

# EURO-QUEST: Student Insights



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Lárionad Náisiúnta um Threoir san Oideachas  
National Centre for Guidance in Education



Rialtas na hÉireann  
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**Developed by the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) / Euroguidance Ireland and launched in 2020, Euro-Quest is a free-to-use programme for Irish post-primary schools promoting educational mobility. This programme is designed to be integrated into the Transition Year (TY) curriculum through Guidance and to link with other subjects using Europe as the common theme.**

It's been just three months since the launch of Euro-Quest, and we are delighted to see how things are progressing! At the time of writing this article, close to 100 schools are currently fully registered, with several guidance counsellors involving other colleagues in delivery of the different modules and embracing the resource as a virtual guidance tool under current circumstances.

We were also delighted to hear from a number of schools delivering the programme at the recent IGC conference (March 2020) and 'TY Show' (January 2020) and to be able to support many of you in your delivery at our recent workshops, by phone and by mail.

As of April 10th 2020, 460 students have completed the student pre course survey, giving us a valuable insight into their pre course knowledge of the European Union and perspectives on mobility, which I will share below:



EUROGUIDANCE: EURO-QUEST: STUDENT INSIGHTS *continued*

- 43% of students felt they knew nothing or very little about the history of the European Union.
- 66% of students said they felt they had some or a good level of knowledge about their rights (to travel, study and work) as an EU citizen.
- 62% of students have considered studying / training / doing an apprenticeship abroad.
- However, 65% said they did not know of any University, PLC Course or apprenticeship which offered the opportunity to complete some or all their study in Europe.
- 68% said that if they wanted to study abroad, they would not know where to find the information they required.
- 68% of them said that they had not heard of 'Erasmus' or 'Erasmus+'.
- Less than 20% of them had heard of the phrase 'educational mobility'.
- 77% did not know of any financial supports /grants that may be available to help students' study in Europe
- 66% of students were unsure if you can transfer or use qualifications that you earn in Ireland in other European countries.
- When asked about their linguistic ability, 61% of students indicated that they speak Gaelige, 53% speak another EU language and 5% speak another non-EU language.



When asked what elements of studying abroad might be positive, fun or interesting, in their opinion, responses included:

- The possibility of better career opportunities in the future.
- The chance to study something not available in Ireland.
- Meeting new people from all over the world, making new friends and connections.
- The opportunity to learn from experts the field.
- The opportunity to learn from people who have different views on life because of where they grew up.

- Exploring different school systems, seeing how college courses are in another country and exploring new ways of learning.
- Experiencing and participating in another culture.
- Learning and immersing yourself in a new language or practice speaking a foreign language.
- It would look good on their CV.
- It would widen 'future horizons'.
- The opportunity to be completely independent and to experience living by yourself with no one to help.
- It could potentially be cheaper to study abroad

The possibility of different food experiences, better weather and the opportunity to play football or trying a new sport also featured!



When asked what elements of studying abroad they thought might be challenging, responses included:

- Home sickness and being away from pets
- Feeling lonely
- Language barriers
- Being out of your comfort zone
- Managing money, cost of living and accommodation
- Adapting to a new country, culture and community
- Adapting to different ways of teaching and of learning
- Accommodation problems
- Fitting in
- Getting lost
- Border control

- Not knowing anyone
- Experiencing different foods
- Having to do lots of work might be challenging
- Adapting to the weather
- Not playing football

The current situation with the Corona Virus also appeared as a concern for some students!

It was wonderful to read the insight students have into the value that internationalising their education could have.

It is clear from the data that a significant number of our students have an interest in studying abroad, a curiosity about other cultures and the desire to travel. Although they are acutely aware of the challenges that moving abroad can present, they also have a clear understanding that the experience of studying abroad has the potential to have a positive impact on their career development and future job opportunities. They are also aware of the personal development potential of such an experience.

This data also demonstrates that a significant number of students consider themselves to be able to speak a language other than English and consider the opportunity to use this language or learn a new one as an interesting opportunity for them. Interestingly, the potential for a language barrier and not being able to communicate properly was also highlighted by many as a significant challenge that would concern them. Although a very natural feeling, I wonder whether as an English-speaking nation, we are used to being generally understood and slightly more ill at ease at the thought of being outside our comfort zone?

What is also very evident, however, is that our students are not yet equipped with the information needed to make informed decisions or research the opportunities to study abroad available to them within the Irish education system.

Students are also unaware of the financial supports available to them or the transferability of their qualifications abroad.

This information is important to have in advance of making any decisions regarding courses, particularly for those among us who may need to take a little more time in considering the possibilities.

Euro-Quest aims to address this by enabling students to explore the European Union and what it has to offer them from an educational mobility point of view.



It will direct them to sources of information regarding the Erasmus programme, study abroad opportunities, financial information as well as practical information pertaining to preparation for life abroad, managing the transition to living abroad positively and overcoming potential cultural and linguistic obstacles.

It introduces them to the European Qualification Framework, the various support organisations and allows them to hear first-hand the experience of Irish Erasmus students abroad.

It will allow them to reflect on whether mobility is for them or not (or at least not yet!)

It also affords them (and us all!) the opportunity to learn a little more about the history of the EU and what it has to offer us.

If you have not yet signed up to Euro-Quest, please note that this is a **free** resource available to all post-primary schools. To learn more and sign up, please visit:

<https://euroguidance.ie/euro-quest>



We look forward to having your school on board!

If you have any queries or feedback about the resource please e-mail [euroguidance@ncge.ie](mailto:euroguidance@ncge.ie)

The benefits of mobility and internationalisation highlighted by the students in their survey responses are echoed in the recent European Commission and Léargas 'Impact Studies':

<https://euroguidance.ie/studying-europe>



The recent efforts of HEIs here and abroad to incorporate some of the benefits of an internationalised curriculum, for those who cannot go abroad, is evident from the recent seminar hosted by WIT:

<http://eurieland.ie/2020/01/15/internationalisation-at-home-seminar-at-waterford-institute-of-technology/>

