CZ EDU CON

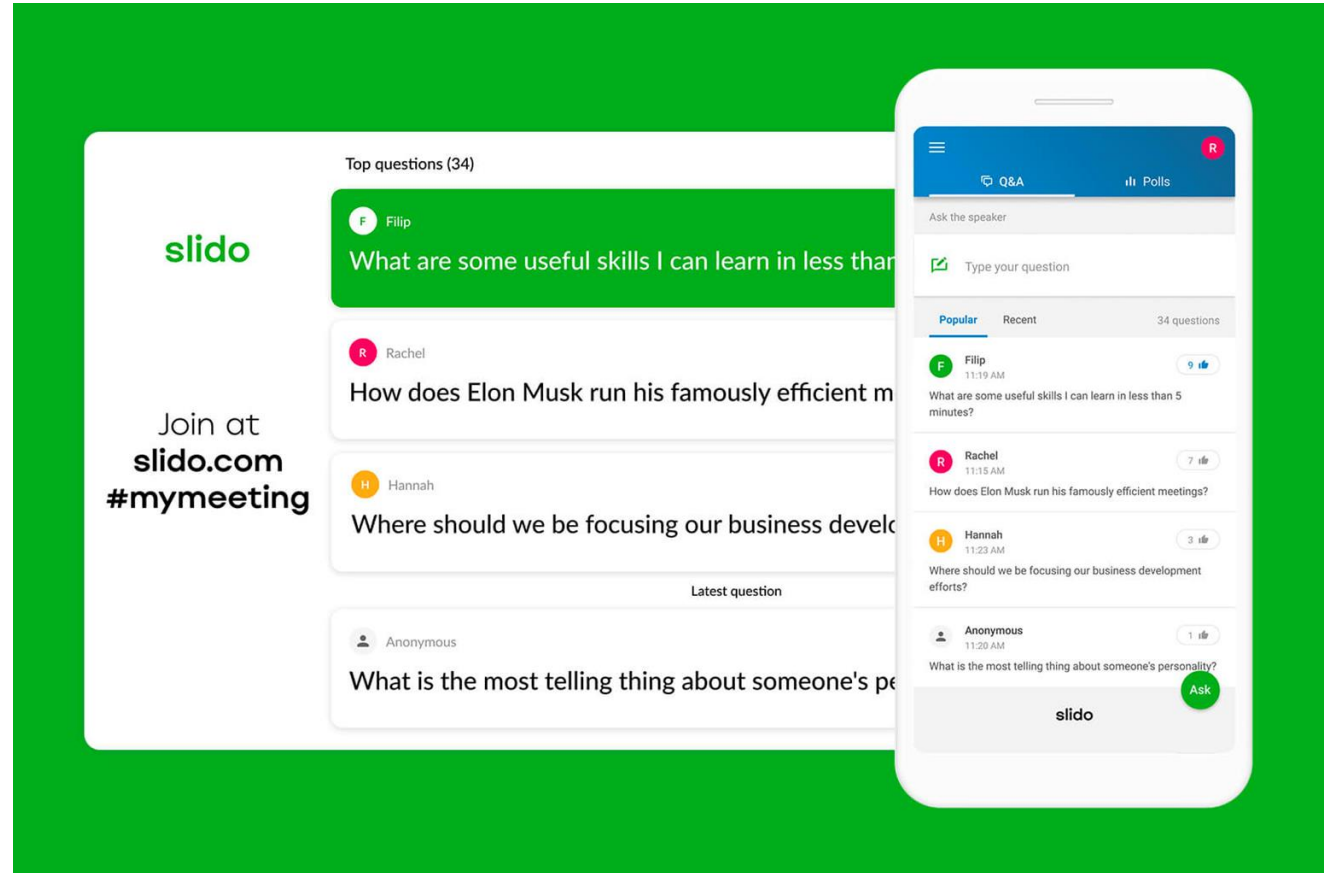# The Student Perspective on the Erasmus+ Programme 2021–2027: How to Remove Barriers to Student Participation?

Rita Dias, Erasmus Student Network

The Students' Perspective on The Erasmus + Programme 2021-2027

How to remove barriers to student participation?

First, let's understand the background of our participants

#7088758

"Maybe it will be different abroad."

Student and Staff Perspectives on Diversity and Inclusion in student exchanges

Maybe it will be different abroad: SIEM Research Report

An extensive **research report** that gathers input of 12.000 students and 750 staff members across Europe and beyond on the inclusion in international student exchanges.

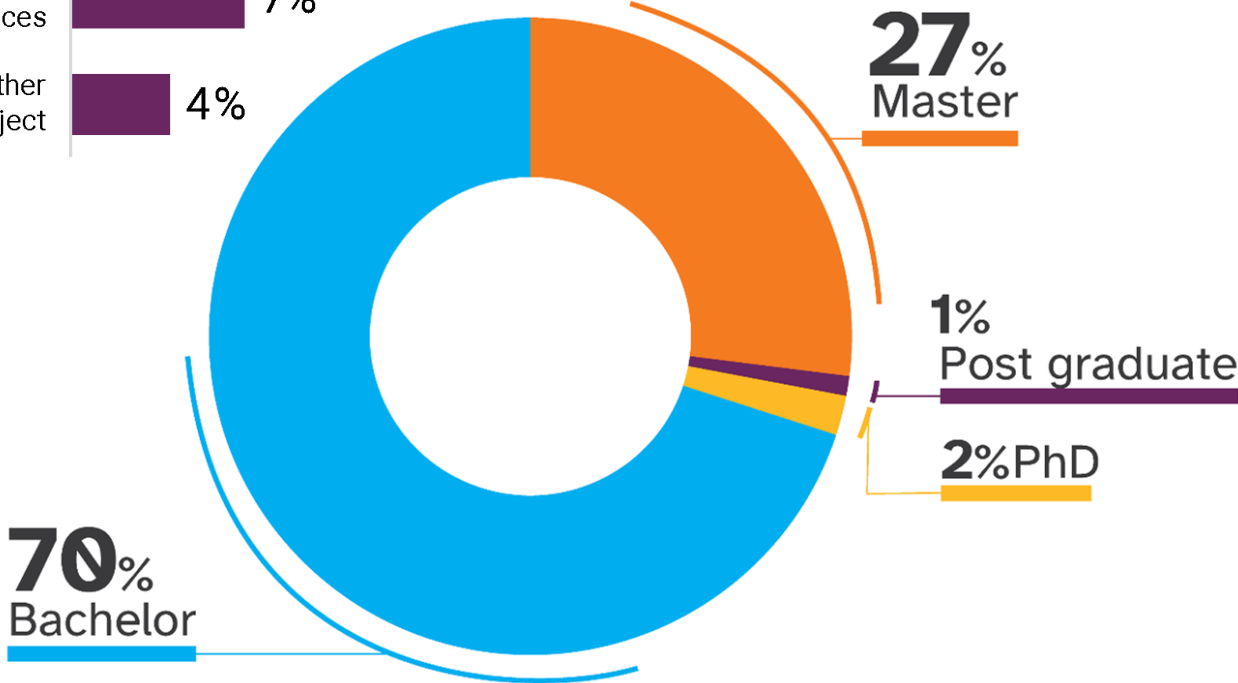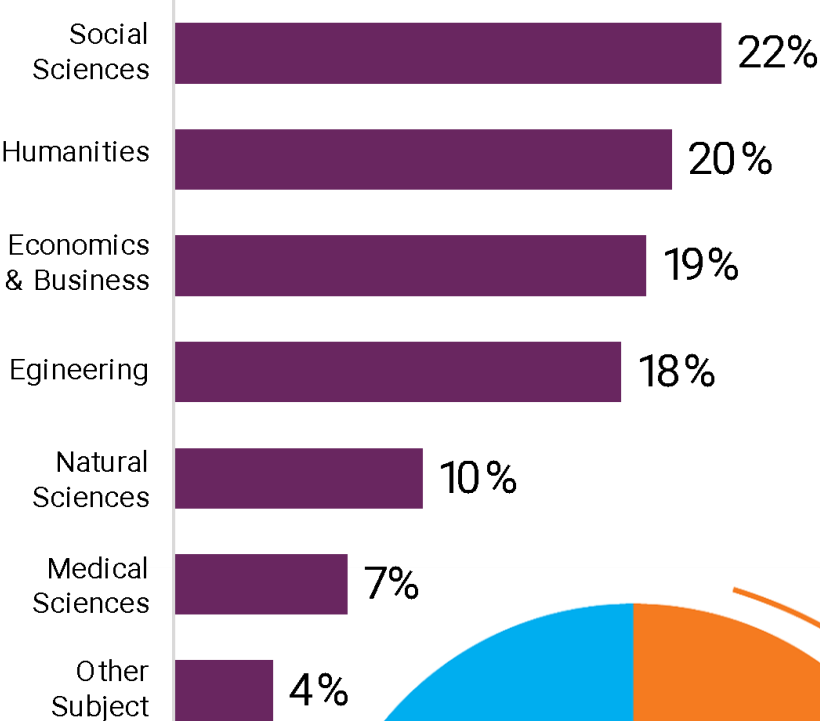The research report showcases the **14 recommendations** targeting

- European Commission
- National Agencies
- Higher Education institutions
- International student organisations.

4

Methodology

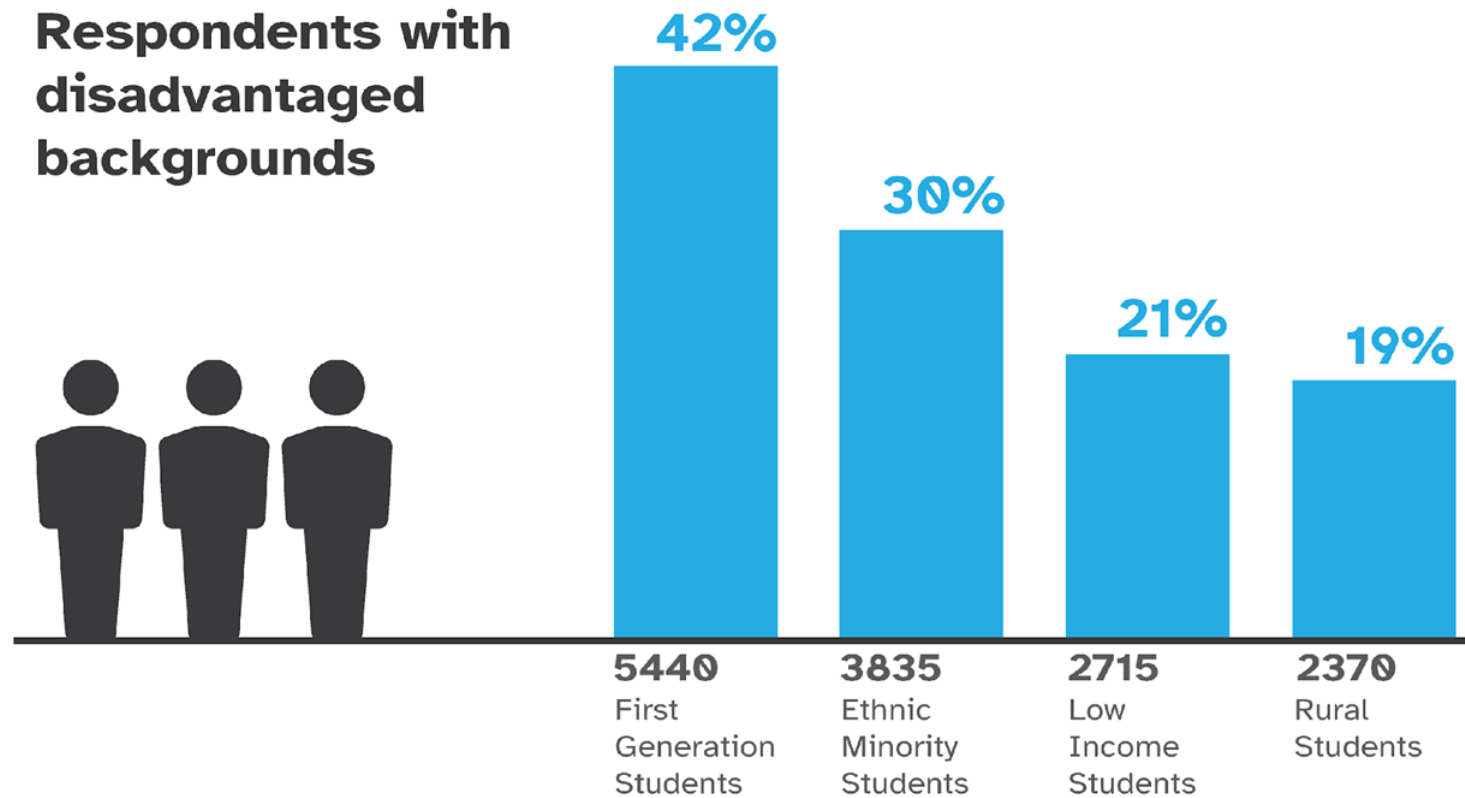- **Student survey**
  (12,820 responses - around 40% non mobile)

- **Staff survey**
  (786 responses)

- **Focus Groups**
  6 focus groups with 36 students in 4 countries

- **Study visits**
  6 institutions

Respondents profile

65% mobile students

35% non-mobile students

Social Sciences — 22%
Humanities — 20%
Economics & Business — 19%
Egineering — 18%
Natural Sciences — 10%
Medical Sciences — 7%
Other Subject — 4%

27% Master
1% Post graduate
2% PhD
70% Bachelor

Defining students with fewer opportunities

Respondents with disadvantaged backgrounds

42%

30%

21%

19%

5440
First Generation Students

3835
Ethnic Minority Students

2715
Low Income Students

2370
Rural Students
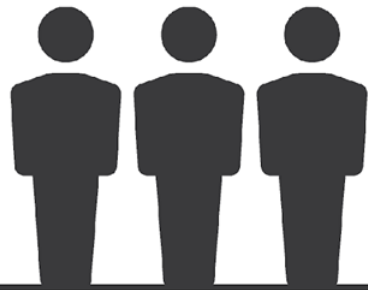
Strategy & Offer

Findings

Student impressions: mobility programmes

Types of programmes

71% of mobile respondants participated in **Erasmus+ studies**.

3% took part in a short mobility programme.
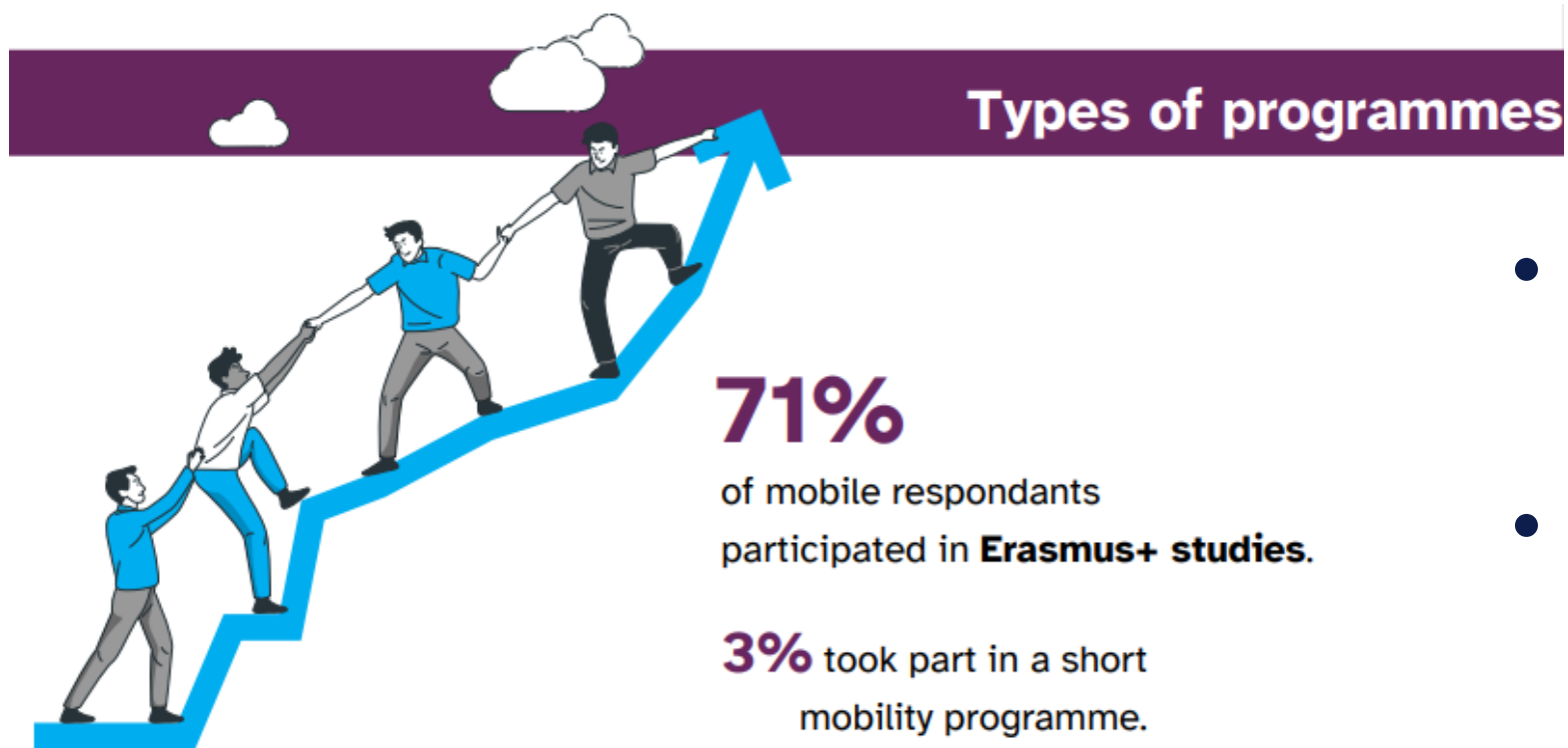
- Short-term mobilities were more popular among students from fewer opportunities background
- 16% of respondents from **ethnic minority backgrounds** and 13% of respondents from **low-income backgrounds** participated in short-term mobilities

Offer different mobility programmes with a variety of durations. Ensure short term mobilities are embedded in the internationalisation strategy.

Student impressions: mobility programmes

Non-mobile students most interested in participating in:

63%

Erasmus+
studies

53%
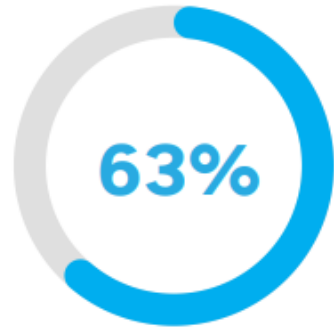
Erasmus+
traineeships or
internships

48%
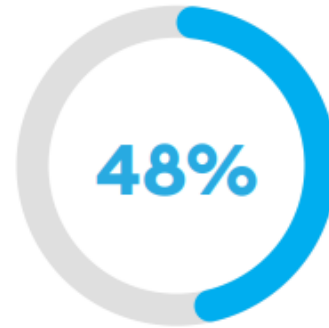
short-term
mobility
programmes

49%

of respondents to the staff survey
offered short-term mobility
opportunities to students.
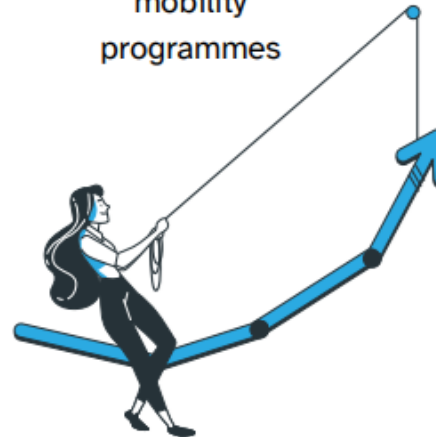
Offer different types of mobility programmes across study, work and volunteer opportunities that will appeal to different student groups.

Student impressions: Mobility duration: actual participation versus preference

	Less than 4 weeks	More than 4 weeks, less than one semester	One semester	More than one semester
Mobile	3%	7%	58%	32%
Non-mobile	8%	15%	43%	33%
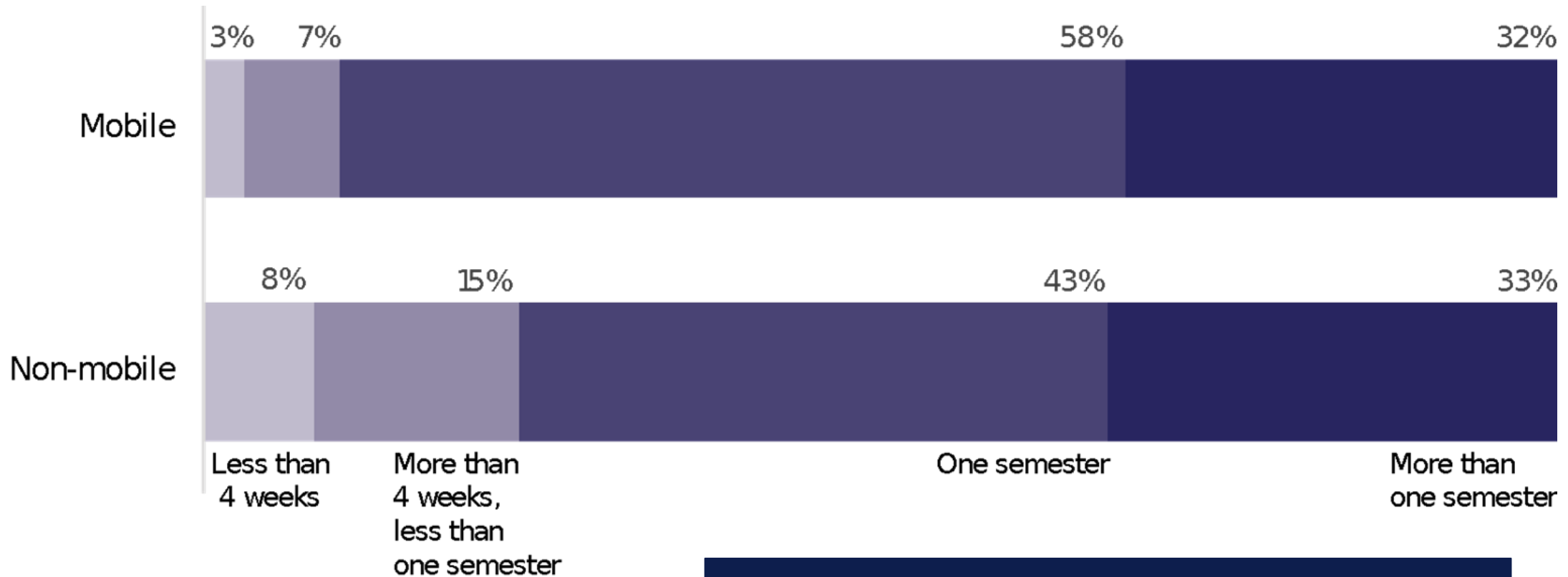
A variety of mobility formats can help to attract more students and act as a stepping stone towards long-term mobility, which remains more attractive

Barriers to mobility

Findings

3 Barrier types

Institutional

Barriers that **reflect the programmes** that are being offered and the r**egulations that coincide** with these programmes that may **impact the access** of specific student groups to mobility opportunities.

Environmental

Environmental and **societal factors** that influence the person's decisions to take part in a mobility.

Access to information as well as **personal backgrounds** impact mobility participation.

Attitudinal

Attitudinal barriers tackle the **belief system and emotions** around the topic of mobility opportunities, to see how they influence their participation rates.

Internalised barriers can severely impact their identification with the opportunity.
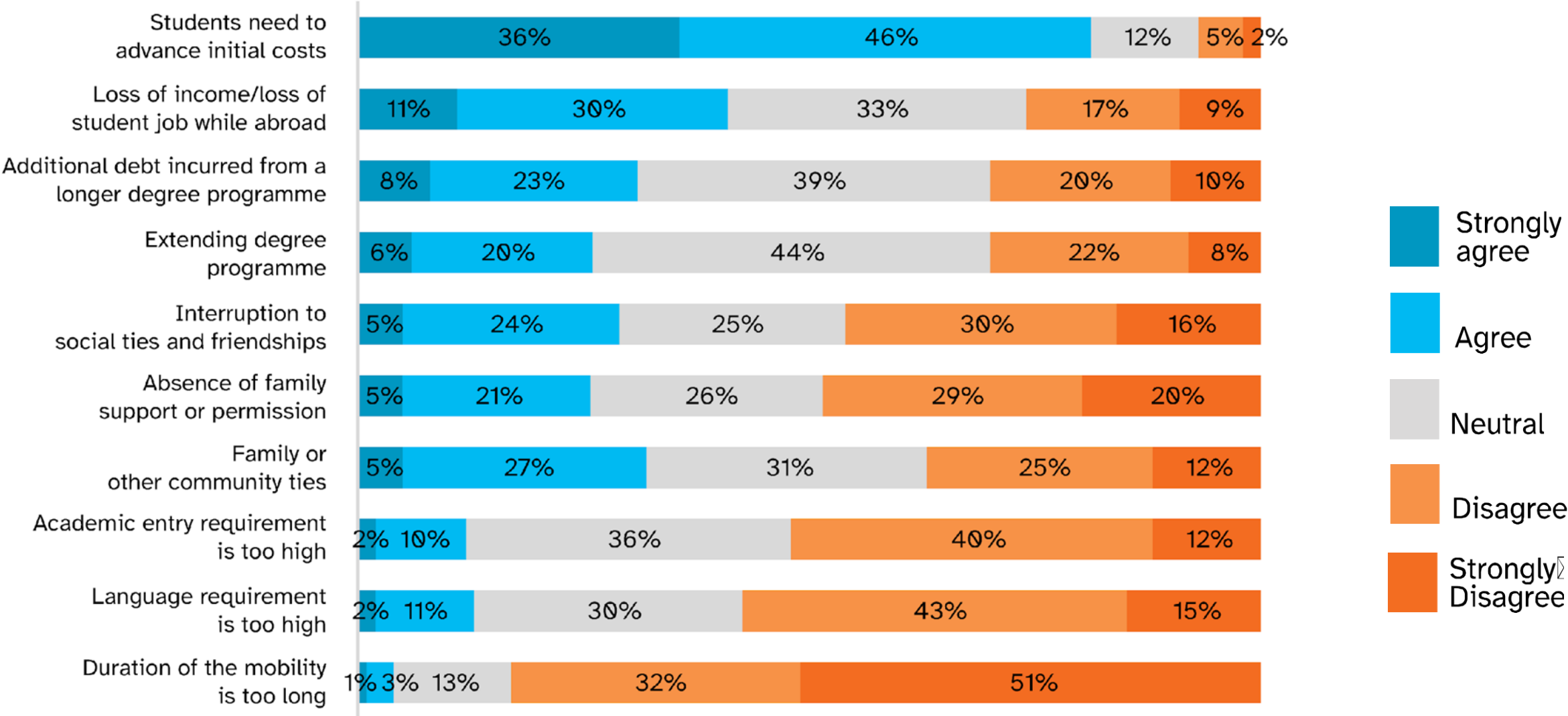
Barriers to mobility

82%

of students reported advancing initial costs to be a barrier to participate in mobility.

"I am someone who has to combine five jobs to pay for my room and studies."

"I have to spend everything I earn immediately. Saving for Erasmus is therefore extremely difficult."

- student quote

Mobile participants' reported practical barriers to mobility

Barrier	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students need to advance initial costs	36%	46%	12%	5%	2%
Loss of income/loss of student job while abroad	11%	30%	33%	17%	9%
Additional debt incurred from a longer degree programme	8%	23%	39%	20%	10%
Extending degree programme	6%	20%	44%	22%	8%
Interruption to social ties and friendships	5%	24%	25%	30%	16%
Absence of family support or permission	5%	21%	26%	29%	20%
Family or other community ties	5%	27%	31%	25%	12%
Academic entry requirement is too high	2%	10%	36%	40%	12%
Language requirement is too high	2%	11%	30%	43%	15%
Duration of the mobility is too long	1%	3%	13%	32%	51%

15

Non-mobile students' blocking factors to go abroad

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Insufficient funding to support period abroad	40%	32%	15%	8%	5%
Lack of flexibility in your degree programme	17%	28%	23%	21%	12%
Concerns about impact on your academic achievement	14%	28%	23%	22%	13%
Lack of knowledge of the opportunities to go abroad	13%	27%	20%	24%	16%
Personal reasons	9%	19%	28%	17%	26%
Unable or unwilling to extend your degree	8%	19%	28%	27%	18%
Lack of recognition for time spent abroad	8%	22%	27%	27%	17%
Unsuccessful application to go abroad	8%	18%	24%	23%	26%
Fear of discrimination while abroad	4%	10%	16%	28%	42%
No interest in going abroad	2%	4%	10%	14%	71%

Barriers to mobility

17% of **non-mobile ethnic minority** respondents agreed that **fear of discrimination** while going abroad was a barrier

43% of respondents from **low-income backgrounds** reported strong concerns related to **upfront costs and loss of job**

49% of **both mobile and non-mobile respondents** have concerns relating to **finding accommodation abroad**

Create a safe space where students can discuss their fears without judgement, and if needed seek specialist advice to respond to the students' queries.

Pre-departure support for mobile students

67%
of Respondents took part in official briefing events with International officers and found them useful.

& would like more support with …

94%
Information about **available funding**

88%
Support with application process

86%
Help choosing a **host university**

56%
Were not offered an activity with fellow students or mobility alumni to discuss mobility

83%
Indicated they would like to discuss with peers in a more social setting

Encouragement for non-mobile students

- **53%** of non-mobile students need **more information on the types of programmes available**
- **47%** felt that **hearing from employers** who value international experiences could be useful
- **47%** of students would like to **hear from their peers** who have been abroad

Ensure that the application process is easy to navigate, and where possible **simplify the process** by removing unnecessary paperwork or steps in the procedure.

Student impressions: Inclusion & Equality of international students

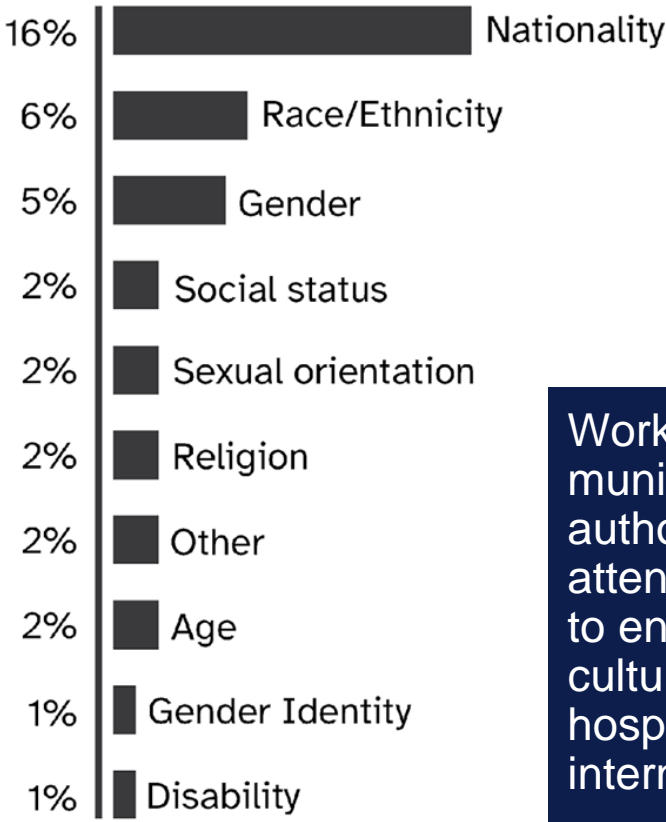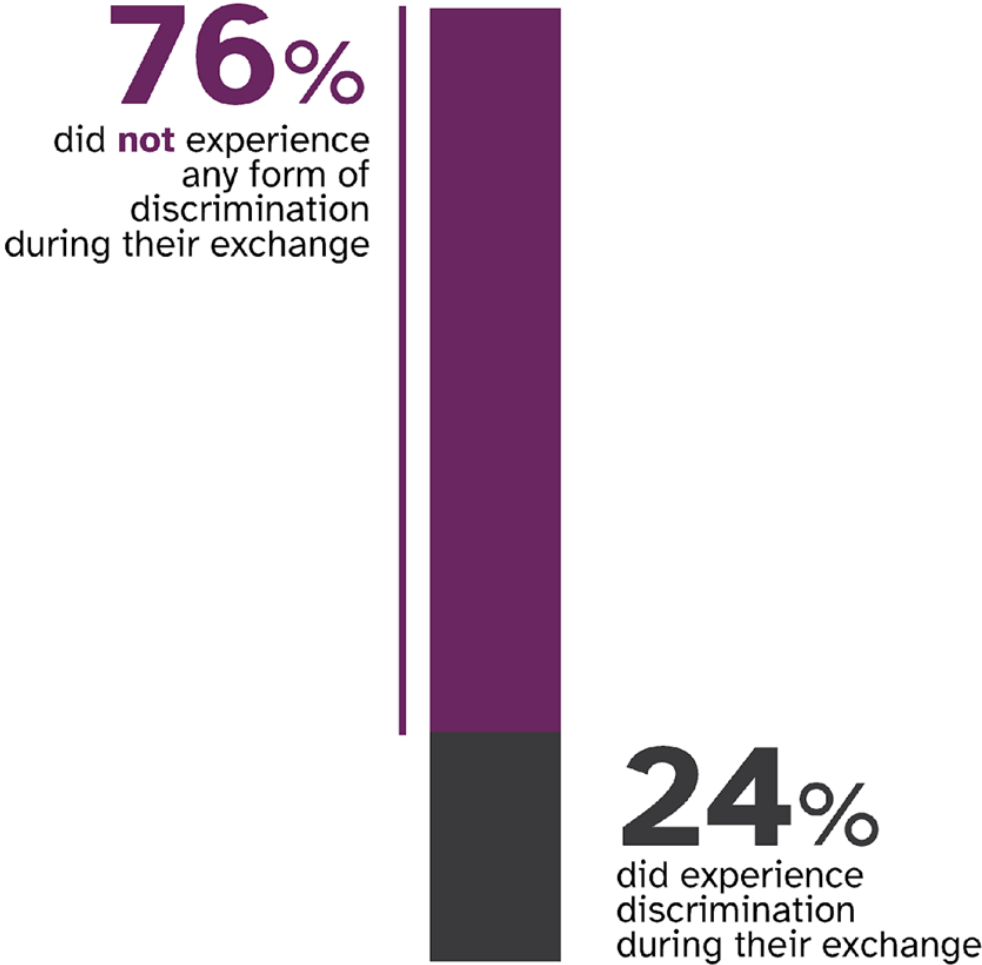**76%** had **positive** experiences while abroad.

34% of students felt that they were treated differently or unfairly at their host university

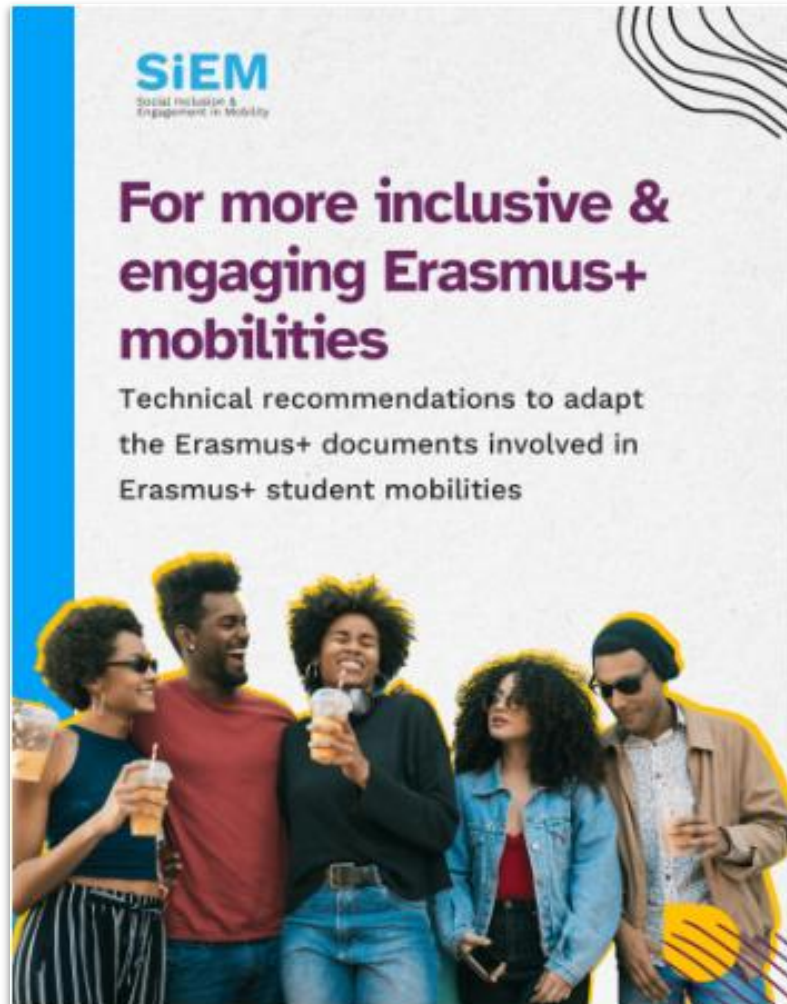**15%** felt that they did not have equal access to resources and opportunities compared to home students.

Student impression: discrimination on exchange

76% did **not** experience any form of discrimination during their exchange

24% did experience discrimination during their exchange

16%	Nationality
6%	Race/Ethnicity
5%	Gender
2%	Social status
2%	Sexual orientation
2%	Religion
2%	Other
2%	Age
1%	Gender Identity
1%	Disability

Work together with local municipalities and other local authorities to make them attentive to the role they play to ensure that the broader cultural environment is hospitable towards international students.

Technical recommendations for more inclusive mobility

SiEM
Social Inclusive &
Engagement in Mobility

For more inclusive & engaging Erasmus+ mobilities

Technical recommendations to adapt the Erasmus+ documents involved in Erasmus+ student mobilities

The SIEM technical recommendations provide an **analysis of possible changes** that could be implemented to the key documents and processes involved in Erasmus+ Higher Education mobilities in order to make them more inclusive.

They target the **European Commission, Erasmus+ National Agencies, Higher Education Institutions** and other policy makers and stakeholders interested in Erasmus+ and mobility programmes.

We closed the SIEM Project in 2022. What new initiatives or projects is ESN bringing

A walk through the XV ESNsurvey preliminary results

What is the ESNsurvey?

- The ESNsurvey is a Europe-wide research project covering different topics concerning mobility and education. **It is the largest project of its kind carried out solely by volunteers.**
- The survey seeks to monitor the implementation of mobility programmes and the experience of international learners abroad, as well as the perceptions of students who have not participated in international student mobility yet.

Where does the analysis come from?

Large scale data collection among recent participants and non-mobile students

Work on the ground and constant feedback from students and our network

**Direct involvement in the programme and work with other stakeholders**

Proposals for improvement in the mid-term evaluation of the Programme

We reached 23k of answers!
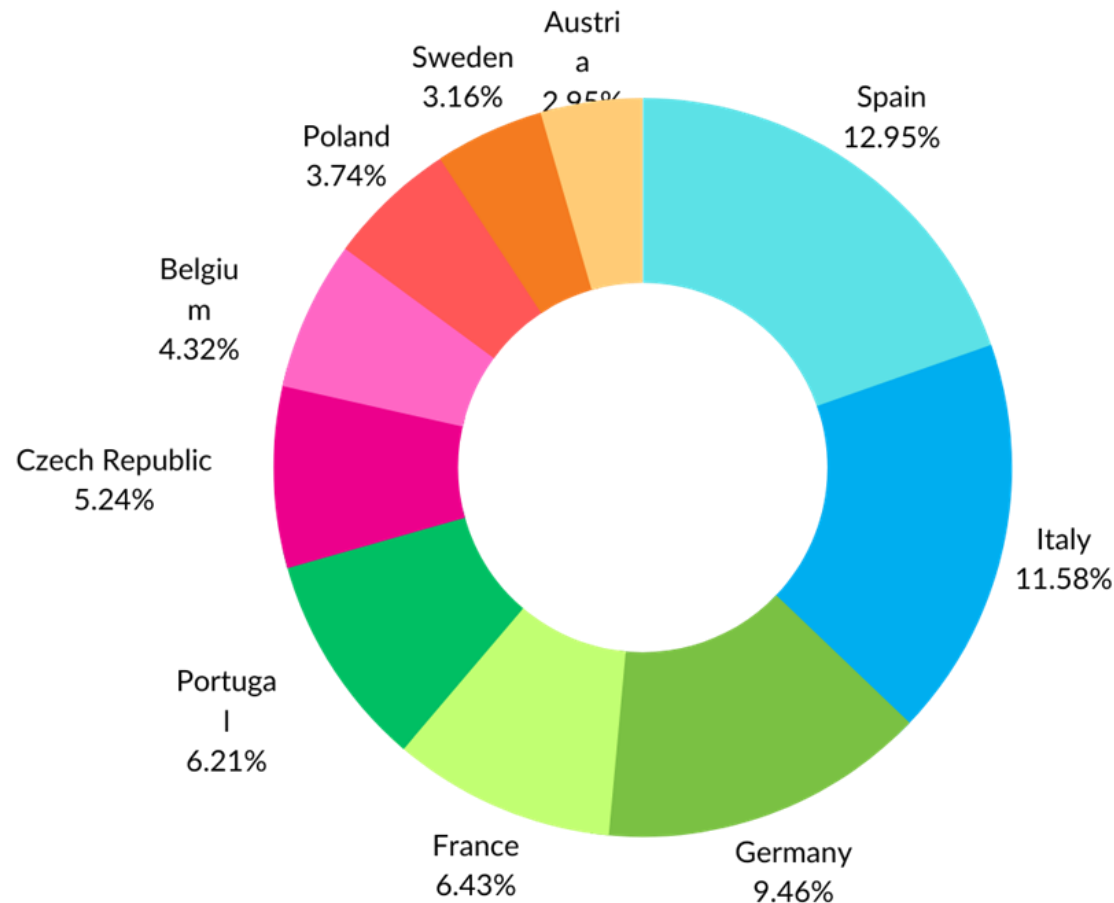# Thank you all for the support!

- **Exchange Students -** 17.855 anwears - 78,40%

- **Full-Degree Students -** 1.856 anwears - 8,15%
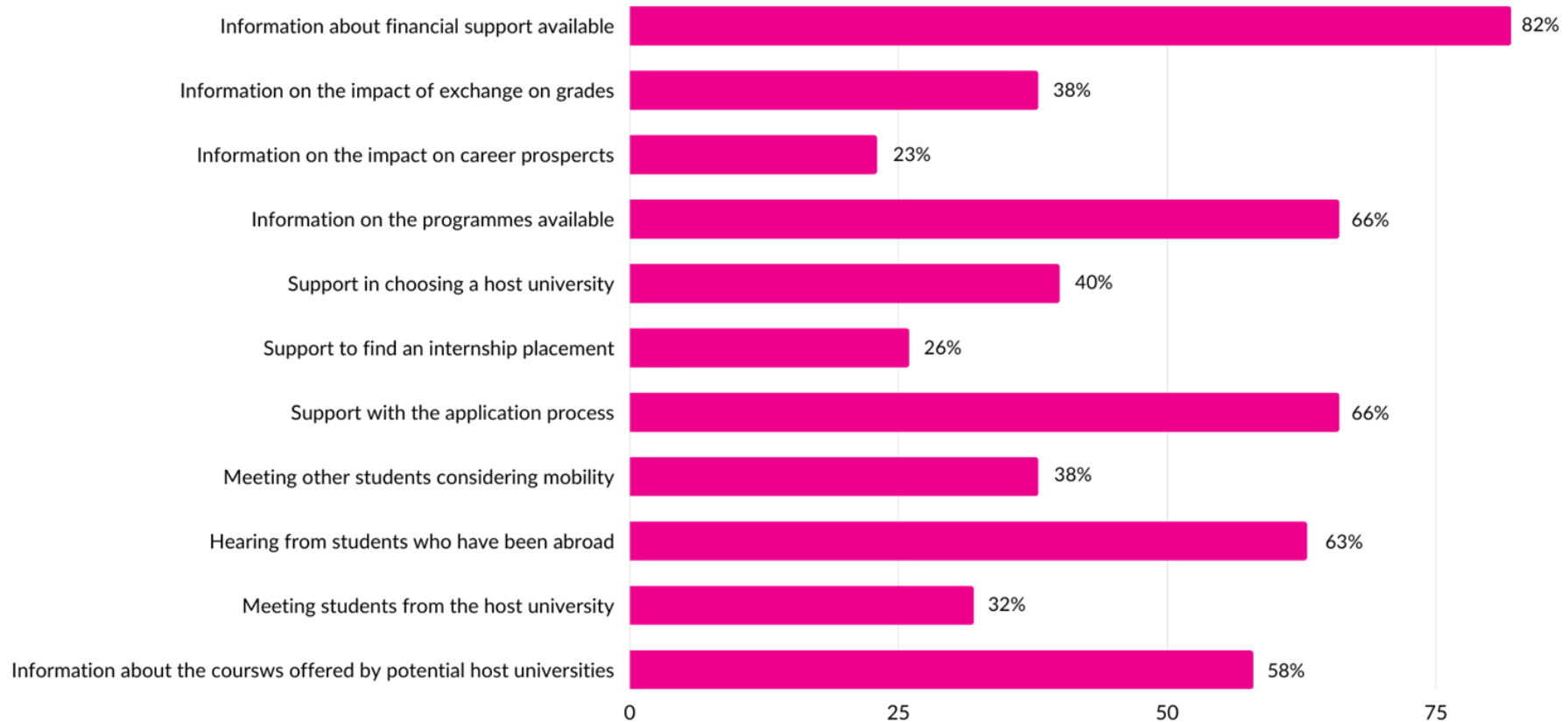
- **Non-mobile Students -** 3.064 anwears - 13,45%

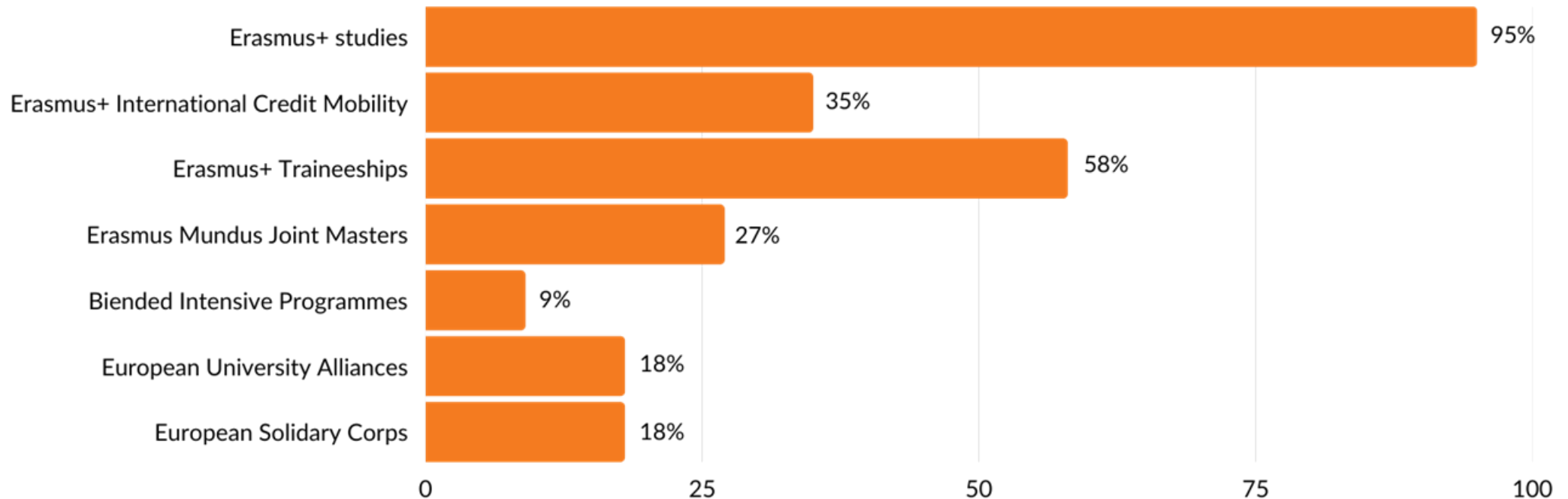# **Top 10 sending countries:** Italy, Spain Germany, France and Czech Republic
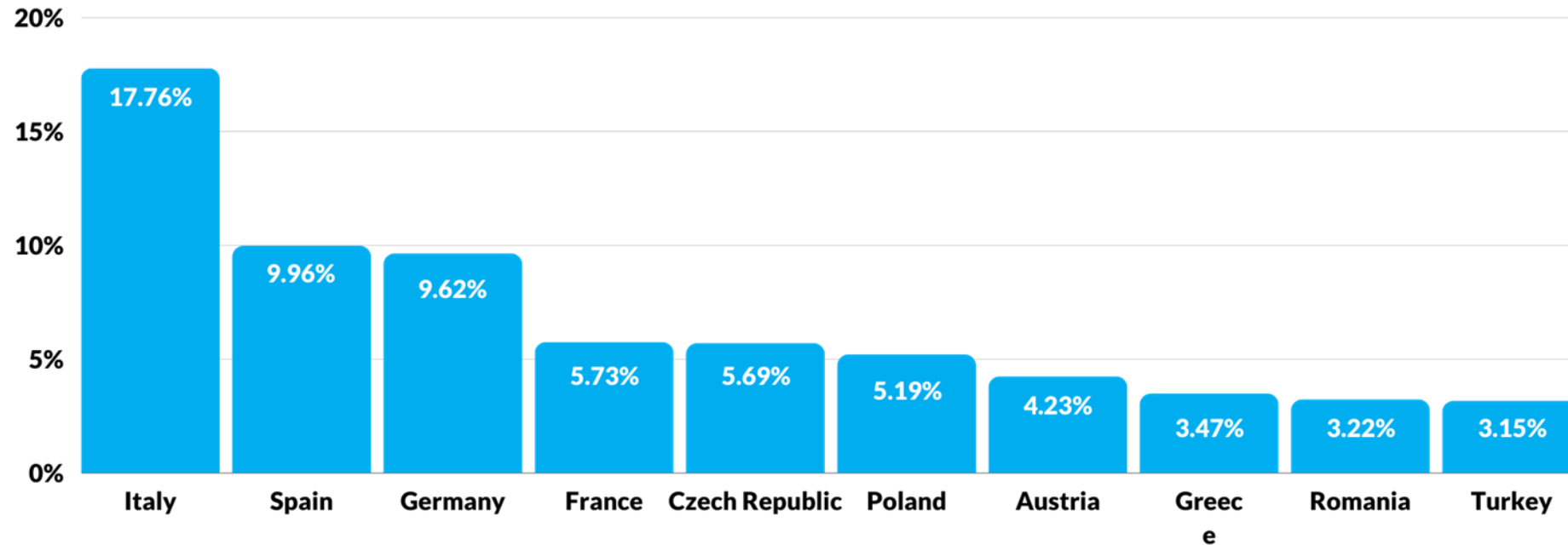
Top 10 hosting countries: Spain, Italy, Germany, France and Portugal

Pre-departure support: Accessibility of information and peer-to-peer support are essential

Category	Percentage
Information about financial support available	82%
Information on the impact of exchange on grades	38%
Information on the impact on career prospercts	23%
Information on the programmes available	66%
Support in choosing a host university	40%
Support to find an internship placement	26%
Support with the application process	66%
Meeting other students considering mobility	38%
Hearing from students who have been abroad	63%
Meeting students from the host university	32%
Information about the coursws offered by potential host universities	58%

Initiatives from the EU: There are still lack of knowledge of some EU initiatives among non-mobile students

Erasmus+ studies — 95%
Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility — 35%
Erasmus+ Traineeships — 58%
Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters — 27%
Biended Intensive Programmes — 9%
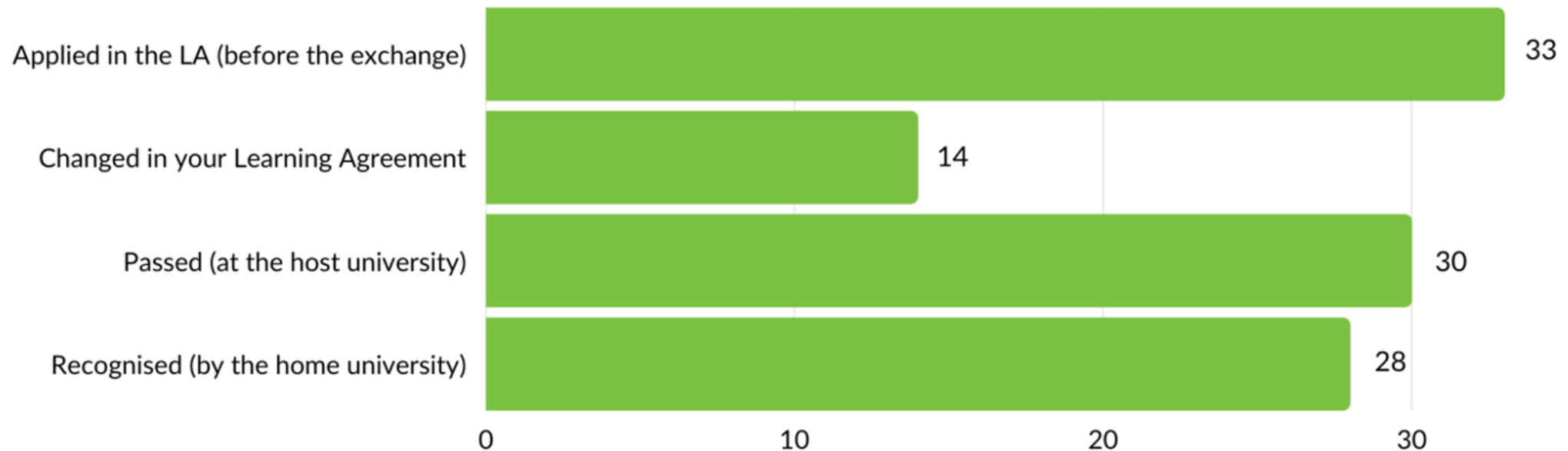European University Alliances — 18%
European Solidary Corps — 18%

Challenges faced by students: Lack of funding, affordability of accommodation and problems with courses are still the main challenges

Insufficient money to cover my cost of living	35.63%
Problems finding affordable accommodation	35.5%
Problems related to the courses I was taking (enrollment, schedule, exams)	33.97%
Problems connecting to locals	28.95%
Absence of family and friends	23.1%
Late payment of my grant/scholarship	20.11%
Problems with my administration (residence permit/visa/registration)	10.98%
Loss of income/loss of student job while abroad	10.45%
Problems adapting to life in the hosting city	9.15%
Discrimination based on my personal background	4.3%
Other (Please Specify)	2.34%
None of the above	15.98%

Digitalisation: the commitment to digital transformation has the potential to improve the experience of Erasmus+ participants, especially for the ones with fewer opportunities
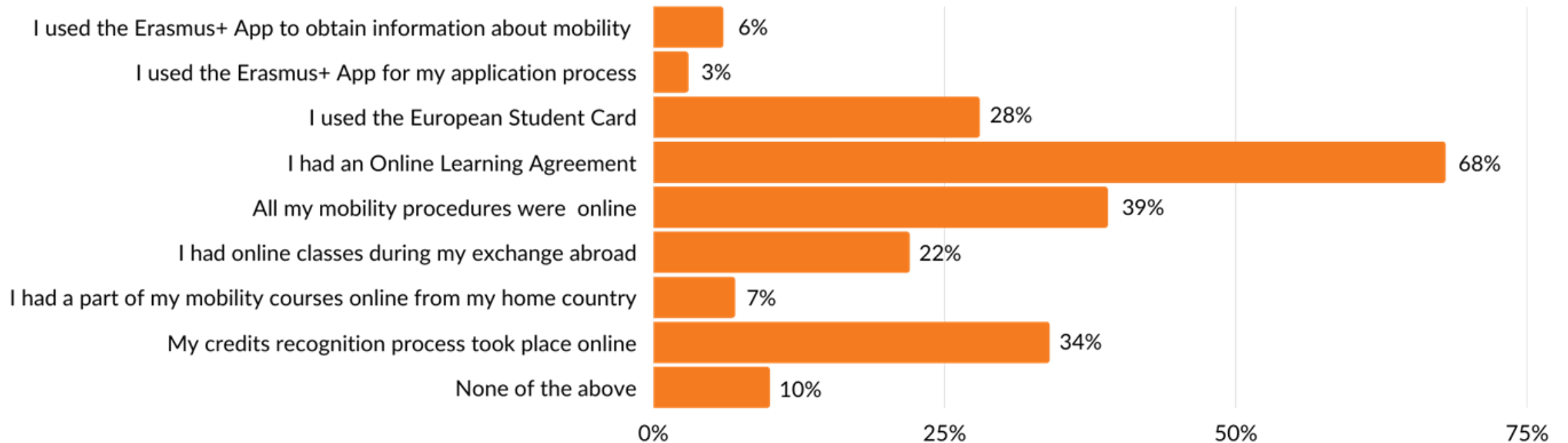
Recognition of Credits: 42% of the respondents revealed that their courses needed to be changed during exchange

Applied in the LA (before the exchange) — 33
Changed in your Learning Agreement — 14
Passed (at the host university) — 30
Recognised (by the home university) — 28

Erasmus+ priorities: Students believe in the programme and consider it lives up to its priorities

82% | Agree **(36%)** or strongly agree **(46%)** with **"Erasmus+ is inclusive for students from different background"**

75% | Agree **(35%)** or strongly agree **(40%)** with **"Erasmus+ contributes to the acquisition of sustainable skills, habits and behaviours among**
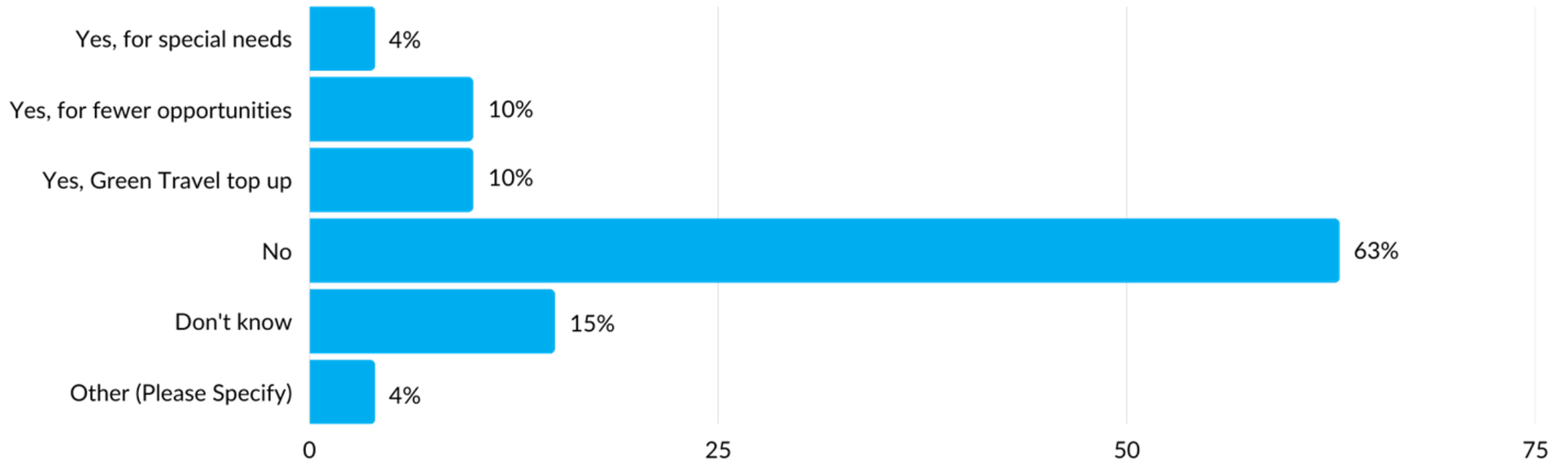
69% | Agree **(38%)** or strongly agree **(31%)** with **"Erasmus+ encourages civic engagement during exchanges"**
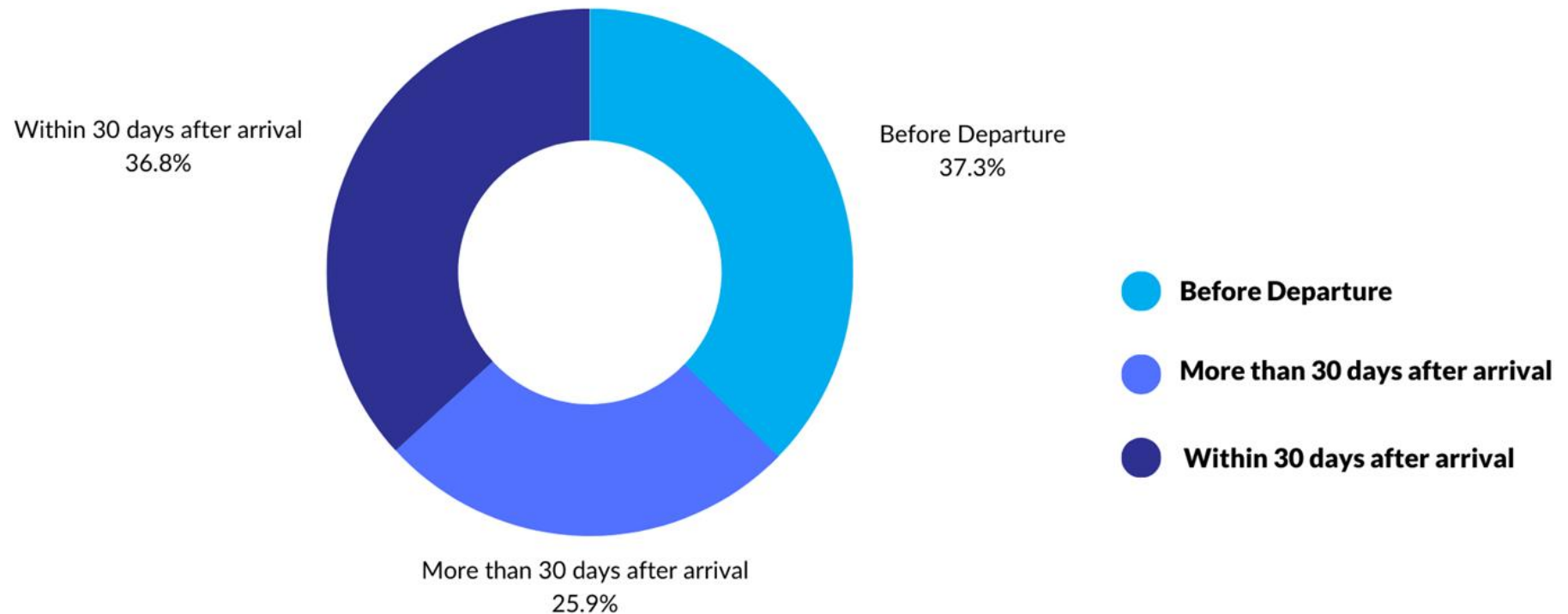
64% | Agree **(39%)** or strongly agree **(25%)** with **"Erasmus+ offers digital solutions to facilitate the mobility process".** Digital skills: 53%

Top-ups: The inclusion top-up was well received by students, showing the positive results of the implementation of the inclusion measures!

Timing of the grants: The efforts are visible, especially regarding students with fewer opportunities but that it's still a long path to walk

Within 30 days after arrival
36.8%

Before Departure
37.3%

More than 30 days after arrival
25.9%

Before Departure

More than 30 days after arrival

Within 30 days after arrival

ESNsurvey Timeline

1. Preliminary Report- September 2023

2. Final Report- February 2024

3. Conference after launch - February 2024

Say Hi to DIEM!
We just got approved a new project on inclusive mobility!

Thank you for your attention!

president@esn.org

policy@esn.org