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**Higher Education Admissions  
and Student Mobility within the EU**

**ADMIT**

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# 1 Executive Summary

The research project ADMIT was concerned with student mobility and admissions to higher education institutions in five EU countries – France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK. The underlying assumption of the research was that student mobility and accompanying academic recognition are necessary prerequisites for an open and dynamic European educational area that will aid European integration and labour market mobility. However, for students to be mobile they have to have access to higher education and the financial resources to enable them to study abroad. Hence the overall aim of this research project was to explore the relationship between higher education admissions and student mobility within the EU. The overarching objective of the project was to shed light on higher education admissions policies and practices at national and university levels and to relate these to student mobility. The specific objectives of the research were:

- To compare policies and statistical data at a European and national level that relate to higher education admissions and the mobility of students across the EU; to review previous research and to provide a conceptual framework to aid our understanding of the differing systems in operation.
- To compare the development and recent changes to higher education admissions policies and practices at a national and university level. What are current policies and practices in relation to academic recognition? To what extent do philosophies of democratisation and marketisation prevail and what changes are taking place? What impact do different systems have on student mobility and on social cohesion?
- To explore the characteristics of students who choose to study outside their own country (e.g. in terms of their socio-economic and cultural/ethnic background) and to explore the reasons why they choose to undertake study abroad together with perceived costs and benefits.
- To examine whether there are specific needs for common curriculum elements in upper secondary general education and in first degree courses that would facilitate student mobility.
- To examine the obstacles and barriers to transnational mobility and the ways in which mobility of students could be increased and facilitated across the countries of the EU. Alongside this we sought to explore examples of good practice and the forms of organisational, institutional and governmental change that are needed.

## Previous research

- In all five countries some research has been carried out relating to the issue of student mobility. However, with the exception of studies carried out in Germany and Sweden, most of the research has been relatively small-scale and focusing on inward and outward mobility in relation to specific countries. There is thus a paucity of research on student mobility, although at an individual country level there is variation in terms of how well developed the research base is. Overall, there was found to be a lack of information about the characteristics of EU students who study in other EU member states, their reasons for study overseas and the barriers that they confront. The most extensive research on EU-mobility has been carried out under the auspices of the Socrates Erasmus Programme. Whilst this provides valuable insights into student mobility it does not address self-organised student mobility.

## Legislation and policies on admissions and mobility

- Each country has differing policies towards both student mobility and admissions, notwithstanding EU legal obligations not to discriminate against citizens of other EU countries. Whilst the focus of the ADMIT project was on mobility within the EU, emphasis within most of the countries is increasingly directed towards mobility outside the EU and especially in the three largest countries (Germany, France and the UK) on inward mobility. Policy developments in a number of countries are also moving in the direction of increasing internationalisation.
- In four of the five countries there is a body of legislation that relates to admissions to higher education. The UK is the exception. Nevertheless, in all countries, there are general policies that relate to higher education admissions. The level of responsibility in relation to university admissions rests with different bodies in the countries concerned. In terms of admissions, the focus of the ADMIT project was on admission to full degree courses and not on periods of study abroad that are frequently organised under the auspices of international or inter-institutional co-operation.
- One of the most important issues in the context of admissions to university is the method used to control the number of students entering higher education institutions. Very different models emerge in the five countries; nevertheless there are some similarities. The similarity relates to the setting of quotas in certain disciplines. (In all countries except the UK this is known as *numerus clausus* - in the UK this term is not used.) Controls of this type vary between countries.
- At postgraduate level there is similarity between countries as far as admissions are concerned, with decisions invariably being taken at the level of the university or department.
- No tuition fees are payable in Germany although there are exceptions. In Sweden there are no fees at present although there is an ongoing debate about tuition fees for foreign students. In Greece, students in traditional study programmes do not pay tuition fees. In France, low levels of fees are payable. In the UK, undergraduate students at the time the research was carried out were required to contribute up to £1025 per year towards the cost of their tuition, depending on their own, their parents' or their spouse's income. UK and EU students from poorer families have some or all of their fees paid for them by the state.
- Mobile students can be defined as those who study abroad for either a degree or for a period of time. The mobility can be organised by another body or by the student him or herself (self-organised or 'free-movers'). In some countries, the concept of 'nationality' is of key importance in terms of defining who are mobile students whilst in others the overriding concern is that of 'domicile' or 'residence'. These are fundamental differences and are reflected in national and EU-wide statistics, which are collected at a national level using different definitions (and different methods). This makes even basic comparisons between countries problematic. Another 'grey' area particularly in relation to statistical information relates to the category of mobility – whether the student is studying for a full degree or studying abroad for a period of time. At present it is not possible to make comparisons between countries in terms of the type of mobility.
- Because of the conceptual difficulties it is important that international statistics are treated with caution. There are enormous problems with comparability of national statistical information with varying definitions being used – for example, 'foreign' students, 'citizens', 'home' and 'overseas' students. These differences that are apparent at a national level are then replicated in EU-wide statistics that draw on national statistics.

- There is a continuum in terms of national policy relating to student mobility, ranging from a focus on inward to a focus on outward mobility. Policy in both France and the UK is focused on inward mobility, especially of non-EU students. Both are marketing their higher education systems in a global context and the strategies adopted appear similar in terms of collaboration between key Ministries. Their reasons appear to be broadly similar and designed to maximise economic, political and cultural influence. In Germany, there are also elements of this approach, but outward mobility of German students is also promoted. In Sweden, policy focuses on both outward and inward student mobility and in contrast to France, the UK and Germany, stresses mobility as a means of trying to ensure international understanding and peace. Moreover, ‘internationalisation’ appears to have a higher political profile than in the other ADMIT countries. Greece, at the other end of the spectrum, has a long history of outwardly mobile students, although current reforms may herald changes as the supply of places in higher education expands to meet demand. Moreover, Greek policy focuses mainly on the mobility of Greeks living abroad and aims to facilitate their return to the country of origin by providing special admissions processes.

### **Coherence of policy on student mobility**

- For the various types of student mobility identified, there is variation in terms of whether there is in fact a policy and at which level – supranational or national – policy exists.
- At the European level, there are policies relating to student exchanges (under the Socrates Erasmus, Leonardo and Tempus Programmes). In addition, European law requires that there is no discrimination between admission of students with European citizenship to universities/higher education institutions in other EU countries. Thus the European focus is on exchanges and the legal context of admissions. At a national level, the situation is different in that each Member State has its own policy focus, which may be on inward or outward mobility or possibly both.
- However, there are a number of gaps in terms of policy – for example, there is no EU-wide policy relating to self-organised mobility. In some countries, at a national level, policy only relates to outward or inward mobility and not to both.
- A further issue of policy relevance is that of admission of non-EU citizens living in EU countries to higher education institutions. In some countries, the admission of non-EU citizens (normally resident in another EU country) is a ‘grey’ area of policy.

### **Education reforms**

- Within the countries involved in ADMIT, various reforms have taken place that impact on higher education admissions and student mobility. In addition, there has been a debate about the structure of degree courses in the EU. The Sorbonne declaration has been the subject of much debate at a national and European level. It is clear that a number of the countries involved in ADMIT have considered the structure of degree courses and issues of comparability.
- In the context of a global higher education market, the changing policies and practices at university level are interesting – particularly the increasing use of English as a teaching medium in higher education, whilst still respecting intercultural diversity.

- In France, Germany and Sweden, internationalisation can be seen as involving changes within higher education institutions to meet the changing needs of the student population. In the UK, evidence of moves in this direction is limited at the level of national policy.

### **Case studies of higher education institutions**

- Case studies were carried out in all five countries participating in the ADMIT project. In the higher education institutions studied, a range of activities concerned with student mobility was underway. These were varied and related to a number of different factors – the national context, the type of institution and its status, the geographical location of the university, fields of study, the demand for places and so on.
- It was not possible to focus solely on intra-EU student mobility, as this alone would not have provided a true reflection of current policy and practice. In all countries participating in ADMIT, student mobility was found to be part of a larger process of internationalisation and incoming and outgoing mobility are dependent on a range of historical and political factors.
- Student mobility includes both inward and outward mobility with students being mobile within the context of exchange programmes such as Socrates Erasmus and as free-movers. In all countries, exchanges under the Socrates Erasmus Programme were evident. However, there was variation in the extent to which agreements had been made with other institutions. In certain institutions there was some antipathy towards the programme.
- In Germany, Sweden and the UK the need to recruit ‘free-moving’ students was a factor that affected university policy and practice. In Germany, for example, a decline in student numbers in some disciplines – physics, chemistry, engineering – together with a reduction in students from traditional ‘sending’ countries has meant that universities are keen to recruit students from elsewhere (mainly the countries of Central and Eastern Europe) to maintain their viability. In Sweden, the same phenomenon was observed in some cases. In the UK, the policy context is very different with funding depending to a large extent on the numbers of students recruited, but here again the same phenomenon is observed, with certain universities recruiting students from outside the UK (particularly, but not only, outside the EU) so as not to lose funding – in essence to ensure their survival.
- In France, where there is, as in the UK, limited outward mobility, the policies of one prestigious institution teaching commerce, are of interest in that all students are required to spend a period of study abroad. A similar situation arises in the UK with students studying for a first degree in languages with the Socrates Erasmus Programme as the vehicle for the period of study abroad.
- In Greece, the situation is completely different as there are high numbers of outwardly mobile students who study for a full degree outside Greece. Nevertheless, the Socrates Erasmus student exchange programmes and other EU programmes, together with an ‘internationalised’ teaching staff has provided an incentive for innovative agreements with other higher education institutions outside Greece. The Socrates Erasmus Programme appears to be particularly important in relation to outgoing mobility, not only in France, Greece and the UK, but also in some German universities.
- The type of mobility varied between countries. In France and in Greece, the focus was on mobility as part of exchange programmes. In Germany and Sweden there was a focus on both exchange students and free-movers (studying for a full degree). In the UK, exchange programmes had a relatively low profile, although for undergraduate language students this was

not the case (it is a requirement that a period of time is spent abroad for such students); in contrast, a high profile was given to recruiting or selecting full degree students.

- It is also important to note that incoming mobility had a high profile in French universities, in the UK and to some extent in Germany and Sweden. In Greece, in the context of exchange programmes, outgoing mobility used to have a higher profile than incoming mobility. Presently incoming and outgoing mobility tend to be balanced. Interestingly in the case of one of the French elite *grandes écoles*, referred to above, the majority of outgoing students study in North America. Incoming mobility on the other hand involves students from North Africa and other countries with historical and linguistic links with France.
- In terms of specific activities and innovations, two main strands were evident, student mobility agreements (which may be linked with teaching innovations) and programmes of European/international research (e.g. Germany, Greece, UK). Within these strands, a range of innovations were highlighted:
  - Compulsory foreign language elements in courses
  - New degree courses/international courses (e.g. in Germany, Greece, Sweden)
  - New European dimension introduced into courses (e.g. in one Greek university)
  - Language courses in the official language of the country
  - Language courses in other languages
  - Teaching in languages other than an official language of the country
  - Induction/orientation courses for students new to the country
  - Ongoing cultural/social programmes throughout the period of study
- A number of issues emerged during the interviews in the universities. These included:
  - Many outgoing students wish to study in English-speaking universities
  - There is variation between disciplines in the extent to which they are interested in internationalisation and mobility
  - In many countries universities are marketing their courses overseas (e.g. Germany, Sweden, UK)
  - An imbalance of outgoing/incoming students exists (e.g. France, Sweden, UK)
- In general, a small number of staff are involved with the administration of students' mobility. The new centralising changes required by the EU to Socrates Erasmus exchange programmes were generally not popular amongst our respondents, with two countries in particular expressing criticism of centralisation and low levels of funding (Greece and the UK).
- The most important aspect of mobility programmes was reported to be the enthusiasm and interest of individual teachers – on whom these programmes depend. Levels of involvement varied for incoming/outgoing students. Whilst support programmes of one kind or another were in place for all incoming students in all countries, the formal support available from staff for potential outgoing students varied considerably, with fairly good levels of support reported in Sweden to low levels of support in the UK.
- Incentives to participate in mobility programmes fell into two main categories. On the one hand there were what we have called ‘intellectual’ incentives and on the other financial incentives. ‘Intellectual’ incentives or motivations were concerned with improving the reputation of the university, faculty or department and improving research and teaching.

- Financial incentives to encourage mobility/internationalisation included attracting funds for research and the absence of tuition fees in all countries except the UK. More explicit incentives included funds to encourage mobility (in some universities in France, Germany, Greece) and other sources including scholarships and awards (in some universities in Sweden and the UK), together with additional funds to faculty for each foreign student enrolled (Germany) and portable loans and grants for students from their home country (Sweden and in some cases the UK).
- A range of different types of support mechanisms were reported including information, language courses for incoming students, language preparation for study abroad, help with, or in some universities, a guaranteed offer of accommodation (France, UK), cultural and social events for incoming students in most countries (Germany, Greece, Sweden, UK) and feedback sessions/meetings with returning students (Sweden).
- In terms of obstacles, the need for common curriculum elements only emerged as an issue in most countries in relation to language proficiency. Indeed, the recurring obstacle reported was a language deficit. The most commonly taught language in the EU is English (apart from in Ireland and the UK, where it is French), and in almost all of the countries involved in the ADMIT project, outgoing students were reported to want to study in the UK or an English-speaking country/institution or on an English-speaking course. However, notwithstanding these barriers, the importance of English in relation to student mobility cannot be overestimated.
- Credit transfer systems (ECTS) are perceived by universities in some countries (e.g. Greece, Sweden and the UK) to facilitate mobility among students.
- Material and financial obstacles to mobility were highlighted in some countries. One interesting example relates to the situation in France, where there is variation between French institutions in terms of the support provided at the level of the region or *département*. In the UK, other material constraints on mobility at university level were a natural limit to expansion in one case - the university could not take more incoming students. On the positive side however, some universities were able to offer limited financial incentives to students, which took the form of special funds and scholarships. In Greece, two universities reported using part of their research budget to make supplementary awards to students, particularly at post-graduate level. In the UK, where scholarships and awards were mentioned, these were mainly, but not exclusively, available to non-EU students.
- In some higher education institutions there appeared to be a lack of interest in mobility. This was found in relation to teachers in French universities (and was reported to be the case with students too), but interestingly not in one of the *grandes écoles*. In some institutions in other countries there also appeared to be a lack of interest, particularly the more prestigious. However, caution is needed in interpreting such findings as in some cases, in spite of a lack of interest at the university level there is an interest at a faculty or departmental level, especially in the less prestigious fields of study within the university.
- A range of other obstacles was highlighted, including recognition of course work. Studying abroad was sometimes felt to be like a 'tourist activity'; work at international level is not recognised or valued; there can be difficulties with employment contracts for foreign students; there may be a lack of resources; there may be a lack of central support and lack of information for students. In addition, the fact that for only a few courses is study abroad obligatory is another obstacle as is the lack of incentives for staff and time constraints (the Socrates Erasmus Programme for example, takes a lot of time to prepare for and manage and exchanges require a lot of work and effort). Two other obstacles were highlighted: the lack of opportunity for

prospective students to hear about the advantages/positive experiences of studying abroad from returning students; and programme anxieties – i.e. concerns that time spent abroad would have a negative impact on grades/results.

- A number of benefits were highlighted in the higher education institutions that were studied. These included improvement in the quality of teaching and research, and cultural and professional enrichment of individuals. Regarding the former benefit, it was thought by several universities in France, Greece, Sweden and the UK that there were positive advantages to reciprocity with other universities, such as shared resources, ability to attract high quality students and teachers and to forge beneficial research links and collaborations. Regarding the latter, incoming students were thought to have a good influence on, and help raise the standards and aspirations of home students and introduce fresh thinking, new perspectives (Germany, Sweden, UK). On the cost side the increased costs incurred by institutions under Socrates were highlighted.

## Student perspectives

### France

- In the qualitative research carried out by the French team it was found that the incoming and outgoing students were predominantly studying languages or social sciences; more were female, with the Socrates Erasmus Programme acting ‘as a motor for European student mobility’; and students were from modest family backgrounds but probably more outward looking than others. The concept of ‘mobility capital’ – comprising personal and family history, previous experiences of overseas mobility, linked to linguistic competence, adaptive experiences and specific personality traits – was used. The students interviewed had mixed mobility capital – some were from dual-culture families, with experience of living and travelling abroad for example. Others were from families that had not travelled much and only spoke one foreign language.
- Students’ motivations for studying abroad tended to focus on the fact that it had ‘always’ been their intention to study abroad, although for some it was necessary for their course. The motives given included language, cultural experiences and personal development. All the students mentioned language and this was also the most important motivation. The choice of country or institution was essentially a linguistic choice, sometimes with a professional project and/or personal reasons. As a result of the dominance of the ‘major languages’ notably English, the UK has a natural advantage over other European countries. Choice of institution was largely dependent on partner institutions.
- The number of languages in which students were proficient varied according to whether they were linguists or not. Two or three languages plus the mother tongue were the norm for language students compared with one or possibly two plus the mother tongue for those who were studying other subjects. Notwithstanding this finding, the situation at one of the *grandes écoles* was different, with a higher priority given to language learning during the course.
- The main source of information before students went abroad was from international offices, which used a range of different strategies, such as meetings, contact with former Erasmus students, use of the Internet, brochures etc. One of the *grandes écoles* involved in the research had high levels of staffing and a dedicated building for international relations, but this was not typical of a typical French university. Interestingly, although the initial support seemed generally satisfactory for the French case study institutions, this was not always the case in relation to the foreign universities mentioned by students interviewed.

- All students who were interviewed were in need of money in addition to that provided by the Erasmus grant. In many cases, students' parents provided these additional resources, whilst in others a number of students worked to finance their period of study abroad, either during the preceding holidays or all the previous year. The Erasmus grants were not able to cover the costs of studying abroad.
- The obstacles identified included principally material or practical difficulties – such as linguistic, academic or socio-cultural problems. The material difficulties were essentially about financing, administrative matters in relation to the institutions and finally difficulties with accommodation. Interestingly no student spoke in terms of a real cultural 'shock' although they spoke of 'surprises' or 'discoveries'.
- The students questioned were positive but prudent when asked to what extent they felt that they had become integrated into the social life of the community. Their activities centred on student life. One of the reasons mentioned for not participating more related to their financial situation and costs such as travel to big cities.
- Students were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their period of study abroad. They gave a very high rating to this question. Positive experiences were such that over two-thirds of students would have wished to extend their period of study abroad. One of the benefits of studying abroad was the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Some students were satisfied with the system, but others were not. Problems cited included a lack of clarity with the system and lack of knowledge about the workings of the examination system in France.

## Germany

- A number of large-scale quantitative research studies, relating to student mobility, have been carried out by Hochschul-Informationen-System (HIS). Data from one such survey of German students enabled secondary analysis to be carried out with a view to assessing the influence of several factors on the cross-border mobility of students and to get a better understanding of their relative strength and the interaction between the factors. A statistical model was developed to evaluate the impact of different factors on the cross-border mobility of German students. Different influencing factors, ranging from study-related to biographical factors, were taken into account. A further goal was to compare different groups of students (e.g. differentiated by course of study or preferred region for a period of study abroad) with regard to the relevance of different influences. In order to determine the interplay of these factors and their relative strength, a multiple regression with latent variables was conducted. The regression model was calculated for all students as well for several selected study-programmes.
- The most influential factor was found to be the reported relevance of studies in other countries for the progress in the study-programme at home. This means that if students believe that their own studies will benefit from studying in another country, they are more likely to go abroad.
- The second most influential factor is skill in English language. These two factors are followed by competence in the second language on the one hand, and by the reported professional relevance in the later occupational activity of experience abroad on the other.
- These most important factors are closely followed by a second group of three factors with a noticeable, but slightly less prominent influence. Of these, the economic situation of the students has a slightly stronger influence than the other two, which are the achievement orientation of the students and personal commitments at home.

- Even less discriminating than these factors but still representing an influence are barriers in the organisation of the stay abroad, such as finding accommodation and knowledge of the foreign education system (which had a negative influence). The two remaining factors, extroversion and non-study-related experience abroad, had a negligible effect in the overall model.
- In short, the most important factors influencing the cross-border mobility of German students are the benefits of studying abroad for students' studies at home, the reported relevance for their later profession and language skills. If a higher rate of cross-border mobility is desired, the most important thing seems to be to emphasise the benefits from studying abroad more strongly. Also, further promotion of language skills is advisable.

## Greece

- The research carried out by the Greek team revealed that internationalisation and educational mobility can be seen as shaped by first, the policies adopted, supported or promoted by a variety of institutional actors, such as the EU, Member States, higher education institutions, departments and academics; and, second, the students' response to these policies, shaped by their plans for their integration in society. The patterns of educational mobility that emerged can be understood as a result of the interplay between this multitude of institutional policies that set the stage for student action and the perceptions, intentions and plans of the students, which are shaped in relation to their social status and their aspirations towards upward mobility.
- Students seemed to value and pursue educational mobility for three main reasons. First, educational mobility is seen to be a path leading to upward social mobility. Second, students seem to view educational mobility as a way to acquire specific scientific skills. Third, students appreciate the social and cultural experience accrued through educational mobility. The first of the three factors seems to be important and present even when the other two appear (see ADMIT 2000b). All interviews with students seemed to indicate that a series of sometimes vague but real hierarchies exist. Student satisfaction from the mobility experience can be understood as the result of the interplay between: the positioning of the home and host countries in the international sphere (centre-periphery); the positioning of the home and host education systems in the particular field of study in the international sphere; the positioning and the prestige of the host institution and/or department in which they study within the hierarchy of institutions and fields of study; and the student's positioning in the social hierarchy, i.e. his social status and family background.
- It seems that reasons to study in Greece vary according to the country of origin. The majority of undergraduate and postgraduate foreign full-course students in Greece were from outside the EU. Students from other EU countries appear to prefer (organised) mobility to a Greek institution for a period of time that would provide them with scientific training and skills to enhance their career prospects. In the hierarchy of educational systems, the positioning of the Greek system seems to be somewhere in the middle, following those considered top educational systems. On the whole, the level of studies in Greece is judged very good or satisfactory, although inferior to the level of studies in some countries (i.e. the UK, France, Germany and the US). However, studies in some prestigious, high-demand fields of study are considered of high academic standing. Students' evaluation of educational mobility can be understood in relation to their future plans and aspirations, their own family background and social status and the prestige of the field of study and/or department in the university hierarchy.
- The Greek team also examined the outward mobility from Greece to the UK and according to their conceptual framework of the interplay of hierarchies, the pattern of (outward) mobility

from Greece to the UK can be understood as a result of the interplay of: the existence of *numerus clausus* in the Greek education system which denies access to higher education to a large number of de facto high ability candidates; the existence of an education system in the UK, which is promoting extensive policies for the attraction of foreign students. This is coupled by a perception on the part of the students that they will eventually ensure a position in their chosen field of study; the prestige of the British Institution(s)/Department(s); and the social status and the professional and social aspirations of the students.

- The interviews indicated that most outgoing students decided to pursue undergraduate studies in the UK when they failed the Panhellenic examinations. The decision to study in the UK does not seem to be based on a perception of the Greek education system as of lower status to the British one. In contrast, outward educational mobility from Greece seems to be related to the role of the education system in the reproduction of the social stratification in the Greek society and the extremely high social demand for university education.
- Educational mobility towards the UK at the postgraduate level can be seen as related to postgraduate programmes in Greece being considered highly competitive. It appears that such a practice functions in a way similar to the *numerus clausus* (at the undergraduate level). The choice of country appears to be based on a perception of the UK as a country which possesses an extended and efficient education system where students get on the whole good quality education. The mobility of Greek students towards the UK seems to be related to: the fact that in the UK education system, students who have failed the Panhellenic examinations will eventually find an institution that will grant them a position for studies in their desired field of study; their wish to acquire fluency in English; the marketing activities in Greece undertaken on the part of the UK to attract foreign students; and the fact that Greeks are very well informed on studying opportunities in the UK. The situation at the postgraduate level is slightly different. Students opt for Master's level studies in the UK as they consider Master's programmes in the UK more specialised and focused as well as better administered than some Greek postgraduate programmes. The interviews seem to suggest that a hierarchy of institutions and departments exists in the UK, possibly more defined than in Greece. This is indicated by the fact that choice of institution at the undergraduate level appears to be guided first, by the entry requirements and the standards set by the institution.
- The social status of the students seems to be related to the evaluation of their mobility experience. Students of high status family background or students who obtained their first degrees in high status departments/fields of study in Greece were found to be more critical of the level of studies in the UK, even at the most prestigious British institutions. Mobile students who either had no experience of the Greek education system or had studied at low status Greek departments and/or fields of study, appeared to appreciate the better facilities offered by British institutions. They also seem to value certain traits of the Anglo-Saxon system, as for example the close tutoring and supervision of students. Some of them pointed out several 'differences of style' between the Greek and the British education systems. It appears that these mobile students associated upward mobility with educational qualifications. They valued postgraduate studies, as they believed that the degrees would enhance job opportunities, their future professional careers and therefore would lead to further upward social mobility. Outwardly mobile students were found to pursue educational mobility and get satisfaction from it when it related to their goals and aspirations for upward mobility and provided them with specific scientific training and/or social experience.

## Sweden

- As a result of the secondary analysis of data relating to incoming and outgoing students the Swedish researchers noted that the great majority had had very positive experiences. Personal experiences from the new situations encountered included mixing with people from different cultural backgrounds, new perspectives widening students' horizons, independence and new responsibilities. These learning processes could all contribute to personal development and competence enhancement in networking and communication skills. Many students made such observations.
- The EU students did not always see the benefits of their studies, whether in terms of subject knowledge, or in terms of being of use in the labour market, but students from the Baltic states invested much hope and belief in their study period abroad and some reported on positive changes that had already taken place. The differences between the groups are marked. One factor explaining the differences might be that they felt needed in their home countries. They often expressed a positive view of the future and that they are part of the realisation of this future.
- There was some dissatisfaction among students concerning the process of finding the appropriate course at the appropriate level. The formal results of studies, i.e. grades, course content or subject knowledge may not be the most important benefits of student mobility. The competencies needed today are often expressed in terms of social and cultural competence, language knowledge, communication skills, leadership, flexibility, adaptability, independence, responsibility, coping with stress etc. and there are reasons to believe that many of these skills may be more successfully acquired in an unknown environment than at home.
- When it comes to the Swedish students' expectations concerning the value of their foreign studies as an advantage in the labour market, Swedish research indicates that employers seldom explicitly required studies abroad for employment, even if they valued foreign studies as being of extra merit.
- Language problems were not found to be the most serious ones for incoming students to Sweden - they managed by using English, or knew Swedish in the case of some Finnish students - nor for outgoing Swedish students. Outgoing Swedish students are well prepared in foreign languages by the school system, especially English, but also to some degree German, Spanish and French. In addition, they can take courses in another Nordic language (Danish or Norwegian). Second generation immigrants, trained at school in their mother tongue, are a growing group among mobile students. Swedish higher education institutions have adopted a policy, which has allowed for the increase in exchanges, namely the expansion of courses in English. But the comments of some students indicate that there is among the incoming students also an interest to learn the Swedish language in order to come closer to the Swedes and to the Swedish culture.
- The ADMIT interviews with academics and others at university level indicated that Swedish students wished to go to English-speaking countries in and outside Europe, and that efforts to create exchanges were concentrated on such countries. However, in the analysis of other research material no similar evidence emerged.
- Both incoming and outgoing students, with the exception of the grant holders from the Baltic countries, mentioned economic barriers. The fact that the Swedes have 'portable' grants and loans may explain the interest in exchange activity. But once in the host country, the Swedish student is in a situation that is comparable to other exchange students, with no parental support.

For the student, living costs tend to be higher abroad, but according to results reported by the Swedish team, almost all mobile students seemed to enjoy the experience abroad and found it worthwhile.

## UK

- The quantitative research carried out by the UK team involved developing a questionnaire for EU (non-UK) students studying at UK higher education institutions to complete. Over 500 questionnaires were returned and analysed. The research examined the characteristics of a sample of EU students studying in UK higher education institutions, their reasons for choosing to study abroad and specifically their reasons for opting for the UK. The majority of students in the sample were studying for a degree to be awarded in the UK although a significant minority were on a Socrates Erasmus exchange.
- The majority of students studying for a UK degree were on undergraduate courses, with significant minorities being on a Master's course or on a research degree programme. Students were studying a wide range of subjects: social studies (the most common), sciences, engineering and technology and 'combined' subjects. Students' reasons for choosing to study abroad varied, with the most important reasons relating to increasing their labour market prospects, broadening their horizons and improving their foreign language competence. More males than females gave as important/very important reasons, wanting to improve their chances of getting a good job, the belief that a higher level of English would improve their labour market prospects and wanting to go to an institution with an international reputation. The most important reasons given for choosing to study in the UK – and the most frequently mentioned – were that respondents found exactly the course that they wanted, that a degree from the UK would improve their job prospects and a belief that the quality of UK higher education institutions would be very good. More males than females gave as very important/important reasons a belief that a degree from the UK and a higher level of English proficiency would improve their job prospects, wanting to go to an institution with an international reputation and a desire to improve their English. More females on the other hand reported that the UK not being far from their home country was an important reason for choosing to study in the UK.
- A high proportion of students on a Socrates Erasmus exchange were studying for a social studies degree in their home country, with significant minorities studying sciences, business and administration and languages. The most important reasons students gave for choosing to study abroad were to improve their foreign language competence, to experience other cultures and to broaden their horizons. A high percentage also felt that studying abroad would improve their job prospects. More females than males cited as important: experiencing other cultures, gaining a different perspective on their subject and experiencing different teaching and learning methods. Important reasons given by students for choosing the UK for their period of study abroad related to improving their English, the view that a higher level of English would improve their job prospects and wanting to meet students from many different countries. More females than males gave their interest in British culture as an important reason.
- All respondents were asked about the arrangements for funding their studies in the UK. The student's family was the most frequently mentioned source and also the most frequently mentioned 'main source' of funds. The socio-economic profile of the students revealed that they were, overall, from privileged backgrounds. In over half the cases, the student's father had studied at tertiary level; over half rated their family socio-economic status in their home country as 'above average' or 'high'. Over half spoke four languages (with varying degree of proficiency). The most frequently mentioned individuals exerting a positive influence on the decision to study abroad were the respondent's mother, father and a close friend. There was

some evidence to suggest that the students' plans for the future had changed since they had been studying in the UK.

### **Obstacles to mobility and solutions**

- Three key barriers common to all countries were identified: language, finance and recognition and/or admissions. Other barriers were also highlighted including cultural/attitudinal barriers; concern at an institutional level about quality and standards at institutions in other EU countries; and different attitudes towards mobility by more and less prestigious institutions.
- A range of possible solutions to these barriers were identified:

#### **Language**

- Develop and reinforce language training, and well before university. Extend the creation of language centres in higher education institutions so that all students benefit from language training that is as varied as possible and at all levels – beginner, intermediate and advanced (recommendations by French team).
- Develop obligatory English study courses to accompany higher education programmes; develop specific language courses in languages other than English related to exchange programmes, or out-sourcing of special language programmes (recommendations by German team).
- The EU should adopt a more comprehensive policy concerning foreign language instruction, promoting the teaching of widely spoken EU languages in secondary education at the national level. It can be assumed that foreign language proficiency varies by country and, therefore, differential policies would be advisable. At the same time the Community should support the instruction of less spoken European languages, to ensure the multicultural character of Europe. Different policies are proposed for the promotion of undergraduate and postgraduate student mobility. At an undergraduate level a promising course of action would relate the funding of Socrates to the development of 'project-based' student exchange schemes and the funding of mobility schemes could be related to the linguistic preparation of outgoing students in the language of the host country. Instruction of at least some core courses in widely spoken European languages would attract incoming students towards institutions where less spoken languages prevail. At the postgraduate level there could be the promotion of joint research projects, coupled with training of students in specific research techniques, as research activities take place without the necessity to specify one language of communication in any particular setting (recommendations made by Greek team).
- There should be more support for Swedish language courses for incoming students who wish to take courses given in Swedish together with more courses to be offered in English; greater support for the acquisition of second and third foreign languages; training teachers to give courses in English and other foreign languages (recommendations by Swedish team).
- Improve the level of foreign language competence among British students via an increased emphasis in upper secondary education where there is no compulsory foreign language element. Foreign language should be included as a 'key skill' for all such pupils (recommendation by UK team).

## **Finance**

- Develop budgetary allocations at European, national, regional, institutional and departmental level to facilitate mobility (recommendation by French team).
- At a national level financial support for mobility could come from actions aimed at providing incentives for the private or voluntary sectors to invest in student mobility (recommendation by French team).
- Develop a fully portable financial support scheme in the EU for students who wish to take a full course in another EU country (recommendation by German team).
- Increased funding of student scholarships in order to ensure participation of all students to the schemes, (especially students that cannot count on family support) (recommendation by Greek team).
- Increased funding of teaching staff mobility targeted to joint teaching and research activities, in order to provide incentives to academics to set up mobility schemes (recommendation by Greek team).
- Funding of programmes establishing meeting-points between research projects and mobility schemes in order to incorporate student mobility in the wider internationalisation activities (and policies) of the universities/departments (recommendation by Greek team).
- Provision of differential incentives (i.e. financial support) to foster the participation of less developed universities and/or departments in EU programmes. The development of research infrastructure with emphasis on low (income and) prestige institutions and low (income and) prestige fields of study, such as 'soft-sciences' should be a sine qua non policy on the part of the EU (recommendations by Greek team).
- Provide additional financial support for high cost areas, countries or fields of study (recommendation by Swedish team).
- Provide more scholarships for incoming students (recommendation by Swedish team).
- Provide fully portable loans for students who wish to study in other EU countries (recommendation by UK team).
- Provide more scholarships to facilitate mobility among outgoing students from lower income families to undertake periods of study abroad and for incoming students from lower income families (recommendation by UK team).
- For admissions: economic compensation for uneven exchange as happens within the Nordic Agreement may be considered (recommendation by Swedish team).

## **Recognition and/or admissions**

- Improve the information systems: explain clearly to students the credit transfer system (ECTS) in operation for Socrates Erasmus exchange programmes; revise the university calendars across European universities so that there are more consistent start and end dates for the academic year/semesters/terms (recommendations by French team).

- Instigate a centralised body for the recognition of modules or courses, with a ‘recognition ombudsman’ at each university; give the individual institutions the right to accept the foreign students they want within the total of allowed students (recommendations by German team).
- The involvement of academics with exchange schemes appears to be the only way to guarantee their involvement in course recognition and evaluation on a regular basis; differential funding for the development of infrastructure of less developed universities and/or departments in less favoured regions (recommendations from Greek team).
- Develop a common (regional) educational space as between the Nordic countries (recommendation by Swedish team).
- Facilitate greater interaction across the EU between those involved in organising exchange programmes and those involved with admissions to ensure greater understanding of issues related to academic standards. Agencies responsible for quality assurance across the EU need to liaise closely with one another. The Sorbonne Declaration provides an ideal context for this to take place (recommendations by UK team).

### **Other incentives to improve mobility**

- Develop a ‘reward’ system for mobility in the careers of teaching staff (recommendation by French team).
- In Sweden, cultural differences were not seen as a barrier, largely as a result of a mentor system having been introduced, which includes social and cultural activities.
- In order to encourage mobility to cohesion member states, differentiation of financial support systems might be adopted with additional support for language preparation (recommendation by German team).
- It is necessary to provide academics with incentives to set up mobility schemes. Increased funding of teaching staff mobility appears to be an appropriate incentive (recommendation by Greek team).

In conclusion, by examining a sample of EU countries with differing policies, higher education systems and financial mechanisms we have been able to show interesting similarities and differences between countries. Unexpected similarities between France and the UK were found in terms of the overall national policies driving student mobility and the way in which higher education is seen as a tool of foreign policy in both.

Other similarities, which were not predicted at the outset, relate to the ways in which similar outcomes can be achieved with differing incentive structures. Inward student mobility is encouraged in certain disciplines in some universities in Germany and the UK, but whilst the incentives are financial in the case of the UK, in the case of Germany - and indeed Sweden - the incentives are for the survival of particular departments within universities. Other interesting similarities relate to the different responses of higher and lower status universities in relation to mobility programmes (cf Greece and the UK), with an institution’s prestige appearing to have an impact on the organisation’s encouragement or otherwise of mobility programmes.

Finally, a key issue that merits a specific mention relates to the way in which differing policies at a national level can impact on mobility – in particular, the fact that Sweden has portable grants and

loans means that in theory there are more opportunities for Swedish students from lower socio-economic status backgrounds to study abroad than for students from other countries. It is hoped that some of the innovative ideas and policy recommendations that we highlight above will be addressed by policy makers.

## **2 Background and objectives of the project**

The research that we report here is concerned with student mobility and admissions to higher education institutions in five EU countries – France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK. This section provides the rationale for the project together with the project aims and more specific objectives.

### **Rationale for the research**

The higher education sector has a key role to play in meeting the high-level skill needs of Europe. With the internal market it is crucial that Europe not only maintains but also expands opportunities for the citizens of the EU. Only by securing a high skills base is Europe likely to be able to compete effectively with its competitors in North America, East and South East Asia. Moreover, given the changing labour market contexts in Europe with less job security, there is a need for young people and adults alike to have high skill levels and to be able to move from one employer to another and, indeed, from country to country. Access to higher education is thus of crucial importance and to ‘explain access is to explain scarcity. Education is valued because it is a scarce good, so we must expect to find either or both market and political institutions for its distribution’ (Halsey, 1991, p. 13). In the sub-sections that follow we will discuss, within the European context, three key issues that underpin the rationale for conducting this research – the importance of knowledge and mobility, the issue of social cohesion and statistics and previous research on student mobility in Europe.

### **Knowledge and mobility**

The importance of the acquisition of knowledge has been the subject of much debate within the European Union. For example: ‘In a society based far more on the production, transfer and sharing of knowledge than on trade in goods, access to theoretical and practical knowledge must necessarily play a major role’ (European Commission, 1994, p.133). And more recently: ‘Enhancing knowledge ... ought to be top priority’ (European Commission, 1996a, p. 53).

Recent policy documents have explicitly focused on the importance of knowledge. ‘Agenda 2000’ (European Commission, 1997a) notes that ‘knowledge policies – research, innovation, education and training – are ... of decisive importance for the future of the Union’ (p. 19). More recently, the Amsterdam Treaty noted the determination of the EU to ‘promote the highest level of knowledge for its people through broad access to education’. The guidelines for future Community action in the areas of education, training and youth presented in ‘Towards a Europe of Knowledge’ (European Commission, 1997b) note:

‘Economic competitiveness, employment and the personal fulfilment of the citizens of Europe is no longer mainly based on the production of physical goods ... Real wealth creation will henceforth be linked to the production and dissemination of knowledge and will depend first and foremost on our efforts in the field of research, education and training and on our capacity to promote innovation. This is why we must fashion a veritable ‘Europe of knowledge’ (p. 1).

In order to build a Europe of knowledge an ‘open and dynamic European educational area’ (p. 3) is proposed. A significant part of this is the physical mobility of students, with mutual recognition being a key feature. In ‘Agenda 2000’ (European Commission, 1997a) the importance of the exchange schemes is highlighted, and it is noted that the success of schemes such as the Erasmus

(now Socrates Erasmus) Programme<sup>1</sup>: ‘should lead to new initiatives to promote transnational mobility for European citizens’ (p. 19).

The issue of student mobility is at the heart of the current proposal. If student mobility is to be enhanced, we need to know more about current policies and practices in order to establish what innovation is needed, and to discover the barriers to mutual recognition of qualifications in relation to higher education entry.

Transnational mobility serves a multitude of purposes – it can foster improvement of the understanding of other European societies and cultures, it can enhance an individual’s social skills and it can encourage the acquisition of linguistic skills and contribute to the ‘development of ‘European citizenship’ complementing existing citizenship, of the country of origin’ (European Commission, 1996b, p.11). The benefits of the Erasmus Programme, by way of example, included improvement of the level of self-reported foreign language proficiency to a ‘substantial extent’ (Maiworm et al., 1991). Moreover, economic advantages to such mobility have been identified. For example, Teichler (1996) reports that students noted a positive impact of study abroad on obtaining their first job and those who recruit graduates see study abroad as a positive element in applicants’ curriculum vitae.

The added value of transnational mobility has been officially recognised in Article 126 (2) of the EC Treaty which specifies that ‘Community action shall be aimed at encouraging mobility of students and teachers, *inter alia* by encouraging the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study’ (European Commission, 1996b). Whilst there is recognition as part of the Socrates Erasmus Programme through the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), this is as a result of prior agreement reached by students’ participating (home and prospective host) institutions on the course they are to take abroad. It is thus institution specific as opposed to official recognition. Of particular interest in relation to the current research project is the fact that in the Nordic countries, as a result of a treaty, all students who fulfil the requirements for entering higher education in their home country have the same rights to enter higher education in other Nordic countries (Strøm, 1996). This is of particular significance given that the education systems at both upper secondary and tertiary levels differ between the countries concerned; thus, in spite of obstacles, there is official recognition.

### **Social cohesion**

Social cohesion has a high political profile in the EU and education has a key role to play in its maintenance. As noted by the Study Group on Education and Training (1997), in Europe there are two aims in relation to education and training:

‘Firstly, education should be democratic, i.e. easily accessible (as inexpensive as possible, if not free) to as many people as possible. Secondly – but a less generally shared aim – education should provide ‘equal opportunities’ ...’ (p. 91).

Some of these features are beginning to change within Europe, particularly but not only in the UK, where tuition fees for higher education have been introduced. Moreover, for students who wish to study abroad there are costs that are incurred. The importance of grants, scholarships and loans to facilitate mobility is clearly important. The tensions that exist between the ‘democratisation’ of higher education and selection also merit special investigation in relation to student mobility.

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<sup>1</sup> Erasmus and Socrates Erasmus are used synonymously throughout this report.

## Data and previous research on student mobility

There are some European data on mobility. Eurostat (2000), provides information on non-national students as a percentage of the total student population in higher education; in the case of the UK, students are considered to be non-nationals if they have permanent residence in another country, whilst for the other countries in our study, non-national students are those holding passports from another country. The data do not provide a precise measure of student mobility as it is not always possible to identify citizenship of students in certain types of higher education; furthermore, the data may overstate the degree of mobility as children of migrants are included. It is important to note that the data include all enrolled students – that is, exchange students enrolled on courses, those who are enrolled on courses for a limited period of time and those enrolled for the duration of their studies.

A considerable amount of work has been carried out on various aspects of the Erasmus exchange programme (e.g., Burn et al., 1990; Berning, 1992; Maiworm et al., 1991; Opper et al., 1990; Teichler, 1996). However, our focus in this study is not specifically on this type of mobility – we are also focusing on ‘spontaneous’ mobility, about which relatively little research has been carried out within the EU with the notable exception of that by Gordon & Jallade (1996).

Gordon & Jallade (1996) explored spontaneous mobility across 12 EU<sup>2</sup> countries. Their analysis differentiated, as far as possible, between foreign and mobile students and revealed that the UK is the largest receiving country of mobile students followed by France and Germany. Altogether these countries account for nearly three-quarters of all mobile students registered in EU universities. The UK and France are also net ‘importers’ of students. Greece is the biggest net ‘exporter’ of students, followed by Germany.

## Overall research aim

The underlying assumption of this research project was that student mobility and accompanying academic recognition are necessary prerequisites for an open and dynamic European educational area that will aid European integration and labour market mobility. However, for students to be mobile they have to have access to higher education and the financial resources to enable them to study abroad. Hence the overall aim of this research project was to explore the relationship between higher education admissions and student mobility within the EU.

Related to the issues of mobility and social cohesion are the new forms of financing higher education – such as loans and vouchers (see Wagner, 1996; Ahonen, 1996; West & Pennell, 1996) and this ties in with another area that we will be addressing, namely the socio-economic characteristics of students who study in other EU countries. We will build on the work that has been carried out in this area by Schnitzer (1995).

Another issue that we will be examining relates to the need for common curriculum elements. The education systems of the EU are diverse (see Vaniscotte, 1996; Eurydice/Cedefop, 1995). Nevertheless, in terms of curriculum content there are similarities as well as differences in relation to the content in certain subject areas (e.g. mathematics, sciences, modern foreign languages, language of instruction). One of the key differences relates to the number of subjects studied and the form that the examinations at the end of upper secondary general education take (e.g. Britton & Raizen, 1996; Madaus & Kellaghan, 1992; Olmedilla, 1992; West et al., 1999). Notwithstanding the research that has been carried out and upon which we will build, Teichler (1992) notes:

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<sup>2</sup> Data for Austria, Finland and Sweden are not presented.

‘Research has not yet ...touched on national policies of recognition and equivalences ... What role do national policies and national centres involved in information and assessment of foreign credentials actually play [in] international mobility and [in terms of] recognition of credentials?’ (p. 55)

The need for research on the area of higher education admissions and mobility is proposed by the Study Group on Education and Training which recently produced its report ‘Accomplishing Europe through Education and Training’ (1997). The Study Group proposed a programme of studies with a view to a comparative analysis of systems based on selected horizontal themes. One of these relates specifically to higher education: ‘Arrangements for access to higher education: selection, grants, élitist or open systems ...’.

Thus the importance of finding out more about access to higher education, mobility and social cohesion is clear. This research was designed to build on research that has already been carried out, and to extend it further in order to understand more fully issues related to student mobility and admissions at a national, institutional and individual level.

### **Research objectives**

The overarching objective of the project was to shed light on higher education admissions policies and practices at national and university levels and to relate these to student mobility. The specific objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To compare policies and statistical data at a European and national level that relate to higher education admissions and the mobility of students across the EU; to review previous research and to provide a conceptual framework to aid our understanding of the differing systems in operation.
2. To compare the development and recent changes to higher education admissions policies and practices at a national and university level. What are current policies and practices in relation to academic recognition? To what extent do philosophies of democratisation and marketisation prevail and what changes are taking place? What impact do different systems have on student mobility and on social cohesion?
3. To explore the characteristics of students who choose to study outside their own country (e.g. in terms of their socio-economic and cultural/ethnic background) and to explore the reasons why they choose to undertake study abroad together with perceived costs and benefits.
4. To examine whether there are specific needs for common curriculum elements in upper secondary general education and in first degree courses that would facilitate student mobility.
5. What are the obstacles and barriers to transnational mobility? How can mobility of students be increased and facilitated across the countries of the EU? What examples of good practice exist? And what forms of organisational, institutional and governmental change are needed?

Section 3 provides the project results together with the methods adopted. This is divided into several sub-sections. Section 3.1 focuses on previous research relating to student mobility and section 3.2 on legislation and policy (Objectives 1 and 2 of the research). Section 3.3 focuses on the findings from case studies of higher education institutions that were undertaken in each of the countries involved in the research to shed light on current practice in relation to student mobility (and where relevant admissions) (Objectives 2 and 4 of the research) and Section 3.4 examines the students’ perspectives in relation to study abroad (Objectives 3 and 5). Section 3.5 focuses on the

barriers to mobility and admissions together with policy recommendations (Objective 5). Section 4 provides the conclusions to the project and discusses key findings.

### **3 Project results and methods**

#### **3.1 Previous research on student mobility**

##### **Introduction**

This section highlights the key issues to emerge in the literature reviews that have been produced by the countries involved in the project, namely, France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK (see also ADMIT, 1999a, 1999b).

##### **Methods**

For each country a review of the literature relating to student mobility and admissions to higher education was carried out. The literature reviews were carried out using a framework agreed by partners. In addition, we examined conceptual issues relating to student mobility and admissions [Objective 1].

##### **Internationalisation and higher education**

There is no clear consensus on the understanding of the concept of internationalisation in relation to higher education. However, Källemark & van der Wende (1997) provide a summary of the main findings of an international study on national policies for internationalisation of higher education. They note that, in general, it has been concluded that national policies for internationalisation are still predominantly, although not exclusively, based on the 'traditional instrument of mobility of students (with a quantitative emphasis on undergraduates) and faculty. At present a shift can be observed from the individual to the institutional level. The national policies include an increasingly wide range of activities and focus more strongly on the curriculum, on the institutional organisation and management and on the structure of the higher education system as such' (p. 260).

Moreover, while one of the prime ideas of the European Union is to create conditions for mobility of persons and a common labour market, the idea of a common educational 'market' has yet to materialise. Källemark & van der Wende (1997) conclude that the internationalisation of higher education is not merely training graduates for a post-industrial and service-oriented society and labour market, but more importantly also for what is characterised as an information society. More controversially, perhaps, their study indicates that the limits of physical mobility as a vehicle for internationalisation have probably been reached. They also note that the transnational delivery of higher education is 'increasingly supported by the use of information and communication technology (ICT), not hindered by any borders or barriers' (p. 270). However, the evidence obtained from our preliminary review of the literature fails to support the notion that the limits of physical mobility as a vehicle for internationalisation have been achieved.

##### **National policies**

##### **Student mobility**

National policies in relation to student mobility vary enormously. At this stage, it is important to stress the varying national contexts. Three of the countries involved in ADMIT, France, Germany and the UK have been 'suppliers' of higher education places to students from other countries over many years. Greece, on the other hand, has insufficient places at present and exports large numbers of students, in particular to the UK. Sweden is in a unique position, having a clear policy of internationalisation, with accompanying incentives for students to study overseas. The individual

country reports for Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK outline the national policies that are in operation (ADMIT 1999b). Details on national policies are given in section 3.2.

## **Admissions**

Admissions to higher education institutions in all countries vary enormously. The systems in operation for domiciled/nationals and for overseas EU students vary, but in distinctive ways. Different models operate, with selective systems in some countries but not in others. It is clear that barriers exist for overseas EU students who wish to study in another EU country. These are not merely language barriers – a range of administrative hurdles have to be overcome prior to gaining admission.

Clear policy differences also emerge between the UK and other countries. This is because the UK has a more highly developed market-oriented approach than other countries. The recent introduction of tuition fees in the UK for the majority of students is testimony to the introduction of market principles into the higher education system. This is in stark contrast to the other countries in the study. Germany, Sweden and Greece (for different reasons) promote overseas study by means of grants and/or loans, although in the case of Greece it should be noted that there are only a limited number of grants.

Notwithstanding the move towards further marketisation in the UK, there are moves in Greece, Sweden and the UK to open up access to higher education to disadvantaged groups – either through ‘open’ universities or through alternative admissions procedures. This also has a bearing on EU students. For example, in the UK higher education institutions, students from poor families will pay lower tuition fees (possibly none); the same policy will apply to all EU undergraduate students.

## **Research on student mobility and higher education admissions**

A limited amount of research has been carried out on student mobility but to date, we have not found any studies concerned with admissions to higher education institutions. The type of research that has been carried out is varied. The most comprehensive research that has been carried out has been in relation to Erasmus exchange students. But student mobility is not limited to exchanges and significant numbers of students study overseas for the full duration of their programmes. Large-scale empirical studies relating to these students are very limited, especially those that explicitly address the issue of intra-EU mobility. In fact, only in Germany and Sweden have such studies been carried out. Statistical data can also give a valuable overview of the extent of student mobility in and out of the countries concerned. Small-scale, predominantly qualitative studies have been carried out that deal with student mobility and related issues and these are reported in the individual country reports (ADMIT 1999a).

In the remaining sections, the intention is to provide an overview of the main findings highlighted in previous research studies carried out in France, Greece, Sweden and the UK. The paucity of research is notable especially in France, Greece and the UK. No empirical research on higher education admissions appears to have been carried out.

## **Who are the mobile students?**

### ***France***

Little research has been carried out on student mobility in France. The two research studies reviewed were qualitative – one consisted of around 40 and one of around 50 individuals (see ADMIT, 1999a for details). One study related to Erasmus exchange students and one to Erasmus

and other categories of mobile students (for example, language assistants); all had spent one year studying overseas. The participants were in their early 20s, predominantly female and from higher socio-economic groups (professional and managerial).

Some interesting characteristics of students emerged in a study by Murphy (1995), namely that mobile students frequently came from families where parents were of different nationalities and often spoke another language. Family mobility and previous experiences abroad also characterised the students in the sample. Parental influence is also likely to be an important factor in encouraging student mobility and in the majority of cases Murphy (1998) found that the parents of the students in her sample were more likely to be pro-European, keen to or wishing to travel and curious. A further study (Martineau, 1995) found that half of the parents in her sample supported their child's wish to study abroad and just under half helped financially. The importance of the financial contribution made by parents explains the low representation of families from lower socio-economic groups in the sample. Students' personality also plays a part in the choice to study abroad. Curiosity, the desire for new experiences and sociability are amongst those characteristics identified.

### ***Germany***

Germany is a major receiving country of mobile students. The number of incoming mobile students has increased six-fold in the last 25 years. In 1997/1998, foreign students in German higher education represented 8.3% of all students; 2.8% of them held higher entrance qualifications from Germany and 5.5% held qualifications from outside Germany (of whom 3.4% were from developing countries and 2.1% were from industrialised countries). The rate of increase of incoming student mobility is, however, lower than that of the global development of student mobility. This seems to suggest that Germany, despite growth in absolute numbers, has not been as attractive to mobile students as had been expected, especially in strategic regions (Japan, USA, South East Asia).

The groups of incoming students from developing and industrialised countries are quite different in terms of their biographical profiles. Students from developing countries are largely male and over 28 years of age. They are more often married and more often have already one or several children. It is also highly probable that students from developing countries are over-proportionally likely to come from parental homes with greater educational access.

Germany is also one of the leading 'sender' countries. In absolute terms, the number of German students abroad has increased four-fold between 1970 and 1996 (10,700 to 42,600 outgoing students). Pre-study experiences abroad (i.e. school exchanges) are important for outgoing students. 17% of them will take up studies abroad, twice as many as the proportion of students without such experience. More than a quarter (27%) of the students in their higher semesters have been abroad as part of their studies (of whom 12% completed a practical traineeship and 6% a language course). Women (32%) choose to go abroad more frequently than men (24%). Half as many students from lower social backgrounds as from higher social backgrounds decide to study abroad (19% vs. 36%). In terms of personality type, only 10% of introverted students but 30% of the extraverted completed a stay abroad. 29% of the students who could fund their studies after the intermediate examination without taking recourse to employment completed a study period abroad compared with only 16% of those students who funded more than 75% of their budget themselves from personal earnings. As the quality of foreign language skills drops, so does the rate of study period abroad (13% of students with fair skills complete a study period abroad compared with 8% of those with satisfactory foreign language skills).

## *Greece*

As reported in the Greek literature review (ADMIT, 1999a), Greece has a long tradition of outgoing mobility. In 1994, nearly 29,000 students, mostly undergraduates, were studying overseas (see ADMIT, 1999a for details). Greek students choose to study overseas if they fail the university entrance examinations, or for personal and family reasons. Economic considerations play a part in where students chose to study. School origin, region of residence and high-income parental family, are factors facilitating mobility towards France, the UK and the USA. Gender is not a barrier to mobility. Scientific field and gender are related: Humanities students are predominantly females whilst Engineering students are predominantly male. Evidence suggests that the majority of Greek students in France are females studying Humanities (Stamelos, 1990), while in the UK they are males studying engineering and economics (see ADMIT, 1999a for details). The typical undergraduate student is less than 25 and the postgraduate is over 25 years old.

## *Sweden*

The number of outgoing undergraduate Swedes studying abroad (self-organised) with study support (from the government) has increased from 2,000 to 13,700 between 1987/88 and 1993/94 (HSV, 1996). During 1996/97 just over 17,000 people were studying at foreign institutions of higher education with Swedish study support for longer or shorter periods of time (HSV, 1998). Around 60% of the total number of outgoing self-organised students are women. The female students are on average younger. As many as 69% of the women were younger than 25 years, as compared to 58% of the men (HSV 1996). There is no relation between age and subject. The average age of those who choose France is 23 years whereas those who go to the Nordic countries are older – the average is 26 years. More students from higher than lower social groups study abroad. It is also interesting to note that students from the higher social groups are over-represented in the humanities in comparison to the natural sciences or technical education (see ADMIT, 1999a for details). Thus recruitment for study abroad is much higher proportionally among the higher social groups.

Turning to incoming students, the total number of foreign undergraduate students with known nationality has been between 8,400 and 10,100 in the period 1978-93 (SCB, 1996). At present, the number is approximately 10,000. In 1997 there were 671 outgoing postgraduates and of these, 46% (308) chose EU countries. The relation is almost the same for incoming postgraduate students from EU countries – 48% (536 out of 1,119) (HSV, 1998).

## *UK*

The UK is a major provider of higher education for students from outside the UK – both students from within the EU and from outside the EU. There has been a marked change in the composition of overseas students. In particular, there has been a substantial growth in the number of incoming EU students, increasing from 11% in 1981 to 37% in 1992 (Greenaway & Tuck, 1995). This is against an overall increase in numbers – in absolute terms, EU students in UK higher education institutions have grown six-fold over the period (from 5,400 to 35,400). The rise in EU students coming to British higher education institutions appears inexorable. Greenaway & Tuck (1995) note that almost half of all incoming international students enrolled for programmes in three broad subject areas – engineering and technology, social sciences and business and finance. There are very little data on UK students who study in other EU countries except for those on the Erasmus Programme.

## Why are students mobile?

### *France*

Previous research (see ADMIT, 1999a) has shown that the study of the language was the primary motivation followed by study and preparation for a job and the desire for new experiences. It appears that certain types of educational experiences encourage or discourage mobility. Students from poorer backgrounds are particularly sensitive to the Socrates Erasmus grant. The encouragement of family and friends is also important. The perceived 'rate of return' of the overseas visit is seen as essential in the eyes of students: 'Cependant, ce souci de rentabilisation ultérieure joue en défaveur des langues que les étudiants estiment minoritaires dans l'espace européen.'

### *Germany*

According to the 15<sup>th</sup> Social Survey (see ADMIT, 1999a), the motives of incoming mobile students in Germany are educational and personal. Gaining language skills, acquisition of specialist knowledge and a foreign degree are rated as prime reasons. 'Great academic freedom' and 'research experience' (the so-called 'strengths' of German higher education system) seem to play a very small role. Personal reasons and expectations primarily include inquisitiveness and the hope of gaining 'better career prospects by studying in Germany'. Financial considerations, for example, the advantage of no tuition fees or the hope of personally funding the studies by taking on casual employment, tended to be given only secondary consideration in the original decision-making process. If incoming students studying in Germany had had an opportunity to go to a country of their free choice, then only 42% of them would actually have come to Germany. Just under a third (30%) would have preferred the United States and 8% Britain.

An HIS study (Müßig-Trapp & Schnitzer, 1997) explored the motives of outgoing German students. The main findings include the fact that the less students are burdened with having to earn money, the more likely they are to go abroad for study purposes. Over a quarter (29%) of those with a low rate of self-financing (i.e. from personal earnings) sought foreign experience, while only 15% of those with a high-rate of self-financing did so. Foreign language ability has a pronounced effect on mobility. 30% of students with a good command of English go abroad for study purposes compared with 10% of those with average or poor skills. Almost 50% of students who believe that foreign experience is of great importance for later professional life go abroad, while only 10% do so of those deeming study abroad of no importance. The most important motivation factors are, however, the desire to improve foreign language skills (about three-quarters of respondents rated improving foreign language skills as 'very important' and about half of the respondents want to improve their language skills in this way); the chance to get to know foreign cultures (rated as 'very important' by just under half of the students and almost 40% would like to learn how to cope in a foreign environment); and a third would like to seek contact with foreign individuals.

### *Greece*

Previous studies (see ADMIT, 1999a) indicate that outgoing mobility can be seen as a result of high social demand coupled with limited places in higher education (*numerus clausus*). Personal reasons such as a desire to leave the parental family, to acquire international experience, to avoid military service (for men), to extend student life or to acquire a postgraduate degree (which enhances a graduate's job opportunities) are other factors promoting outward mobility. Students do not always choose the institutions where they study according to prestige or scientific reputation. Their choice may be related to other criteria (personal, social style etc.).

## *Sweden*

A study by Jones (1992) asked incoming students about their reasons for studying in Sweden. The answers show that their motives were mainly related to language, culture, the education system and the social and political system.

In another study carried out by the National Board for Student Aid in 1995 (see ADMIT, 1999a for details) outgoing (self-organised) students who had taken out study loans for overseas study were asked which was their most important reason for studying abroad; the two most frequently mentioned (each by about 70% of students) were 'I was interested in the subject' and 'It is interesting to study in a foreign environment'. It is interesting to note that men more often than women chose to study abroad because the course/programme seemed better abroad or because it was not available in Sweden. For medical students a frequent reason (32%) was that they had not been admitted to the course/programme in Sweden. This was also a common reason for students in natural science and engineering. The non-availability of the course/programme in Sweden was mentioned more often by those studying arts, services, media/communication and medicine. Students studying humanities (languages included) went abroad more often than others to experience living in another country. The same was also true for those studying in France and Spain, which is not surprising since many probably went to these countries to learn the language.

It is also interesting to note that 40% of students mentioned the desire to increase their chances of getting a job they wanted and their chances of getting a job abroad. Increased chances of getting a job, possibly abroad, were common reasons for the students going to Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany and North America.

## *UK*

Previous research (see ADMIT, 1999a) has found that for outgoing UK Erasmus students, the most frequently occurring reasons were to learn a foreign language (85%); self-development (82%); desire to travel (77%) and enhancing understanding of the host country (76%). For incoming non-EU students, common reasons were the 'opportunity to travel/experience different cultures', 'to receive a better quality education' and 'better job prospects in home country if you have a qualification from overseas'. ('Learning a foreign language' was not provided as an option.)

## **Where are students studying?**

### *France*

The French literature review highlights the importance of geographical proximity in relation to student mobility within the EU (see ADMIT, 1999a).

### *Germany*

Previous research indicates that most foreign students in Germany come from Europe (see ADMIT, 1999a for details). In 1996/1997, of the 151,870 foreign students enrolled, 92,733 were Europeans. Asian students account for the second largest group with 33,324, followed by African (14,462) and American (1,026) students. The significant increase of absolute numbers of incoming mobile students observed in the 1990s is primarily explained by the growth in the number of European mobile students. In contrast, a reduction was observed in the number of Asian students.

Almost two-thirds of outgoing German students go to Europe (63%), a further (16%) go to North America. Britain is the destination country for 19% of students, followed by France (14%), Spain (7%) and Italy (almost 6%).

### ***Greece***

As noted in the literature review (ADMIT, 1999a), in the past, outgoing student mobility was directed mainly towards the UK, Italy and the USA. Since 1984 the flow towards the UK is increasing, while the flows towards Italy, the USA, France and Germany are diminishing (see ADMIT, 1999b). It should be noted that cultural institutions, such as the British Council and the Institut Français have long exercised a policy of attraction of Greek students towards universities in their respective countries, while recently, several institutions are strongly marketing studies in the UK.

### ***Sweden***

The USA is the number one country to which most Swedish outgoing (self-organised) students go, with a slight over-representation of men. Within Europe, France and the UK were the most popular countries in 1993/94, for both men and women. In total, women are more oriented towards Europe, whereas men are more oriented towards the USA (HSV 1996).

### ***UK***

As noted in the UK literature review (ADMIT, 1999a), just over 4% of the student population in British higher education institutions are incoming students from countries of the EU (excluding the UK). They tend to be more highly represented in some universities than others. The percentage of such students varies between higher education institutions. Excluding specialist higher education institutions (such as art and agricultural colleges), high percentages of EU students were accepted at the University of Essex (just over 20%), the School of Oriental and African Studies (13%) the Universities of Surrey and Sussex and the London School of Economics and Political Science (each over 12%).

## **What type of mobility?**

### ***Germany***

As noted in the literature review (see ADMIT, 1999a), some 16% of the students from developing countries engaged in their first degree course in Germany stated that they had received a scholarship. The proportion of scholarship holders among students from industrialised countries is substantially higher (33%). In postgraduate courses, 31% of students from developing countries are scholarship holders, whilst 30% of those from industrialised countries are scholarship holders. It is interesting to note that over half (54%) of the scholarships to holders from developing countries are provided by German organisations.

Among incoming mobile students from developing countries 47% had not commenced studies in the home country (compared with 35% from industrialised countries) while 53% had commenced studies in their home country. Students from developing countries almost exclusively pursue a full degree in Germany, whilst 14% of those coming from industrialised countries are studying for an academic degree that will not be awarded in Germany. Of those students who wish to obtain a first degree in Germany, the majority are engaged in a *Diplom* degree or *Magister* degree course offered by universities. Only 15% of students from developing countries and 9% of students from industrialised countries study at *Fachhochschule*. About one third of foreign students state that they

are engaged in a second degree course. This is made up of 13% of students from developing countries (8% studying for a doctorate) and 16% from industrialised countries (24% studying for a doctorate).

Around 80% of outgoing mobile students study or take an internship abroad after the completion of their intermediate examination (*pre-Diplom*). Only a small proportion complete their study abroad (10%) or take practical internships during the basic study (13%). Language courses abroad are much more equally spread throughout the studies. As regards organisational forms, 63% of study periods abroad are organised by the students themselves, one quarter are part of an exchange scheme, while 13% are group programmes offered to students of a particular higher education institution or discipline. The proportion of group programmes at *Fachhochschule* are slightly higher than universities. The smallest proportion of organised study periods abroad is to be found among students of medicine (15%) while the highest proportion is among students of languages and cultural sciences (43%).

### ***Sweden***

In Sweden, data are available on different types of mobility (self-organised versus externally-organised) and for incoming and outgoing students (see ADMIT, 1999a). The number of incoming, externally-organised undergraduates stands at 5,400 compared with 5,000 incoming self-organised undergraduates (1997 figures). This situation is totally different from that of a few years before: in 1994/95, incoming, externally-organised undergraduates stood at 3,200 whilst incoming, self-organised was estimated to be 8,000. This is explained by the EU programmes.

Outgoing Swedish student mobility is increasing, but self-organised mobility is still the most common type. The group of self-organised students grew from 13,700 in 1994/95 to 17,000 students in 1997. The group of externally-organised students grew from 4,000 in 1994/95 to 6,400 in 1997.

### **What incentives are there to study abroad/take EU students?**

#### ***Greece***

Greece has a policy of providing a small number of scholarships (see ADMIT, 1999a). Paid leave is also available, but only to a very small number of public servants (such as teachers). The government used to believe that it could profit from student mobility (when there were more scholarships). In the case of Greece, the government offered 223 fellowships for studies abroad in 196 specialties for the academic year 1999-2000. It is the 81<sup>st</sup> programme of fellowships for studies abroad (IKY, 1999). However, the fellowships cover only a small part of the Greek mobility. In the case of outgoing Greek students on Erasmus going to France, only 14% of them had a fellowship in France (Stamelos, 1990).

#### ***Sweden***

The incentives for the students are educational, cultural, professional and social/political. The liberalisation in 1989 represented a shift in attitude, from the principle that state study loans were not granted for studies abroad to the opposite principle stipulating that in general state study loans were to be made available for studies abroad. This is a main reason for the increasing number of Swedes studying abroad. Another reason for the increase is the development of European student exchange programmes (HSV, 1996).

The government has highlighted the international and European perspective in 'Challenges to Science – a Strategy Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 1992'. Sweden will become more and more a part of an international community, especially after entering the EU. Qualitative requirements are in focus. One precondition is for the entire education system to prepare pupils and students for international relations and employment. Good knowledge of languages, not only English, is important. An increasing proportion of tuition at universities and university colleges should take place in foreign languages. High-quality research calls for an international perspective and frame of comparison. The most important international research co-operation takes place in networks. The complexities of global change should be a challenge to all parts of the academic world (HSV 1996).

This broadening of European co-operation also emphasises the significance of the Nordic contribution. The importance of the Nordic co-operation becomes even more important as Europe becomes increasingly integrated. This was stated in the government budget bill in January 1993 (HSV, 1996).

The Swedish government has decided to fund a special programme for the exchange of university teachers, which has been partly successful (HSV, 1996). There is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to the internationalisation of the curriculum.

## ***UK***

There does not appear to be any research that has addressed the issue of incentives in the UK. One policy incentive is that where a student needs, as a part of his or her course, to study overseas for a set period of time, the student grant and loan are portable (see ADMIT, 1999b). This is in contrast to the situation in Sweden, where grants are fully portable.

## **What are the barriers?**

### ***France***

Barriers identified in previous research for outgoing students included inequalities in relation to the structures, the institutions and the countries. In particular, there were insufficient exchange places in some countries (see ADMIT, 1999a).

### ***Germany***

The 15<sup>th</sup> Social Survey highlights the problems and difficulties faced by foreign students in Germany. The greatest difficulties identified relate to living conditions (see ADMIT, 1999a). This is more the case for students from developing than from industrialised countries. Visa formalities, residence and work permits were areas in which students from developing countries experienced the greatest problems, in particular the 'free-movers'. The main problem faced by free-mover students from developing countries, and to a lesser extent those from industrialised countries, was that of funding. Proficiency in language, orientation in the education system, making contacts in and outside the higher education institution were rated as medium level difficulties. The type and degree of difficulties varies, however, according to the type of student mobility (see German literature review for details).

Regarding barriers to outgoing student mobility the Social Survey identified the additional financial burden as the most important factor obstructing students studying abroad (58%). Loss of services, entitlements or earning sources were only slightly less frequently named (48%). This is mostly the case for students from low-income families (40% vs. 15% of highest income families). Problems with recognition of study achievements abroad and the overall time losses in their studies are also

frequently mentioned (37% and 41% respectively). Remarkably, almost a quarter of students reported laziness (23%) as a reason not to decide in favour of study abroad!

### ***Greece***

The state places no barriers to outgoing self-organized student mobility (see ADMIT, 1999a). Administrative procedures in the host countries, which may or may not be a consequence of policy, may be considered as barriers to outgoing mobility. Such barriers may take the form of a long administrative process (from first obtaining information to final registration), language deficiencies or the difficulty of acquiring a visa (Stamelos, 1990). Concerning incoming student mobility, the main barrier seems to be the quota applied.

Outgoing Erasmus mobility is hampered by difficulties, such as the insufficiency of the Erasmus grant, partial recognition of the coursework completed at another university, language deficiencies (other than English), or the quality of academic tutoring in the host country. For the incoming Erasmus students, language constitutes a major barrier.

### ***Sweden***

As noted in the Swedish literature review (ADMIT, 1999a), a project focusing on the situation of foreign students at Uppsala university was carried out in 1980. The *incoming* students had both language problems and financial problems. The courses in Swedish language were not extensive enough. There were also problems concerning the educational background. The publication of the project 'Visiting Students in Stockholm. Encountering and Adjusting to Swedish culture' carried out in 1992 identified six main problem areas: contact with the Swedes, cost of living-financial needs, the Swedish language, homesickness and loneliness, the visiting student's health, and, finally, the climate (Jones, 1992).

A survey study by the National Board for Student Aid (CSN) in 1995 showed the biggest problem for *self-organised outgoing* students in 1993 was financial (see ADMIT, 1999a for details). Language was not a problem or a very small one according to the students.

### ***UK***

For British outgoing students, there is a linguistic barrier to mobility. It was not until 1991 that modern foreign languages became an obligatory subject for pupils in compulsory secondary education (ages 11 to 16) in England. And in Scotland there is no 'national curriculum' as such, merely national guidelines. Thus, British students may find that there are language barriers to be overcome if they wish to study in other EU countries.

For incoming students, language also poses difficulties given that English is the language of instruction, in contrast to the situation in some other EU countries, where instruction is provided in other languages. Programmes in English prior to study commencing are often not found to be useful and research suggests that a high proportion of incoming students experience language difficulties.

### **What are the costs?**

#### ***France***

Little research appears to have addressed costs (see ADMIT, 1999a). However with Erasmus students, the modest grant results in frequent recourse to financial aid from parents. Research

carried out by Murphy (1998) found that most students in the sample were self-financing. Additional grants were also identified as was parental help and bank loans. Whilst only a small-scale study, it is interesting to note that no mention of grants was made by students from Spain, Italy and Portugal, whilst those from Denmark and the Netherlands all received state aid (on average 3,000 to 5,000 FF per month).

### ***Germany***

Foreign students in Germany most frequently name earnings from employment pursued at the same time as their studies (55%) as a source of funding (see ADMIT 1999a). Differences apply between students from developing (59%) and industrialised (50%) countries, as well as between those on their first degree course (65%) and those at postgraduate level (53%). Financial support from parents is received by 37% of all students (28% developing countries versus 50% industrialised countries). About 25% of students receive a scholarship (22% of students from developing countries compared with 31% of those from industrialised countries). 13% of foreign students use personal savings and 12% are financially supported by their partners.

Great variations pertain to the funding of the various forms of study abroad for outgoing students. Almost 40% of all studies abroad are largely funded by parents, 10% is funded by students own resources, 13% by Bafög, while only a small proportion of students are predominantly funded by scholarships (7% from German sources, 2% from EU sources and 3% from other scholarship sources).

### ***Greece***

As noted in the Greek literature review (see ADMIT, 1999a), there are two major costs. One is a 'brain drain' with highly competent Greeks being lost to the country. The second is the financial cost in terms of foreign exchange. It is estimated that on average a student abroad costs 12,000 Euro per year – taking into account that there are tuition fees to be paid in some countries and the fact that there are scholarships too. At the same time there are expenses that the students' families bear.

### ***Sweden***

In many countries the financing of internationalisation is not part of the mainstream funding of institutions. Sweden is seen as an exception, because students are entitled to use their study support for studying abroad (HSV, 1997). Internationalisation has been given a high priority at many of the Swedish universities during the last 10 years although it is competing with other areas for resources (HSV, 1996).

The allocations from the government to higher education institutions are based on the number of students in different subject areas and the results of these students. (This is a form of output-related funding that is associated with market-oriented reforms that have taken place in a number of northern European countries (especially the UK) and the USA.) The part allotted for the number of students represents about 40% of the allocation and the part given for completed courses and exams about 60%. Swedish students and foreign students are counted in the entitlement to institutions. Also some Swedish students going abroad entitle the Swedish institutions to some allocation of income, namely those students who are already tied to a Swedish institution. A rough estimate of the average cost per student (full-time equivalent) was SEK 38,000 for the year 1993/94 (HSV, 1996).

Costs with respect to incoming students (2,240) amount to about SEK 85 million in 1993/94. Resource savings with respect to outgoing students, assuming that they would otherwise have been

studying in Sweden, amount to SEK 423 million in 1993/94. There are also costs for outgoing students. This means that the savings on the outgoing students do not mirror the costs for the incoming students. Another cost for outgoing students is state financial support (grants and loans). The loans for studies in other countries are allowed to be higher than loans for studies in Sweden. There is a risk that some will never repay their loans (HSV, 1996).

## ***UK***

Little research appears to be available that addresses the costs of student mobility. One small study carried out at the London School of Economics (Varlaam & Walker, 1992) found that all of the incoming EC students obtained some or all of their income from a range of other sources (family, vacation job, own savings, part-time job etc.). At the beginning of the academic year, 38% of the incoming EC and 'overseas' (non-EC) students were in debt. The most commonly used sources of credit were student loan schemes, credit cards, families and banks, with student loan schemes and families providing the largest amount. There were some clear differences between the incoming EC and overseas students with the former being less likely to use student loan schemes and borrow from families. In fact, only 26% of the EC students were in debt, owing on average £2,300 (median £1,200) with a range of £100 to £8,000.

## **What are the actual benefits?**

### ***France***

Previous research has identified cultural and personal benefits (see ADMIT, 1999a). In terms of cultural awareness, overseas study enables students to question the significance of the European identity. On a personal level it enables a new vision of Europe.

### ***Germany***

In Germany, there is some information on the perceived benefits for students who study abroad (see ADMIT, 1999a). Almost all students consider study abroad to be very worthwhile for their personal development. The overall gain in the subject studied varies slightly by field of study with engineering, medicine, and humanities standing out particularly. Students also emphasise the distinctive experience gained from studying abroad, the improvement of the proficiency in a foreign language, and increased competence in the subject being studied.

### ***Greece***

Outgoing students benefit academically, socially and linguistically from mobility (see ADMIT, 1999a). They get acquainted with another educational system and a different organization of academic life. They get acquainted with foreign cultures and mentalities and broaden their horizons. They also improve their command of a foreign language, an indispensable skill for a scientist living and working in another country.

### ***Sweden***

Previous research (see ADMIT, 1999a) reveals that benefits of mobility for the students seemed to be language knowledge, cultural awareness and employment-related benefits according to a 1993 study carried out by the National Board for Student Aid (CSN) in 1995 (see ADMIT, 1999a for details). Most of the results from the ongoing study led by Sedigh Zadeh (HSV) have recently been published, and throw more light on benefits, as viewed by the students, by the employers, by the society and the state institutions. Other benefits are an exchange of knowledge. Universities and

university colleges have a unique position in international co-operation. They are agents for change and centres for discussion of values and ideologies (HSV, 1996).

## **UK**

There is little hard evidence on the precise benefits of educating incoming overseas students (see ADMIT, 1999a). However, it is clear that these students, as a group, are of financial importance to the British economy. A study commissioned by the UK Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals in 1995 examined the economic impact of international students in UK higher education (Greenaway & Tuck, 1995). The report states that there are compelling reasons for believing that increased exports through higher education are especially valuable to the economy. A number of non-economic benefits accrue to the staff and students of higher education institutions; these include benchmarking of standards for quality control purposes; a stimulus to course innovation; cultural and intellectual enrichment; and an environment more conducive to mutual understanding between different ethnic groups. Likewise it is possible to identify several non-economic benefits to the UK. These include promotion of the English language; promotion of British culture; and fostering understanding between races. There seems to be a large information gap in the follow-up and monitoring of the long-term effects of international education programmes.

### **What information is used/produced?**

The literature review (ADMIT, 1999a) reveals that little research has explored the information used or produced. However, in the UK, the concept of 'academic reputation' appears to be of great importance when students select a higher education institution. However, 'reputation' is rather an intangible concept. The French research highlights the fact that not enough information is provided. In relation to Erasmus, informal networks of former participating students appear to be important sources of information.

### **Student life**

#### ***Information***

In relation to information, Allen & Higgins (1994) looked at incoming non-EU students in the UK as 'consumers' – their satisfaction with the 'customer care' process from the receipt of initial information through to the induction programme, satisfaction with the English language training provision and accommodation. Nearly three-quarters of students felt very or well-prepared given the information that they had received from their institution. However, 27% did not feel well prepared. The most frequently mentioned difficulty that respondents had experienced in obtaining information about undergraduate study in the UK was finding out information on the content of their course. The majority of the respondents (87%) had attended an induction programme and found it useful.

#### ***Main problems***

Research carried out in Greece, the UK and France sheds light on some of the problems faced by students studying abroad (see ADMIT, 1999a).

From the research on outgoing *Greek* students studying in French Universities (Stamelos, 1990), we can distinguish some critical points concerning student life abroad. Positive points concern the possibility of intercultural contacts; of comparison and enrichment; and the feeling of personal freedom. Negative points concern the different mentality of those in the host country; a different style of life; a feeling of isolation or non-participation in the life of the host country; and financial

problems. However, as a general rule, the undergraduate students seem to be better adapted to the host country and the host institution.

Research carried out in the *UK* of incoming overseas non-EU students (Allen & Higgins, 1994) revealed that the main concerns were academic problems (34%), financial problems (33%), mixing with home students (29%) and the weather (35%). The *most significant* was ‘academic problems’ (35%), followed by English language (14%) and financial problems (11%). Accommodation is another potential problem. A study carried out for the Overseas Students Trust by Hughes in 1990 examined housing for incoming overseas students (including EC students). The study concludes that as far as English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia are concerned, Britain lags behind in the provision of sufficient accommodation ‘of the right quality for overseas students’. The study by Allen & Higgins (1994) addressed accommodation issues. They found that on arrival in the UK, the most preferred type of accommodation was a hall of residence, 42% preferred self-catering and 29% with catering provided. International students were reported to want to share accommodation with other international students and home students. Just under a fifth (17%) of the respondents called for greater integration of international and home students as a means of improving the quality of the experience of international students studying at their institution.

Research carried out in *France* revealed that amongst problems identified for students were the initial welcome, housing, language and finance. Living conditions were a cause for concern in some cases as was the university administration – in some countries this appeared more problematic than in others.

## **Conclusions**

This section highlights issues that emerged from our review of the literature. There is a paucity of research that has looked at student mobility (other than the Erasmus Programme) at the level of the individual country. In some countries the research base is better developed than others. There is also little information about the characteristics of EU students who study in other EU member states, their reasons for study overseas and the barriers that they confront. The research reviewed highlights the financial problems associated with study overseas.

## **3.2 Legislation, policy and statistics**

### **Introduction**

The ADMIT project is focusing on student mobility and admissions to higher education institutions in five EU countries – France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK. Each country has differing policies towards both student mobility and admissions, notwithstanding EU legal obligations not to discriminate against citizens of other EU countries. These, and the legal context underpinning the policies are the focus of this synthesis report (see also ADMIT 1999b).

Whilst the focus is on mobility within the EU, emphasis within most of the countries is increasingly directed towards mobility outside the EU and especially in the three largest countries (Germany, France and the UK) on inward mobility. Policy developments in a number of countries are also moving in the direction of increasing internationalisation.

### **Methods**

In this facet of the research each research team examined legislative and policy documents. Statistical data were also scrutinised. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out with

policy makers and others to shed further light on policy at a national level [Objective 2]. In addition, we examined conceptual issues relating to student mobility and admissions [Objective 1].

## Policy context

The countries participating in the ADMIT project differ in terms of their policies and practices in relation to student mobility. At one extreme, French and British policy are both focusing on inward mobility, especially of non-EU students. Both are marketing their higher education systems in a global context and the strategies adopted appear similar in terms of collaboration between key Ministries – notably the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs. Their reasons appear to be broadly similar and designed to maximise economic, political and cultural influence. German policy, whilst having elements of this approach also promotes outward mobility of German students. Swedish policy focuses on both outward and inward student mobility and in contrast to France, the UK and Germany, stresses mobility as a means of trying to ensure international understanding and peace. Moreover, ‘internationalisation’ appears to have a higher political profile than in the other ADMIT countries. Greece, at the other end of the spectrum, has a long history of outwardly mobile students, although current reforms may herald changes as the supply of places in higher education expands to meet demand.

## Higher education systems

The higher education systems in the five countries differ along a number of key parameters. First and foremost, in two countries, France and Germany, admission to *university* is dependent on the applicant having achieved the qualification/certificate at the end of upper secondary general (academic) education (the *Baccalauréat* in France and the *Abitur* in Germany). In the UK, admission is *overtly* selective with the qualifications at the end of upper secondary general education generally playing a necessary but not sufficient role in terms of the candidate gaining a place. In Sweden, educational background, including experience in the workplace, and a university aptitude test are the main criteria to gain admission. In Greece, a reform process is underway with a move away from a nationwide selective system to one more like the French and German systems with an additional aptitude test.

Whilst the five countries could superficially be contrasted in terms of being selective or not this dichotomy is perhaps too simplistic. In particular, in France, there are in addition to the universities, the ‘*grandes écoles*’ that are highly selective and highly competitive and there is, moreover, selection at the end of the first year of university studies. In Germany there is no such selection. However, it is important to note that the secondary education system in Germany is, for the most part selective. This is in contrast to the situation in the other four countries where there is no clear-cut policy of selection<sup>3</sup> with most pupils attending ‘comprehensive’ schools. In Germany, only the most able pupils attend *gymnasias* and are thus likely to obtain the *Abitur* necessary for entry to university. Thus, entry is, for the most part, restricted to candidates who have been selected in terms of their academic ability at an earlier stage in their education.

The five countries differ in terms of whether or not the higher education system is differentiated or not. In fact in all countries there is more than one kind of institution. In Germany, in addition to universities there are *Fachhochschulen* that offer more vocationally applied courses. In Greece, there are technical higher education institutions and universities. In France, as mentioned previously there are various types of ‘*grandes écoles*’. In the UK, there is ostensibly no difference between the universities; however, in the media a distinction is drawn between the ‘old’ universities

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<sup>3</sup> Although in some parts of England and Wales there are selective schools and some opportunities for certain schools to select pupils.

and the ‘new’ universities (mostly former polytechnics) that were created after 1992. In Sweden, whilst there is no differentiation of the university system – at least not in any overt way – there are university colleges as well as universities and the former are not able to award degrees above the Bachelor level. Finally, it should be noted that in some of the countries there are options for students to be admitted by non-formal means.

## Higher education admissions

### Overview

In four of the five countries there is a body of legislation that relates to admissions to higher education. The UK is the exception. Nevertheless, in all countries, there are general policies that relate to higher education admissions. The level of responsibility in relation to university admissions rests with different bodies in the countries concerned. The focus here is on admission to full degree courses and not on periods of study abroad that are frequently organised under the auspices of international or inter-institutional co-operation.

### France

Legislation passed in 1984 underpins admission to the ‘first cycle’ in France. The responsibility for admissions varies according to the type of candidate – whether they are French, other Europeans or other foreign students. It is important to note that admissions vary between the different higher education institutions. For a university or ‘*Institut Universitaire de Technologie*’ admission is open to all holders of the *baccalauréat* and those who have obtained an equivalent level or other relevant experience. It is important to note that the mobility of French students within France is not encouraged and that students generally register in the *académie* where they have taken their *baccalauréat*.

The situation is different for candidates who wish to register at a *grande école*. In general there is a competitive examination, although there are other methods used for some types of *grandes écoles*. French students in all cases apply directly to the university. For students who are not French but who live in France (with a residence permit) and who have the French *baccalauréat*, the situation is the same. For other foreign residents a dossier has to be submitted to the university.

For full degree students from outside France (the EU and beyond) the procedure is different. Full details are provided in the country report for France, but in essence, the candidate must go through a pre-registration process in their own country. This involves applying to the French Embassy. The candidate names two universities; if the first choice university refuses a place, the dossier is passed to the second one. The candidate is informed directly of the decision. If refused from the second institution, he or she may request that the Ministry of Education directs him or her to another. This is subject to a specified level in a test of French being obtained (in certain contexts, the candidate is exempt from this test – for example, if French is the official language of the country from which the candidate originates).

There are a variety of other circumstances where the situation varies – for example, students who hold certain qualifications (e.g. International or European or French-German *Baccalauréat*), students coming to France as part of an organised intergovernmental or inter-university programme, refugees, stateless persons, the children of French diplomats.

The main difference between French and foreign students is that for the latter there is a two-stage process at differing levels of responsibility – one the French embassy and the other the university.

This is in contrast to the process for French students where the candidate applies to the university directly.

### **Germany**

In Germany, the Constitution leaves only a few competencies for the federal government. The *Länder* play a key role in relation to higher education. There is however, a Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) and this deals with educational matters of national relevance. The resolutions have to be passed unanimously and are then recommended to the *Länder*; they need to be transformed into laws and regulations at the level of the Land. Thus admission to higher education is regulated by the laws of the *Länder* in the Framework Act for Higher Education (HRG). Secondary school leavers in Germany have the constitutional right to study in principle whatever and wherever they want according to their type of school leaving certificate. With the *Abitur*, higher education in all disciplines and in all types of disciplines is possible. There is also a subject-restricted higher education entrance qualification (*Fachgebundene Hochschulreife*) and the entrance qualification for all studies at *Fachhochschulen*. For certain courses there are *numerus clausus*: architecture, biology, medicine, veterinary science, dentistry, pharmacy, law, business administration, dietetics, food chemistry, psychology and business computer science.

Foreign students with German school leaving certificates are treated in the same way as nationals in terms of admission. EU students are also regarded in the same way. As noted in the German report: 'Their foreign higher education qualifications are accepted as valid for the same range of study courses as in their home countries'. In relation to non-EU students, guidance is provided by the relevant national body.

### **Greece**

At present, admissions to higher education are defined by legislation passed in 1983 and 1997 and a quota/*numerus clausus* system exists for all categories of entrants to higher education institutions. These are: (a) Greeks who have successfully completed *lyceum*, (b) Foreign Students of non-Greek Origin, (c) Foreign Students of Greek Origin, (d) Cypriots and (e) children of Greek civil servants living abroad. The state has not developed a distinction between EU and overseas students.

Foreign students of non-Greek origin, who wish to enter higher education, are directly selected by the Ministry of Education. The candidate has to fulfil certain criteria, including, amongst others, the provision of a certificate from the Ministry of Education of his or her own country giving his or her grade average at the end of secondary education and certification that the candidate is eligible to enter a university in his or her country of origin. No examinations are required for foreign students. Special examinations exist for foreign students of Greek origin who wish to enter universities. Such students are subject to a process of direct selection by the Ministry of Education in case they wish to enter a technical higher education institution.

It is important to note that major education reforms are currently underway in Greece. Besides the traditional study programmes, Alternative Study Programmes (PSE) are added in the universities and the Open University (presently offering postgraduate courses only) is about to fully-function offering undergraduate programmes as well. The current reforms seem likely to result in more flexible admissions to higher education. In addition, a major programme has been undertaken to increase the supply of university undergraduate places by means of new departments in traditional study programmes and through increasing places in the Open University. Full details are provided in the report on Greece.

## **Sweden**

There are regulations regarding admissions to Swedish universities. Eligibility is a central responsibility whilst admissions are handled locally. Eligibility in the home country is considered to be the criterion determining whether a candidate should be eligible to study in Sweden. There is an explicit goal to increase the recruitment of students from a non-academic background to counteract socially biased recruitment. There are no differences between Swedish or non-Swedish candidates applying for entry to a full degree programme. On the basis of legislation and regulations, the relevant agency issues instructions to individual universities. Whilst some universities make their own local admissions decisions, others delegate this responsibility to a central body. There is flexibility for universities to modify admissions requirements. In general, selection for admission is determined equally on the basis of grades, a scholastic aptitude test and samples of previous work or evidence of special aptitude. Competition is higher in some programmes than others (e.g. within the natural sciences it is relatively low (see also the UK below)). There are a limited number of study places (*numerus clausus*) for all courses.

## **UK**

There is no legislation in the UK that deals directly with university admissions. Responsibility for higher education entry is shared between the government and individual higher education institutions. Notwithstanding the lack of legislation, policy and practice in relation to admissions at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels are relatively straightforward. At the undergraduate level UK and EU candidates apply to their preferred universities through a central 'clearing' system. There are both general and specific requirements governing admissions. Local decisions are taken by university departments about who is to be accepted onto a given programme. In general, the results of the examinations at the end of upper secondary general education are the key factor determining who is admitted (with variations between departments and universities). Higher grades are necessary for some courses (e.g. medicine) than others (e.g. natural sciences) as a result of the relative demand for places. Moreover, some universities/departments demand higher grades than others. There have been efforts in recent years to increase participation in higher education amongst disadvantaged groups and the selection procedure may vary in such cases.

## **Controlling mechanisms**

One of the most important issues in the context of admissions to university is the method used to control the number of students entering higher education institutions. Very different models emerge in the five countries; nevertheless there are some similarities. The similarity relates to the setting of quotas in certain disciplines. (In all countries except the UK this is known as *numerus clausus* – in the UK this term is not used.) Controls of this type vary between countries. Moreover, there are some interesting contrasts with the overall university admissions system.

## **France**

In France, there are in practice three types of selection that exist. These are selection at the end of the first year; other official types of selection, and non-official types of selection. The limited number of places in the *grandes écoles* (public and private) and the preparation required for the competitive examinations implies a severe selection process (on the basis of a dossier, written and/or oral examinations). There are also restrictions in terms of access to other institutions/programmes as detailed in the country report on France. The number of students admitted to study medicine, dentistry and pharmacy after the first year is fixed by the relevant Ministries; this controlling mechanism can also be seen as a form of selection. Finally, the high failure rate at the

end of the first year is such that one can in fact talk of ‘selection’. As noted in the country report for France (ADMIT, 1999b), the principle of non-selection in the legislation and policy is hard to realise in terms of practice. A de facto selection exists at a given moment. The principal difference between France and certain other countries is that the mode of selection is implicit in France.

### **Germany**

In Germany, access to higher education is almost completely controlled by the secondary school system. Access in the case of *numerus clausus* courses is controlled by the responsible federal body (this applies to German and EU students), not by the higher education institutions themselves. Higher education institutions are only able to select students for courses requiring specific aptitude (e.g. sport, music, art). A recent development in the direction of institutions choosing their students is that in *numerus clausus* courses they can select 20% of their individual student capacity by means of interviews.

### **Greece**

In Greece, all traditional study programmes are restricted by *numerus clausus*. Entrance is by means of competitive state-run examinations (Panhellenic examination). In the Open University, the number of places on offer each year is defined by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Greek Open University Council. To decide the places available each year for all categories of foreign students who wish to enter higher education institutions an elaborate system of quotas is applied, while entrance procedures differ by category and level of studies.

### **Sweden**

In Sweden, programmes are restricted by *numerus clausus*.

### **UK**

The more market-driven higher education system in the UK contrasts with that in most of the countries involved in ADMIT. The number of UK and EU students recruited is controlled by the state through the funding mechanisms employed. Universities are generally free to recruit students to study any subject. The only exceptions apply in the cases of medicine, dentistry and initial teacher training. In these subjects quotas are set. If institutions fail to recruit an agreed minimum number of students then there is a deduction made to their grant income from the funding council. There are no quotas for non-EU students recruited by universities.

Admission to UK higher education institutions is competitive and no qualification or diploma gives an automatic right to a place at a higher education institution. There are no national regulations relating to the recognition of foreign qualifications for academic purposes.

### **Payment of fees**

No tuition fees are payable in Germany although there are exceptions as detailed in the German report. In Sweden there are no fees at present although there is an ongoing debate about tuition fees for foreign students. In Greece, students in traditional study programmes do not pay tuition fees. In the case of the PSE and Open University, students pay a small fee.

In France, low levels of fees are payable – up to about 300 Euros. This sum includes social security payments and insurance cover (these are not included in the UK tuition fee). In the UK, new legislation means that undergraduate students are required to contribute up to £1025 per year (1999/2000 figures) towards the cost of their tuition, depending on their own, their parents’ or their

spouse's income. Students from poorer families have some or all of their fees paid for them by the state. This applies to both eligible UK and EU students.

## **Differences between undergraduate and postgraduate**

There are more similarities between countries as far as entry at postgraduate level is concerned, with decisions invariably being taken at university or departmental level. In some countries, there are problems with recognition of the first degree or studies undertaken (see country reports for Germany and Sweden). The individual country reports give details of the admissions processes in the countries concerned (ADMIT, 2000a).

## **Mobility**

### **Introduction**

Turning now to student mobility, there are differences between the countries in the concepts underpinning student mobility. For this purpose, we have developed a typology to aid the research being undertaken (see ADMIT, 1999b).

In some countries, the concept of 'nationality' is of key importance and this is used in official statistics. In others the overriding concern is related to the concept of 'residency'. These are fundamental differences and are reflected in national statistics. Another 'grey' area particularly in relation to statistical information relates to the category of mobility – whether the student is studying for a full degree or studying abroad for a period of time. At present it is not possible to make comparisons between countries in terms of the type of mobility.

Because of the conceptual difficulties it is important that international statistics are treated with caution. In the individual country reports (ADMIT, 1999b), the concepts that are used relate broadly to:

- Students who are residents/nationals of the country in question
- Students who are residents/nationals of another EU country
- Students who are residents/nationals of a non-EU country

In addition, we refer to students studying for a full degree and those studying abroad for a period of time.

### **Statistics**

The ADMIT report (1999b) gives some national statistics relating to mobility in higher education in individual countries. It should be noted however that there are enormous problems with comparability. There are various definitions – for example, 'foreign' students, 'citizens', 'home' and 'overseas' students.

West (2000) discusses this issue in more detail noting that the concepts underpinning the indicators published by Eurostat (1999) do not address 'mobility' as such. In most of the countries of the EU the indicator ostensibly relating to mobility is based on students' nationality. Thus, students with a nationality other than that of the country concerned are identified as 'foreigners'. For Germany, students with Turkish nationality who have lived in Germany all their lives are thus classified as 'foreign'. Interestingly, in German national education statistics there is a distinction made between such students and those who do not have permanent residence in Germany, but this is not reflected

in Eurostat statistics as the data collection instrument – the UNESCO/OECD/Eurostat questionnaire – focuses on ‘foreign’ students.

The situation in the UK is very different. In this case, the underlying concept is one of ‘domicile’. So the student’s permanent country of residence is the important factor, not his or her nationality (although that may come into play ironically in relation to the payment of student fees in the UK). As noted by Eurostat (1999):

In ... the UK, students are considered to be non-nationals if they have permanent residence in another country, while for the other Member States ... non-national students are those holding a passport from another country.

The data presented do not provide a precise measure of student mobility. On the one hand, the number of students enrolled in an EU Member State other than their own, is underestimated, partly because in some countries, it is not possible to identify the citizenship of students in certain types of higher education ... On the other hand, the data may overstate the degree of student mobility, as children of migrants are included (Eurostat, 1999, p. 162).

It is thus clear that data relating to ‘non-national’ students are not directly comparable and that the interpretation of indicators in this field is problematic.

### **National policies**

Although mobility is not restricted to physical mobility in this report we are focusing on this aspect as opposed to the broader issues surrounding ‘virtual mobility’. All countries encourage inward mobility but to differing degrees. At one extreme are France and the UK, which as reported earlier have a major focus on inward mobility. In Germany and Sweden there is a focus on both inward and outward mobility. Greece, at the other extreme has a long history of outward mobility of students as demand for university places at present outweighs the supply of places. Worldwide, it is one of the countries with the highest numbers of outgoing students. The three host countries with the highest number of Greek students are the UK, Italy and the USA, with undergraduates predominating in the UK, Italy and Romania and the postgraduates predominating in the UK, the USA and France.

Policies in France and the UK do not focus on outward mobility. Both actively encourage the recruitment of non-EU international (overseas or foreign) students with public money being provided to support either/or universities and students. In France, for example, grants are available from several Ministries – from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Economy and Regional Councils. In the UK, the British Council plays an important role.

### **Incentives**

In *France*, incentives are bilateral and multilateral agreements, innovative experiments led by the state, the regions or the university. Details are provided in the country report (ADMIT, 1999b), but of particular interest are the Franco-Italian University established in 1998 and co-supervision of theses. In 1998, the agency *Edufrance* was set up to promote inward mobility and internationalisation generally. Other initiatives include *les pôles universitaires européens*, and specialised courses in English. There is also a debate about enabling foreign students to gain admission to the *grandes écoles* without going through the traditional preparatory courses. In France, grants are portable for students who wish to study abroad in the context of organised mobility, but there are problems in the context of self-organised mobility.

In *Germany*, funds are available from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research together with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to enable higher education institutions to develop and organise specific study programmes for incoming students, inviting particularly students for full degree courses in economics and selected engineering and natural science courses. Public funds are available from DAAD to promote courses for highly qualified foreign postgraduate students for both Masters and Doctorates. In terms of outward mobility, students entitled to financial assistance can use these funds for a period of study abroad. Almost all institutions offer scholarships to foreign students at various levels.

In *Greece*, the majority of scholarships are managed by the Foundation of State Scholarships (IKY), a semi-autonomous agency, depending on the Ministry of Education. It offers scholarships both to Greek students who wish to study abroad (or follow postgraduate programmes in Greece) and to foreigners who wish to study in Greece. Scholarships for Greek nationals are awarded competitively, whereas foreign fellows are directly selected, as detailed in the country report (ADMIT, 1999b).

In *Sweden*, grants and loans are portable. Additional incentives include: no fees and courses being offered in English. Interestingly there is no encouragement of self-organised mobility to Sweden. Many scholarships are financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Ministry of Education.

In the *UK*, an incentive has recently been introduced for UK students taking part in the Socrates Erasmus Programme, namely the tuition fee at the home university does not have to be paid if the period of study abroad is a full academic year. In the UK, the student loan is portable in certain circumstances.

Finally, in all countries, the Socrates Erasmus grant, although small, is a financial incentive to students to take part in exchange schemes within the Socrates Erasmus Programme.

Information is important if students are to make informed choices about studying abroad either in the context of a full degree course or in the context of a period of study abroad. In all countries there are useful information sources available. Information is provided through a wide range of agencies – Ministries and agencies or other bodies funded by government, private organisations and individual universities. Also involved are the NARICs and Socrates and Leonardo agencies. Full details are provided in the country reports.

### **Barriers to mobility**

Barriers to student mobility are identified in each country report (ADMIT, 1999b). Here we highlight key barriers that have been identified:

- Language barriers
- Interviews (may be part of the procedure in UK, France, Germany)
- Quotas (in Greece for undergraduate courses)
- Examinations (in Greece for undergraduate courses)
- Different types of assessment at the end of upper secondary education in different countries (e.g. continuous assessment versus external examinations)
- Finance – student fees, loans not sufficient, loans or grants not fully portable
- Lack of transferability of study period or qualification
- Problems gaining employment whilst studying
- Gaining a residence permit
- Length of studies

- Large, impersonal institutions with little personal tutoring
- Administrative obstacles
- Cultural barriers
- Differing taxation policies

### **Costs and benefits**

The benefits of student mobility identified in the country reports (ADMIT, 1999b) are varied, but are mostly cultural. However, the benefits of inward mobility are clearly articulated in the case of UK, France and Germany. In these cases, the benefits are seen to be cultural and economic and more generally extending the influence of the country in an increasingly globalised economy. For outgoing students the benefits are seen as being primarily cultural.

Specific issues identified as costs in the individual country reports include the ‘brain drain’ in Greece, the export of foreign exchange, and costs to the family of studying abroad. This is noted specifically in France, Greece and Sweden.

### **Discussion**

Within the countries involved in ADMIT, various reforms have taken place that impact on higher education admissions and student mobility. Whilst in this synthesis report we have focused on current policy specifically in relation to physical mobility and admissions, we need to consider the broader context in which they operate. In particular, there has been a debate about the structure of degree courses in the EU.

The Sorbonne declaration has been the subject of much debate at a national level. It is clear that a number of the countries involved in ADMIT have considered the structure of degree courses and issues of comparability. As noted in the country report for Germany for example (ADMIT, 1999b), there has been a debate about the ‘Anglo-American’ structure to higher education studies. Many German higher education institutions have already introduced or are about to introduce ‘Bachelor’ and ‘Masters’ courses more akin to those in the UK. ‘This is intended as an incentive for foreign students and home students as well to study abroad’ as fewer problems with recognition will be encountered. Tied in with this issue is the extent to which there is full recognition of degrees from other EU countries as exemplified by the continuing debate about comparability of German and British degrees below the level of the doctorate.

In the context of a global higher education market, the changing policies and practices at university level are interesting – particularly the increasing use of English as a teaching medium in higher education. Whilst in France, Germany and Sweden internationalisation can be seen as involving changes within higher education institutions to meet the changing needs of the student population and to encourage inward mobility (at least in relation to France and Germany) in the UK, evidence of moves in this direction are limited. The major UK changes relate to the marketisation of higher education with a strong policy ‘push’ for increased inward mobility. In Greece, where a completely different situation exists, policy reforms are aiming to stem the outward movement of students (albeit with countries such as the UK continuing to target Greek students). But as noted in the Greek report, it can be argued that ‘student mobility ... promotes an international integration of Greek society in an unprecedented quality and scale’. Thus we find similarities in terms of the export of national culture taking place through student mobility.

The situation is clearly complex and multi-faceted, but it is crucially important to acknowledge that at the national level, **student mobility has a high political profile with student mobility often being seen as a tool of foreign policy.**

### **3.3 Case studies of universities**

#### **Introduction**

This section presents key issues that have emerged from Work Packages 2 and 4 of the ADMIT project which addressed Objectives 2 and 4. The findings reported here are, in the main, based on case studies of higher education institutions in the five countries participating in ADMIT. Work Package 2 relating to Objective 2 focused on higher education mobility, admissions and recognition. Work Package 4 relating to Objective 4 sought to establish whether there are specific needs for common curriculum elements that would facilitate student mobility.

It is important to note that in relation to admissions to higher education institutions, there are distinct differences between the countries involved in the ADMIT project which meant that this issue was not addressed in the case studies in all countries (as admissions are a state responsibility). Notwithstanding this, the issue was addressed in all countries as part of Work Package 1 which addressed Objective 1 (see ADMIT, 1999b).

#### **Methods**

Case studies were carried out in all five countries participating in the ADMIT project (France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK). In relation to admissions to university of free-movers, only in Sweden and the UK was this issue addressed at the level of the higher education institution due to the differing national contexts, with admissions for 'free-movers' being more centralised in the remaining countries. Nevertheless, in each country report, the issue of admissions is part of the overall framework.

The number of case studies carried out by the partners varied; three were carried out in Sweden and the UK, five in Greece, six in France and seven in Germany. This variation reflects differing national contexts and decisions taken in relation to the balance between diversity and detail necessary to meet the project objectives. Full reports of each case study higher education institution are presented in this report.

#### **Internationalisation**

Student mobility should be seen as being part of a broader process of Europeanisation and internationalisation within the higher education sector. There are variations in the way that internationalisation is perceived, depending to some extent upon the national context. However, at the most basic level, internationalisation in practice includes student mobility (incoming and outgoing), teacher mobility, curriculum development projects and collaborative research and innovative teaching methods, including those delivered using new information and communications technologies (ICT) including the Internet. In some universities, internationalism is also strongly associated with speaking English and in particular the use of English as the language of instruction. The ADMIT project is focusing on student mobility (incoming and outgoing), with particular – but not exclusive – reference to mobility within the countries of the European Union.

## **Mobility**

### **Activities**

In the higher education institutions studied, a range of activities concerned with student mobility was underway. These were varied and related to a number of different factors – the national context, the type of institution and its status, the geographical location of the university, fields of study, the demand for places and so on.

It is important to stress at the outset that it is not possible to focus solely on intra-EU student mobility if one is to provide a true reflection of current policy and practice. In all countries participating in ADMIT, student mobility is part of a larger process of internationalisation and incoming and outgoing mobility are dependent on a range of historical and political factors.

Student mobility includes both inward and outward mobility with students being mobile within the context of exchange programmes such as Socrates Erasmus and as free-movers. In this section, we highlight key findings.

In all countries, exchanges under Socrates Erasmus were evident. However, there was variation in the extent to which agreements had been made with other institutions. In certain institutions there was some antipathy towards the programme.

In Germany, Sweden and the UK the need to recruit ‘free-moving’ students was a factor that affected university policy and practice. In Germany, for example, a decline in student numbers in some disciplines – physics, chemistry, engineering – together with a reduction in students from traditional ‘sending’ countries has meant that universities are keen to recruit students from elsewhere (mainly the countries of Central and Eastern Europe) to maintain their viability. In Sweden, the same phenomenon was observed in some disciplines: ‘Mobility meant survival’ for certain courses. In the UK, the policy context is completely different with funding depending to a large extent on the numbers of students recruited, but here again the same phenomenon is observed, with universities recruiting students from outside the UK (particularly, but not only, outside the EU) so as not to lose funding – in essence to ensure their survival.

In France, where there is, as in the UK, limited outward mobility, the policies of one prestigious institution teaching commerce, are of interest in that all students are required to spend a period of study abroad. A similar situation arises in the UK with students studying for a first degree in languages with the Socrates Erasmus Programme as the vehicle for the period of study abroad.

In Greece, the situation is completely different as there are high numbers of outwardly mobile students who study for a full degree outside Greece. Nevertheless, the Socrates Erasmus student exchange programmes and other EU programmes, together with an ‘internationalised’ teaching staff have provided an incentive for innovative agreements with other higher education institutions outside Greece.

The Socrates Erasmus Programme appears to be particularly important in relation to outgoing mobility, not only in France, the UK and Greece, but also in some German universities.

## **Types of mobility**

The type of mobility varied between countries. In France and Greece, the focus was on mobility as part of exchange programmes. In Germany and Sweden there was a focus on both exchange students and free-movers (studying for a full degree). In the UK, exchange programmes had a relatively low profile, although for undergraduate language students this was not the case (it is a requirement that a period of time is spent abroad for such students); in contrast, a high profile was given to recruiting or selecting full degree students.

It is also important to note that incoming mobility had a high profile in French universities, in the UK and to some extent in Germany and Sweden. In Greece, in the context of exchange programmes, outgoing mobility used to have a higher profile than incoming mobility. Presently incoming and outgoing mobility tend to be balanced. Interestingly in the case of one of the French *élite grandes écoles*, referred to above, the majority of outgoing students study in North America. Incoming mobility on the other hand involves students from North Africa and other countries with historical and linguistic links with France.

## **Specific activities and innovations**

In terms of activities, two main strands were evident:

- Student mobility agreements (which may be linked with teaching innovations)
- Programmes of European/international research (e.g. Germany, Greece, UK)

Within these strands, a range of innovations were highlighted:

- Compulsory foreign language elements in courses
- New degree courses/international courses (e.g. in Germany, Greece, Sweden)
- New European dimension introduced into courses (e.g. in one Greek university)
- Language courses in the official language of the country
- Language courses in other languages
- Teaching in languages other than an official language of the country
- Induction/orientation courses for students new to the country
- Ongoing cultural/social programmes throughout the period of study

A number of issues emerged during the interviews in the universities. These included:

- Many outgoing students wish to study in English-speaking universities
- There is variation between disciplines in the extent to which they are interested in internationalisation and mobility
- In many countries universities are marketing their courses overseas (e.g. Germany, Sweden, UK)
- An imbalance of outgoing/incoming students exists (e.g. France, Sweden, UK)

## **Staff**

In general, a small number of staff are involved with the administration of students' mobility. In the main they are located in international offices. The new centralising changes required by the EU to Socrates Erasmus exchange programmes were generally not popular amongst our respondents, with two countries in particular expressing criticism of centralisation and low levels of funding (UK and Greece). In some institutions, international offices were also to be found at departmental level.

The most important aspect of mobility programmes was reported to be the enthusiasm and interest of individual teachers – on whom these programmes depend. Those involved were frequently reported to be enthusiasts who were dedicated, highly motivated and very interested in international relations (France, Germany, Greece, Sweden). One of the reasons for different levels of involvement in different institutions is to do with the individual academics concerned. Also, levels of involvement varied for incoming/outgoing students. Whilst support programmes of one kind or another were in place for all incoming students in all countries, the formal support available from staff for potential outgoing students varied considerably, with fairly good levels of support reported in Sweden to low levels of support in the UK.

## **Incentives and support**

### ***Incentives***

Incentives to participate in mobility programmes fell into two main categories. On the one hand there were what we have called ‘intellectual’ incentives and on the other financial incentives.

‘Intellectual’ incentives:

- Improve the reputation of the university, faculty or department
- Improve research and teaching

Financial incentives to encourage mobility/internationalisation:

- Attract funds for research
- Lack of tuition fees (not the UK)
- Funds to encourage mobility (in some universities in France, Germany, Greece) and other sources including scholarships and awards (in some universities in the UK, Sweden)
- Additional funds to faculty for each foreign student enrolled (Germany)
- Portable loans and grants from home country (Sweden)

There are thus some interesting examples of the financial incentives being used to encourage mobility.

### ***Support***

A range of different types of support mechanisms were reported:

- Information
- Language courses for incoming students
- Language preparation for study abroad
- Help with, or in some universities, a guaranteed offer of accommodation (UK, France)
- Cultural and social events for incoming students in most countries (UK, Germany, Sweden, Greece)
- Feedback sessions/meetings with returning students (Sweden)

## **Obstacles**

### ***Common curriculum elements?***

The need for a common curriculum only emerged as an issue in most countries in relation to language proficiency. The recurring obstacle reported was a language deficit. For students to study outside their home country, they are likely to need to be proficient in a language other than their mother tongue. However, as noted in the French report, it was reported that the incoming students had not always mastered the language adequately. This clearly ties in with the curriculum in secondary education.

The most commonly taught language in the EU is English (apart from in Ireland and the UK, where it is French), and in almost all of the ADMIT countries, outgoing students were reported to want to study in the UK or an English-speaking country/institution or on an English-speaking course. The reasons for this are not clear from our research to date, but there are two plausible alternatives, both of which may well be inter-related. First, students may well be more proficient in English than in other languages. Second, they may perceive that there will be better labour market opportunities if they study in an English-speaking university as their English proficiency will improve whilst studying in English. Language barriers to mobility are apparent. However, notwithstanding these barriers, the importance of English in relation to student mobility cannot be underestimated.

Credit transfer systems (ECTS) are perceived by universities in some countries (e.g. Greece, Sweden and the UK) to facilitate mobility among students.

### ***Material and financial***

Material and financial obstacles were highlighted in some countries. One interesting example relates to the situation in France, where there is variation between French institutions in terms of the support provided at the level of the region or *département*. In the UK, other material constraints on mobility at university level were a natural limit to expansion in one case – the university could not take more incoming students. On the positive side however, some universities were able to offer limited financial incentives to students, which took the form of special funds and scholarships. In Greece, two universities reported using part of their research budget to make supplementary awards to students, particularly at post-graduate level. In the UK, scholarships and awards were mentioned, which were mainly, but not exclusively, available to non-EU students.

### ***Lack of interest***

In some higher education institutions there appeared to be a lack of interest in mobility. This was found in relation to teachers in French universities (and was reported to be the case with students too), but interestingly not in one of the *grandes écoles*. In some institutions in other countries there also appeared to be a lack of interest, particularly the more prestigious. However, caution is needed in interpreting such findings as in some cases, in spite of a lack of interest at the university level there is an interest at a faculty or departmental level, especially in the less prestigious fields of study within the university.

### ***Other obstacles***

A range of other obstacles were highlighted:

- Recognition of course work
- Studying abroad was sometimes felt to be like a ‘tourist activity’

- Work at international level is not recognised or valued
- Difficulties with employment contracts for foreign students
- Lack of resources
- Lack of central support
- Lack of information for students
- Few courses study abroad is obligatory
- Lack of incentives for staff
- Time constraints – the Socrates Erasmus Programme for example, takes a lot of time to prepare for and manage
- Exchanges require a lot of work and effort
- Lack of opportunity for prospective students to hear about the advantages/positive experiences of studying abroad from returning students
- Programme anxieties – i.e. concerns that time spent abroad would have a negative impact on grades/results

### **Costs and benefits**

A number of benefits were highlighted in the higher education institutions that were studied. These included:

- improvement in the quality of teaching and research
- cultural and professional enrichment of individuals

Regarding the former benefit, it was thought by several universities in the UK, France, Greece and Sweden that there were positive advantages to reciprocity with other universities, such as shared resources, ability to attract high quality students and teachers and to forge beneficial research links and collaborations. Regarding the latter, incoming students were thought to have a good influence on, and help raise the standards and aspirations of home students and introduce fresh thinking, new perspectives (UK, Germany, Sweden).

On the cost side the increased costs incurred by institutions under Socrates were highlighted.

### **Admissions**

Admissions are discussed in the reports on Sweden and the UK. Only in these two countries are admissions for free-movers delegated (with some room for discretion) to university level.

### **Conclusions**

Previous sections have highlighted some of the key issues that emerged in the institutional case studies that were carried out. The individual country reports provide a wealth of information relating to mobility and admissions in the countries participating in the ADMIT research project (ADMIT, 2000a).

## **Section 3.4 Students' perspectives of mobility**

### **Introduction**

This section outlines the contributions made to addressing Objective 3 of the ADMIT project which focused on students' perspectives of mobility. The full report (ADMIT, 2000b) provides details of the methods adopted, together with the issues that emerged from the research undertaken.

In the following section we summarise the key objectives of the Work Package (which related to Objective 3 of the ADMIT project) and this is followed by an outline of the research methods used by the research teams in each country. Salient features of each of the research studies are then highlighted together with some of the main issues to emerge in each country.

## **Objectives**

The key objectives of Work Package 3 were to:

- explore the characteristics of students who choose to study outside their own country (e.g. in terms of their socio-economic and cultural/ethnic background);
- explore the reasons why they choose to undertake study abroad.

However, the research carried out addressed a far wider range of issues than originally planned. Amongst the issues addressed – by some if not all teams – were the following:

- Characteristics of mobile students (e.g. sex, age, subject studied, socio-economic status, parental education level, languages spoken, experiences abroad)
- Reasons for studying abroad (and, where relevant, not studying in home country)
- Information sources, informal and formal, used in choice process
- Selection of country, university and course of study
- Importance of language proficiency
- Language of instruction of course
- Financial support
- Support in university
- Obstacles encountered
- Facilitating factors
- Positive and negative experiences
- Credit transfer

## **Research methods**

A wide range of research methods were adopted to meet the project objectives. In two cases (France and Greece) qualitative methods were used, with a wealth of data having been collected and analysed. In two cases (Germany and the UK) quantitative methods were used, with secondary data analysis being undertaken in the case of Germany and primary data collection being undertaken in the UK. In one case (Sweden) secondary analysis of a wide range of research carried out in Sweden was undertaken.

It is important to note that for this part of the ADMIT project different research questions were asked as a result of the differing national contexts, data availability and so on. One of the results of this is that it is not possible to do justice to the research that has been carried out in a summary report and the reader is referred to the full reports for each country.

## **Key findings**

Key findings that emerged from the research conducted in each country involved in the ADMIT project – France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK – are outlined below (full details are given in ADMIT, 2000b).

## *France*

The qualitative research carried out by Murphy-Lejeune, Houguenague & Vaniscotte (2000) involved detailed interviews with 12 incoming and outgoing students studying at four French higher education institutions (see ADMIT, 2000b). Murphy-Lejeune et al. (2000b) found that the students were predominantly studying languages or social sciences, more were female, with the Socrates Erasmus Programme acting ‘as a motor for European student mobility’ with students being from ‘modest family backgrounds but probably more outward looking than others’.

The concept of ‘mobility capital’ which consists of four principal components – personal and family history, previous experiences of overseas mobility, linked to linguistic competence, adaptive experiences and specific personality traits – was used. The students interviewed had mixed mobility capital – some were from dual-culture families, with experience of living and travelling abroad for example. Others were from families that had not travelled much and only spoke one foreign language.

Students’ motivations for studying abroad tended to focus on the fact that it had ‘always’ been their intention to study abroad, although for some it was necessary for their course. The motives given included language, cultural experiences and personal development. All the students in the research carried out by Murphy-Lejeune et al. (2000b) mentioned language and this was also the most important motivation.

According to the study by Murphy-Lejeune et al. (2000b) the choice of country or institution was essentially a linguistic choice, sometimes with a professional project and/or personal reasons. As a result of the dominance of the ‘major languages’ notably English, the UK has a natural advantage over other European countries. As one student noted: ‘Anglo-Saxon destinations are most sought after undoubtedly because mastery of English is capital for entry into the labour market’. Choice of institution was largely dependent on partner institutions.

The number of languages in which students were proficient varied according to whether they were linguists or not. Two or three languages plus the mother tongue being the norm for language students compared with one or possibly two plus the mother tongue for those who were studying other subjects. Notwithstanding this finding, the situation at one of the *grandes écoles* was different, with a higher priority being given to language learning during the course.

The main source of information before students went abroad were from international offices, which used a range of different strategies, such as meetings, contact with former Erasmus students, use of the Internet, brochures etc. One of the *grandes écoles* involved in the research had high levels of staffing and a dedicated building for international relations, but this was not typical of a typical French university. Interestingly, although the initial support seemed generally satisfactory for the French case study institutions, this was not always the case in relation to the foreign universities mentioned by students interviewed.

All students who were interviewed were in need of money in addition to that provided by the Erasmus grant. In many cases, students’ parents provided these additional resources, whilst in others a number of students worked to finance their period of study abroad, either during the preceding holidays or all the previous year. The Erasmus grants were not able to cover the costs of studying abroad.

The obstacles identified included principally material or practical difficulties - such as linguistic, academic or socio-cultural problems. The material difficulties were essentially about financing,

administrative matters in relation to the institutions and finally difficulties with accommodation. Interestingly no student spoke in terms of a real cultural ‘shock’ although they spoke of ‘surprises’ or ‘discoveries’. Other barriers identified related to ethnocentricity – a point to which we return in section 3.5 (see ADMIT, 2000c).

The students questioned were positive but prudent when asked to what extent they felt that they had become integrated into the social life of the community. Their activities centred on student life. One of the reasons mentioned for not participating more related to their financial situation and costs such as travel to big cities.

Students were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their period of study abroad. They gave a very high rating to this question. Positive experiences were such that over two-thirds of students would have wished to extend their period of study abroad. One of the benefits of studying abroad was the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Some students were satisfied with the system, but others were not. Problems cited included a lack of clarity with the system and lack of knowledge about the workings of the examination system in France.

### ***Germany***

In the case of Germany, a number of large-scale quantitative research studies, relating to student mobility, have been carried out by *Hochschul-Informationssystem* (HIS).

Data from one large-scale survey carried out by HIS enabled secondary analysis to be carried out with a view to assessing the influence of several factors on the cross-border mobility of students and to get a better understanding of their relative strength and the interaction between the factors (see ADMIT, 2000b).

The data used were derived from a large-scale survey of German students. The survey ‘Gearing up for Europe’ examined factors influencing European student mobility and gave an overview over different factors, ranging from study-related to personal concerns. This HIS survey ([www.his.de/abt3/prog/684/](http://www.his.de/abt3/prog/684/)) was carried out in 1997. A stratified sample of first degree students of chosen study programmes just before graduating were questioned by means of a postal survey. There were 3000 cases in the data set.

The purpose of the statistical model that was developed was to evaluate the impact of different factors on the cross-border mobility of German students. Different influencing factors, ranging from study-related to biographical factors, were taken into account. A further goal was to compare different groups of students (e.g. differentiated by course of study or preferred region for a period of study abroad) with regard to the relevance of different influences.

In order to determine the interplay of these factors and their relative strength, a multiple regression with latent variables was conducted. The regression model was calculated for all students as well as for several selected study-programmes.

The key findings are presented here with full details being provided in the HIS report. The most influential factor was found to be the reported relevance of studies in other countries for the progress in the study-programme at home. This means that if students believe that their own studies will benefit from studying in another country, they are more likely to go abroad.

The second most influential factor is skill in English language. These two factors are followed by competence in the second language on the one hand, and by the reported professional relevance in the later occupational activity of experience abroad on the other.

These most important factors are closely followed by a second group of three factors with a noticeable, but slightly less prominent influence. Of these, the economic situation of the students has a slightly stronger influence than the other two, which are the achievement orientation of the students and personal commitments at home.

Even less discriminating than these factors but still representing an influence are barriers in the organisation of the stay abroad, such as finding accommodation and knowledge of the foreign education system (which had a negative influence). The two remaining factors, extroversion and non-study-related experience abroad, had a negligible effect in the overall model.

In short, the most important factors influencing the cross-border mobility of German students are the benefits of studying abroad for students' studies at home, the reported relevance for their later profession and language skills. If a higher rate of cross-border mobility is desired, the most important thing seems to be to emphasise the benefits from studying abroad more strongly. Also, further promotion of language skills is advisable.

### *Greece*

The research carried out by Kontogiannopoulou-Polydorides & Papadiamantaki (see ADMIT, 2000b) revealed that internationalisation and educational mobility can be seen as shaped by first, the policies adopted, supported or promoted by a variety of institutional actors, such as the EU, Member States, higher education institutions, departments and academics; and, second, the students' response to these policies, shaped by their plans for their integration in the society.

The patterns of educational mobility that emerged can be understood as a result of the interplay between this multitude of institutional policies that set the stage for student action and the perceptions, intentions and plans of the students, which are shaped in relation to their social status and their aspirations towards upward mobility. In conducting the interviews the researchers tried to understand how students evaluated their mobility experience and to establish the factors that influenced both their decision to pursue educational mobility (organised or free) and the perceived results of such activities.

Students seemed to value and pursue educational mobility for three main reasons. First, educational mobility is seen to be a path leading to upward social mobility. Second, students seem to view educational mobility as a way to acquire specific scientific skills. Third, students appreciate the social and cultural experience accrued through educational mobility. The first of the three factors seems to be important and present even when the other two appear. In the full report numerous specific examples are provided to support the above conclusions.

More specifically, all interviews with students (as well as all interviews at the institutional level carried out in the previous phase of the project) seemed to indicate that a series of sometimes vague but real hierarchies exist. Student satisfaction from the mobility experience can be understood as the result of the interplay between:

- The positioning of the home and host countries in the international sphere (centre-periphery).
- The positioning of the home and host education systems in the particular field of study in the international sphere.
- The positioning and the prestige of the host institution and/or department in which they study within the hierarchy of institutions and fields of study.
- The student's positioning in the social hierarchy, i.e. his social status and family background.

It seems that reasons to study in Greece vary according to the country of origin. The majority of undergraduate and postgraduate foreign **full-course** students in Greece were from outside the EU. Students from other EU countries appear to prefer (organised) mobility to a Greek institution for a period of time that would provide them with scientific training and skills to enhance their career prospects. This was indicated by all seven interviewed EU students. In the hierarchy of educational systems, the positioning of the Greek system seems to be somewhere in the middle, following those considered top educational systems. On the whole, the level of studies in Greece is judged very good or satisfactory, although inferior to the level of studies in some countries (i.e. the UK, France, Germany and the United States). However, studies in some prestigious, high-demand fields of study are considered of high academic standing. This, for example, was indicated by students in the fields of Computer Science and Engineering (see country report for Greece in ADMIT, 2000b).

Students' evaluation of educational mobility can be understood in relation to their future plans and aspirations, their own family background and social status and the prestige of the field of study and/or department in the university hierarchy. (For specific cases dealing with this issue see the full report.)

Kontogiannopoulou-Polydorides & Papadiamantaki (2000b) also examined the outward mobility from Greece to the UK and according to their conceptual framework of the interplay of hierarchies, the pattern of (outward) mobility from Greece to the UK can be understood as a result of the interplay of:

- The existence of *numerus clausus* in the Greek education system which denies access to higher education to a large number of de facto high ability candidates;
- The existence of an education system in the UK, which is promoting extensive policies for the attraction of foreign students. This is coupled by a perception on the part of the students that they will eventually ensure a position in their chosen field of study;
- The prestige of the British Institution(s)/Department(s);
- The social status and the professional and social aspirations of the students.

From the interviews conducted it is easy to conclude that most outgoing students decided to pursue **undergraduate** studies in the UK when they failed the Panhellenic examinations. Had they succeeded in the examinations, they would have studied in Greece. This was stated by all the outgoing students who pursued the first cycle (Bachelor level) studies in the UK. The decision to study in the UK does not seem to be based on a perception of the Greek education system as of lower status to the British one. In contrast, outward educational mobility from Greece seems to be related to the role of the education system in the reproduction of the social stratification in the Greek society and the extremely high social demand for university education, which can be understood as an expression of the need for incorporation in the highest strata of the social stratification system (Kontogiannopoulou-Polydorides, 1995).

Educational mobility towards the UK at the **postgraduate level** can be seen as related to the fact that postgraduate programmes in Greece are considered 'highly competitive', meaning that they accept a limited number of students. It appears that such a practice functions in a way similar to the *numerus clausus* (at the undergraduate level), excluding a number of students from Master's level postgraduate programmes.

It appears that the choice of country is based on a perception of the UK as a country which possesses an extended and efficient education system where students get on the whole good quality education. The mobility of Greek students towards the UK seems to be related to the following factors:

- The fact that in the UK education system, which they evaluate as high status, students who have failed the Panhellenic examinations will eventually find an institution that will grant them a position for studies in their desired field of study;
- Their wish to acquire fluency in English;
- The marketing activities in Greece undertaken on the part of the UK to attract foreign students; and
- The fact that Greeks are very well informed on studying opportunities in the UK.

The situation at the **postgraduate** level is slightly different. Students opt for Master level studies in the UK as they consider Master's Programmes in the UK more specialised and focused as well as better administered than some Greek Postgraduate Programmes<sup>4</sup>. They also seem to appreciate the infrastructure of British universities, especially libraries.

The interviews seem to suggest that a hierarchy of institutions and departments exists in the UK, possibly more defined than in Greece. This is indicated by the fact that choice of institution at the undergraduate level appears to be guided first, by the entry requirements and the standards set by the institution.

Most interviewed **undergraduate students** gained access to UK institutions through UCAS, upon completion of a foundation course. In a few cases they were offered a place at the institution that was their first choice, as they opt primarily for the very prestigious institutions. As most of them were interested in gaining access to higher education, they accepted the positions offered, even in less prestigious institutions.

In contrast, choice of institution for **postgraduate studies** is based on strict academic criteria. This means that students take primarily into account the prestige and reputation of the institution and the department (field of study) and consider the market value of the degree both in Greece and the UK. This was indicated by the many students, who pursued Master's studies at the very top and prestigious institutions. This was true for students who completed a first degree in Greece, those who completed a bachelor's at prestigious universities in the UK, as well as those who completed a bachelor's at lower status universities in the UK. They stated that they selected the institutions to which they applied for postgraduate studies on purely academic criteria and opted to study at the most prestigious universities.

The social status of the students seems to be related to the evaluation of their mobility experience. Students of high status family background or students who obtained their first degrees in high status departments (fields of study) in Greece were found to be more critical of the level of studies in the UK, even at the most prestigious British institutions.

Mobile students who either had no experience of the Greek education system or had studied at low status Greek departments and/or fields of study, appeared to appreciate the better facilities offered by British institutions. They also seem to value certain traits of the Anglo-Saxon system, as for example the close tutoring and supervision of students. Some of them pointed out several 'differences of style' between the Greek and the British education systems (see full report for Greece).

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted though that in most fields of study (e.g. computers, information systems, engineering etc.) a Bachelor's degree from a British institution is not considered (legally) equivalent to the Greek 'Ptychion'. Therefore students who have completed a first degree in the UK have to complete a Master's as well, as they have to complete at least four or five years of studies in order to secure the equivalence of their degree.

It appears that these mobile students associated upward mobility with educational qualifications. They valued postgraduate studies, as they believed that the degrees would enhance job opportunities, their future professional careers and therefore would lead to further upward social mobility. Outwardly mobile students were found to pursue educational mobility and get satisfaction from it when it related to their goals and aspirations for upward mobility and provided them with specific scientific training and/or social experience. This points to a 'utilitarian' attitude towards mobility, which contrasts with the traditional view in Greek literature concerning the 'idealistic and progressive' characteristics of the Greek youth and student movement up to 1974.

### *Sweden*

As a result of the secondary analysis of data relating to incoming and outgoing students Ericsson, Hansson & Svensson (2000) note that the first conclusion was that the great majority had very positive experiences (see ADMIT, 2000b).

Personal experiences from the new situations encountered included mixing with people from different cultural backgrounds, new perspectives widening students' horizons, independence and new responsibilities. These learning processes could all contribute to personal development and competence enhancement in networking and communication skills. Many students made such observations.

It was found that the EU students did not always see the benefits of their studies, whether in terms of subject knowledge, or in terms of being of use in the labour market, but the Baltic students invested very much hope and belief in their study period abroad and some reported on positive changes that had already taken place. The differences between the groups are marked – even taking into account the fact that the Baltic students might have felt a certain need to express their gratitude to the Swedish Institute for having received a government grant. One factor explaining the differences might be that they felt needed in their home countries. They often expressed a positive view of the future and that they are part of the realisation of this future. Much of the knowledge they would bring back would be received with open arms and would be used in the ongoing restructuring and reforming of their countries.

There was some dissatisfaction among students concerning the process of finding the appropriate course at the appropriate level. Maybe this suggests that teachers need to be more involved. In organised exchanges, administrators seem to have taken over much of this task.

The formal results of studies, i.e. grades, course content or subject knowledge are maybe not the most important benefits of student mobility, at least not the only ones. The competencies needed today are often expressed in terms of social and cultural competence, language knowledge, communication skills, leadership, flexibility, adaptability, independence, responsibility, coping with stress etc. and there are reasons to believe that many of these qualifications may be more successfully acquired in an unknown environment than at home. It is abroad that the students will meet other languages in their cultural context and the persons acting within their own culture. Their ability to change cultural perspectives and to look at cultural differences at a distance from their own culture, will be challenged.

When it comes to the Swedish students' expectations concerning the use of their foreign studies as an advantage in the labour market, Sedigh's report (1994) indicates that employers seldom explicitly required studies abroad for employment, even if they valued foreign studies as being of extra merit. Another Swedish study, carried out by Bäckström & Broomé in 1998 (see ADMIT, 2000b for details) shows that immigrants and foreigners have problems in the Swedish labour market and they are unemployed to a higher extent than Swedes. Swedish employers, especially at

small and medium sized enterprise level, tend to select the Swede, when choosing between a Swede and a non-Swede with equal qualifications. That extra that the foreigner may bring, language, contacts, intercultural competence etc, is not very often considered something valuable.

Language problems are not the most serious ones for students coming to Sweden or for outgoing Swedish students. Outgoing Swedish students are well prepared throughout public and secondary schooling to study courses in English, and, to some degree German, Spanish and French. Above this they can take courses in another Nordic language, i.e. Danish or Norwegian. Second generation immigrants, trained at school in their mother tongue, are a growing group among mobile students. Swedish higher education institutions have adopted a policy, which has allowed for the increase in exchanges, namely the expansion of courses in English. But the comments of some students indicate that there is among the incoming students also an interest to learn the Swedish language in order to come closer to the Swedes and to the Swedish culture. This is something that should be valued positively and attended to.

The interviews with academics and others at university level (see ADMIT 2000a for full details) indicated that Swedish students wished to go to English-speaking countries in and outside Europe, and that efforts to create exchanges were concentrated on such countries. In the analysis undertaken by Ericsson, Hansson & Svensson (2000) the material analysed did not reveal such comments.

Both incoming and outgoing students, with the exception of the grant holders from the Baltic countries mentioned economic barriers. The fact that the Swedes may bring their grants and loans may explain the increase in exchange activity. It has surely contributed to the realisation of many students' dreams. But once in the host country, the Swedish student is in a situation which is comparable to other exchange students: little or no back up, no parents to go to for dinner when money is short, and no wardrobe to select from. For the student, living costs tend to be higher abroad, but according to results reported on here almost all mobile students seemed to enjoy the experience abroad and found it worthwhile.

## **UK**

The quantitative research carried out by West, Dimitropoulos, Hind & Wilkes (2000) involved developing a questionnaire for EU (non-UK) students studying at UK higher education institutions to complete. Over 500 usable questionnaires were returned and analysed (see ADMIT, 2000b).

The research examined the characteristics of a sample of EU students studying in UK higher education institutions, their reasons for choosing to study abroad and specifically their reasons for opting for the UK. The majority of students in the sample were studying for a degree to be awarded in the UK although a significant minority were on a Socrates Erasmus exchange.

The majority of students studying for a UK degree were on undergraduate courses, with significant minorities being on a Masters course or on a research degree programme. Students were studying a wide range of subjects: social studies (the most common), sciences, engineering and technology and 'combined' subjects.

Students' reasons for **choosing to study abroad** varied, with the most important reasons relating to increasing their labour market prospects, broadening their horizons and improving their foreign language competence. More males than females gave as important/very important reasons, wanting to improve their chances of getting a good job, the belief that a higher level of English would improve their labour market prospects and wanting to go to an institution with an international reputation.

The most important reasons given for **choosing to study in the UK** – and the most frequently mentioned – were that respondents found exactly the course that they wanted, that a degree from the UK would improve their job prospects and a belief that the quality of UK higher education institutions would be very good. More males than females gave as very important/important reasons a belief that a degree from the UK and a higher level of English proficiency would improve their job prospects, wanting to go to an institution with an international reputation and a desire to improve their English. More females on the other hand reported that the UK not being far from their home country as an important reason for choosing to study in the UK.

A high proportion of students on a Socrates Erasmus exchange were studying for a social studies degree in their home country, with significant minorities studying sciences, business and administration and languages.

The most important reasons students gave for **choosing to study abroad** were to improve their foreign language competence, to experience other cultures and to broaden their horizons. A high percentage also felt that studying abroad would improve their job prospects. More females than males cited as important: experiencing other cultures, gaining a different perspective on their subject and experiencing different teaching and learning methods.

Important reasons given by students for **choosing the UK** for their period of study abroad related to improving their English, the view that a higher level of English would improve their job prospects and wanting to meet students from many different countries. More females than males gave their interest in British culture as an important reason.

All respondents were asked about the arrangements for funding their studies in the UK. The student's family was the most frequently mentioned source and also the most frequently mentioned 'main source' of funds.

The socio-economic profile of the students revealed that they were, overall, from privileged backgrounds. In over half the cases, the student's father had studied at tertiary level; over half rated their family socio-economic status in their home country as 'above average' or 'high'. Over half spoke four languages (with varying degree of proficiency).

The most frequently mentioned individuals exerting a positive influence on the decision to study abroad were the respondent's mother, father and a close friend. There was some evidence to suggest that the students' plans for the future had changed since they had been studying in the UK.

### **Section 3.5 Student Mobility: Barriers and Incentives**

The final Work Package of the ADMIT project (Work Package 5 addressing Objective 5) focused on barriers to student mobility. This section highlights the nature of the barriers and possible incentives and solutions to overcome them.

In order to examine barriers to mobility, the ADMIT team devised a 'Mobility Obstacle Matrix'. This is made up of three key barriers common to all countries:

1. Language
2. Finance
3. Recognition and/or admissions

In the following sections, we examine each of these main barriers in turn. Whilst the obstacles are common across countries, they differ in terms of how they impact on mobility. We also highlight a number of other barriers to mobility raised by individual countries. A variety of policy recommendations are then made to overcome these barriers and obstacles. Full details are provided in ADMIT (2000c).

## **Barriers identified**

### **Language**

In all countries, to a greater or lesser extent, language is a barrier to mobility. In the case of *France* the language of the destination country is an important factor in determining the choice of country in which to study. 'One of the obstacles to mobility of young French people rests with the fact that 90% of students who wish to study abroad want to study in the UK or the US for what are essentially linguistic reasons.' The French report (see ADMIT, 2000c) also notes that as the UK cannot accept all the students some will give up the idea of mobility altogether. Moreover, many French students do not even imagine studying abroad judging their language level to be insufficient.

In the case of *Germany*, it was noted that there is a low working knowledge of English in certain areas of study such as natural sciences and engineering. In addition, the motivation to learn English in school-level education was reported to be low. An added obstacle is that there are low rates of second and third language proficiency. This is clearly a barrier to outward mobility (for details see ADMIT, 2000c).

The *Greek* research (ADMIT, 2000c) suggested that student mobility patterns appear related to the (perceived) positioning of the education system of a country in the international sphere. Students' perceptions about the positioning of an education system are shaped not only by the (quality of) the scientific work of academics but also by the international visibility of this work. Therefore, language affects students' perception of the academic activities in the institutions of a particular country, over and above the practical issue of mastering a foreign language or not. It is a factor indirectly related to the international positioning and prestige of a country's education system, in the sense that:

- the work of academics who are involved in research projects and write in widely spoken languages is more visible internationally than the work of academics that write in less spoken languages;
- the literature published in widely spoken languages receives greater attention.

In *Greece* incoming mobility is hampered by the insufficient linguistic preparation of students in Greek, which limits the students' ability to follow lectures and prohibits their participation in classroom activity. Greek outgoing students (usually) have a satisfactory command of widely spoken European languages. Their preference for studies in 'English speaking' universities (in the U.K., Holland, the Scandinavian countries and the US), reflects their greater proficiency in the English language. However Greek students are not proficient in less widely spoken European languages and their mobility towards institutions that offer courses in these languages is limited.

In the case of *Sweden*, it was noted that there is a lack of Swedish knowledge among incoming students (ADMIT, 2000c). In addition, whilst the knowledge of English among outgoing students is seen to be adequate, 90% of students are limited to courses in English or Scandinavian languages. Relatively low rates of second and third foreign languages are spoken. Finally, the Swedish report notes that there are not enough teachers prepared or trained for teaching or tutoring English.

There was a consensus of opinion from interviews conducted in universities that students in the *UK*, whose first language is English, do not possess the foreign language skills that their counterparts in other European countries possess (ADMIT, 2000a). This therefore constitutes a barrier to mobility insofar as students are unwilling to go to non-English speaking countries. The situation regarding language difficulties was rarely reported as an obstacle to mobility for incoming students. Indeed, one of the main reasons that students come to the UK to study is the desire to study in an English-speaking country. The issue of language gives rise to one key area of difficulty, namely imbalance, with fewer outgoing than incoming students in the UK.

## **Finance**

Financing study abroad was found to be a key obstacle to mobility in all countries, although to a greater or lesser extent. The report for *France* (ADMIT, 2000c) notes that financial support for Socrates Erasmus mobility programmes is insufficient as the subsidy from the EU does not cover the real costs incurred by a period of study abroad. The monthly allowance given under the Socrates Erasmus Programme to French students does not on its own enable a student to live abroad and cover food, lodging, transport, purchase of materials etc. More and more French students hold part-time jobs to finance their studies and lose this source of funding when they go abroad. Many of them still live with their parents and do not pay for accommodation in France.

The report for *Greece* notes that funding of student mobility is considered completely inadequate (ADMIT, 2000c). The continuously decreasing Socrates Erasmus scholarship does not cover the difference in the cost of living between Greece and certain European countries (especially the UK and the Scandinavian countries). Therefore, Socrates Erasmus is not considered an 'equal opportunity programme' as it is mostly upper class and middle class students that take advantage of the opportunities offered, whereas lower class students, who cannot count on family support, are disadvantaged in this respect. The report additionally notes: 'The diminishing funding discourages the participation of both academics and students'.

In the report for *Germany* (ADMIT, 2000c) it was noted that although there was some portability of financial support schemes it was 'restricted' portability, not open as in the case of Sweden.

Policy in *Sweden* is the most forward-looking of all countries involved in the ADMIT project in terms of the promotion of student mobility. This is because grants and loans for students studying abroad for short or long periods of time are portable. Notwithstanding this fact, the Swedish report (ADMIT, 2000c) notes that the loans/grants are not always sufficient. In addition, there are few scholarships for incoming students, a point also noted in the UK case studies of universities.

Interviews with *UK* university personnel again indicated that insufficient support for exchange programmes was the main obstacle to student mobility (ADMIT, 2000a). Financial obstacles for students, were apparent. Student loans are not, as a general rule, portable (although there are some exceptions as in the case of Socrates Erasmus exchanges). It was perhaps not surprising to find that in our survey of a sample of EU students studying in UK universities, the vast majority came from families that were reported to be of high socio-economic status. The opportunity to benefit from studying abroad is not open to all – indeed the policies in place are such that there is clear inequity in terms of who benefits from such study.

## **Recognition and admissions**

The issue of recognition is fundamental to student mobility. The *French* report (ADMIT, 2000c) notes that the credit transfer system (ECTS), so crucial for the Socrates Erasmus exchange

programme, is still not well known and is also difficult to manage. In spite of a certain trend towards convergence in terms of university calendars, the differences still pose problems.

The *German* report (ADMIT, 2000c) notes that ECTS is felt to be a suitable instrument for recognition, but also highlights the fact that individual academics have discretion over whether or not to accept such credit transfer. The German report also noted that there are low quotas for foreign students in *numerus clausus* courses.

The Greek report (ADMIT, 2000c) notes that non-recognition of courses is a paramount problem, discouraging students' participation in mobility schemes. Participation in ECTS, as a way to handle this problem remains very limited. It appears that recognition of courses is related to the positioning of the institution/department in the university/field of study hierarchy and the importance assigned to mobility schemes (by institutions, departments and/or academics. For further details see country report). In general 'it appears that the higher the prestige of the institution and department ... the higher the priority assigned to international research projects and the lower the priority assigned to the development of undergraduate student mobility schemes'. Academics in more prestigious institutions appear to apply strict criteria to the evaluation of course work completed in other European universities and often deny mobile students credit for courses that they have completed and passed. In contrast, lower prestige institutions and/or departments seem to be more interested in the development of student mobility schemes, as they view mobility as a means of enhancing the department's visibility and international profile.

The *Swedish* report (ADMIT, 2000c) points out that with a diverse higher education system in Europe – which is viewed as an asset – there needs to be further transparency in the description of both upper secondary and higher education across Europe, with transparent grading systems instituted. A further obstacle identified is that exchange is not always balanced.

The *UK* report (ADMIT, 2000a, 2000c) highlights inconsistent practices in relation to the marking of the course work submitted in other European universities, which could cause problems with additional workload.

### **Other barriers**

Several country reports (ADMIT, 2000c) refer to cultural/attitudinal barriers. The *French* report for example notes that students' role models are essentially French and they are not convinced of the need to go abroad. Their lack of openness in relation to this is demonstrated by their fear of foreign languages, of the duration of study, of the foreign country or of a change of daily routine, above all for those who live with their parents. Another barrier is that students feel the need to finish their studies as soon as possible because of labour market difficulties and going abroad is seen as a loss of valuable time. The *German* report notes that students have a 'strongly rooted attachment' to their familiar environment. The *UK* report notes that in some cases there was suspicion of potential partner institutions with 'doubts being raised about quality and standards'. Ethnocentrism was also encountered in that some universities do not wish or feel the need to adapt to mobile students. In the *Swedish report*, insufficient awareness, knowledge and skills in the area of intercultural issues were identified as possible obstacles.

According to the *Greek* report, students' willingness to pursue educational mobility is related to three main reasons, (not mutually exclusive):

- (a) Students consider educational mobility as a path leading to upward social mobility. This is usually the case when higher education qualifications are needed for the fulfilment of students' goals and aspirations. The decision to study abroad is related to the positioning of the university

and the positioning of the department/field of study within the hierarchy of education systems and fields of study in the international sphere.

- (b) Students seem to view educational mobility as a way to acquire specific scientific skills or training in particular techniques.
- (c) Students appreciate the social and cultural communications experience accrued through educational mobility. The students see often the intercultural communications skills obtained through mobility as additional qualifications, which provide them with a comparative advantage in the labour market.

The importance assigned by students to these aspects of mobility should have implications for EU policy. It appears that situations of exchange schemes in which these aspects of mobility were catered for (e.g. structure and practices furthering students' educational qualifications and skills leading to upward mobility) have greatest chances of success.

Other issues highlighted in several reports related to workload. As the *French* report notes, for university departments the administrative management of exchange programmes is very heavy; this is particularly so at certain points in time such as the start of the new academic year. The *UK* report notes that workload is a major problem with student mobility programmes. As revealed in the report, organising often fell to enthusiastic individuals and although the high workload was not a problem in itself it became one when the work involved failed to receive recognition or lacked status within the participating university. The Swedish report notes similar problems.

A range of other barriers are identified in individual country reports. These tend to be country specific although the *Swedish* report notes that the newly-introduced institutional contracts within the Socrates Erasmus Programme have 'disconnected teachers from mobility issues'. A related obstacle is that teachers, study counsellors and administrators involved in admission and recognition procedures do not have enough contact. This finding chimes with comments made by other countries.

### **Solutions to problems identified**

The country reports (see ADMIT, 2000c) provide a range of solutions to the problems that have been identified above. In this section we highlight those that relate to the three barriers that were identified by all five countries involved in the ADMIT project, namely, language, finance and recognition and/or admissions. In addition, a number of other solutions to country-specific problems are reported.

#### **Language**

The individual country reports (see ADMIT, 2000c) highlight the policy changes that could reduce the language barriers:

- Develop and reinforce language training, and well before university. Extend the creation of language centres in higher education institutions so that all students benefit from language training that is as varied as possible and at all levels – beginner, intermediate and advanced (recommendation by French team).
- Develop obligatory English study courses to accompany higher education programmes; develop specific language courses in languages other than English related to exchange programmes, our out-sourcing of special language programmes (recommendations by German team).

- The EU should adopt a more comprehensive policy concerning foreign language instruction, promoting the teaching of widely spoken EU languages in secondary education at the national level. It can be assumed that foreign language proficiency varies by country and, therefore, differential policies would be advisable. At the same time the Community should support the instruction of less spoken European languages, to ensure the multicultural character of Europe.

Different policies are proposed for the promotion of undergraduate and postgraduate student mobility.

*Undergraduate Level:*

- A promising course of action would relate the funding of Socrates to the development of 'project-based' student exchange schemes.
- The funding of mobility schemes could be related to the linguistic preparation of outgoing students in the language of the host country. Instruction of at least some core courses in widely spoken European languages would attract incoming students towards institutions where less spoken languages prevail.

*Postgraduate Level:*

- Promotion of joint research projects, coupled with training of students at specific research techniques, as research activities take place without the necessity to specify one language of communication in any particular setting (recommendations made by Greek team).
- There should be more support for Swedish language courses for incoming students who wish to take courses given in Swedish together with:
  - more courses to be offered in English;
  - greater support for the acquisition of second and third foreign languages;
  - training teachers to give courses in English and other foreign languages (recommendations by Swedish team).
- Improve the level of foreign language competence among British students via an increased emphasis in upper secondary education where there is no compulsory foreign language element. Foreign language should be included as a 'key skill' for all such pupils (recommendation by UK team).

**Finance**

- Develop budgetary allocations at European, national, regional, institutional and departmental level to facilitate mobility (recommendation by French team).
- At a national level financial support for mobility could come from actions aimed at providing incentives for the private or voluntary sectors to invest in student mobility (recommendation by French team).
- Develop a fully portable financial support scheme in the EU for students who wish to take a full course in another EU country (recommendation by German team).
- Increased funding of student scholarships in order to ensure participation of all students to the schemes, (especially students that cannot count on family support) (recommendation by Greek team).

- Increased funding of teaching staff mobility targeted to joint teaching and research activities, in order to provide incentives to academics to set mobility schemes (recommendation by Greek team).
- Funding of programmes establishing meeting-points between research projects and mobility schemes in order to incorporate student mobility in the wider internationalisation activities (and policies) of the universities/departments (recommendation by Greek team).
- Provision of differential incentives (i.e. financial support) to foster the participation of less developed universities and/or departments in EU programmes. The development of research infrastructure with emphasis on low (income and) prestige institutions and low (income and) prestige fields of study, such as 'soft-sciences' should be a sine qua non policy on the part of the EU (recommendations by Greek team).
- Provide additional financial support for high cost areas, countries or fields of study (recommendation by Swedish team).
- Provide more scholarships for incoming students (recommendation by Swedish team).
- Provide portable loans for students who wish to study in other EU countries for full degrees and periods of study abroad (recommendation by UK team).
- Provide more scholarships to facilitate mobility among outgoing students from lower income families to undertake periods of study abroad and for incoming students from lower income families (recommendation by UK team).
- For admissions: Economic compensation for uneven exchange as happens within the Nordic Agreement may be considered (recommendation by Swedish team).

### **Recognition and/or admissions**

- Improve the information systems: explain clearly to students the credit transfer system (ECTS) in operation for Socrates Erasmus exchange programmes; revise the university calendars across European universities so that there are more consistent start and end dates for the academic year/semesters/terms (recommendations by French team).
- Instigate a centralised body for the recognition of modules or courses, with a 'recognition ombudsman' at each university; give the individual institutions the right to accept the foreign students they want within the total of allowed students (recommendations by German team).
- The involvement of academics with exchange schemes appears to be the only way to guarantee their involvement in course recognition and evaluation on a regular basis; promotion of ECTS through extended programme funding for a specific time frame (e.g. for the next three years only); differential funding for the development of infrastructure of less developed universities and/or departments in less favoured regions (recommendations from Greek team).
- Develop a common (regional) educational space as between the Nordic countries (recommendation by Swedish team).
- Facilitate greater interaction across the EU between those involved in organising exchange programmes and those involved with admissions to undergraduate and postgraduate courses to ensure greater understanding of issues related to academic quality and standards. Agencies

responsible for quality assurance across the EU need to liaise closely with one another. The Sorbonne Declaration provides an ideal context for this to take place (recommendations by UK team).

### **Other incentives to improve mobility**

Of the other incentives and solutions suggested the following appear to be innovative and offer examples of practice that could be developed elsewhere:

- o Developing a ‘reward’ system for mobility in the careers of teaching staff (recommendation by French team).
- o In Sweden, cultural differences were not seen as a barrier, largely as a result of a mentor system having been introduced, which includes social and cultural activities.
- o In order to encourage mobility to cohesion member states, differentiation of financial support systems might be adopted with additional support for language preparation. Other financial incentives are also proposed to improve exchange networks and facilitate the exchange of teaching staff (recommendations by German team).
- o It is necessary to provide academics with incentives to set up mobility schemes. Increased funding of teaching staff mobility appears to be an appropriate incentive, as it leads to increased teaching opportunities in other universities and enhanced possibilities for joint research projects, which heighten the international visibility of academics’ scientific work. It should be noted that academics in the social sciences and humanities, strongly complained about the decreased funding for these fields of study as compared to sciences and medicine (recommendation by Greek team).

## 4 Conclusions and policy implications

The research carried out in the ADMIT project set out to meet a range of different objectives. Each of these has been met and in this section, we first of all highlight a selection of the key issues that emerged (section 4.1). In section 4.2 we present policy implications and recommendations at a European level. Section 4.3 explains how the European collaborative effort has contributed to the results and section 4.4 outlines some further ideas for research at a European level.

### 4.1 Key issues at a European level

In this section we highlight key findings in the context of our initial objectives.

Objective 1 To compare policies and statistical data at a European and national level that relate to higher education admissions and the mobility of students across the EU; to review previous research and to provide a conceptual framework to aid our understanding of the differing systems in operation.

The quantity and quality of previous research relating to student mobility varies between the ADMIT countries (France, Germany, Greece, Sweden and the UK), with Germany and Sweden having carried out a considerable amount of research in this area, but the other countries having carried out much less. Research examining EU student mobility across the Union is limited to studies carried out under the auspices of the Socrates Erasmus exchange programme. No such research relating to students who study for full degrees in other EU countries appears to have been carried out. No previous research relating to admissions to higher education institutions appeared to have been carried out.

Admissions to higher education institutions in the countries involved in ADMIT vary enormously. The systems in operation for domiciled/nationals and for overseas EU students vary, but in distinctive ways. Different models operate, with selective systems in some countries but not in others. Statistical data relating to mobility at a supranational level are not comparable. In some countries, the concept of ‘nationality’ is of key importance in terms of defining who are mobile students whilst in others the overriding concern is that of ‘domicile’ or ‘residence’. These are fundamental differences and are reflected in national and EU-wide statistics, that are collected at a national level using different definitions (and different methods). This makes even basic comparisons between countries problematic. Another ‘grey’ area particularly in relation to statistical information relates to the category of mobility – whether the student is studying for a full degree or studying abroad for a period of time. At present it is not possible to make comparisons between countries in terms of the type of mobility. Because of the conceptual difficulties it is important that international statistics are treated with caution. The concept of student mobility was elaborated during the course of the ADMIT project. The concepts that are used in our project relate broadly to:

- Students who are residents/nationals of the country in question
- Students who are residents/nationals of another EU country
- Students who are residents/nationals of a non-EU country

In addition, we refer to students studying for a full degree and those studying abroad for a period of time.

There is a clear need for improved statistical data relating to mobility of different types across the whole of the European Union to be collected. This requires above all a political will – the

technology is available, but administrative systems would need to be modified to ensure that appropriate definitions are elaborated. For example, there is a need to distinguish the students' normal country of origin or domicile in addition to nationality (citizenship). This is because different countries have different policies relating to who is eligible or not to become a national of an EU Member State and in terms of which individuals apply for and gain citizenship.

Objective 2 To compare the development and recent changes to higher education admissions policies and practices at a national and university level. What are current policies and practices in relation to academic recognition? To what extent do philosophies of democratisation and marketisation prevail and what changes are taking place? What impact do different systems have on student mobility and on social cohesion?

Objective 4 Are there specific needs for common curriculum elements in upper secondary general education and in first degree courses that would facilitate student mobility?

Objectives 2 and 4 were addressed primarily in our case studies of higher education institutions. However, as admissions were not an institutional responsibility in all countries, this issue was only addressed in the case studies in Sweden and in the UK and addressed as part of the analysis of policy documents in the other three countries.

One key finding was that the issue of academic recognition of qualifications from other EU countries did not seem to be problematic in most countries. This is in spite of the differing curricula and upper secondary assessment systems in operation across the EU (see West et al., 1999). Notwithstanding this finding, there were some specific concerns relating to the assessment systems used in one or two countries (see ADMIT, 2000a).

Whilst there were few problems with recognition of qualifications at this level, there were problems with recognition of *periods of study* abroad. This issue needs to be given serious consideration if programmes such as Socrates Erasmus are to have maximum benefit for students who undertake periods of study abroad.

The need for common curriculum elements was not identified as an issue, except in the case of foreign languages. There is clearly a problem here with mobility being limited by a lack of knowledge of languages. Whilst it can be argued that languages spoken less widely within the EU need to be promoted for reasons of social cohesion and reinforcing cultural diversity – with which we would agree – there is a need for more widely-spoken languages also to be promoted further as without proficiency in these, EU citizens without competence in such languages (e.g. English, French, German) will be at a disadvantage in the European labour market.

Whilst it may come as no surprise that in countries with a more market-oriented higher education system such as the UK, the incentive structure would encourage institutions to recruit students from within or outside the European Union in order to maximise income, we found that there were other incentives that were driving higher education institutions from other countries to recruit students from within or outside the European Union. In these cases – and particularly in Germany for courses where demand from German students is low such as engineering – the recruitment of students from these countries can be seen to be related to the survival of the university in question. Thus different incentives can be seen to lead to similar behaviours by the organisations themselves. At another level, governments, particularly in France and the UK, but also Germany, see overseas students as a way of increasing their economic and cultural influence.

It is often assumed that some higher education systems are more 'democratic' than others. For example, all students who gain the requisite upper secondary qualification in Germany or France

have a right to be admitted to university, whilst in Greece, Sweden and the UK this is not the case. Nevertheless, there are selection mechanisms in place in these countries but they take place at different times – at entry to secondary school in many German Länder and at the end of the first year of university study in France.

Our evidence suggests that the dichotomy of democratic versus market-oriented is too simplistic for any analysis of higher education admissions and mobility. What may be even more important in terms of increasing social cohesion are the financial incentives and disincentives that operate in individual countries and the hierarchy of universities that exists in some countries. If these are indeed important issues, social cohesion and student mobility would be more likely to result with appropriate incentives at institutional and individual student level being instituted. At an institutional level appropriate monetary incentives need to be put in place and at an individual level portable loans and means-tested grants need to be available to ensure that those most in need of financial support obtain it.

Objective 3 To explore the characteristics of students who choose to study outside their own country (e.g. in terms of their socio-economic and cultural/ethnic background) and to explore the reasons why they choose to undertake study abroad together with perceived costs and benefits.

The research carried out to meet this objective reveals that there are various factors that facilitate mobility and various factors that inhibit it. Key issues related to the importance of language proficiency, field of study and family background and attitudes in facilitating student mobility.

In our view, one of the key policy issues that should be addressed relates to the need for adequate resourcing to be available to facilitate student mobility. A recurring theme in our research was that students need adequate resources if they are to benefit from study in other EU countries. In only one country, Sweden, are loans ‘portable’ – although in the UK they are portable in certain circumstances, including Socrates Erasmus exchanges. In our view government support should not be restricted to students who study in their own country. Study abroad is widely perceived by students to have labour market advantages and if additional resources are not made available, the benefits of such study will only accrue to those whose families can support them. This is clearly not equitable. Individual countries could clearly follow the Swedish model so that mobility is not hindered. An EU system of financing could also be developed.

In terms of the Socrates Erasmus Programme, there was a very strong view that the resourcing at all levels was inadequate – and to such an extent that the programme was not universally supported by higher education institutions. Moderate expenditure could ensure that students are provided with a more reasonable grant for accommodation and travel and that institutions – preferably individual departments – could be given resources to compensate for the time taken to administer the programme.

Objective 5 What are the obstacles and barriers to transnational mobility? How can mobility of students be increased and facilitated across the countries of the EU? What examples of good practice exist? And what forms of organisational, institutional and governmental change are needed?

Barriers to mobility and policy recommendations are given in Section 3.5. In short, language was found to be a barrier to mobility in all countries, but to a greater or lesser extent. Financing study abroad was found to be a key obstacle to mobility in all countries, although again to a greater or lesser extent, particularly as in Sweden there are portable grants and loans. The issue of recognition is fundamental to student mobility particularly in relation to the Socrates Erasmus exchange

programme. Other barriers related to cultural/attitudinal barriers, a concern about quality and standards and lack of knowledge about intercultural issues and the workload associated with exchange programmes.

## **4.2 Recommendations at an EU level**

At an EU level, there are a number of policy implications that arise from the ADMIT project and these are presented below:

- Encourage and provide financial incentives for the establishment of language centres in higher education institutions so that all students benefit from language training.
- The EU should adopt a more comprehensive policy concerning foreign language instruction, promoting the teaching of widely spoken EU languages in secondary education at the national level. At the same time the Community should support the instruction of less spoken European languages, to ensure the multicultural character of Europe.
- Fund ‘project-based’ student exchange schemes through Socrates Erasmus.
- Fund mobility schemes on condition that linguistic preparation (in the language of the host country) of students is provided.
- Encourage the adoption of language courses for all students beyond compulsory school-leaving age by education and training providers in public and private sectors via funds targeted on individuals; such funds could be in the form of a quasi-voucher with funds being provided to training providers – which could include higher education institutions – on the basis of the number of students following specified accredited courses, or a voucher along the lines of language training vouchers developed in some French regions (see West et al., 2000).
- Develop budgetary allocations at European level to facilitate mobility; funds in this case could be targeted on both individuals and on institutions, as both need incentives to promote mobility. It would be important for any such allocations to be targeted on those individuals who are from lower socio-economic groups and on universities that are not currently highly motivated to participate in mobility programmes/recruit EU students.
- Develop a fully portable financial support scheme (grant and loan system) in the EU for students who wish to take a full course in another EU country.
- Provide increased funding for teaching staff mobility targeted to joint teaching and research activities, in order to provide incentives to academics to set up mobility schemes.
- Provide differential incentives (i.e. financial support) to foster the participation of less developed universities and/or departments in EU programmes. The development of research infrastructure with emphasis on low (income and) prestige institutions and low (income and) prestige fields of study, such as ‘soft-sciences’ should be a sine qua non policy on the part of the EU.
- Provide additional financial support for high cost areas, countries or fields of study.

- Provide more scholarships to facilitate mobility among outgoing students from lower income families to undertaken periods of study abroad and for incoming students from lower income families.
- Provision of economic compensation for uneven exchange as happens within the Nordic Agreement may be considered. Such a scheme might result in more places being made available in institutions in English-speaking countries for students who wish to study in such institutions.
- Facilitate greater interaction across the EU between those involved in organising exchange programmes and those involved with admissions to undergraduate and postgraduate courses to ensure greater understanding of issues related to academic quality and standards. Agencies responsible for quality assurance across the EU need to liaise closely with one another. The Sorbonne Declaration provides an ideal context for this to take place.
- Give serious consideration to modifying data collection systems relating to student mobility. It is recommended that Eurostat collects data on students domiciled in other EU countries together with data on their nationality; this would mean that there are data available on students' country of residence and their nationality. Data also need to be collected on the numbers of students registered for a full degree of for a period of study.
- Develop an EU wide policy addressing self-organised mobility in addition to Socrates Erasmus exchanges.

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