



JISER - MED REPORT

DIMENSION 1: STUDENT SERVICES ONLINE SURVEY

REPORT

INTRODUCTION:

An online survey to identify the issues related to accessibility by Middle East & North Africa students to postgraduate Studies in the European Union was launched on 3 October 2011 and was running until 30 September 2012.

The purpose of this survey was to know more about the experience of graduate students coming from the MENA region to study in a University in the European Union and this within the framework of the Erasmus Mundus exchange program. It aimed at consolidating baseline information to improve students' services, accessibility and mobility by identifying barriers to students' accessibility to EU Higher Education Institutions.

This survey is part of the dissemination strategy described in the JISER-MED project, and was designed and translated from English into French by the University of Barcelona (Spain). The technical implementation and online support was provided by the Princess Sumaya University of Technology (Jordan). This survey addresses in 66 questions in the field of Legal, Academic, Cultural, Administrative, and Financial issues as well as Access to Information and General Information on the students' background. It consisted of multiple choices and open question or with a yes and no answer.

METHODOLOGY:

An email containing a link to the survey has then been sent to all JISER-MED partners informing them of the need to disseminate this survey among Erasmus Mundus Master Coordinators and Ph. D Students. The JISER-MED partners includes: EPUF (Spain), AlmaLaurea (Italy), Universitat de Illes Balears (Spain), Université de Montpellier 1 (France), Université de Perpignan Via Domitia (France), Abdelmalek Essaâdi University (Morocco), Princess Sumaya University for Technology (Jordan) , The Virtual University of Tunis (Tunisia).

The JISER-MED partners suggested extending the survey target group to other Project Coordinator of Erasmus Mundus Programme in the Mediterranean region.

In this regard, an email has been sent to Ms. Giordana Bruno (EACA - Brussels) to ask for the contact details of other Erasmus Mundus Project Coordinator in this area.

Ms. Bruno answered that she has to check internally first as this complies with the European Commission internal rules on data protection and then suggested to personally take care of spreading and transferring the survey to European EM coordinators.

An introductory letter to send to the students and in which the JISER-MED project and the survey will be introduced was also requested by the JISER-MED partners. The letter was therefore drafted in both English and French and was also transferred to Ms. Bruno.

The concerned target countries were Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain, and Turkey.

CONTENT:

The survey covered a variety of field in order to make sure to understand all the different aspects of the students experience in his/her studies period in a university in the European host country. A series of questions were asked to the students concerning the following topic: legal, academic, access to information, financial aspects, administrative aspects, culture, and general background information. The latter concerned among others the age, the current economic situation (employed, student etc..), the level of education of the respondent's both parents. To find out more about the specific questions that were asked for each of the above mentioned area, please check the word document "Questionnaire_JISER-MED_FINAL" that can be found on the CD.

RESULTS:**a) General information**

On 1 August 2012 we had two hundred and one (204) students who took the survey. The Princess Sumaya University of Technology provided us with the results in a PDF format document on which the students's answers to each question were displayed in two ways on one same page:

- In a pie chart with an indication of the question and the percentage of the students per each answer;
- In written: the question and the percentage of students who selected each of the possible answer

54% of the students who took the survey were male while 43% were female. Among them, 33% had an undergraduate degree in the field of Engineering and Technology and they represent the majority. 40% came to study in a European University /Institution to pursue a Master programme and 32% to achieve Ph.D or Doctoral studies. On the total number of students who took this survey, 47% said that they will continue their studies when returning to their home country.

b) Feedback

89% of the students would choose a European country to carry postgraduate studies if they had to choose another country to study in, and 93% of them rated their studying experience in a European country as good or very good.

The below tab indicates by order of preferences the European country the students would have chosen:

Rank	Country
1	France
2	Germany
3	United-Kingdom
4	Belgium
5	Italy
6	Switzerland – Austria –Spain
7	The Netherlands – Luxemburg

These positive feedbacks are important to note despite the fact that only 30% found the access to EU Higher-Education “easy” and 23% saw it as “difficult”. The detailed break-down of the students' answer to all these questions can be found in the survey results that are also available on the CD.

The main concerns that were expressed by the students regarding the access to EU Higher-Education institutions were related to long and cumbersome administrative procedure and to the high cost of life in Europe. *All the processes to be completed before being admitted into*

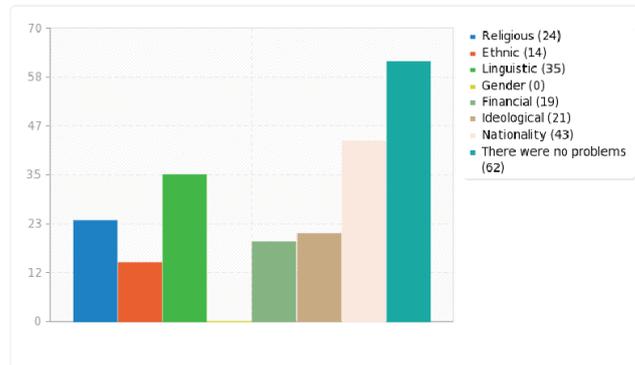
University and obtaining the scholarship are [seen as] too many, too long and cumbersome by 31% of the respondent, 25% considers that *the cost of living in the European Union is too high*, while 13% said that *obtaining the visa is difficult*. Please find below the list of answers:

In your opinion, which were the main difficulties that Middle East & North Africa students encounter when trying to study in the European Union?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Language (1)	11	9.02%
All the processes to be completed before being admitted into University and obtaining the scholarship are too many, too long and cumbersome (2)	38	31.15%
Obtaining a visa is difficult (3)	16	13.11%
The cost of living in the European Union is too high (4)	31	25.41%
Academic level differences between the two regions (5)	8	6.56%
Cultural integration (6)	7	5.74%
Other	8	6.56%
No answer	3	2.46%

Questions related to the students’ integration in the Host University and Country showed that 62 students out 204 did not encounter any problem. Among the students who were confronted to cases of discrimination, 74% qualified them as “moderate” and felt it was related to their nationality or due to the lack of command of the host country’s language:

Did you feel discriminated in the country of destination? If so, in what way?



CONCLUSION:

Despite the fact that the application and registration procedures are seen as difficult by the students’ and could be considered as discouraging, the host university is considered as the main interlocutor and the support it brings for all the administrative procedure remains crucial for the applicants. The Academic induction in the host university is considered as “good to very good” by 66% of the respondents and internet is seen as the 1st source of information on scholarship programmes and opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The results showed that the host universities played the role of the main source of information and the main interlocutor students had during their application and registration process.

We can therefore infer that there is a need in increasing the level of awareness and knowledge at the University of Origin of the current procedures in EU universities and institutions. This knowledge concerns mainly the following aspects:

- ❖ The time needed to complete the registration in the host university
- ❖ The list of usually requested documents to be presented to the host university: this can be known by experience and a database built and regularly updated by the International Office of the University of Origins. This can also be done by closer contact and information sharing between the host university and the University of Origin.
- ❖ The visa requirements and procedures by country: at least for the countries in which the students are keener on selecting for their studies.
- ❖ The available sources of financing and ways of obtaining them in both the host and the country of origin
- ❖ Information on the host country's culture and host university operating ways (relation with the administration, teaching methodology...)