

Chapter A3

General methodological notes

EUROSTUDENT couples a central coordination approach with a strong network of national partners in each participant country (> [Chapter C5](#)). The EUROSTUDENT consortium (> [Chapter A2](#)) provides national contributors with the EUROSTUDENT core questionnaire, as well as extensive instructions for conducting the field phase at the national level, data cleaning and weighting, calculation of indicators, and data delivery.

The national research teams are chosen and funded by the participating national ministries. The national research teams are responsible for implementing a national student survey, delivering the data to the EUROSTUDENT VI data team in accordance with EUROSTUDENT conventions, and providing national interpretations of the delivered data. The delivered data are checked in a series of feedback loops for accuracy and comparability and are validated for publication by the national research team.

In the 6th round of the EUROSTUDENT project, the process of data collection and delivery was headed by the consortium partner Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) in Vienna, Austria.

EUROSTUDENT conventions are the instruments used to ensure the comparability and quality of the data collected. Since the 1st round of EUROSTUDENT, these conventions have been continuously developed further and are the result of productive discussions during several project meetings, intensive seminars, and workshops which were organised by the EUROSTUDENT consortium. They are documented in several handbooks which are provided to all EUROSTUDENT partners as well as the interested public.

EUROSTUDENT core questionnaire

The EUROSTUDENT core questionnaire details the items, responses, and instructions to be used in the national surveys. The questionnaire handbook provides in-depth explanations of the purpose of each question and instructions on adapting it, if necessary, to the national context. EUROSTUDENT employs so-called hashtags (#) to mark instances where the national teams need to go beyond simple translation of the question by making adaptations to the particular national context. For example, “#common language(s)” would, in Germany, mean German, in Switzerland it would be German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic. This method is used to ensure that the resulting national questionnaires will be understandable and applicable to the students being surveyed in each country. The EUROSTUDENT VI questionnaire handbook is available on the EUROSTUDENT website.

Survey execution

The questionnaire handbook also provides guidelines for the preparation and execution of the survey at the national level. It provides information on the EUROSTUDENT standard target group, sampling guidelines, as well as information on the survey organisation and method. Mandatory preparatory seminars for all national teams additionally provided the opportunity to present and discuss the plans for national implementation with other national teams and the EUROSTUDENT data team.

Box A3.1

The standard target group of EUROSTUDENT VI

The EUROSTUDENT target group includes all students who are – at the time of observation (usually: semester) – enrolled in any national study programme regarded to be higher education in a country. Usually that corresponds to ISCED levels 5, 6, and 7.

This means all students should be included regardless of:

- Nationality – National and foreign students should be included, as long as they are studying for a full degree in the country of observation (and are not only obtaining a limited number of credits, e.g. as an Erasmus student).
- Full-time/part-time status – Full-time, part-time, and/or correspondence students should be included as long as the study programmes the students are enrolled in offer a minimum of physical face-to-face interaction in lectures/classes (not only exams).
- Character of the higher education institution (HEI) or study programme – General as well as professional orientations of HEIs and study programmes should be included, as long as the programmes and institutions are considered to be higher education in the national context.
- Legal character of the HEI – Public and private institutions should be included, as long as private institutions are considered to be a regular part of the higher education system in the national context.

Excluded from the EUROSTUDENT target group are:

- Students on (temporary) leave, i.e. students who have officially or non-officially interrupted their studies at the time of observation for whatever reason.
- Students on credit mobility, short-term mobile students (e.g. Erasmus students), i.e. students who are currently studying in the country of observation (incoming) or who have currently left the country of observation (outgoing) for a short time period (e.g. one or two semesters) with the purpose of gaining only a relatively small number of credits.
- Students in ISCED 8 study programmes (PhD – and doctoral programmes).
- Students in distance learning study programmes which do not offer any physical face-to-face lecture period at all, but are solely based on written/online interaction (apart from exams).
- Students at very specialised HEIs, e.g. military or police academies, or HEIs directly affiliated with one company. This might also include programmes providing training only for public administration.
- Students in programmes classified as ISCED (2011) levels 5 or 6 which are not regarded to be higher education in the national context. This could encompass, for example, further vocational training programmes for Master crafts(wo)men, or upper secondary schools or post-secondary programmes not regarded as higher education.

Box A3.2

Notes on national samples and deviations from EUROSTUDENT standard target group

Albania: Only full-time students included in sample. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group.

Austria: Survey conducted in 2015. The focus group “students with higher education background” presented throughout the report does not include students with parents whose highest degree is at ISCED level 5 (in Austria: Master crafts(wo)men and post-secondary education, parts of vocational upper secondary school) as these degrees are not considered to be higher education in Austria. There are no short cycle programmes in the Austrian HE system.

Switzerland: Short-cycle programmes (post-secondary professional programmes, i.e. ‘höhere Berufsbildung’/‘formation professionnelle supérieure’) are not included in sample because they are not considered to be higher education.

Czech Republic: No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education. Part-time students are understood to be students studying during the weekend, etc. Full-time students go to school on a daily basis.

Germany: The German sample does not include students with non-German citizenship holding foreign higher education entry qualifications (“Bildungsausländer”). International students according to EUROSTUDENT conventions are therefore not part of the target group. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group. While the German data with regard to parents’ higher education background have been calculated according to EUROSTUDENT conventions, the classification of parents who are Master crafts(wo)men at ISCED level 6, and thus as “with higher education”, is not in line with the national understanding of these degrees as vocational. No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education.

Estonia: No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they are not considered to be higher education.

Finland: Short-cycle programmes not included in the sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education. Private universities in Finland offer foreign degrees which can be obtained in Finland and were not included in the sample.

Georgia: No non-universities exist in Georgia. No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education.

Croatia: Short-cycle programmes not included in the sample due to the very small size and number of these programmes.

Ireland: No private institutions included in the sample. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group.

Iceland: No non-universities exist in Iceland.

Italy: Survey conducted in 2017. No international students are included in the sample. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group. Specialised higher education institutions (HEIs) (for arts and interpretation; AFAM – Alta formazione artistica e musicale; SSML – Scuole superiori per mediatori linguistici) are – in line with the EUROSTUDENT conven-

tions – not included in sample, due to the very small size of the sector and the very specialised character. No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist.

Lithuania: No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education.

Latvia: Survey conducted in 2017. Part-time students are not included in the sample. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group.

Norway: Short-cycle programmes not included in the sample as they are not considered to be higher education.

Poland: No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they are not considered to be higher education.

Portugal: Survey conducted in 2017.

Romania: Survey conducted in 2017. No non-universities exist in Romania. No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education.

Serbia: Survey conducted in 2017. Non-universities not included in sample. This constitutes a deviation from the EUROSTUDENT target group. No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education.

Sweden: No non-universities exist in Sweden.

Slovakia: No short-cycle programmes included in sample as they do not exist or are not considered to be higher education.

Turkey: Survey conducted in 2017. Online students are – in line with the EUROSTUDENT conventions – not included in the sample, although these make up a large part of the student population. No non-universities exist in Turkey.

The EUROSTUDENT target group includes all students who, at the time of observation (semester), are enrolled in any national study programme regarded to be higher education in a country. Usually that corresponds to programmes at ISCED levels 5, 6, and 7. Box A3.1 provides further details on the EUROSTUDENT standard target group. Not all countries fully complied with this – deviations from the EUROSTUDENT conventions as well as further notes on national samples are given in Box A3.2.

EUROSTUDENT encourages the use of online surveys. Most national contributors have followed this recommendation, while others have chosen other methods based on the national context (Table A3.1).

Table A3.1

Main survey instruments used by national contributors

	Online survey	Paper and pencil	Telephone interview
Countries	AT, CH, CZ, DE, DK, EE, FI, FR, GE, HR, HU, IE, IS, LT, MT, NL, NO, PL*, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, TR	AL*, LV*, RS	IT
Total number	25	3	1

* (partially) conducted in classrooms

Data cleaning and analysis

After the data collection, national contributors clean the data and prepare the calculation of national indicators. Detailed cleaning and coding instructions are given for each variable, so that a national dataset adhering to EUROSTUDENT standards is created. SPSS syntax supporting this process is also provided.

EUROSTUDENT recommends weighting the raw data using population data on sex, age, study programme (BA, MA, etc.), type of HEI and field of study. Additional weighting variables are encouraged. >[Chapter C3](#) provides an overview of the implemented weighting schemes at the national level.

The EUROSTUDENT data team supports the national research teams during the data cleaning and delivery process. Furthermore, each national team is required to attend a seminar at which the process is explained in detail and the steps are discussed between the national teams and the EUROSTUDENT data team.

The calculation of the indicators in EUROSTUDENT VI is done using a (semi-)automatic SPSS syntax. The results of these calculations are uploaded into the EUROSTUDENT database, where they are checked and commented on by the national teams. Delivered data were checked by the EUROSTUDENT data team before being validated for publication by the national researchers. Small deviations between the Synopsis of Indicators and the >[Database](#) may occur due to necessary rounding.

Any deviations from the EUROSTUDENT conventions in national questionnaires or calculations are noted beneath each figure/table and explained in more detail in >[Chapter C2](#).

In addition to delivering the necessary indicators, national researchers comment on the data they deliver from a national point of view. This, on the one hand, helps the EUROSTUDENT consortium in interpreting the data, and, on the other, provides orientation to interested researchers and other stakeholders wishing to work with the EUROSTUDENT data themselves. All data provided by the national contributors as well as any commentaries on the data are made available at the end of the project via the EUROSTUDENT database.