

## Chapter B7

# Students' resources

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# Key

### Level of student income

In Latvia, Malta, and Romania, students' median income per month, including transfers in kind, is comparatively high with values above 1,400 Purchasing Power Standard (PPS). In Azerbaijan, Denmark, France, Germany, and Slovakia, the median income is below 1,000 PPS.

### Financial impact of COVID-19 pandemic

On cross-country average, 23 % of students report a (very) negative impact of the pandemic on the financing of their studies. Student groups that are affected to an above-average extent are those whose parents are not at all well-off (35 %), students depending on national public student support (25 %), and students with disabilities (30 %).

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### Student income and inflation

When comparing student income and inflation between 2013 and 2022/23 in a limited number of countries, it shows that in most countries student income rose at higher rates than inflation. In France, this only applies temporarily and in Sweden the inflation rate was most of the time markedly higher than the income trend.

### Composition of student funding

From a macro perspective, students receive, on average across countries, 40 % of their total monthly income from their family or partner. Students' self-earned income provides 41 %, national public student support 12 %, and other income sources account for 6 %.

# findings

## Importance of family/partner contributions

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On average across EUROSTUDENT countries, 76 % of students receive support in cash and in kind from their parents, partner, or other relatives. This type of support accounts for an average of 52 % of the recipients' total monthly income.

## Importance of public support

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Across countries, 41 % of students receive, on average, national public student support. This way the public sector provides 34 % of the recipients' total monthly income.

## Recipients of public support

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Student groups receiving national public student support to an above-average extent are, for instance, young students (< 25 years), students who are not paying fees, and students with migration background.

## Extent of students' financial difficulties

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When measured by the international average, 26 % of all students report either serious or very serious financial difficulties. In Georgia, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, and Romania, more than 30 % of students are faced with this problem.

## Main issues

This chapter on students' resources refers to the financial requirements for higher education studies. Participation in higher education can involve considerable costs for students, especially when they (have to) leave the parental home and establish their own households. In order to cover their living and study-related costs, students generate their income from a variety of sources. For analytical reasons, however, these many sources are summarised into four categories in this report: a) family/partner contributions, b) students' self-earned income, c) national public student support, and d) other income. The first three sources of income, which generate the majority of revenue in all countries (Hauschildt et al., 2021), have different characteristics and implications. The financing of the study programme through contributions from the parents, for instance, takes the financial burden off the students. However, it prolongs the students' financial dependency on their parents, even if the students are of age. Furthermore, some students may fear overburdening their parents (Middendorff et al., 2013), which can be stressful for students. When students finance their studies through self-earned income, this provides (more) financial independence from their parents (Middendorff et al., 2017) and may considerably ease the students' budget restriction as gainful employment appears to be a very productive income source (Gwosć, 2019). However, students then have to spend a lot of time on employment, which they then lack for their studies or other important activities (Apolinarski & Gwosć, 2020; Keute, 2017; Franzen & Hecken, 2002). Finally, receiving public support may relieve the students and their parents, especially when it takes the form of non-repayable support. Yet, public support often appears not to be a rich source of income and is frequently associated with the emergence of financial difficulties (Hauschildt et al., 2021; DZHW, 2018). Furthermore, students may feel increased psychological pressure due to the requirement of regularly providing proof of study performance in order not to lose eligibility for state support or due to the prospect of repaying public loans in the future. In this way, any source of funding has its up- and downsides. The fact that students use a certain source of income particularly intensively (though not exclusively) is sometimes also due to the restriction that other, more favoured sources of income are not (sufficiently) available.

For many years, the issue of student funding has been featured in the ministerial declarations of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), although with varying degrees of concreteness (e.g. London Communiqué, 2007; Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009; Yerevan Communiqué, 2015). With the Rome Communiqué, the EHEA countries stated that: "Financial support systems should aim to be universally applicable to all students, however, when this is not possible, the public student financial support systems should be primarily needs-based and should make higher education affordable for all students, foster access to and provide opportunities for success in higher education." (Annex II to the Rome Communiqué, p. 6, 2020). The 'Principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA' developed as part of the Rome Communiqué were later underlaid with various indicators, including composite scoreboard indicators, to monitor the implementation and development of the principles and guidelines. For the area of student financing, this includes the proportion of students receiving universal or need-based grants, as well as state support for student accommodation, transport, and meals (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022). Through this description of instru-

ments and their use in indicator formation, the mandate for public student funding was further concretised.

### Magnitude of student income



The level of income provides information about students' financial opportunities to purchase consumer goods and invest in education (Pindyck & Rubinfeld, 2018; Becker, 1993). In this chapter, income differences between countries and various groups of students within and across countries will be looked at in more detail. Income can be affected by crisis events such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Kroher et al., 2023; Becker & Lörz, 2020; Berkes et al., 2020). Our analysis looks at the negative impact of the pandemic on students' income situation. Inflation is another crisis phenomenon which may have a mainly negative impact on the purchasing power of students, suited to cause a cost-of-living crisis (Neves & Stephenson, 2023; European Students' Union, 2022). Therefore, an attempt is made to compare the development of student income and inflation over almost a decade. Furthermore, as insufficient income can be one reason for students' financial difficulties (Unger et al., 2020; Finocchietti, 2015), the relation between students' income situation and their assessment of financial difficulties is investigated, among other things.

#### Box B7.1

#### Methodological note: Magnitude of student income

When interpreting the data on student income, it should be noted that the EURO-STUDENT 8 target group has changed in so far as distance students in fully online programmes living in the country of survey have now been taken into account (> [Chapter A3](#)). These students are more likely to be intensively employed while studying and, therefore, receive higher earnings. Furthermore, stricter data cleaning rules have been applied during data preparation that may have an impact on the level of income as well.

### Composition of student funding

The magnitude of student income is, inter alia, influenced by its structure, i.e. the number of income sources available and the yield of these funding sources. The average income structure of a country's student population, in turn, is affected by the basic orientation of the national student funding system on the macro level towards the private or the public sector. In the first case, student funding is seen as the sole or at least predominant responsibility of the students and often also that of their parents. As a result, students' self-earned income and intra-family transfers dominate the income structure. In the second case, providing student funding is mainly a government task. Public support in various forms, such as  grants, scholarships, loans or even public  transfers in kind, such as subsidised student accommodation or tuition-free studies, then play a major role for the students' income structure. The prevalence of one of these funding sources is then also associated with different societal perceptions of the students. In systems with a strong private orientation, students who generate large income parts by gainful employment alongside studies can be regarded as employees in a training programme (young learners). If they are mainly funded by their parents, who have a legal or socially expected responsibility for their upkeep, students can be

viewed as dependent children, even if they are of legal age (essentially, children still supported by their families). In systems relying to a large extent on public support, students are considered as independent adults who are especially financially independent of their parents (responsible citizens) (see also Schwarz & Rehburg, 2004, for a similar classification). The national characteristics of the three most important income categories – a) family/partner contributions, b) students' self-earned income, and c) national public student support – are analysed in more detail. Additional data on students' self-earned income can be found in > [Chapter B6](#).

### Financial difficulties of students

Students' financial difficulties result from the interplay of their income and expenses. Financial distress may encourage students to seek (additional) employment alongside studies, however, this could result in other difficulties or potentially negative outcomes, such as prolonged duration of studies (Theune, 2015; Triventi, 2014), a lower number of credits acquired, worse grades (Wenz & Yu, 2010; Callender, 2008), interruption of studies, or even dropping out of higher education completely (Heublein et al., 2017; Hovdhaugen, 2013). Due to the limitations set by available time and jobs (> [Chapter B5](#)), many students confronted with financial difficulties may not be able to increase their income through employment, leading to lower quality of living conditions. Our analysis focuses on the question of which student groups are especially challenged by financial difficulties and are thus more prone to negative effects as mentioned above. Furthermore, we will also look into the development of students' financial distress over time.

## Data and interpretation

### Magnitude of student income

#### Box B7.2

#### Methodological note: Purchasing Power Standard

Since the EUROSTUDENT countries use different currencies (e.g. the Euro, Danish Krone, Swiss Franc), Purchasing Power Standard (PPS) has been used as a common currency to achieve a great degree of comparability. PPS is an artificial currency used to eliminate the influence of exchange rates and differing price levels between countries, both of which may distort the international comparison of monetary values. One PPS can be depicted as a tiny goods basket that costs exactly the same amount of money (= 1 PPS) in all EU-27 countries. If, for example, income recipients in country A have 800 PPS and those in country B have 500 PPS, the data clarify that income recipients in country A can buy 800 units of the goods basket, while their counterparts in country B can purchase only 500, although the price is the same in both countries. To calculate PPS, the monetary values reported by the EUROSTUDENT countries in national currency have been converted using the Euro as reference. The respective currency conversion factors applied are Purchasing Power Parities (PPP) for 2022, as reported by Eurostat (Eurostat, 2023) and – in the case of Azerbaijan and Georgia – by the World Bank (World Bank, 2023). The interested reader can view all financial data, including Euro and national currency units, in the EUROSTUDENT > [Database](#).

Across all countries, the **○** median income of students amounts to 1,154 PPS per month, taking into account monetary income, as well as transfers in kind received by students in the form of goods, services, and bills paid by others (e.g. by parents, partner, or other relatives) (Figure B7.1). As already seen in the past, there are differences between the countries. The difference between the highest student income in Latvia (1,603 PPS) and the lowest in France (856 PPS) with a factor of less than two is comparatively small and clearly lower compared to the last project round when the factor was three.<sup>1</sup>

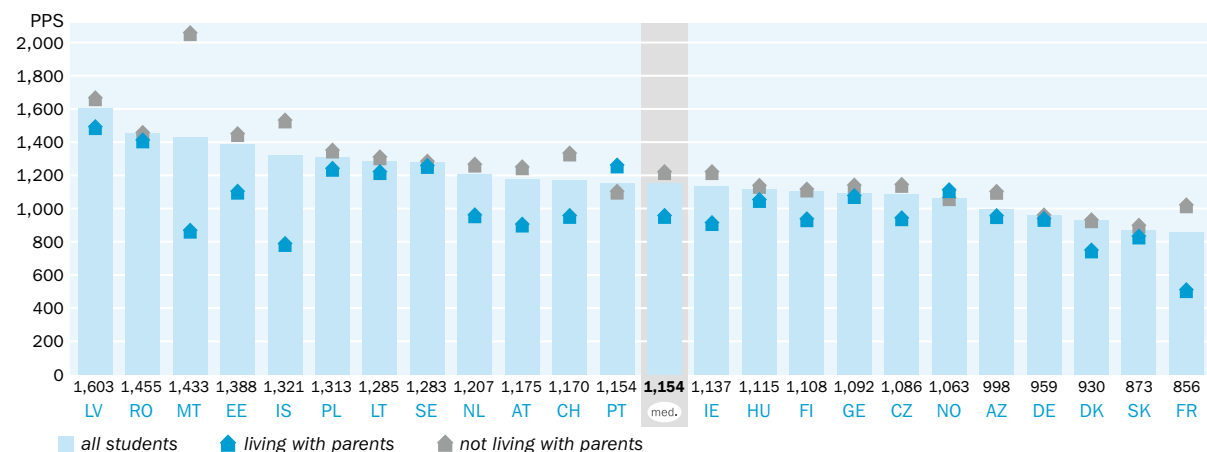
**Students' median income is relatively high in Latvia, Romania, and Malta, with more than 1,400 PPS monthly.**

By using PPS, the differences between countries are much smaller than if income had been expressed in Euro, since PPS eliminate not only exchange rate effects but also price level differences between countries. The use of PPS also influences the order of countries. Norway and Denmark, for example, would not be below the international median if the data were displayed in Euro. The amount of student income within a country is primarily determined by the expenses that students need or choose to cover. These expenses encompass **○** living costs and study-related expenditures. With respect to the latter, the level and structure of costs in higher education as well as the cost-sharing between the public and the private sector are important. Furthermore, the level of income is also influenced by the availability of different income sources and the extent to which students can and want to utilise them.

Figure B7.1 [↓](#)

### Student income by form of housing

Total monthly income including transfers in kind. Median income (in PPS)



**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, G.1 (PPP). **No data:** ES, HR.

**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period? 4.11 What are your average expenses for the following items during the current lecture period?

**Note(s):** The values above the country abbreviations represent the median income of all students. Transfers in kind are goods and services for students financed or provided by their parents, partner, or others.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

Students' financial needs are also influenced by their housing situation. Our analysis distinguishes between students living with parents, who receive, on international median 956 PPS per month, and those living independently, who receive 1,220 PPS within the same timeframe.

<sup>1</sup> For comparison: The median income of 1,603 PPS in Latvia equals 1,280 Euro.

This fundamental difference between the two groups is also evident in the vast majority of countries.

- Particularly clear differences in income of more than 300 PPS between the two groups can be seen in Malta, Estonia, Iceland, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, and France.
- Only in two countries, Portugal and Norway, is the pattern reversed, i.e. students living with parents have a higher median income than those who live outside the parental home.<sup>2</sup>

As students get older, the median income rises continuously in almost all countries (Table B7.1). This is mainly due to the increasing share of self-earned income of older students. On cross-country median, students with low educational backgrounds have the highest income compared to their peers with medium or high educational backgrounds. This is because the first group often generates more employment income. When students have a dominant source of income, it appears that students depending on self-earned income have usually the highest income and those depending on national public student support the lowest income. Students' financial difficulties are reflected in their income levels: in the vast majority of countries, students with financial difficulties have a lower median income than their peers without such difficulties. Finally, fee-paying students have in almost all countries a higher median income than those who do not pay fees as the first group has higher costs to cover.

### Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on student financing

*Across countries, almost a quarter of students report a (very) negative impact of the pandemic on financing their studies.*

The recent coronavirus pandemic had a wide range of effects on students. Physical and mental health, social contacts, freedom of movement, and the format of university teaching are just a few examples of the areas that have been affected by the pandemic. What impact has it had on students' finances? The following analysis takes a look at students who stated that the pandemic had either a negative or very negative impact on the financing of their studies (Figure B7.2).

On cross-country average, 23 % of all students report a (very) negative impact of the pandemic on the financing of their studies. At country level, the share ranges from a bit more than a tenth in Lithuania to more than a third in Portugal. This means that at the same time, a large majority of students in all countries experienced either no or even a positive impact of the pandemic on their finances, however, it should be noted that only those who are still in higher education and have not dropped out responded to the questionnaire.

When looking at students who differ by their parents' financial status (Figure B7.2a), it appears that students whose parents are not at all well-off experienced much more often negative impacts than their counterparts whose parents are very well-off. The cross-country average for the first group is more than twice as high as for the second group (35 % vs. 16 %). This basic pattern holds true for all but one country with available data on both groups.

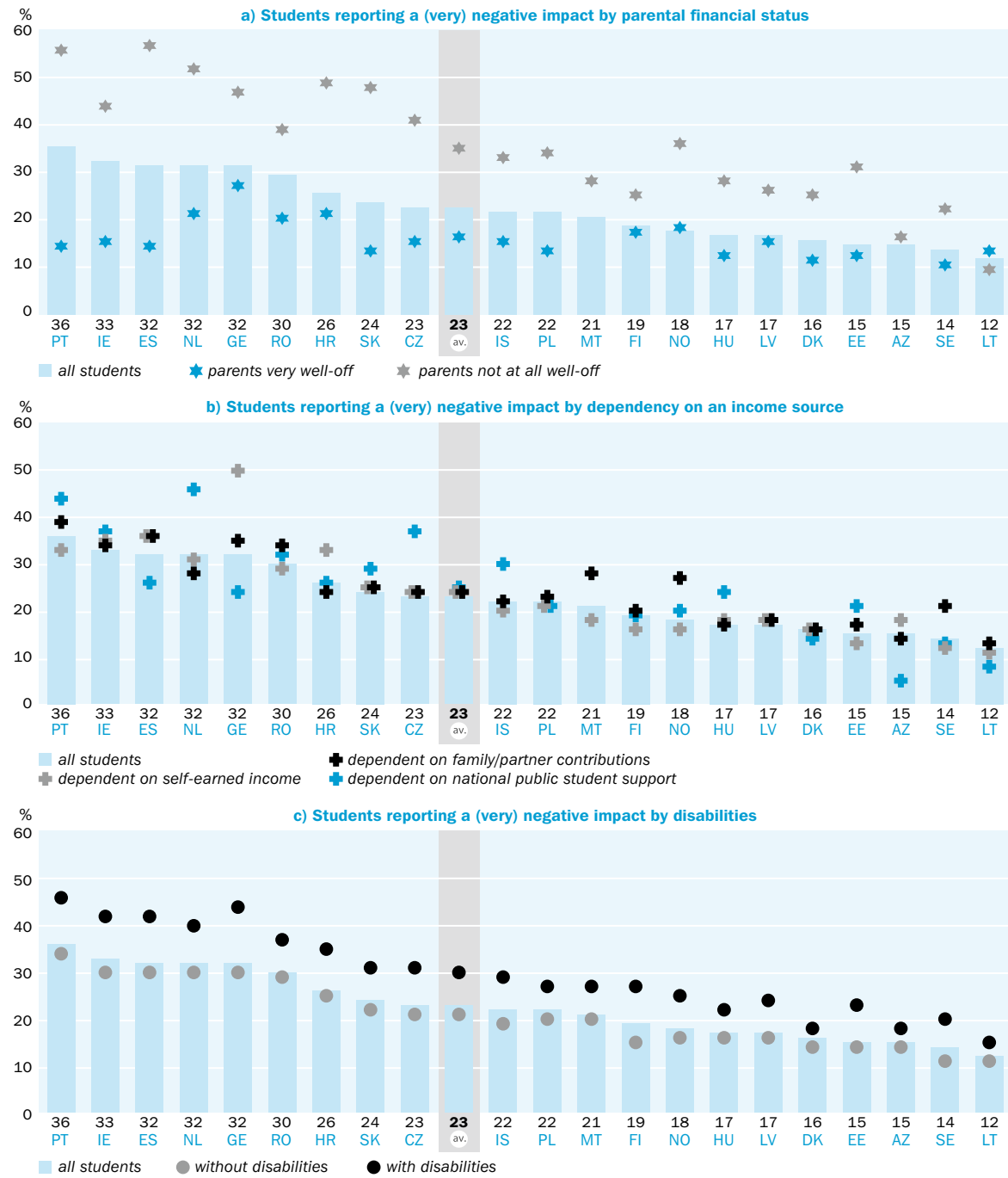
- In Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and Slovakia, the difference between students whose parents are not at all well-off and their peer group is more than 30 percentage points. The difference is comparatively low in Finland and Latvia at around 10 percentage points.

<sup>2</sup> Income data that differentiate more by students' various types of housing outside the parental home can be found in the > Database.

Figure B7.2

Students' assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on financing studies

Share of students (in %)



Data source: EUROSTUDENT 8, TM44. No data: AT, CH, DE, FR. Too few cases: parents very well-off: MT, AZ; dependent on national public student support: MT, LV.

Data collection: Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except ES, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

EUROSTUDENT question(s): M2.2 To what degree are you currently experiencing a positive or negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on financing of your studies?

Note(s): The values above the country abbreviations represent the share of all students reporting a (very) negative impact.

Deviations from EUROSTUDENT survey conventions: NO.

Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group: IE, NL.



The wealth of students' parents thus plays an important role for students in coping with the financial consequences of the crisis.

For students depending on a certain source of income, a pattern is much more difficult to recognise (Figure B7.2b). On cross-country average, there are almost no differences between students depending on family/partner contributions, on self-earned income, or on national public student support. 24 % in the first two groups and 25 % in the latter report a (very) negative impact of the pandemic on their finances. A pattern becomes clearer when data are analysed at country level. Looking at the countries that provided data for all three student groups, the following picture emerges: In eight countries, it is students depending on national public student support who report the highest shares of negatively affected students.<sup>3</sup> In seven countries, it is students depending on family/partner contributions and in another four countries it is students depending on self-earned income.

This indicates that students with public support as dominant income source experienced more financial hardships due to the pandemic, although this is not very clearly reflected in the international average. There is no obvious explanation for this. Especially in times of the pandemic, public support is – due to the state guarantee – expected to be a more stable source of income than, for example, earned income, which can be lost due to lay-offs. However, it has become apparent that almost 10 % of students in Europe encountered problems with their scholarship status as payments have been reduced, postponed, or cancelled (Farnell et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been shown time and again in the past that students who depend on national public student support often receive clearly lower incomes than their fellow students who depend on other sources of income. If the pandemic is then associated with rising expenses (e.g. general inflation, costs for technical equipment to attend online lectures, higher expenses on meals due to the temporary closure of university canteens), students receiving public support may be particularly ill-equipped to cover them.

When students' disabilities are used as differentiation criterion, a very clear pattern emerges (Figure B7.2c). In all countries, students with disabilities report (very) negative financial impacts of the pandemic to an above-average extent. The opposite applies to the experiences of the comparison group. In all countries, students without disabilities suffered (very) negative effects less often than average. The cross-country average for the first group is 30 % and for the second 21 %.

- The differences between the two student groups are rather large in Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Georgia, the Czech Republic, and Finland, with more than 10 percentage points.
- By contrast, in Denmark, Azerbaijan, and Lithuania, the difference is no higher than 4 percentage points.

One reason for the differences between the two groups could be that disabled students who were working while studying and lost their job during the pandemic had greater difficulty finding a new job than their fellow students without disabilities. In addition,

<sup>3</sup> In the Czech Republic, data on students depending on national public student support are based on a relatively low number of respondents.

the pandemic may also have placed a greater burden on the health of the first group and thus increased their expenses. This would also have a negative impact on their financial situation.

### Student income and inflation

Monetary income can be subject to a process of devaluation over time. Such an inflationary process took place with particular vigour in 2022/23 in many European countries (Eurostat, 2024b). High inflation rates mean a great loss of purchasing power, which students may not be able to compensate. We have taken this as an opportunity to analyse the development of student income and the general inflation rate over a longer period of time for selected EUROSTUDENT countries (Figure B7.3). The focus is on students not living with parents as they have to cover higher costs compared to their peers who are living with parents.

*In the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Poland, and temporarily in France, student income rose at a higher rate than inflation for nearly the last decade.*

The data show the development of student income for students not living with parents and the general inflation rate as measured by the European Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) over the last four rounds of EUROSTUDENT. Index values have been used for both variables. The data for both variables were standardised to the value 100 in the year of the EUROSTUDENT V data collection (2013 or 2014, depending on the individual country) to have a common baseline. The inflation rate rose continuously in almost all countries during the reporting period. Partial exceptions are Estonia, Ireland, and Poland, where the HICP value fell slightly or even only marginally at times. The inflation level differs somewhat between the countries. In Estonia and the Czech Republic, the HICP reaches values of more than 130, while in Ireland and Sweden the index does not exceed 121. All countries have in common that inflation increased clearly in 2022. This is particularly true for Estonia, the Czech Republic, and Poland with annual inflation rates between 15 and 22.5%. In France, Ireland, and Sweden, the increase ranged between 6.4 and 9%.<sup>4</sup>

With respect to student income, there is a monotonous growth in all analysed countries except Ireland and Sweden. However, the level increases vary markedly across countries. In Sweden, student income increased between 2013 and 2022 by almost 19%. By contrast, the increase in Estonia amounted to 147% in the same time span. A comparison of the development of both variables – student income and inflation – shows that in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, and Poland, student income rose at a higher rate – in most countries at a clearly higher rate – than inflation. In France, the increase in student income exceeded the inflation rate in the period from 2016 to 2018 and from 2020 to 2021. In Sweden, student income decreased between 2016 and 2021 and increased markedly in 2022. By contrast, the inflation rate in Sweden increased constantly from 2013 to 2022. It was, therefore, above the rate of change in student income for almost a decade.

The data indicate that in most of the selected countries student income rose for nearly the last decade at higher rates than inflation. However, this also implies for students who do not (or cannot) build up savings that their expenses have also grown at higher

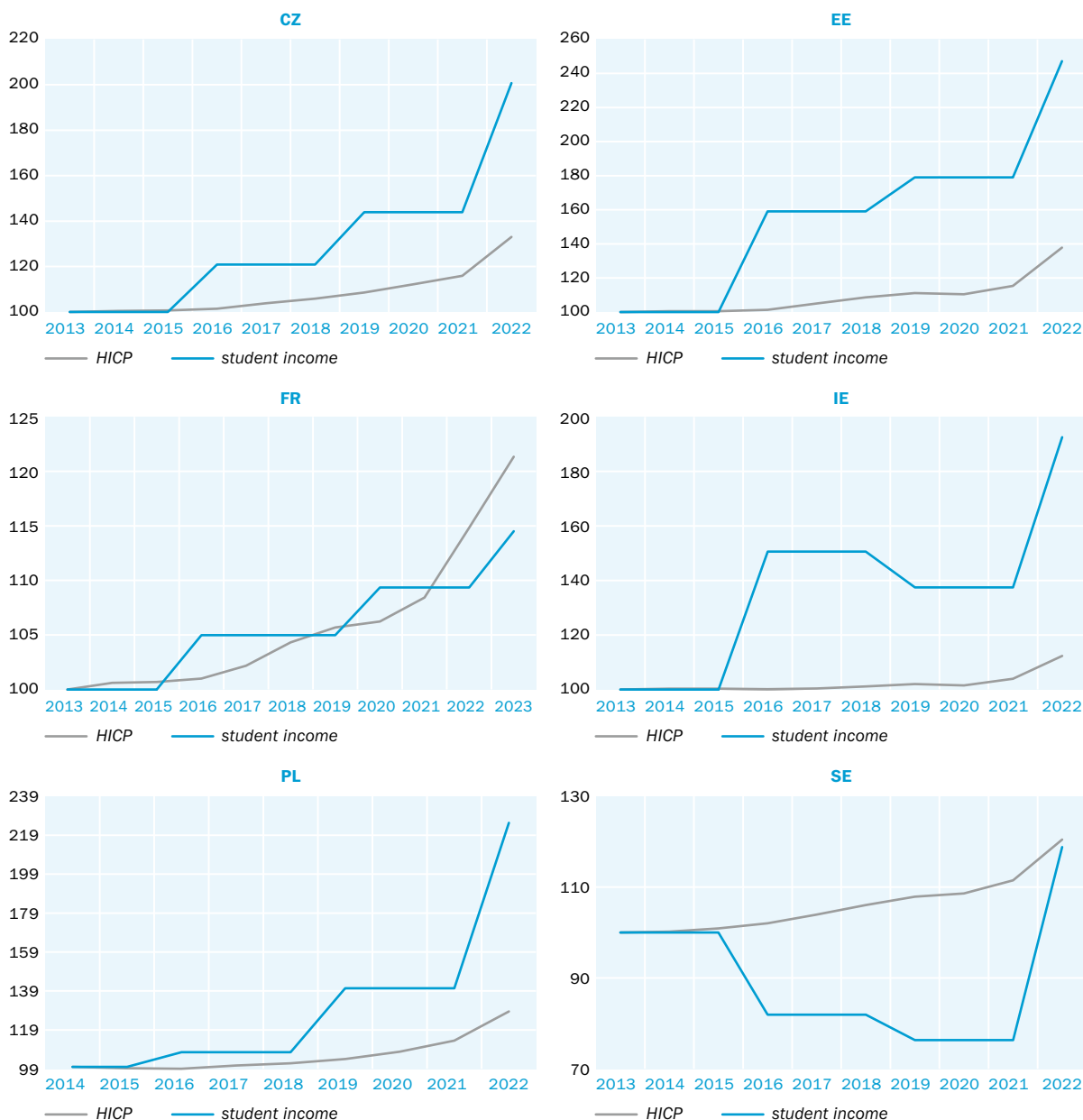
<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that due to the timing of the countries' field phases in E:8, the peak in inflation, which occurred with country-specific differences between June 2022 and February 2023, could largely not be recorded.

rates than inflation. When interpreting the data, two things should be taken into account. Firstly, the results cannot tell anything about whether student income is sufficient to cover all necessary expenses.

Figure B7.3 ↓

### Student income and inflation over time in selected countries

Index values based on students' total monthly income including transfers in kind (mean), students not living with parents



**Data source:** Student income: EUROSTUDENT V: G.1, EUROSTUDENT VI: G.1, EUROSTUDENT VII: G.1, EUROSTUDENT 8: G.1; HICP: European Central Bank, 2023.

**Data collection:** EUROSTUDENT 8: Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except FR (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period? 4.11 What are your average expenses for the following items during the current lecture period?

**Note(s):** Transfers in kind are goods and services for students financed or provided by their parents, partner, or others.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.



In the above analysis, there is no indicator that could provide information on the level of any minimum student income required. It only provides information on the extent to which inflation led to a loss of purchasing power for students. Secondly, for methodological reasons it may well be that the HICP is not a well-suited indicator for measuring inflation for students. On the one hand, students have expenses (e.g. tuition fees) that other population groups do not need to cover. On the other hand, students have reduced expenses (e.g. price reduced meals in refectories or rooms in student halls of residence) from which other population groups do not benefit. An inflation measure that was developed for the general population cannot adequately take these special features into account. Applying the general inflation rate to students may then mean that their situation is wrongly estimated.<sup>5</sup> However, a better indicator on European level is not (yet) available.


## The structure of student income

### Box B7.3

#### Methodological note: Categories of student income

For the analysis in this chapter, student income is grouped into four categories: a) family/partner contributions, b) self-earned income, c) national public student support, and d) other income.

**Family/partner contributions:** Contributions from family/partner are  transfers in cash (legally required or voluntary) that students receive from their parents, partner, or other relatives. The transfers comprise disposable income such as cash and money transfers that students can use freely for their monthly spending. The amounts for  transfers in kind have also been added to family/partner contributions in the figures and tables in this chapter.

**Transfers in kind:** Transfers in kind are students' living and  study-related costs that are not paid by the students themselves, but by the students' parents, partner, or other relatives. The respective payments go directly to the students' creditors, i.e. the money is intangible for the students. One example of transfers in kind is the rent that parents whose collegiate children live away from the parental home pay directly to their children's landlord. Transfers in kind can also be provided in the form of free goods and services by the family and partner (e.g. free meals, clothes, etc.). The concept of transfers in kind is used to capture the full extent of material support for students.

**Self-earned income:** The category 'self-earned income' includes students' income from gainful employment, be it dependent employment or self-employment. Income from both current and previous employment (i.e. savings) is taken into consideration. With respect to income from previous employment, only the average amount that students use to cover their costs of living and studying per month during the current lecture period is considered.

<sup>5</sup> In relation to this, a recent study for Germany has indeed shown that the goods basket of students differs considerably from that of the general population, especially with respect to rent (including ancillary costs) and food. It was also found that – based on specifically estimated student inflation rates – the majority of students had to bear a higher inflation in 2022 than the general population (Meier et al., 2023).

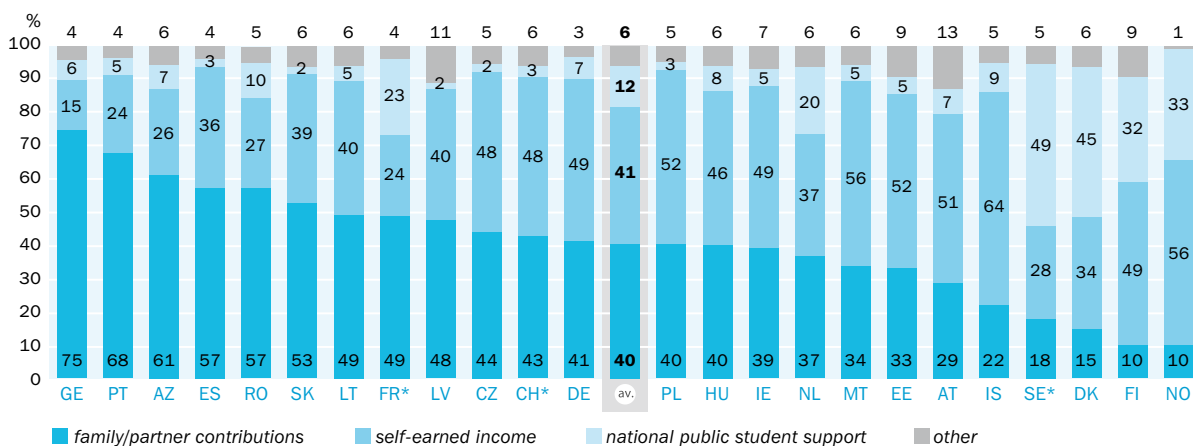
**National public student support:** This type of support comprises payments that students receive, usually because of their student status, directly from the state in which they are permanently studying. It includes non-repayable support (i.e. grants and scholarships) and repayable support (i.e. loans) that may be subject to interest or not. Support from all levels of state (i.e. national level, province, and municipality) as well as from higher education institutions (HEIs) is taken into account. However, as the EUROSTUDENT data are based on students' self-reports, some public support items cannot be covered. This applies, for example, to tax relief for students and their parents or when the state assumes costs to the benefit of students (e.g. state payments to HEIs intended to cover students' tuition fees).<sup>6</sup>

**Other income:** 'Other income' is a residual category covering various income items from either private or public sources not assigned to one of the other categories mentioned above. Student income from other private sources could be grants and loans from private companies. Income from other public sources refers, for example, to pension payments and child benefit for students, which are public support items that are not exclusively granted to students in higher education. Finally, 'other income' may include student support from outside the country of study, i.e. from foreign countries or international entities such as the EU.

Figure B7.4 [↓](#)

**Composition of students' funding**

Based on total monthly income including transfers in kind. Source of funding (in %)



**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, G.52, G.53, G.54, G.55, and G.56. **No data:** HR.

**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period? 4.11 What are your average expenses for the following items during the current lecture period?

**Note(s):** The category 'other' also includes in this case income from sources outside the respective country. Transfers in kind are goods and services for students financed or provided by their parents, partner, or others.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT survey conventions:** FR, CH, SE.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

<sup>6</sup> In Georgia, for instance, 30% of students do not pay tuition fees (> Chapter B8). Instead, their fees are borne by the state, which makes corresponding payments directly to the universities. In accordance with the EUROSTUDENT conventions, this state financial contribution to the institutional costs of higher education is not included in public support for students.

Across all countries, students receive, on average, two fifths (40 %) of their total monthly income including transfers in kind from their families and partners (Figure B7.4). Students generate 41 % of their total income through gainful employment. The public sector provides 12 % of student income by giving out grants, scholarships, and loans. The remaining 6 % come from other private or public sources. This means that on cross-country average the composition of student income has changed compared to the last round and the family/partner now seems to provide a larger part of student income (+ 4 percentage points).

*Across countries, students themselves and their families or partners provide more than 80 % of students' total monthly income.*

As before, the bulk of student funding continues to come from the private sector. Students and their families provide slightly more than four fifths of student income, while the public sector supplies about one eighth (12 %).<sup>7</sup>

- When comparing at country level, it appears that students' self-earned income is the single most important source of income in 54 % of countries. This is true for the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Malta, Estonia, Austria, Iceland, Finland, and Norway.
- In more than a third of countries, namely Georgia, Portugal, Azerbaijan, Spain, Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania, France, and Latvia, family/partner contributions are in relative terms the most important source of income.
- National public student support is only in two countries, Sweden and Denmark, the income source with the highest share in students' total income.

### The importance of contributions from family/partner

We previously emphasised the significance of family/partner contributions to student funding (Figure B7.4). In the following analysis, we focus exclusively on recipients to gain deeper insights into this funding source.

*On cross-country average, 76 % of students receive support from the family or partner. These contributions supply more than half of the recipients' monthly income.*

On cross-country average, 76 % of students receive support in cash and in kind from their parents, partner, or others (Figure B7.5). On average, this type of support accounts for 52 % of the recipients' total monthly income including transfers in kind. Based on the international average, two groups of countries stand out:

- In the countries of the lower left quadrant, both the share of recipients and the income share of family/partner contributions are below the sample average. This group of countries encompasses all Nordic countries as well as Austria, Ireland, and Malta. The share of recipients ranges from 41 % in Finland to 72 % in Malta. The income share varies from 19 % in Norway to 52 % in Ireland.<sup>8</sup>
- In the upper right quadrant, which includes Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Portugal, Georgia, Slovakia, Romania, France, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Spain, Hungary, and Poland, both shares are above the international average. The share of recipients ranges from 79 % in Poland and Hungary to 100 % in Lithuania. The share of family/partner contributions in the recipients' income varies between 54 % in Hungary and 76 % in Portugal.

<sup>7</sup> This calculation of the shares of private and public sector funding is only approximate. The category 'national public student support' may not cover all public contributions to student funding. On the one hand, some items of national public support, such as housing benefits for students, are reported in the category 'other'. On the other hand, the contributions from family/partner may contain income that the family or partner has received in the form of state support beforehand (e.g. in Austria and Germany, students' parents may receive child benefit for their collegiate children, and the parents may pass on this support to their children). As a result, the share of public support is likely to be underestimated in our calculation.

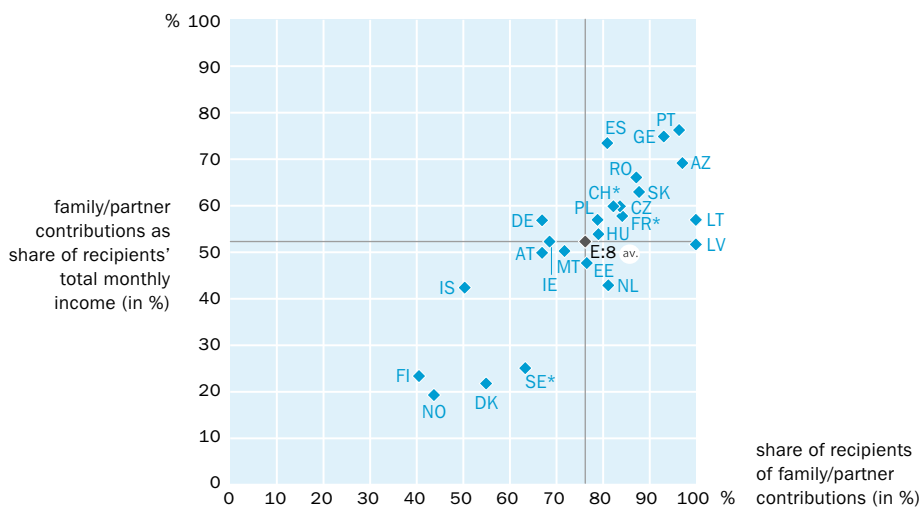
<sup>8</sup> In Ireland, the income share is only marginally below the cross-country average.

As in the last round, the countries in the upper right quadrant form the largest group. There, study funding rests to a particularly high degree on the shoulders of the students' families. Countries with such a funding system could basically run the risk of excluding children from financially not well-off families from higher education, unless, for instance, the state succeeds in closing the funding gap.

Figure B7.5 ↓

### Recipients of family/partner contributions and importance of income source

Based on total monthly income including transfers in kind



**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, G.92, and G.97. **No data:** HR.

**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period? 4.11 What are your average expenses for the following items during the current lecture period?

**Note(s):** Transfers in kind are goods and services for students financed or provided by their parents, partner, or others.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT survey conventions:** FR, CH, SE.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

## The importance of public support

**The state supports, on cross-country average, 41 % of students, providing more than a third of the recipients' total income.** The importance of public support can be investigated in the same manner as family support above. Across the EUROSTUDENT countries, 41 % of all students receive national public student support and this type of support accounts for 34 % of the recipients' total monthly income including transfers in kind (Figure B7.6).

- In the lower left quadrant, there are seven countries – Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Lithuania, and Romania – in which both the recipient quota and the share of national public student support in the recipients' total income are below the international average. This is the largest group of countries. The recipient quota ranges from 16 % in Slovakia to 35 % in Romania. The income share varies between 18 % in Latvia and 32 % in Ireland.
- In the upper right quadrant, which encompasses most of the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and France, both variables are above the international average. The recipient quota varies between 54 % in the Netherlands and 88 % in Denmark. The income share ranges from 41 % in the Netherlands to 65 % in Sweden.
- In Switzerland, Poland, Germany, Iceland, and Austria, which can be found in the upper left quadrant, the income share of the recipients is above the international

average as well, ranging from 37 % in Austria to 62 % in Germany. At the same time, the recipient quota is below the international average in these countries, ranging from 10 % in Switzerland to 22 % in Iceland and Austria.

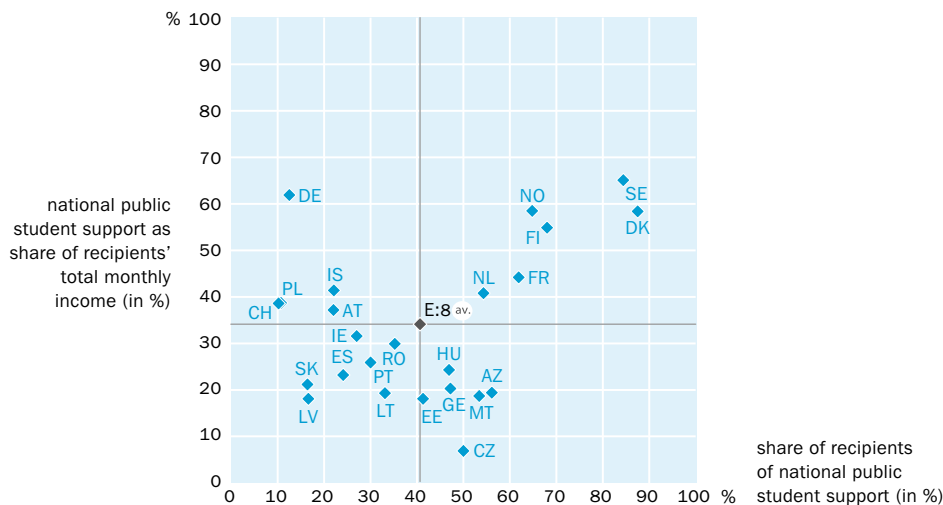
- Finally, there are six countries – Estonia, Hungary, Georgia, the Czech Republic, Malta, and Azerbaijan – in the lower right quadrant. In those countries, the recipient quota is above average, ranging from 41 % in Estonia to 56 % in Azerbaijan.<sup>9</sup> The income share is below the international average, varying between 7 % in the Czech Republic and 24 % in Hungary.

The analysis of family/partner contributions and national public student support shows how the two sources partially replace each other as (most) important sources of funding. For example, in the Nordic countries Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark, public support plays a major role for student funding (both the share of recipients and the share of public support in the recipients' total income are above the international average).

Figure B7.6 [↓](#)

### Recipients of national public student support and importance of income source

Based on total monthly income including transfers in kind



**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, G.82, and G.91. **No data:** HR.

**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period? 4.11 What are your average expenses for the following items during the current lecture period?

**Note(s):** Transfers in kind are goods and services for students financed or provided by their parents, partner, or others.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

At the same time, family/partner contributions are of much less importance in these countries (both variables are below the international average). The opposite is essentially true for Slovakia, Latvia, Spain, Portugal, Lithuania, and Romania. There, public support is rather low (in terms of recipient quota and income share) and family/partner contributions are rather high (although in Latvia the income share does not exceed the international average – nevertheless, the value is still high). This emphasises that the

<sup>9</sup> In Estonia, the recipient quota is marginally above the cross-country average.



two groups of countries are based on different fundamental funding principles assigning different priorities to the public and private sectors.

### Recipients of public support

*Students who profit to an above-average extent from public support are, e.g. young students, those with a migration background, and those who do not pay fees.*

In the previous section the share of students receiving national public student support has already been examined on cross-country level. Which student groups benefit most or least from state support? The following analysis describes the cross-national recipient rates across various institutional, study-related, and socio-demographic characteristics (Figure B7.7).

When interpreting the data, it should be borne in mind that public student support systems can be very complex not only in their structures but also in their effects. There are different fundamental principles of state social policy (e.g. welfare principle vs. supply principle), several policy objectives are being pursued (e.g. equalising social disparities or supporting meritocratic targets), and a large variety of instruments is used (for example, repayable and non-repayable support, loans that are subject to interest or not, transfers in cash and in kind, targeted and flat rate support). This cannot be differentiated in the following analysis. In addition, there are overlaps between various supported student groups, for example, a student receiving national public student support may come from a medium educational background, studying at a university, striving for a Bachelor's degree. For this reason, the focus of comparison should be only on contrastive pairs (e.g. Bachelor vs. Master).

On average across EUROSTUDENT countries, 41 % of all students receive national public student support. Student groups which receive state support to an above-average extent are, for example, students who are not paying fees (47 %), young students in the age groups below 25 years (47 % respectively 45 %), first- and second-generation migrant students (45 %). Within the framework of social policy, the state often uses targeted tuition waivers for certain groups of students to make studying less costly. The exemption from paying fees thus complements other instruments of state social policy. With respect to student age, there is a clear and stable pattern over time according to which the recipient quota for public support is decreasing as students get older. This is mainly due to the state regulations in place for public support. Eligibility is often determined based on a certain student age, a maximum funding period, and supplementary income limits. These factors make it less likely for older students to receive state support. According to the EHEA's principles and guidelines, students with migration background are counted among the underrepresented groups whose participation should be increased and who are – together with other groups – in the focus of specific support. Not least for this reason, they receive national public student support more often than average.

Student groups receiving national public student support clearly less often than average are, inter alia, those attending non-universities (32 %), attending HEIs under private control<sup>10</sup> (15 %), Master students (34 %), and students whose parents are financially very

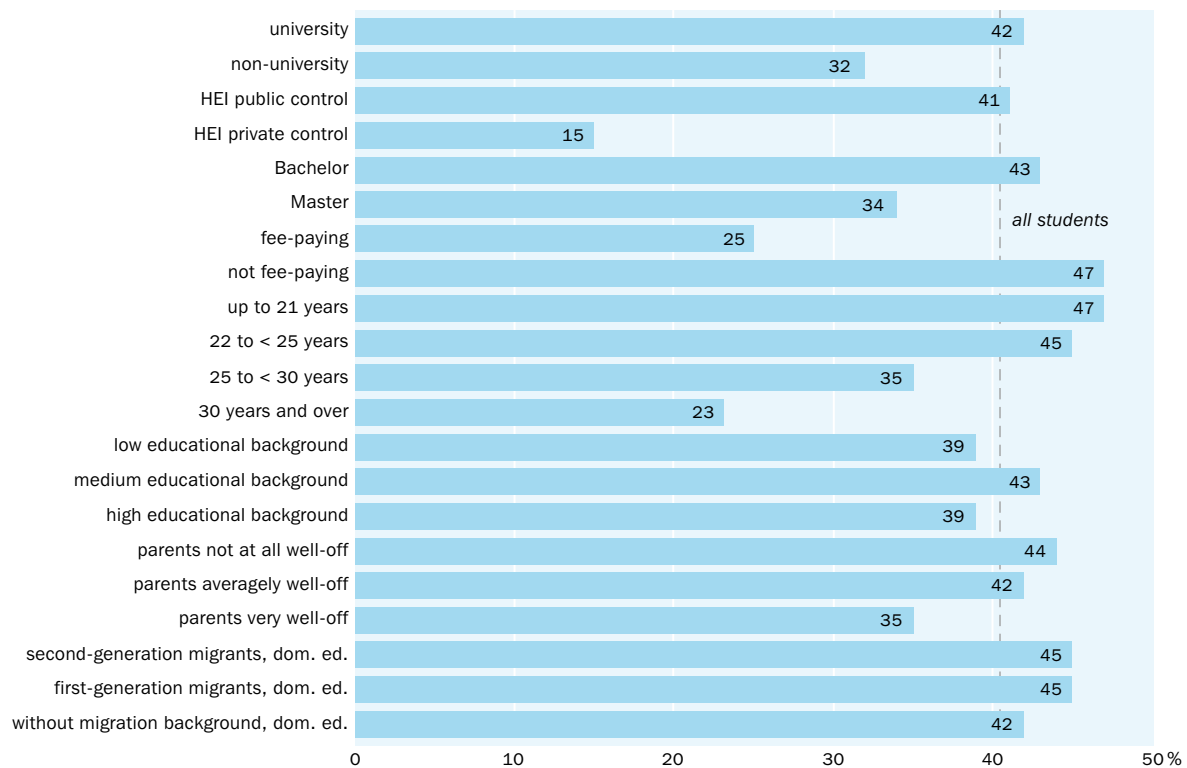
<sup>10</sup> According to ETER, the classification between public and private control is made according to whether a public agency or a private entity has ultimate control over the institution. Ultimate control is decided with reference to who has the power to determine the institution's general policies and activities and appoint the officers managing the school and will usually also extend to the decision to open or close the institution. As many institutions are under the operational control of a governing body, the constitution of that body will also have a bearing on the classification (European Commission, 2023, > Chapter B4).

well-off (35 %). Students attending non-universities are often from low social backgrounds, they are older on average and – in connection with this – receive rather high incomes due to intensive employment alongside studies (> Chapter B4). As a result, they receive less state support; this is where the age effect mentioned above comes into play.

Figure B7.7 ↓

### Recipients of national public student support

Students receiving national public student support by institutional, study-related and socio-demographic characteristics. Share of students on cross-country average (in %)



**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, G.82. **No data:** second-generation migrants, first-generation migrants, without migration background: ES; parents very well-off, averagely well-off, not at all well-off: CH; fee-paying: DK, NO; not fee-paying: NO, PT; HEI public control: AZ, GE; HEI private control: AZ, DK, FI, FR, GE, IE, IS, MT, NL, SE. **Too few cases:** low educational background: LT; first-generation migrants: AZ, LT, LV, MT, SK; parents very well-off: AZ, MT.

**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period?

**Note(s):** The dotted line represents the cross-country average for all students receiving national public student support. Non-universities do not exist in Azerbaijan, Iceland, Romania, or Sweden.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

This basic argument also applies to Master students. They are, on average, clearly older than Bachelor students. With advancing age of students, however, they are more likely to have an accommodation of their own, live with a partner and have children. All this is associated with increased financial requirements, which the students cover by spending more time on gainful employment and thus achieving higher total incomes. Simultaneously, public support and also parental support diminish over time. Higher education institutions under private control finance themselves largely through tuition fees. This requires from students and their families a sufficient ability to pay. In fact, the majority of students at such HEIs still hail from high educational backgrounds or

come from financially (very) well-off families. However, this makes it less likely that these students will receive state support – at least no state support which is meant to equalise social disparities. Country-specific data for most of the previously mentioned student groups can be found in Table B7.2.

### Students' financial difficulties

**On cross-country average, 26 % of students report (very) serious financial difficulties.**

Students' financial difficulties result from an imbalance of income and expenditures. The subsequent analysis is based on the survey question about the extent of financial difficulties that students experienced at the time of the survey. The interviewees were asked to respond according to a 5-point scale that ranged from 'very seriously' to 'not at all'. Based on the cross-country average, 8 % of students report very serious financial difficulties, while another 18 % still indicate serious difficulties (Figure B7.8). 27 % of students have moderate financial distress and 21 % state only slight problems in this respect. Finally, 27 % of students have no financial difficulties at all. It appears that in all countries, the majority of students have at the most moderate financial difficulties. Nevertheless, the minority of students with (very) serious financial distress is rather large in all countries.

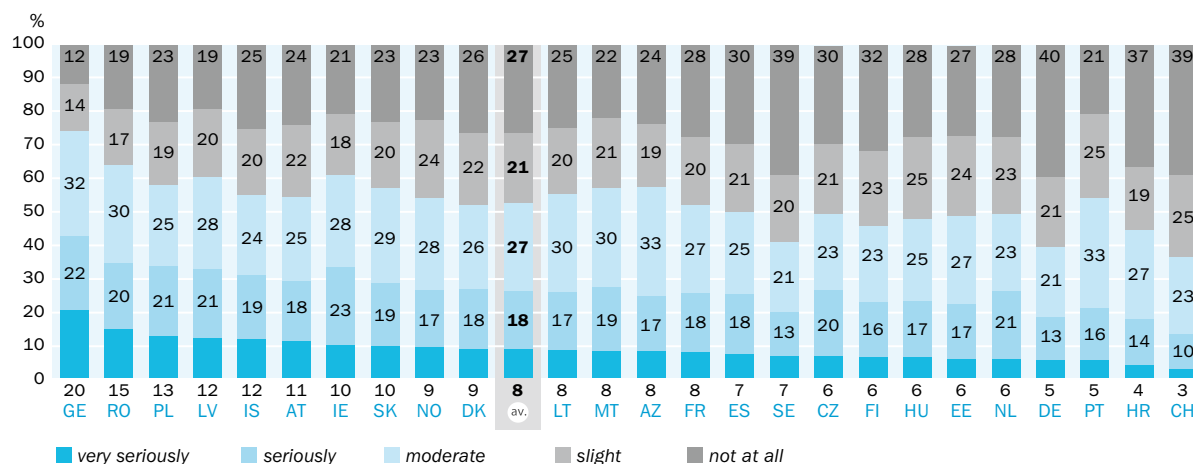
- In Georgia, Romania, Poland, Latvia, Iceland, and Ireland, more than 30 % of students are affected by (very) serious financial problems.
- In Germany, Croatia and Switzerland, the share of students with such troubles is at least 13 %.

Compared to the last round, the share of students with (very) serious financial worries has partially increased. On average across all countries with available data, the respective share increased by 2 percentage points. In Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Poland, and Romania, the increase was rather high, ranging between 6 and 10 percentage points.

Figure B7.8 [↓](#)

#### Students' assessment of their financial situation

Extent of current financial difficulties of all students. Share of students (in %)



Data source: EUROSTUDENT 8, F.148.

Data collection: Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

EUROSTUDENT question(s): 4.16 To what extent are you currently experiencing financial difficulties?

Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group: IE, NL.

## Financial difficulties by different characteristics of students

The degree of financial difficulties varies between different groups of students. When differentiating by students' parents' financial status, it appears that students who rate their parents as financially not at all well-off are – not surprisingly – much more likely to have severe financial difficulties than their counterparts (Figure B7.9a). On cross-country average, 59 % of these students report (very) serious financial problems, while the share for their fellow students whose parents are financially very well-off amounts only to 15 %.

In all countries with available data, the share of students whose parents are not at all well-off is not only above the respective national average, but also the highest of all three groups.

- The differences between students whose parents are not at all well-off and those whose parents are very well-off are particularly high in Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Portugal, and Croatia, at more than 50 percentage points.
- Even in the countries with the comparatively smallest differences, that is Iceland, Sweden, and Germany, the difference between the two groups is not smaller than 30 percentage points.

In Georgia, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Azerbaijan, Portugal, and Croatia, the share of students with (very) serious financial difficulties whose parents are not at all well-off is very high. These countries are characterised by two features. On the one hand, the student funding systems are largely based on support from the students' families and partners. The analysis of Figure B7.5 has shown that both the share of recipients of family/partner contributions and the share of family/partner contributions in the recipients' total monthly income are above the international average in these countries; thus, they all can be found in the upper right quadrant in Figure B7.5.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the countries are characterised by the fact that their wealth is below the international average in the European Union.<sup>12</sup> It can, therefore, be assumed that the combination of strongly family-dependent student financing and a country's relatively low per-capita income means that students from low-income families are likely to have particularly great financial difficulties.

Students with disabilities struggle more often with severe financial difficulties, too. In all countries, disabled students report (very) serious financial problems to an above-average extent (Figure B7.9b). On cross-country average, this share amounts to 37 %. At the same time, their fellow students without disabilities are only affected by such financial problems to a below-average extent in all countries. On average across countries, this share amounts to 23 %. The reasons for a higher risk of financial distress of disabled students can be found both on the students' income and expenditure side. Disabled students may have lower incomes, e.g. in case their disabilities limit their abilities or chances for gainful employment. In fact, a further analysis of EUROSTUDENT data shows that the income from paid jobs during the lecture period differs

*Student groups reporting (very) serious financial distress particularly often include, e.g. those whose parents are not at all well-off, students with disabilities, and those depending on public support.*

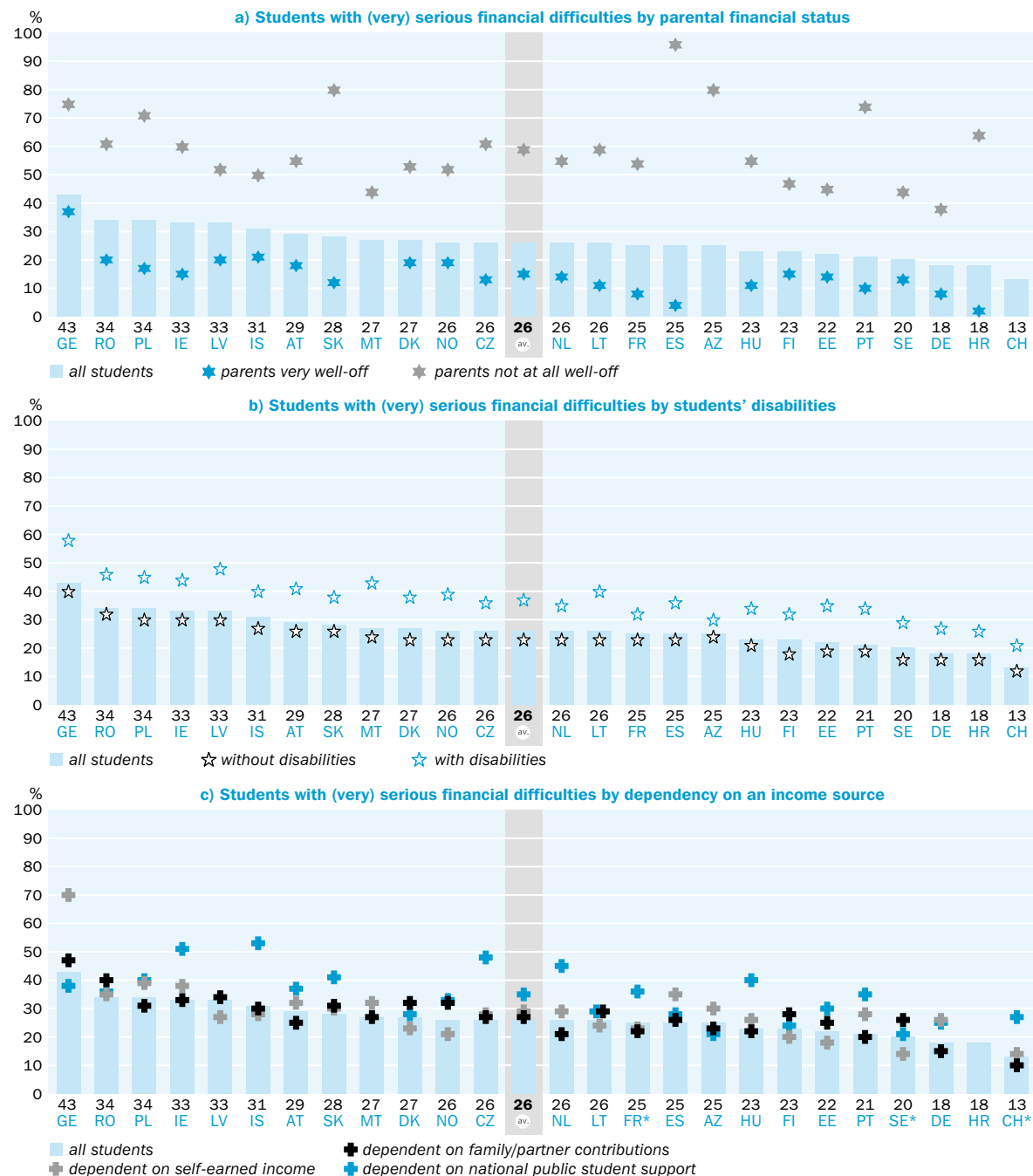
<sup>11</sup> For Croatia, data on family support are not available for the current project round. However, previous analyses over the last four rounds of EUROSTUDENT have shown that the two characteristics mentioned above were also true for Croatia. It can, therefore, be assumed that this will continue to apply in the current round.

<sup>12</sup> A comparison of the countries' GDP per capita in PPS with the average value of the EU-27 countries for the year 2022 yields the following results: EU-27 = 100, GE = 40 (own estimate), Poland = 79, Slovakia = 71, Spain = 85, Azerbaijan = 46 (own estimate), Portugal = 79, Croatia = 73 (Eurostat, 2024a; World Bank, 2024).

Figure B7.9

### Students' assessment of their financial situation by parental financial status, students' disabilities, and dependency on an income source

Share of students (in %)



**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, F.148. **No data:** parents very well-off and not at all well-off: CH; dependency on an income source: HR. **Too few cases:** parents very well-off: MT, AZ; dependent on national public student support: LV, MT.

**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.16 To what extent are you currently experiencing financial difficulties?

**Note(s):** The values above the country abbreviations represent the share of all students with (very) serious financial difficulties.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT survey conventions:** CH, FR, SE.

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

clearly between the two groups. On cross-country average, the mean employment income per month of students with disabilities is 403 PPS. Their counterparts without disabilities earn 531 PPS (> [Database](#)). This has also an impact on the students' total income. The total monthly mean income, including transfers in kind, of disabled students amounts, on international average, to 1,425 PPS, while that of their peers without disabilities is 1,450 PPS (> [Database](#)). Of course, this difference is only small, however, at country level the difference between the two groups is sometimes more pronounced (e.g. in Estonia, Ireland, and Norway, it is more than 100 PPS per month). There are also variations between the two groups on the expenditure side. For example, in all countries, disabled students have higher health costs than their fellow students without disabilities (cross-country averages: 47 PPS vs. 31 PPS, > [Database](#)). This indicates that the finances of disabled students are indeed under pressure from both sides although the income problem seems to weigh heavier.

When students depend on an income source, the cross-country average indicates that two student groups show similar results, while one group stands out (Figure B7.9c). Among students depending either on family support or on self-earned income, 27 % respectively 29 % report (very) serious financial difficulties, which is (just) above the international value for all students (26 %). In the group of students depending on national public student support, 35 % complain about severe financial problems. This is also reflected on national level. Out of 22 countries with data on all three student groups, there are 13 countries in which students depending on national public student support report the largest shares of those with (very) serious financial difficulties.<sup>13</sup> In five countries, Romania, Denmark, Lithuania, Finland, and Sweden, it is students depending on family support and in another four countries, namely Georgia, Spain, Azerbaijan, and Germany, it is students depending on self-earned income who most often have serious financial problems. The fact that students depending on public support have a much higher risk of getting in severe financial troubles is most likely related to their income situation: on cross-country median, students depending on national public student support receive a total income, including transfers in kind, of 602 PPS per month. Their fellow students depending on family support have 1,117 PPS and students depending on self-earned income get 1,472 PPS in the same time span (Table B7.1).

Further student groups who report (very) serious financial difficulties to an above-average extent are those of advanced age (25 years and over), from low and medium educational backgrounds, international students, students living away from parents, and students who are paying fees (Table B7.3).

### Comparison over time: students' assessment of their financial situation

How did students' financial difficulties develop over time? The following analysis draws a comparison of the proportion of students with serious or very serious financial difficulties between the fifth and the current eighth round of EUROSTUDENT (Figure B7.10). There are 20 countries with available data on this indicator for the two project rounds. A trend can be observed that the extent of students' severe financial difficulties

*In 60 % of countries, the share of students with (very) serious financial difficulties has decreased between E:V and E:8.*

<sup>13</sup> In the Czech Republic, data on students depending on national public student support are based on a relatively low number of respondents.

has been decreasing over time. In 60 % of countries, the share of students reporting (very) serious financial difficulties has decreased between E:V and E:8.

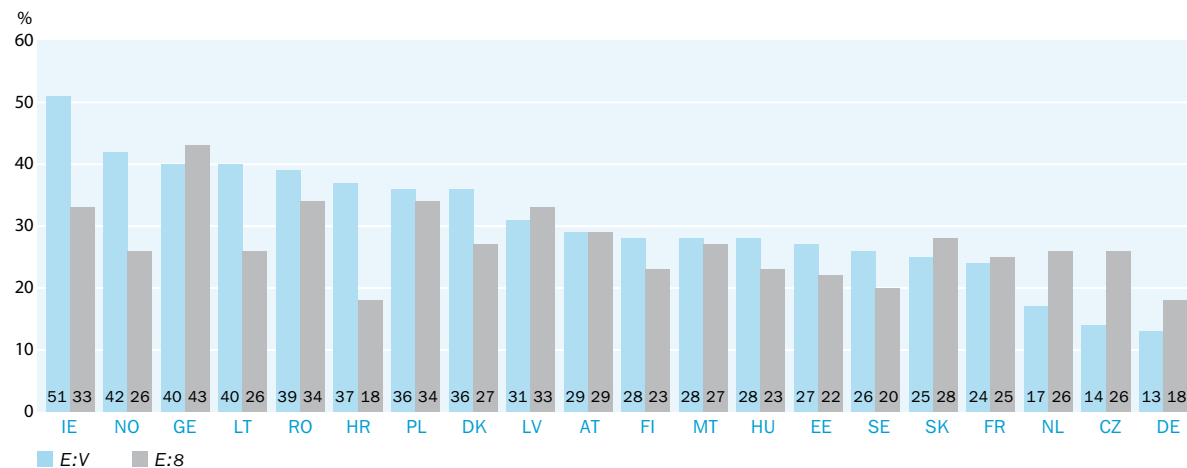
- The decline was particularly pronounced in Ireland, Norway, Lithuania, Croatia, and Denmark, with 10 percentage points and more. In another seven countries, the decline in the share of students with (very) serious financial difficulties ranges between 1 and 6 percentage points.
- In Austria, the share of financially distressed students is the same in both rounds (29 %).
- In 35 % of countries, including Georgia, Latvia, Slovakia, France, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Germany, the share has increased from E:V to E:8. The increase varies from 1 percentage point in France to 12 percentage points in the Czech Republic.

If we look at the data not only for the fifth and eighth round, but for the last four rounds of EUROSTUDENT, a variety of patterns emerges, i.e. in many countries the values of the time series do not fall or rise strictly monotonously. Nevertheless, a general downward trend is recognisable in most countries. This is generally a positive outcome. However, the reasons for this are not yet clear. The decreasing share of students with severe financial distress may be caused by an improved material well-being of them over time. This may be due to students receiving more financial support from their families, from the state, or they generate more earned income through gainful employment alongside studies.

Figure B7.10 [↓](#)

#### Comparison over time: students' assessment of their financial situation

Students with (very) serious financial difficulties. Share of students (in %)



**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT V, F.6, and EUROSTUDENT 8, F.148. **No data:** E:V: AZ, ES, IS, PT; E:8: AM, BA, CH, IT, ME, RS, RU, SI, UA.

**Data collection:** E:8: Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except DE (summer 2021), AT, FR, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 3.8/4.16 To what extent are you currently experiencing financial difficulties?

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

Another explanation, however, might be that the social composition of the student populations has changed over time. Perhaps potential students from low-income families have increasingly refrained from taking up studies so that their places have been more and more taken by students from wealthier families. A more in-depth analysis is needed to clarify this question.

## Discussion and policy considerations

The financial resources available to students, as measured by the median income, still vary from country to country, which is to be expected. Azerbaijan, Germany, Denmark, Slovakia, and France are countries where student income in PPS is rather low in international comparison, although the level of median income as such does not necessarily indicate an increased inability to cover costs. Compared to the last round, the income range between the countries has narrowed noticeably, as the ratio between the highest and lowest income of the countries has decreased from more than three in the last round to less than two in this round. When taking the results from the sixth project round into account as well, when the ratio was slightly above two, this rough measure seems not to indicate a convergence of student income across countries over time. However, the international convergence of student income would also not be an objective set by the Rome Communiqué (2020) or the development of its principles and guidelines (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022).

Student income can come under considerable pressure because of crisis events. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on study financing for parts of the student populations, e.g. through the loss of students' own jobs, reduction of family support, or difficulties obtaining public support (Hawley et al., 2021; Becker & Lörz, 2020; Berkes et al., 2020; Farnell et al., 2021). In a global comparison, students in Europe expressed during the pandemic more frequently worries about their personal finances than their fellow students in Asia, North America, and Oceania. This problem was only reported more often among students in Africa and South America (Aristovnik et al., 2020). At national level in the EUROSTUDENT countries, the share of students negatively affected financially by the pandemic ranged between more than a tenth in Lithuania and more than a third in Portugal. Student groups that were disproportionately often affected by such negative impacts of the pandemic were especially those whose parents are financially not at all well-off. Furthermore, students with disabilities and – to a lesser extent – students depending on national public student support were part of these groups. The reasons for the difficulties of these groups in coping with the financial consequences of the pandemic may initially vary (e.g. lack of (more) parental support, loss of jobs, increased health costs, insufficient public support) but in the end it is due to a lack of opportunities to increase income to the extent required. Students have received additional state aid during the pandemic in several countries. In Germany, all federal levels, i.e. federal, Länder and local governments, as well as universities, have provided financial support. The instruments and measures used included, inter alia, grants, giving out interest-free loans, the temporary exemption from interest on loans, and the extension of funding periods (Reus, 2022; Gwosć, 2023). Apart from the appropriateness of this support, which cannot be assessed here, another major problem was the time delay in making public aid available to students in need. The call for quick, unbureaucratic help from the state, echoing not only in the higher education sector but across many other areas during the pandemic, however, seems unfortunately only be realisable to a limited extent (van der Beek et al., 2023). Nevertheless, forward-looking state crisis prevention measures could help to reduce the response time in the event of future crises.



Another event that is very likely to have had a direct, predominantly negative impact on students' finances is inflation like that of the years 2022/23. A time series analysis of student income and the general inflation rate over the last 10 years for selected countries has shown that in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Poland, and – at least half of the time – in France, income growth has outpaced inflation. However, if students do not – or cannot – build up savings, their expenditure growth exceeded inflation as well. The positive findings on the long-term development of students' purchasing power, however, says nothing about the adequacy of their income levels to cover their costs, it only says to what extent inflation reduces purchasing power. The current EUROSTUDENT data reflect the inflation in 2022/23 to some extent, but it was not possible to capture its peak. The European Students' Union (2022) pointed out that in winter 2022/23, students were facing the decision to choose between heating, eating, or dropping out of higher education because of inflation. They suggested a comprehensive list of countermeasures for different federal levels. In fact, the state has also provided financial support during this crisis. In France, vulnerable groups including students received one-off payments (Ministère de l'économie des finances et de la souveraineté industrielle et numérique, 2021), in Spain, tax reductions on food, electricity and gas, as well as subsidies for low-income families were granted (La Moncloa, 2022), and in Austria, one-off payments, changes in income taxation (e.g. eradication of cold progression) and regular indexation of study assistance were introduced (Fink, 2022). Students were not always explicitly addressed as a target group, but they at least benefited from measures when those were aimed at the total population or large population groups. It must be feared, however, that the public sector in many countries was too financially overstretched with the overall crisis management to be able to fulfil the above-mentioned students' needs satisfactorily.

**B  
7** The analysis of students' income structure has shown that private sources provide the lion's share of student funding. On cross-country average, family/partner contributions and students' self-earned income together account for 81 % of students' total monthly income, while direct cash support from the state provides another 12 %. Compared to the data from the last round, the share of family/partner contributions has increased by 4 percentage points, while the importance of all other income categories has slightly decreased. This could also be an effect of the previous crises resulting in students increasingly falling back on parental support.

While the recipient quota of national public student support has, on cross-country average, hardly changed compared to the last round (E:8: 41 % vs. E:VII: 42 %) this does not apply to the share of public support in the recipients' total income. The international share has decreased from 42 % in the last round to 34 % in the current round. In countries like Georgia, Ireland, Malta, Poland, and Sweden, the decline was between 11 and 27 percentage points. This is most likely due to considerable increases in the recipients' job income, which took place in all countries with available data (> [Database](#), although this result can probably also be partly attributed to the changes in the student populations targeted by EUROSTUDENT as mentioned in the beginning and the data cleaning rules applied, see Box B7.1). This could mean that the income importance of public support has decreased for the group of recipients (for a time comparison for Germany see Dohmen et al., 2021). Against the background of the objectives of the social dimension of the EHEA, this might be a worrying development. Not least

because public support, especially in the form of need-based grants, is a suited means of preventing employed students from dropping out of higher education (Kalalahti et al., 2023).

Across countries, more than a quarter (26 %) of students report (very) serious financial difficulties. This share has increased by 2 percentage points compared to the last round, which is probably not least due to various crises, such as the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and rapidly increasing inflation. It should be noted, however, that our data set only records the consequences for those who are still in the higher education system. Other consequences, such as students dropping out due to financial reasons, cannot be captured. Particularly affected by financial worries are students whose parents are financially not at all well-off. But also students with disabilities, students depending on national public student support, 25- to 29-year-olds, those from low educational backgrounds, international students, and students who are paying fees, are often among those who report disproportionately high shares. Most of these groups are identified as disadvantaged, underrepresented, or vulnerable in the EHEA's Social Dimension Strategy and are targeted by inclusive strategies (Annex II to the Rome Communiqué, 2020). Our results indicate that financial support for these groups is still urgently needed. One piece of seemingly good news is that in a long-term comparison between the fifth and the current eighth round, there is still a trend towards the extent of students' severe financial difficulties decreasing over time in most countries. However, the exact causes still need to be investigated.

## Tables

Table B7.1

**Students' total monthly income including transfers in kind by age, educational background, dependency on an income source, financial difficulties, and student fees**

Income (median, in PPS)

	Age groups				Educational background			Dependency on income source			Financial difficulties		Student fees	
	Up to <21 years	22 to <25 years	25 to <30 years	30 years and over	Low educational background	Medium educational background	High educational background	Dependent on family/partner contributions	Dependent on self-earned income	Dependent on national public student support	With financial difficulties	Without financial difficulties	Students paying fees	Students not paying fees
AT	891	1,057	1,262	1,722	1,324	1,219	1,119	964	1,464	1,096	1,119	1,267	1,335	1,111
AZ	930	1,168	1,596	1,643	1,093	911	1,105	934	1,409	433	935	1,073	1,246	842
CH*	906	1,039	1,264	1,972	1,247	1,178	1,124	1,018	1,482	1,031	1,170	1,172	1,172	1,013
CZ	891	1,029	1,338	1,956	1,338	1,117	1,070	923	1,472	109	1,014	1,146	1,698	1,010
DE	828	926	988	1,247	927	959	986	959	1,017	863	826	1,055	959	918
DK*	818	893	967	1,236	976	930	930	1,364	1,116	817	930	927	n.d.	930
EE	1,046	1,195	1,542	1,928	1,366	1,399	1,361	1,157	1,652	587	1,228	1,537	1,719	1,322
ES	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
FI	962	978	1,070	1,316	1,266	1,172	1,060	1,087	1,308	934	1,082	1,153	1,247	1,108
FR*	699	1,069	1,178	1,682	792	771	949	924	1,318	561	746	961	1,013	735
GE	1,061	1,139	1,208	1,199	993	1,092	1,078	1,226	939	141	1,139	1,025	1,200	798
HR	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
HU	842	1,026	1,355	1,752	1,239	1,155	1,068	944	1,437	546	1,014	1,170	1,492	982
IE	946	996	1,343	1,679	1,276	1,050	1,196	1,132	1,343	559	971	1,363	1,190	907
IS	805	954	1,286	1,867	1,831	1,618	1,244	1,203	1,618	1,047	1,244	1,452	1,323	1,278
LT	1,028	1,408	1,894	2,030	t.f.c.	1,228	1,304	1,167	1,549	600	1,238	1,366	1,871	1,113
LV	1,340	1,583	1,844	1,940	1,616	1,622	1,628	1,590	1,628	t.f.c.	1,570	1,643	1,848	1,331
MT	908	1,092	2,139	2,239	1,735	980	1,211	1,042	2,015	t.f.c.	1,213	1,694	2,207	1,119
NL	1,068	1,227	1,292	1,816	1,307	1,168	1,206	1,215	1,298	1,127	1,197	1,206	1,216	1,583
NO	819	922	1,088	1,953	1,601	1,172	1,019	1,322	1,793	807	941	1,191	n.d.	n.d.
PL	1,123	1,309	1,568	1,860	1,457	1,299	1,338	1,087	1,580	602	1,279	1,352	1,641	1,049
PT	1,041	1,177	1,323	1,808	1,145	1,135	1,164	1,117	1,535	624	1,161	1,135	1,146	n.d.
RO	1,170	1,541	1,840	2,327	1,507	1,404	1,560	1,349	1,872	468	1,385	1,572	1,844	1,326
SE*	1,062	1,141	1,284	1,825	1,568	1,355	1,210	1,367	1,879	1,141	1,251	1,296	1,434	1,283
SK	732	833	1,107	1,299	932	838	885	797	1,086	386	870	886	1,078	785
median	930	1,069	1,292	1,816	1,292	1,168	1,124	1,117	1,472	602	1,139	1,191	1,323	1,049

n.d.: no data. t.f.c.: too few cases.

Data source: EUROSTUDENT 8, G.1 (PPP).

Data collection: Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

EUROSTUDENT question(s): 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period? 4.11 What are your average expenses for the following items during the current lecture period?

Note(s): Transfers in kind are goods and services for students financed or provided by their parents, partner, or others.

Deviations from EUROSTUDENT survey conventions: CH, DK, FR, SE.

Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group: IE, NL.

Table B7.2

**Recipients of national public student support by age, educational background, parental financial status, type of HEI, and study programme**

Share of students (in %)

	Age groups				Educational background			Parental financial status			Type of HEI		Study programme	
	Up to 21 years	22 to < 25 years	25 to < 30 years	30 years and over	Low educational background	Medium educational background	High educational background	Parents very well-off	Parents averagely well-off	Parents not at all well-off	University	Non-university	Bachelor	Master
AT	23	26	23	14	28	28	14	13	23	33	20	29	24	19
AZ	60	50	32	27	43	56	55	t.f.c.	57	59	56	n/a	57	53
CH	11	11	11	8	22	13	7	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	10	10	11	10
CZ	64	57	31	4	31	47	53	47	50	39	53	19	48	49
DE	15	12	14	8	19	17	9	1	12	26	14	11	12	11
DK	91	90	85	79	85	89	87	85	87	85	87	89	91	81
EE	45	44	39	36	44	44	40	33	43	44	42	40	43	39
ES	31	28	14	7	37	37	12	9	28	36	30	12	25	20
FI	91	90	70	41	42	65	74	72	66	59	74	62	74	49
FR	62	68	61	42	67	72	56	42	63	78	62	61	61	66
GE	51	44	44	37	37	46	48	51	47	32	50	28	53	28
HR	51	42	19	4	35	41	34	31	38	35	40	23	35	37
HU	59	56	34	14	47	44	49	43	48	42	50	29	47	42
IE	37	26	16	11	32	35	19	9	25	51	24	31	34	12
IS	13	19	30	22	23	19	25	21	23	23	22	n/a	24	20
LT	36	32	31	30	t.f.c.	34	33	37	32	29	32	35	34	27
LV	28	14	7	7	11	13	19	14	18	12	18	9	20	11
MT	85	63	19	10	43	67	65	t.f.c.	51	26	66	23	71	23
NL	50	64	59	23	58	58	53	43	60	80	58	51	55	54
NO	80	83	72	33	48	62	69	64	64	65	67	62	75	53
PL	10	12	10	10	15	14	7	4	13	28	11	11	11	11
PT	36	31	21	14	44	37	15	7	30	38	28	33	32	25
RO	39	37	25	28	41	37	33	30	35	38	35	n/a	36	36
SE	95	93	84	66	78	87	84	90	82	81	84	n/a	90	65
SK	14	22	14	7	16	17	16	16	16	24	17	8	16	20
av.	47	45	35	23	39	43	39	35	42	44	42	32	43	34

n.d.: no data. t.f.c.: too few cases. n/a: not applicable.

**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, G.82.**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.15 What is the average monthly amount available to you in cash or via bank transfers from the following sources during the current lecture period?**Note(s):** Non-universities do not exist in Azerbaijan, Iceland, Romania, or Sweden.**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

Table B7.3

**Students' assessment of their financial situation by age, educational background, educational origin, basic form of housing, and student fees**
*Share of students experiencing (very) serious financial difficulties (in %)*

	Age groups				Educational background			Educational origin		Housing form		Student fees	
	Up to 21 years	22 to < 25 years	25 to < 30 years	30 years and over	Low educational background	Medium educational background	High educational background	Domestic	International	Living with parents	Not living with parents	Students paying fees	Students not paying fees
AT	21	26	35	34	41	30	27	26	38	21	31	36	27
AZ	22	29	42	30	24	29	22	24	t.f.c.	23	28	25	24
CH	8	10	16	20	25	15	10	12	19	10	15	12	13
CZ	26	27	30	22	44	29	23	25	37	22	28	35	25
DE	9	12	27	26	29	22	14	16	32	10	21	19	19
DK	19	23	28	40	42	28	25	28	21	20	27	n.d.	26
EE	21	23	23	22	30	23	21	21	33	21	22	31	21
ES	19	28	39	30	29	31	16	25	38	22	28	30	19
FI	17	20	26	24	27	26	21	22	30	14	23	32	23
FR	23	26	38	31	38	32	20	24	43	22	27	23	29
GE	40	46	42	51	53	48	39	42	45	41	45	43	42
HR	16	18	19	22	21	20	14	18	21	15	20	20	16
HU	19	22	30	25	40	26	20	21	36	19	25	25	22
IE	31	38	40	30	37	37	29	33	33	31	34	32	35
IS	24	30	38	28	29	32	30	30	39	26	32	34	28
LT	25	27	29	22	t.f.c.	26	25	25	34	24	26	28	25
LV	31	35	35	31	38	39	30	32	36	29	34	38	28
MT	27	32	36	19	28	27	26	26	39	28	25	24	29
NL	20	29	40	26	34	24	25	24	36	17	34	27	21
NO	28	29	30	20	35	30	25	26	27	19	27	n.d.	n.d.
PL	29	33	43	41	43	38	28	33	38	31	35	38	29
PT	17	20	28	33	24	21	18	19	43	16	26	20	n.d.
RO	33	35	41	32	37	39	28	34	47	33	35	41	33
SE	16	17	23	23	25	21	18	19	26	15	21	31	20
SK	27	28	31	30	39	30	24	28	38	26	30	32	27
av.	23	26	32	28	34	29	23	25	35	22	28	29	25

n.d.: no data. t.f.c.: too few cases.

**Data source:** EUROSTUDENT 8, F.148.

**Data collection:** Spring 2022 – summer 2022 except CH (spring 2020), DE (summer 2021), AT, ES, FR, PT, RO (spring 2023 – summer 2023).

**EUROSTUDENT question(s):** 4.16 To what extent are you currently experiencing financial difficulties?

**Deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group:** IE, NL.

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