

Our wish for 2024 - A pathway to ensure quality mobility

Reaction of the Erasmus Student Network to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2024

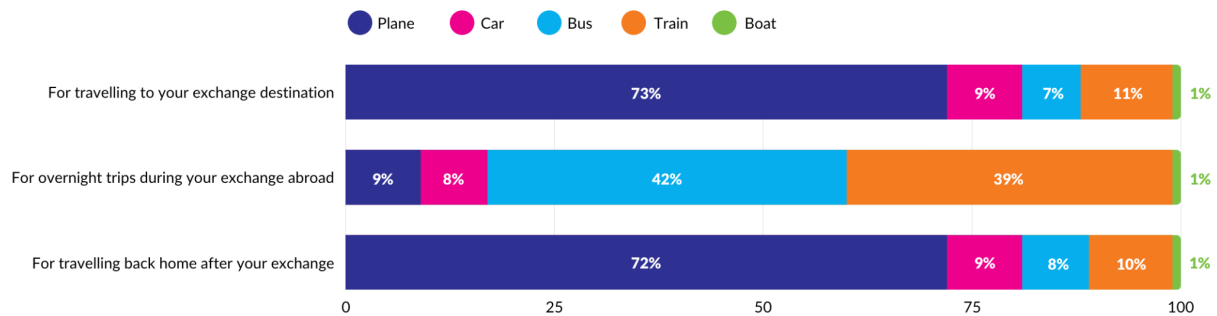
The Erasmus Student Network welcomes the decision of the European Commission to overhaul the support system for travel for all Erasmus+ participants for 2024. ESN considers this a significant step towards making the Erasmus+ programme more inclusive, more sustainable, and closer to achieving its priorities. **ESN is pleased that the European Commission has introduced significant changes to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 2024 and is confident that the improved travel support, which will be possible for everyone, will lead to significant shifts in the travel patterns of students.**

The current state of play

The currently existing system for travel support was providing only 50 EUR to students who choose to travel sustainably. This financial support was very symbolic and clearly insufficient. Although it was a step in the right direction to point the attention of students to greener ways of travelling, its introduction did not lead to a significant change in the student's choice of mode of transportation.

The ESNsurvey XV gives a very important insight into the use of the green travel top-up, showing that **only 10% of the participants have received it**. This key finding clearly correlates with the data published with the most recent [Erasmus+ Annual](#)

[Report 2022](#)¹, which presents that only a slightly higher percentage of 11% of students in higher education have benefited from the support to travel sustainably.

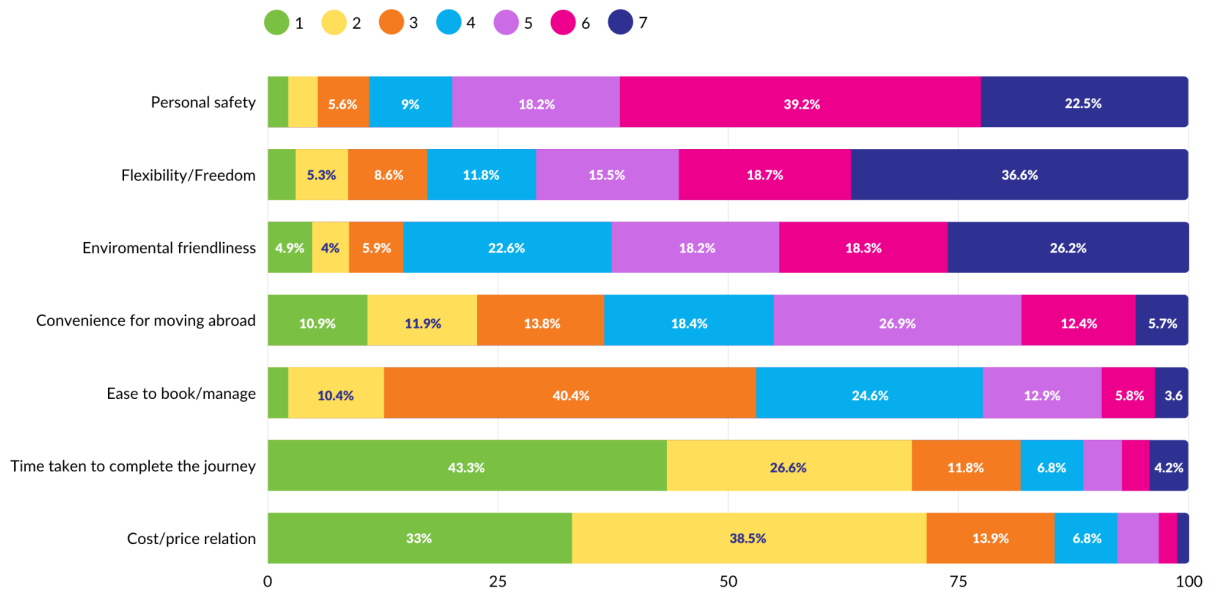


ESNsurvey XV, preliminary report (2023): What means of transport did you use for travelling at these three key moments of your exchange?

Data from the [ESNsurvey XV preliminary report](#) clearly shows that plane remains the most preferred mode of transport, with 73% of participants choosing this option and 72% preferring it for the return journey to their home country. However, for overnight trips during their mobility, buses (42%) and trains (39%) emerge as the preferred choices. When comparing this share of students with the data from the Green Erasmus report (2022)², in which 73% of students shared that they have opted for a plane to travel to their mobility destination and back, it becomes evident that the trend is consistent.

¹ Erasmus+ Annual Report 2022, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

² Green Erasmus Partnership, Brussels, February 2022



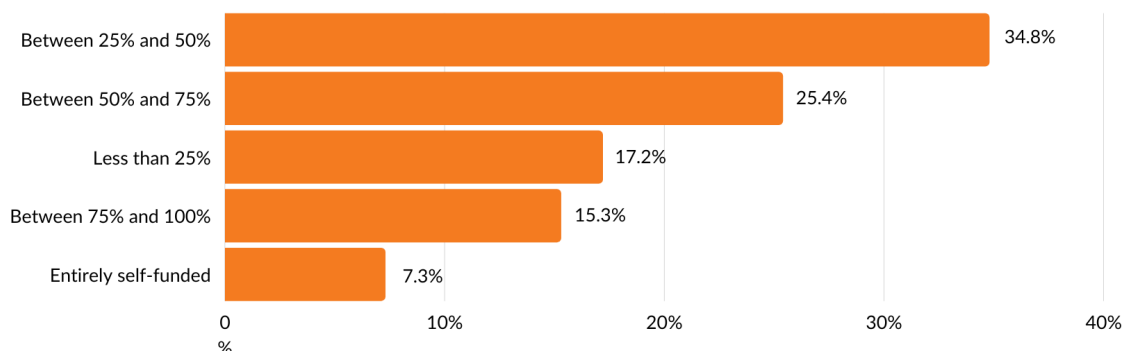
ESNsurvey XV, preliminary report (2023): What are the most important reasons for choosing this specific mode of transport?

Furthermore, the most influential factors when choosing a specific mode of transport for students are the time needed to complete the journey, with 43.% of students rating it as the most important one, and the cost/price relation, reported by 33% of students as the second most important factor. **Significant changes in these patterns can only be achieved with appropriately ambitious incentives, which allow students to cover the costs of a sustainable trip throughout Europe and make sure the majority of students can afford to travel sustainably.**

The green way forward

The Erasmus Student Network has long advocated for an increase in sustainable travel, aiming to significantly alter the travel behaviour of students participating in Erasmus+ exchanges to reduce the environmental impact of the programme. Over 5000 people from over 100 countries have signed the [Green Erasmus petition](#), calling for an increase in the current top-up grant to a universal top-up to individual support of up to €250 for green travel, proportionate to the distance covered. Therefore, **ESN highly appreciates**

the transformation of the funding rules, awarding green travel support to participants based on the travel distance between their place of origin and their mobility destination and return, should they choose to travel sustainably.



ESNsurvey XV, preliminary report (2023): How was your mobility period funded? Please consider “total cost” to include accommodation, travel, food and pocket money

The SIEM research report (2022)³ has indicated that the biggest practical barrier to participation in mobility for students is the ability to advance initial costs, while different editions of the ESNsurvey have been highlighting the grants received are insufficient to cover students’ cost of living. Therefore, ESN is glad that the Commission has acknowledged these most significant challenges for students and has taken a step in addressing students’ needs. While the current funding rules offer support for travel costs only for participants from countries not associated with Erasmus+ and outermost regions and OCTs, **ESN is pleased to see that the travel support is now available to all participants for both green and non-green travel.**

The Green Erasmus petition called further to increase the travelling days from 4 to 7 days eligible for financial support. **ESN welcomes the increase in the sustenance cost for travel time from 4 to 6 days for green travel** and the novelty of making subsistence costs available for up to 2 days of travelling to students receiving non-green travel

³ Allinson K., Gabriels W.,(2021). Maybe it will be different abroad; student and staff perspectives on diversity and inclusion in student exchanges. SIEM Research Report, siem-project.eu

support. ESN believes that this new funding mechanism will not only contribute to the **enhancement of the mobility's quality** but also **facilitate the green transformation of the programme**. Additionally, it will create more flexibility for students who wish to explore cities on their way to their mobility destination, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in an intercultural experience.

Additional changes that support quality mobility

Apart from the enhancement of travel support, ESN would like to acknowledge the new categorisation of country groups⁴. In conjunction with the increased travel support, the transfer of several countries from Group 2, with a medium cost of living, to Group 3, with higher living costs, reflects the evolving reality that students are currently encountering. This adjustment aims to significantly alleviate students' challenges in covering initial costs related to their mobility and is expected to substantially increase the total average grant per participant.

In the spirit of continuous support for more inclusive mobility, it's also crucial to recognise the increase in inclusion support for organisations, rising from 100€ to 125€ per participant. This change sets a tone of willingness to continuously make the programme more accessible to students, irrespective of their background.

Further recommendations for efficient implementation

Every new measure should be implemented with careful consideration to ensure efficacy. Therefore, the Erasmus Student Network would like to draw attention to a couple of potential pressure points in the implementation of travel support. We believe these considerations are crucial for the successful execution of the new Programme Guide for 2024:

- Introducing the increased green travel support to everyone **should be executed in a manner that avoids creating disparities for students whose mobilities will**

⁴ EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme and third countries not associated to the Programme from Regions 13 and 14

be funded with resources from previous calls. A smooth transition into the new funding model is essential, enabling Higher Education Institutions to maintain flexibility in the process. This approach ensures fairness and consistency across all participants;

- **The travel support should be awarded to students without imposing heavy administrative requisites**, aiming to incentivise their choices rather than creating additional bureaucratic burdens. The Green Erasmus Policy Recommendations⁵ also emphasise the need for clear definitions of what constitutes a sustainable mode of transportation. In line with this, the implementation of the new travel support should not be constrained by burdensome requirements to confirm that a student travelled sustainably. In certain cases, this includes the demand for home institutions to sign a declaration stating that the student travelled sustainably, in addition to requesting sustainable journey tickets.
- The fact that travel support will be available to all participants, including for non-green travel, is indeed another positive step in increasing financial support for students from various backgrounds. This inclusive approach ensures that a broader spectrum of students can benefit from the financial assistance, promoting accessibility and diversity within the Erasmus+ programme. Even though the grant levels per distance for non-green travel are lower than those for green travel and thus are less incentivising, **students should be actively encouraged to prioritise travelling sustainably**. HEIs and student organisations could play a crucial role in fostering more sustainable student behaviour in this regard. Promoting green travel should not be an isolated initiative but an engraved component in the entire life cycle of a student. The [Green Erasmus Guidelines for Environmental Activities](#) can support the development of sustainability strategies for HEIs in collaboration with student organisations.

⁵ Sustainable internationalisation for a sustainable Europe: the role of Higher education internationalisation in fostering a more environmentally friendly continent, Green Erasmus Partnership, Brussels, July 2023

- In 2022, ESN published a joint call for an [Erasmus+ Ticket](#). With the implementation of the novelties regarding travel support, we believe that one way to encourage students to take full advantage of the support and promote sustainable measures during their journey abroad is to **have a dedicated Erasmus+ train ticket** tailored to the needs of students travelling to and from their mobility destination. This initiative aims to streamline the travel process for participants and further enhance the overall Erasmus+ experience.
- With discussions for the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) budget around the corner, we believe **it's time to continue our advocacy efforts for increased funding for the Erasmus+ Programme**. This is crucial not only for the successful implementation of the novelties introduced in the new Programme Guide but also to ensure a sustained growth in the number of mobilities through the years. Now that we have worked on increasing the quality of mobilities and their accessibility, it's crucial that we continue our efforts to further enhance both the quantity and impact of mobilities. This entails a sustained focus on increasing the budget for the Erasmus+ Programme in the next MFF budget.