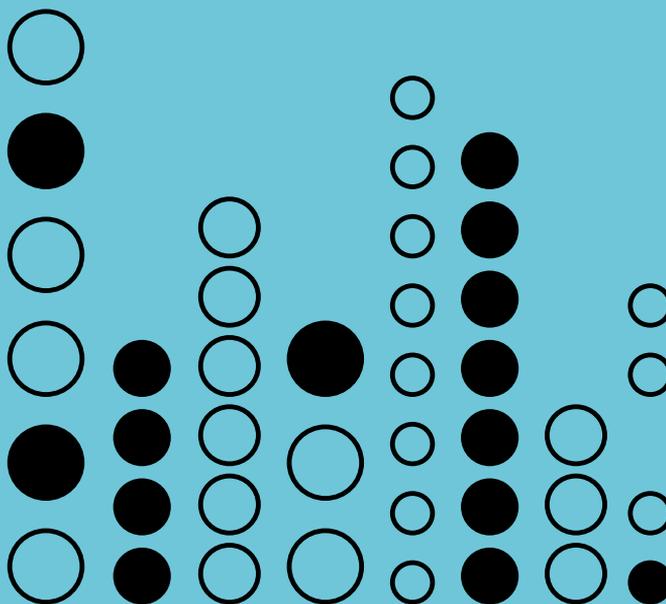


Erasmus... and what next?

Tracer study on education and careers of Polish students
participating in Erasmus mobility projects



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FRSE RESEARCH REPORT, VOL. 1/2019

Erasmus... and what next? Tracer study on education and careers of Polish students participating in Erasmus mobility projects

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DTP and Cover Design: Artur Ładno
Print: Multigraf Drukarnia Sp. z o.o. Bydgoszcz

Publisher: Foundation for the Development of the Education System,
National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme
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 www.erasmusplus.org.pl

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ISBN 978-83-65591-74-6

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Citation: J. Dąbrowska-Resiak, *Erasmus... and what next? Tracer study on education and careers of Polish students participating in Erasmus mobility projects*, Foundation for the Development of the Education System, Warsaw 2019.

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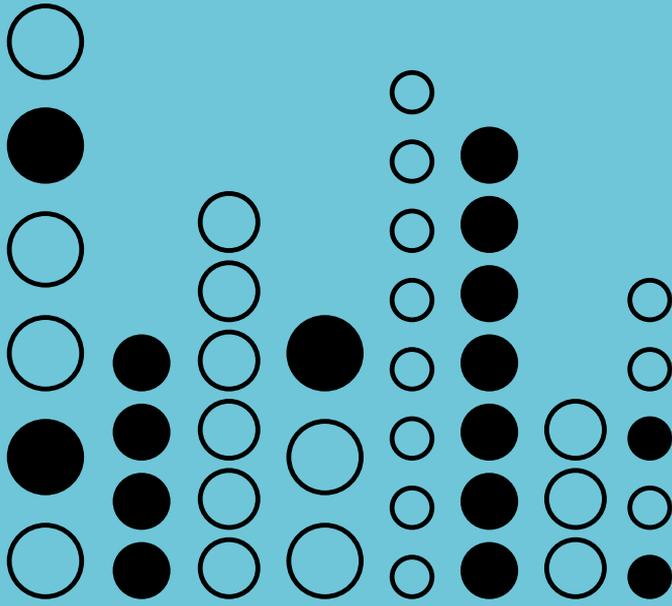
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Introduction



Home



This report shows the results of the tracer study on education and careers of students who during their studies participated in mobility projects as part of the Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes. The study was initiated and carried out by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, which acts as the Polish National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme.

The study aimed at verifying how the transition from education to the labour market took place, how the Polish university graduates' careers progressed and how mobilities abroad impact the lives of grant holders. The study covered participants of mobilities under the Erasmus+ (Higher Education sector) and Erasmus programmes, i.e. students who had been awarded grants to undergo a study period or serve work placement abroad.

The terms 'mobility' and 'mobility projects' are used in the report in accordance with definitions adopted in European educational programmes addressed to students (Erasmus and Erasmus+). Mobilities are temporary stays abroad in order to study, work, serve a traineeship, participate in training or teach classes to students. The term mobility is often used as a synonym for an exchange or travel abroad¹. Mobility projects are projects within which students stay at universities abroad to undergo a study period or serve work placements and traineeships at institutions abroad.

The Erasmus programme is addressed to HEI students and staff. Originally, it was implemented as a stand-alone initiative (between 1987 and 1995), and later it formed a part of Socrates-Erasmus (1995–2006) and the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013). Poland joined the initiative in 1998. In the years 2014–2020, the Erasmus programme is one of the five sectors of Erasmus+ (Higher Education). In this report, the abbreviated term 'Erasmus' is used to describe the EU educational mobility programme addressed to students; therefore, it relates both to the Erasmus and Erasmus+ programme. This approach results from similar educational mobility offers addressed to students in subsequent years and stems from the fact that Erasmus+ is the direct continuation of the Erasmus programme.

This study contributes to expanding knowledge of the impact of mobility on personal and professional development of Erasmus beneficiaries. It also expands the scope of previous analyses of the development of competences of mobility project participants. The study provides empirical data to inform evidence-based education policy. It forms part of a growing trend consisting in the monitoring of graduates' career progression in the labour market by Polish and international institutions. It is also a measure aimed at boosting graduate employability. At the

1. *Erasmus w Polsce w roku akademickim 2007/08 [Erasmus in Poland in the Academic Year 2007/08]*, Członkowska-Naumiuk, M. (ed.), Warsaw 2009.

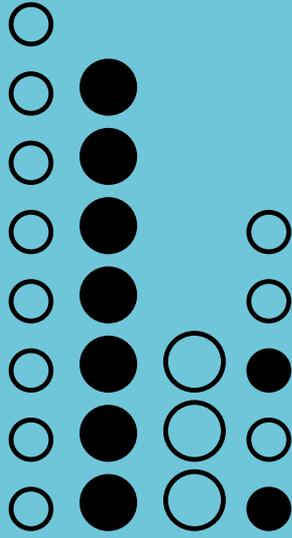
same time, we present one of few tracer studies devoted to educational mobility underwent as part of study periods at universities abroad.

The results of the study are presented in three main chapters devoted to: the impact of mobility on professional development of project participants, their careers and further education, and skills development. They are preceded by an overview of other studies concerning the careers of university graduates conducted in Poland and Europe, and a description of the situation of young people in the labour market and mobilities as part of EU educational programmes.





Background of the study



There are two main types of studies concerning the situation of university graduates. One are economic analyses prepared by domestic and international organisations and research institutes and covering general topics (unemployment, wages, forms of employment, etc.); the other are more detailed (related to promotion, for example). Such studies take into account the situation of young people who have a higher education. They often compare them with different age groups and with their peers at different levels of education. In Poland, the most significant of these studies are the analyses carried out by the Central Statistical Office (*Badanie Aktywności Ekonomicznej Ludności (BAEL) [Study on the Economic Activity of the Population]*), the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (*Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego (BKL) [The Human Capital Balance]*) and Eurostat.

The second most important source of information about the situation of graduates in the labour market are (cross-sectional and longitudinal) tracer studies carried out by various institutions and universities. Analyses of this type are becoming increasingly desirable – such research initiatives appear in numerous European countries and the European Commission also plans to carry one out. In Poland, the most important data is provided by the Nationwide System for Monitoring Economic Fates of HEI Graduates (ELA), and by the following analyses: *Dalsza Nauka i Praca [Further Education and Work]* and *From School to Work*.

In the context of graduates' progress, studies on the impact of educational mobility for the development of project participants are also relevant. The European Commission publishes data on this topic in the form of annual reports on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme. Similar data is also available based on mid-term evaluations. Moreover, Eurydice publishes Mobility Scoreboard reports, which present the results of monitoring European countries' progress in promoting educational mobility and removing obstacles to its implementation, as well as higher education system analyses. National Agencies of the Erasmus+ programme (including the one operating in Poland) publish their own reports.

The situation of HEI graduates in Poland

OECD studies indicate that employability increases together with the level of education. In European countries, the employment rate for higher education graduates is 84%, for secondary school graduates – 75%, and for graduates of schools below the secondary level – 57%. In Poland, these rates are respectively:

88%, 68% and 41%, which means that the level of education has an even more significant impact on employment opportunities².

Since 1989, an education boom has been observed in Poland, which has strongly affected the position of HEI graduates in the labour market. The transition to a market economy has resulted in an increase in educational aspirations of young people and improved access to education. This can be partially attributed to the privatisation of the higher education sector, which has resulted in rapid growth in the number of higher education institutions. In the academic year 1990/1991, 112 HEIs offered education to 400,000 students. In the academic year 2016/2017, 390 HEIs offered education to 1.35 million students. The gross enrolment ratio in higher education increased from 12.8% in 1990 to 53.8% in the academic year 2010/2011, and then began to decline, reaching the level of 47.4% in the academic year 2016/2017³. After a long-standing significant growth in the number of universities, starting from the academic year 2010/2011 we can observe a decrease in the number of HEIs, mainly non-public schools.

Study of the Economic Activity of the Population

Since 1992, the Central Statistical Office have conducted *Badanie Aktywności Ekonomicznej Ludności* [Study on the Economic Activity of the Population] on a quarterly basis. The study is conducted with the use of the representative method, which means that its participants are selected at random from the pool of Polish households (at present, the sample is 54,700 households), and the information obtained is extrapolated for the whole country. The goal of the study is to provide information about the volume and structure of labour resources and to determine the number of people who are professionally active and passive.

In comparison to other age groups, among young people aged under 25 it is possible to observe low professional activity (only 35% of them work or are registered as unemployed) and a low employment rate (this group is the most vulnerable to unemployment). In accordance with data for the fourth quarter of 2017, fewer than every third person aged 15–24 (29.8%) is employed, while in the 25–34 age group this rate reaches 80.6% and among people aged 35–44 it amounts to 83.8%. The unemployment rate among 15–24 year olds is 14.8%, as compared to 4.5% among people aged 25–34, 3.7% in the group of people aged 35–44, and 3% in the group of people aged 45 and over⁴. However, it should be stressed that unemployment is falling in Poland. This is also true for

2. *Education at a Glance 2017. OECD Indicators*, Paris 2017.

3. Wiki Youth Data: <https://bit.ly/2AbgVbc> [Accessed: 21.09.2018].

4. GUS data: <https://bit.ly/2S4N6QN> [Accessed: 21.09.2018].

youth unemployment, which is lower than the EU average, which amounts to 16.8%⁵.

The Human Capital Balance

Since 2010, the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University has carried out the largest research project in Poland (and one of the largest in Europe) to diagnose the situation in the labour market and the supply of competences. The Human Capital Balance is a tool to monitor the level and structure of employment and trends in the labour market. In the case of working-age people it makes it possible to identify areas of mismatch between their competences and the needs and challenges of the labour market. Study results form the basis for the formulation of recommendations for decision-makers in the area of science and education, employment policy, and entrepreneurship development. In this chapter, the 2017 edition of *Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego* [The Human Capital Balance] is discussed.

The results of the Human Capital Balance do not refer directly to the situation of young people, but the analysis includes a division into individual age groups and levels of education. It encompasses information on the situation of young people in the labour market, including issues relating to unemployment or forms of employment. The report shows that HEI graduates are much less frequently at risk of unemployment than people with lower educational attainment (especially those who completed schools at a level lower than secondary). Young people (aged 18–35) who are HEI graduates are satisfied with their selected field of study – 70% of them declare that if they had the opportunity to choose again, they would make the same decision. Those most satisfied with their choice are graduates in the following fields of study: Information and Communication Technologies, and Arts and Humanities (over 77%), and those least satisfied are graduates in Social Sciences and Journalism (about 53%).

HEI graduates form a group of respondents whose profession is consistent with their education profile. However, there are differences even in this group – the youngest respondents (aged 18–35) who are HEI graduates less frequently work in their acquired profession than their older counterparts.

The percentage of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) varies between 12% and 18% (women predominate in this group). However, it is worth noting that after taking informal and non-formal education into account, the NEET indicator is much lower, especially in the youngest age group, which means this group is comprised of people who avail of additional forms of development (sports activities, courses, training, conferences, seminars, etc.).

5. Wiki Youth Data: <https://bit.ly/2AbgVbc> [Accessed: 21.09.2018].

The study has shown that remuneration grows along with the level of education. In the 18–35 age group, respondents who are HEI graduates earn on average PLN 3,038 net (men: PLN 3,996 net; women: PLN 2,556 net), which is more than people of the same age who did not graduate from HEIs, and at the same time they earn less than older respondents with the same level of education.

Graduate tracer studies and panel surveys conducted in Poland

In Poland, various graduate tracer studies, both centralised and decentralised, are carried out. At the central level, they are conducted by research institutes and units and are usually grant-funded. Individual higher education institutions also undertake such studies.

Studies conducted by HEIs

Graduate tracer studies are carried out by almost all universities in Poland and have a narrow scope – they concern graduates of individual higher education institutions and are usually related to a given course of studies. An online survey is the most commonly used study method. The questionnaire is sent to respondents via email. The biggest deficiency of such analyses results from their diversity: although the methodologies used by individual universities are usually similar and many questions overlap, the structure of individual questionnaires varies considerably, as does the time of survey dispatch and the number of data collections (usually respondents answer the questionnaire once, but some HEIs send them to their graduates on numerous occasions, also several years after completion of studies). Because of the limited number of respondents and low response rates, these analyses may be of use to individual HEIs, but they are not representative of the entire student population in Poland.

Panel survey *From school to work*

A nationwide survey on the situation of young people on the labour market and, in particular, their transition from education to employment was entitled *From School to Work: Individual and Institutional Indicators of Education and Career Paths of Young Poles (FS2W)*⁶. The survey aimed at tracing the relationship between the skill quality and level (taking gender, cultural capital and social background into account) and education and careers of young Poles. It was a continuation of work undertaken as part of a research project entitled: *Dalsza Nauka i Praca [Continuing Education and Work]*, which focused on

6. www.fs2in.ifispan.waw.pl [Accessed: 21.09.2018].

the measurement of knowledge and skills increase in upper secondary school students and individual, family- and school-related determinants.

The FS2W survey used a database comprising 9,746 students born in 1992 and 1993 who participated in the national PISA (*Program for International Student Assessment*) study in 2009. In 2014, a second measurement was performed, with the main research technique being a face-to-face interview. In the case of persons who, for various reasons, were not available for such an interview, an online survey was staged.

POLPAN Panel Survey

Polish Panel Survey POLPAN is a programme implemented since 1988 to record changes in the social structure of Poland. In the first wave a representative sample of 5,817 adults aged 21–65 participated in the survey. The successive waves of the survey are carried out every five years. The next edition is scheduled for 2018⁷.

The POLPAN survey is unique due to the scope of the collected material. In addition to information about demographic and social characteristics of respondents and their families, the questionnaire includes a number of questions concerning socio-political matters, the majority of which are comparable to questions appearing in international research. POLPAN takes into account the situation of young people – study results of the previous wave included a report entitled *Niepewne uczestnictwo – młodzi na polskim rynku pracy w latach 2008–2013* [*Uncertain Participation – Young People on the Labour Market in Poland in the Years 2008–2013*]⁸, in which the following issues were discussed: forms of employment, age when the first job was taken up, impact of educational attainment on professional situation, and professional careers of the youngest respondents.

Nationwide System for Monitoring Economic Fates of HEI Graduates (ELA)

Among Polish graduate tracer studies carried out using the panel survey method, special attention should be paid to the Nationwide System for Monitoring Economic Fates of HEI Graduates (ELA)⁹ implemented by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and designed by the University of Warsaw

7. <http://polpan.org> [Accessed: 21.09.2018]. The results of the study were not published by the beginning of 2019.

8. Kiersztyn, A. *Niepewne uczestnictwo – młodzi na polskim rynku pracy w latach 2008–2013* [*Uncertain Participation – Young People on the Polish Labour Market in the Years 2008–2013*], Warsaw 2015.

9. The system can be accessed at: ela.nauka.gov.pl.

Laboratory of Education Quality Evaluation (PEJK). The ELA system is developed by the National Information Processing Institute – a State Research Institute commissioned by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The objective of the system is to collect reliable information about economic prospects of university graduates and, at the same time, about the system of higher education in Poland.

The unique character of ELA results from the nature of information collected to monitor the fate of graduates – it includes specific administrative data, not only declarations of graduates. It comes from the Social Insurance Institution and the POL-on system (integrated system of information on science and higher education, which supports the work of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). On this basis, success factors on the labour market are determined, which make it possible to compare the situation, including financial standing, of graduates of various fields of study in different periods covered by the survey. The results for particular groups also take into account the specificity of the labour market in the places of residence (voivodeships) of the respondents.

The ELA system operates since 2014. So far, three waves of the survey have been carried out. The first one covered respondents who completed their studies in 2014, the second – graduates of 2014 (again) and 2015 (for the first time), and the third – graduates of 2014 and 2015 (again), and 2016 (for the first time). In subsequent waves, it is planned to repeat the measurement of the previously surveyed groups, as well as to include new cohorts of HEI graduates.

In the system, it is possible to track average earnings of graduates in a given graduation year, find out how many of them are in paid employment (and in what form of employment), and how many are unemployed, as well as verify how many of them continue their studies as part of other courses or take care of their children. The system provides a comparison of earnings of graduates in particular areas and levels of study, as well as information on the risk of unemployment in the case of graduates in various fields (also in comparison with the unemployment rate in the voivodeship of residence of a given respondent).

It is worth noting that ELA reports do not contain information on persons who are not included in the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) registers, i.e. people working outside Poland and NEET graduates. The data in the system also does not cover the self-employed, because it is not possible to determine their earnings on the basis of the amount of contributions paid by them. What is more, ZUS does not record contracts for specific work, contracts of mandate nor work performed without formal contracts. Persons insured with the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund (KRUS) may also not be included in ZUS registers. When interpreting the results, it should, therefore, be taken into account how many

graduates covered by the report are registered with the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS).

Graduate tracer studies in the European Union

Relatively few comparative studies on the fate of graduates have been carried out at the European level, but several initiatives in this area are worth mentioning.

International studies

Comparative graduate tracer studies were carried out within the framework of several projects: CHEERS (1998–2000, 12 countries), REFLEX (2005–2006, 16 countries), HEGESCO (implemented in 5 countries using the REFLEX methodology) and TRACKIT, implemented by the European University Association¹⁰.

In order to improve the quality of education and competences of Europeans, the European Commission adopted a new programme in June 2016: *The New Skills Agenda for Europe*¹¹. The programme gave rise to a series of actions designed to ensure that citizens of the European Union have access to an appropriate level of training, support and development of their skills. Among these activities was the Graduate Tracking system, whose name was later changed to the EUROGRADUATE Pilot Survey Project. Works are currently under way to prepare a pilot graduate survey in selected European countries.

The EUROGRADUATE Survey Project was launched in autumn 2018¹². As part of the project, data collection tools were to be developed and tested in selected European countries. The pilot were to cover graduates who completed their studies one year and five years before the survey (ISCED 6 and 7, which in the Polish system of education corresponds to first and second cycle studies), and a quantitative survey will be carried out using the Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) technique, in this case an online questionnaire. Upon the completion of the survey, reports (a large-scale comparative report and national reports) will be drawn up and decisions will be made on including all EU Member States in the survey.

In accordance with the assumptions of the European Commission, the system is to provide qualitative and quantitative data on what HEI and vocational school graduates across Europe do upon graduation. Its aim is to influence the development of graduate monitoring systems in each Member State. It is also important to encourage closer cooperation between national actors

10. *Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, Retention and Employability*, Luxembourg 2014.

11. <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>.

12. The results of the study were not published by the beginning of 2019.

involved in the preparation of such analyses, including the exchange of good practices, and, consequently, to increase the comparability of collected data. Such information is intended to contribute to improving the quality and relevance of education, thereby eliminating skills mismatches between graduates and labour market needs.

The decision to take initiative on graduate tracing was preceded by extensive public consultations on the review of the EU programme for the modernisation of higher education, which was completed in February 2016. The opinions of respondents were rather critical: 71% of students or graduates and 61% of higher education staff disagreed with the statement that 'the supply of higher education graduates is adequately matched to the knowledge and skills needed in the economy', and only 29 consultation participants agreed with the statement that 'students are duly supported when making [...] decisions as to the selection of the field of study'¹³.

Graduate tracer studies in individual countries of the European Union

Individual countries of the European Union also develop graduate monitoring systems at the central level. In 2017, the European Commission launched an action aimed at determining the feasibility of collecting information on the learning outcomes of graduates of higher education institutions, based on the results of the EUROGRADUATE feasibility study¹⁴. This study confirmed that numerous systemic initiatives were undertaken in Europe to monitor graduates of higher education institutions, but they significantly differed in individual countries in terms of methodology and intensity. In 25 Member States (out of 31 covered) measures were taken based on regular graduate tracer studies, on analyses of administrative data or on both these methods. In this group, only 11 states conducted regular graduate tracer studies (usually every year or every two years), and six used the method combining surveys and administrative data. The EUROGRADUATE study confirmed the demand for access to sustainable, regular European analyses devoted to graduates.

The European Commission collects and publishes data on various national systems for monitoring the fate of HEI graduates¹⁵. The Commission's website features descriptions of solutions adopted in Poland (ELA system), Romania, Estonia, Spain, Croatia, Slovenia, Finland, Lithuania and Hungary.

13. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A New Skills Agenda for Europe*, Annex No. 2.

14. www.eurograduate.eu.

15. https://ec.europa.eu/education/compendium_en?body_value=tracking&items_per_page=9 [Accessed: 21.09.2018].

An interesting and very comprehensive system for monitoring the careers of graduates has been introduced in France by CEREQ (Centre for Education Research, Training and Employability). The study entitled *Génération* was launched in the 1990s and has been continued until today. It aims at a detailed analysis of French graduates' transition from education to the labour market. The study makes it possible to reconstruct the education and professional careers of young people three years after the completion of studies and to monitor their progress. The *Génération* study is carried out every three years in the form of a phone survey addressed to a new group of graduates. It covers all young people who completed education in a given year, hence the term 'generation' used by the authors of the study to describe the surveyed group. The study covers large groups of respondents: e.g. in the *Génération 2004* the sample amounted to 65,000 young people. The study covers graduates of higher education institutions and secondary schools. Each graduation year is surveyed on several occasions: for the first time three years after the completion of education, and again after subsequent three-year periods. Several generations have been surveyed more than a few times, e.g. those who graduated in 1998 have been surveyed four times (three, five, seven and ten years after graduation). Some repeated measurements are based on abridged versions of the original questionnaire¹⁶.

Respondents describe their main occupation in of the months following the date of completing education, up to the date of the survey. This makes it possible to create a detailed description of the changes in the situation of the young people and to collect information about respondents' first jobs and subsequent places of employment. Owing to the fact that the research tool is used in the same form in subsequent stages of the survey, in subsequent graduation years it is possible to indicate the factors that are conducive for entering the labour market upon completing education (e.g. education level, fields of study or degrees awarded in the course of studies) and for tracing changes in the labour market which affect the situation of the young people. The *Génération* study also takes into account a number of other factors, such as gender, social background, place of residence, and family situation of the respondents.

The results of subsequent waves of the study are available on CEREQ's website in the form of online reports. They describe the situation of subsequent generations and compare individual graduation years of respondents in terms

16. A detailed description of the study scheme (in French) is available on CEREQ's website at: www.cereq.fr/articles/Enquete-Generation/Presentation-detaillee-de-Generation [Accessed: 21.09.2018].

of employment, unemployment rates, forms of employment and other variables important from the point of view of the labour market¹⁷.

Data on learning mobility under Erasmus

Data on mobility as part of European programmes for international learning mobility are collected primarily by the European Commission and National Agencies of the Erasmus+ programme in individual countries. They are made available in the form of aggregate and comparative reports. Analyses of learning mobility are also carried out by the Eurydice network (*Mobility scoreboard*), whereas the European Commission conducts in-depth studies of the impact of mobility on its participants.

Cross-sectional and international data on participation in mobility

Data pertaining to the Erasmus+ programme remains the most important source of information about the learning mobility of students. The analysis carried out in 28 countries of the European Union shows that in the academic year 2013/2014, on average only 1.3% of students participated in learning mobility (1.9% in Poland; the highest rate in Luxembourg – 6.4%, and Liechtenstein – 3.6%)¹⁸.

European data concerning mobility are featured in *Mobility Scoreboard* reports presenting the results of studies carried out by the Eurydice network and commissioned by the European Commission. The study defines five thematic areas: information and guidance, foreign language preparation, portability of grants and loans, mobility support provided to students with low socio-economic background, and recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications. To date, two *Mobility Scoreboard* (2013 and 2016) reports have been published and subsequent editions will be published at two-year intervals (the results for 2018 were not published by the beginning of 2019)¹⁹.

Data on learning mobility are also included in documents of the Erasmus+ programme: in annual and mid-term evaluation reports. *Erasmus+ Annual Reports* are interesting data sources. So far, reports for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 have been published and subsequent editions are pending. The reports describe the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme as a whole and learning mobility of students in the higher education sector is only one of many topics discussed therein. Chapters devoted to Key Action 1. Student Mobility (KA 103 and KA 107) present in particular data on projects received and granted and on financial allocations as part of the entire Key Action 1 in all Member States of the

17. www.cereq.fr/publications/Cereq-Bref/Enquete-2016-aupres-de-la-Generation-2013-Belt-d-amelioration-de-l-insertion-professionnelle-for-les-non-diplomes [Accessed: 21.09.2018].

18. *Mobility Scoreboard: Higher Education Background Report*, Luxembourg 2016.

19. Documents in electronic versions are available in English and Polish at: www.eurydice.org.pl.

European Union and in individual countries. The publications also feature data based on reports of mobility project participants, which point to a very high level of satisfaction and improvement of competences and qualifications²⁰.

An in-depth *Erasmus Impact Study* focussing on the influence of mobility on the professional development of students who were Erasmus grant holders was carried out in 2013. The results of the study have been published in two study reports: one devoted to the discussion of the most important issues resulting from the survey²¹ and the other presenting detailed analysis results with reference to selected regions in Europe (north, south, west and east; Poland has been included in the last one)²².

A sample of 71,000 students was selected to analyse the impact of mobility on the increase in competences, as well as on finding employment and professional development. The results indicate that the most important reasons for students to decide to participate in international mobility projects is the desire to experience living in another country and the will to learn languages and improve soft competences. Other reasons for going abroad include boosting employability.

Study authors have verified the extent to which students developed specific competences related to employability. A comparison was made on the basis of measurements carried out before students' departure and upon their return from international mobility. The results were also compared with the achievements of students who had not participated in learning mobility programmes. It appeared that students who were the beneficiaries of Erasmus developed characteristics covered by the study to a much greater extent than their peers who did not participate in the programme.

In subsequent sections, soft skills to be displayed by HEI graduates as required by employers were analysed (in Eastern Europe, communication skills proved to be the most important). The impact of mobility on professional development was also analysed. Unemployment rates among students who participated in the Erasmus+ programme and these of other students at three months and five years after graduation were compared. It was also examined how many respondents started economic activity and how many of them were employed in managerial positions. Also in these aspects Erasmus project participants fared better than their peers. Mobile students were to a lesser degree exposed to long-term unemployment, more often started their own businesses and were employed in managerial positions. Programme participants were more willing to seek

20. *Erasmus+ Annual Report 2016*, Brussels 2017.

21. *The Erasmus Impact Study*, Luxembourg 2014.

22. *The Erasmus Impact Study Regional Analysis*, Luxembourg 2016.

employment abroad and to work in an international environment. They also more often chose life partners who were foreign nationals.

Participation of Polish students in Erasmus

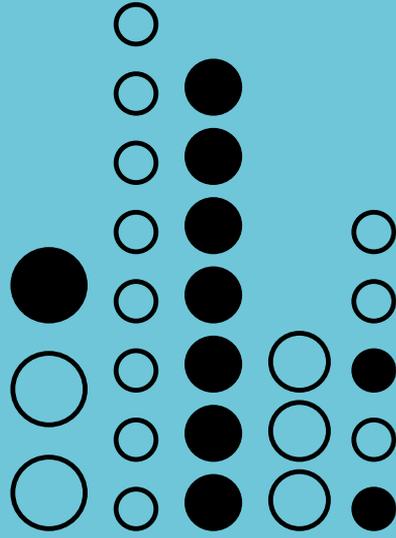
Mobility participant reports form the most important source of information about the participation of Polish students in mobilities as part of Erasmus. Each academic year, all participants of mobility for education and training are obliged to present such reports. The reports concern such thematic blocks as evaluation of mobility and support provided by the sending and host institutions. Moreover, aspects related to funding, recognition of achievements, as well as personal, professional and academic development of students are discussed therein. An important advantage of these reports is the fact that all submitted statements are complete. Thanks to the reports' obligatory nature, the Erasmus National Agency obtains accurate information collected over many years. The data concern the evaluation of student mobilities for education and training. Another important advantage of the reports is their comprehensiveness. They cover preparations for the mobility, the stay abroad, and an evaluation of the mobility upon the student's return.

The Polish National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme gathers and examines such data. The collected information is used in national analyses of the programme, information and promotional materials and in preparing recommendations for Polish authorities and the European Commission. From the onset of the programme, reports featuring analyses for individual years intended for domestic recipients and aggregate comparative reports have been published in Poland²³. However, until now there have been no systematic tracer studies on learning and professional mobility participants.

23. The reports can be found on the website of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System: <http://czytelnia.frse.org.pl>.



Methodology of the study



Study concept

This study analysing the careers of students participating in Erasmus and Erasmus+ mobility projects combines two types of studies: a tracer (transversal) study and a panel (longitudinal) survey. A panel survey can be described as a method of collecting data repeatedly from one group of respondents at regular intervals using the same or similar tools. Tracer studies include administering a survey to subsequent graduate groups.

The study was initiated in 2017 and comprised the piloting phase of the study tool and the first stage of the tracer study. The data were collected using a base questionnaire.

The base questionnaire was addressed to people who:

- effected Erasmus mobilities within that year,
- effected their mobilities prior to that year but completed their university programmes during that year (which is why they had not been included in previous surveys).

Those participating in the tracer study covering a selected year and agreeing to continue it in subsequent years will be included in the panel sample. Having filled in their base questionnaire during the first data collection they will be asked to fill in its abridged version during subsequent waves of the survey (panel questionnaire). Data will be collected one, three and five years after their graduation.

The choice of a method combining two ways of data collection will facilitate the tracking of respondents' careers, attitudes and opinions. Information obtained in this way will illustrate the dynamics of changes occurring within a given group and facilitate the identification of cause-effect relationships linked to the developments being analysed.

The biggest risk associated with that kind of research concept consists in a potentially low response rate as early as in the first survey wave and – consequently – not much motivation to take part in further panel survey data collections (Babbie 2001). In order to prevent this from happening, there are plans to introduce incentives to participate in further waves of panel survey in subsequent years to encourage the biggest possible number of respondents to fill in their questionnaires.

The tool

Data is mainly collected during Computer Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI). Respondents are emailed links to an online questionnaire which they are to fill in by themselves and without the interviewer's assistance. The choice of this method facilitates reaching a large group of respondents in a relatively short time while maintaining low administrative costs. Anonymity is an important

advantage offered by CAWI as it eliminates the influence of interviewers ('interviewer effect' and 'respondent effect') on respondents when they provide answers. However, the absence of the survey organisers' full control over who actually completes the questionnaire is an important limitation here.

In 2017, only one measurement tool was used: the base questionnaire containing the widest range of variables. An abridged version of the questionnaire prepared on the basis of the first one will be addressed to the panel sample during subsequent waves of the survey. The base questionnaire covers the following aspects: completed degree programmes, participation in Erasmus mobilities, work and work placements during studies, entry on the labour market, continuing education, and career. Particular emphasis was placed on participation in programmes organised by foreign HEIs and on Erasmus internships, as well as on the influence of such mobilities on respondents' professional and educational status. Issues focussing on graduates' careers and further education were also discussed.

Data collection

The sample chosen for the first wave of the survey involved all students – participants in Erasmus and Erasmus+ mobility projects between 2007 and 2015. Those serving internships or studying at foreign universities were also included in the sample. The survey was administered to graduates completing all study cycles, from Bachelor degree to PhD programmes. Those who were still studying and who were yet to complete a programme of any cycle were excluded from the survey. The date of obtaining a certificate of completion of the programme during which a respondent underwent an Erasmus mobility was regarded as the moment of completing higher education.

The participant database was created thanks to reports, i.e. obligatory questionnaires completed by all mobility participants upon return from abroad. These reports feature a question concerning consent to further contact from the National Agency (among other things – in order to conduct further studies) and a request to provide an email address. The survey questionnaire was sent to all students who consented to being contacted by the National Agency. Therefore, the database contained a total of 101,371 unique email addresses.

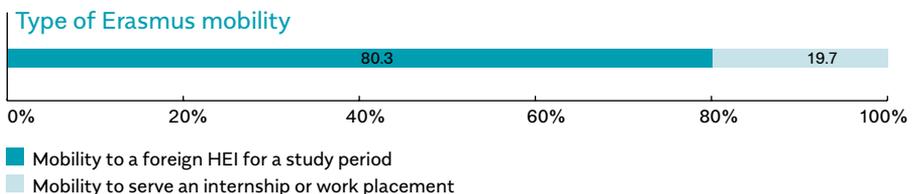
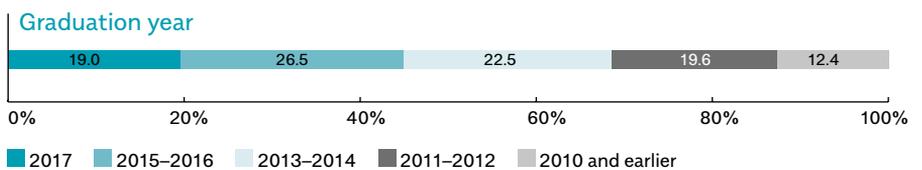
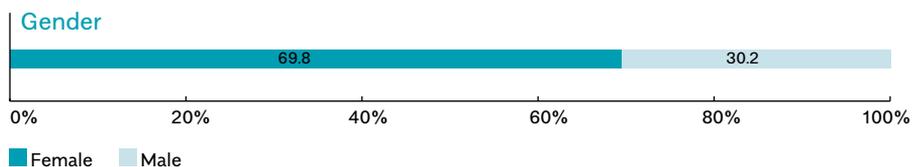
The first data collection took place in June 2017 and was treated as the piloting phase of the study concept and the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 3,000 respondents randomly selected from the database. The results of the piloting phase confirmed the effectiveness of both the tool and the data collection technique. They also facilitated the introduction of small modifications to the questionnaire to make it better adapted to respondents' needs. The first data collection after the piloting

stage started in November 2017 and ended in January 2018. Subsequent data collections will take place every November. From the respondents' viewpoint, this is the best month as by then resit examination sessions in Polish HEIs are over, therefore, the survey can include all graduates completing their programme in the data collection year.

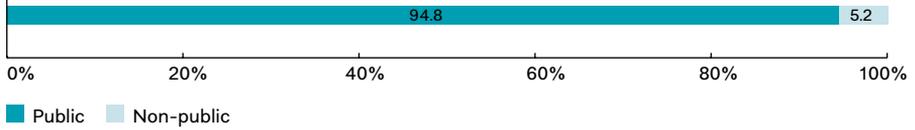
Invitations to participate in the survey (and later – survey reminders) were sent (using the Freshmail tool preferred for the purpose of email campaigns) in the form of a brief message encouraging participation and providing a link to the online questionnaire. Before sending the emails, contact details were verified to eliminate repeated addresses (Freshmail automation functionality).

During the first stage of the survey, 7,100 fully completed questionnaires were sent to the National Agency (which is a 7% response rate). Questionnaires partly completed were not analysed – there were 3,880 such cases. The actual response rate is to be seen in the context of the database. A vast majority of data was invalid – respondents no longer used the mailboxes provided as contact ones (for example university email addresses used during studies to contact lecturers or administration staff).

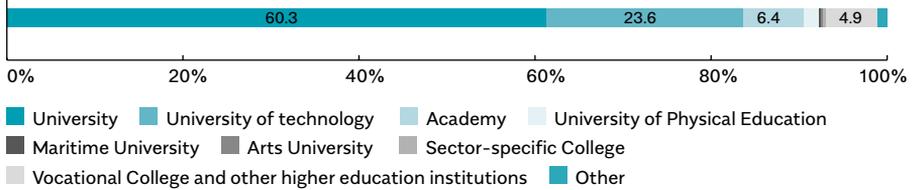
Description of respondents



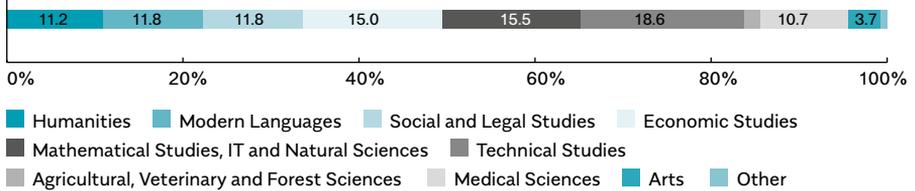
Status of graduates' HEIs



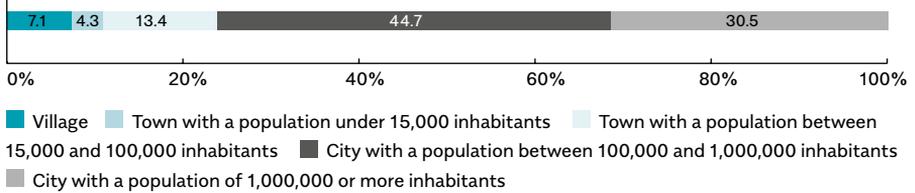
Type of HEIs respondents graduated from



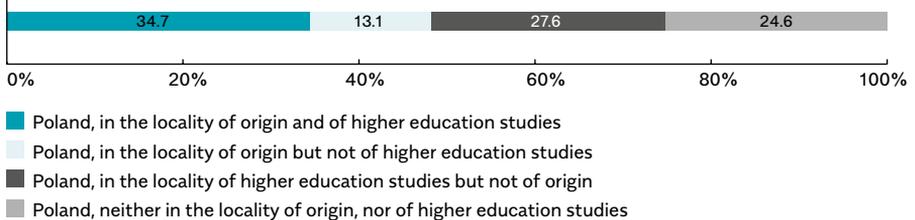
Degree in:



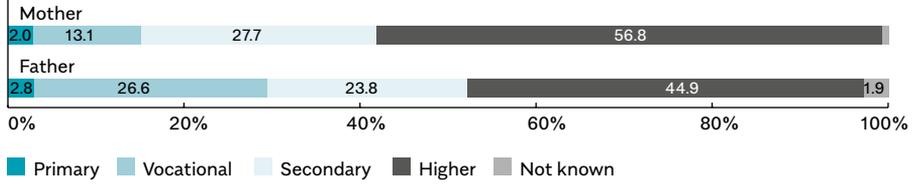
Place of residence



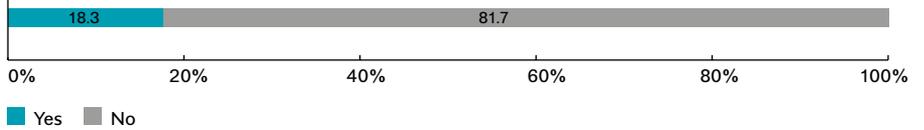
Current place of employment



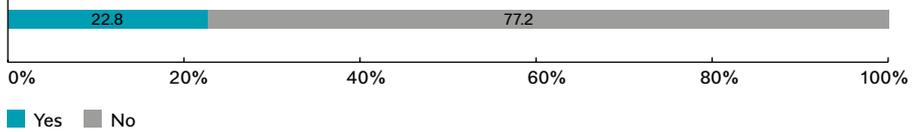
Parents' education



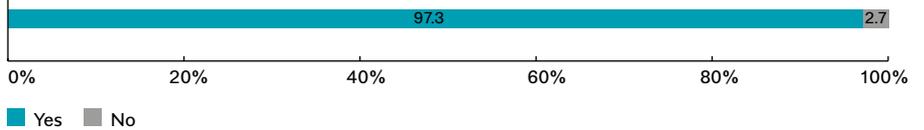
Do the respondent's close family members have a similar job?



Do the respondent's close family members have a similar level of education?



Is Polish the respondent's mother tongue?



Student mobility as part of the Erasmus programme



In accordance with the principles of the Erasmus+ programme described in the *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*²⁴, mobility projects (also student learning mobilities) are aimed at raising the level of key competences and skills, especially those that are useful in the labour market. They also intend to improve the command of foreign languages and raise intercultural awareness.

Learning mobilities were a very important aspect of graduate career tracking. They were looked at from the perspective of time and their influence on graduates' further education and career was considered. The analysis includes two types of mobility: going abroad to follow a period of study at a foreign university (mobilities for a study period abroad) and to serve internships or work placements in foreign institutions (mobilities for a work period abroad). Moreover, the survey made use of information about graduation years (which facilitated comparing the situation of recent graduates with that of their older counterparts) and fields of study.

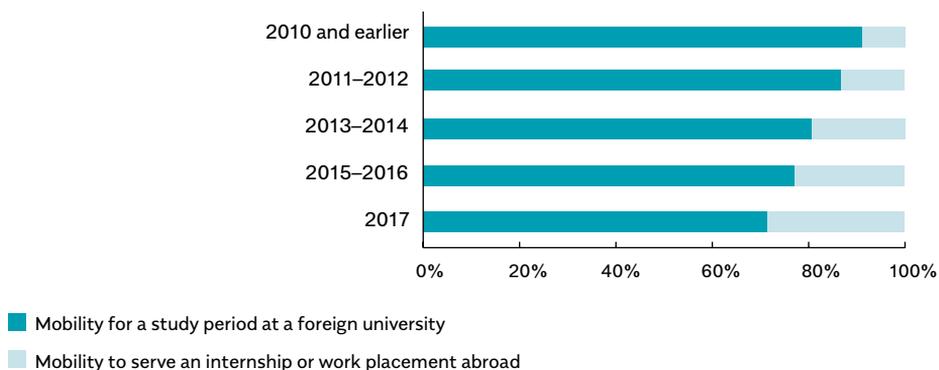
Polish students' mobility

Erasmus+ and its predecessor Erasmus are the most popular international education programmes among Polish students. In the years 2007–2016 over 100,000 of them went abroad to study and work as part of the programme. Since 2009 interest in the programme has remained stable. On average 11,000 students go to study abroad every year and another 3,500 decide to participate in international work placements and internships.

Mobilities for a study period abroad are much more popular than those carried out to serve internships and work placements, yet studies completed over the years show that there is a growing interest in work placements. It is worth remembering that students had the first opportunity to serve internships and placements abroad when the Lifelong Learning Programme was launched (in 2007). At the beginning, only a few hundred people decided to participate in such mobilities (out of twelve or so thousand participating in mobility programmes). Before 2010, over 90% of respondents decided to carry out a mobility for a study period abroad. In 2015–2016, internships constituted over 20% of all student mobilities, and in 2017 – nearly 30%.

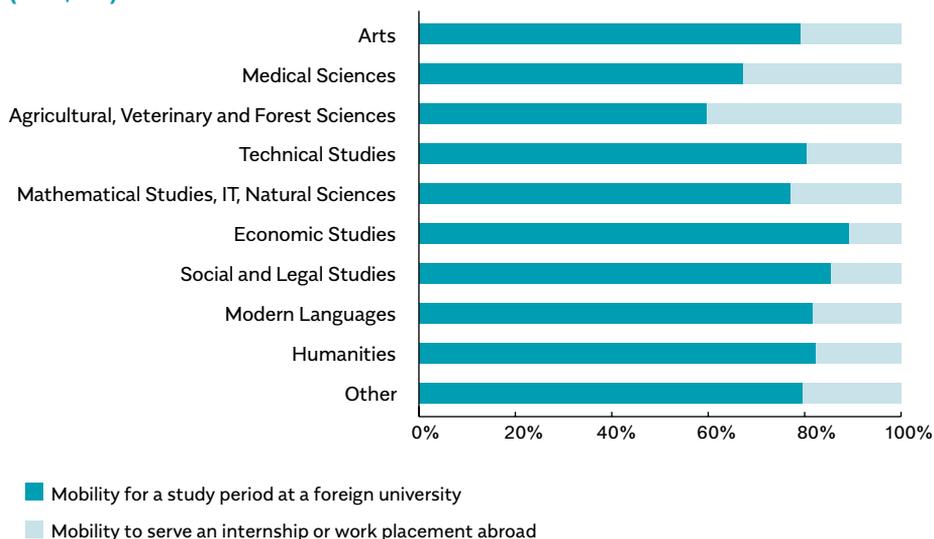
24. *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*, Version 2 (2018): 15.12.2017.

Popularity of individual types of mobility among students in subsequent years (n = 6,877)



To a certain degree, the popularity of individual types of mobility was also influenced by the field of study. The highest percentage of students choosing to undergo work placements was observed in fields of study related to Agricultural, Veterinary and Forest Sciences (over 40%) and Medical Sciences (33%). The lowest percentage was observed among those involved in Economic Studies as well as Social and Legal Studies.

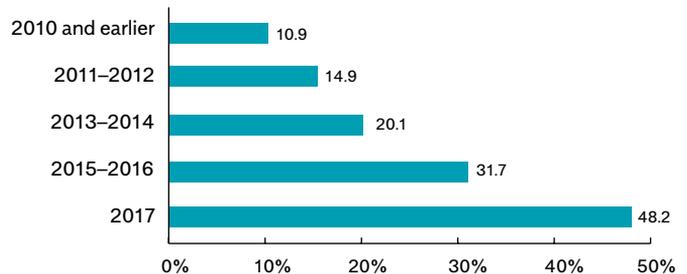
Popularity of individual types of mobility among students – breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)



The principles of Erasmus and Erasmus+ allowed students to participate in an international mobility project more than once during their studies (although the possibility of multiple mobilities was considerably increased in the Erasmus+ programme). Every fourth respondent participated in more than one mobility project (26.38%).

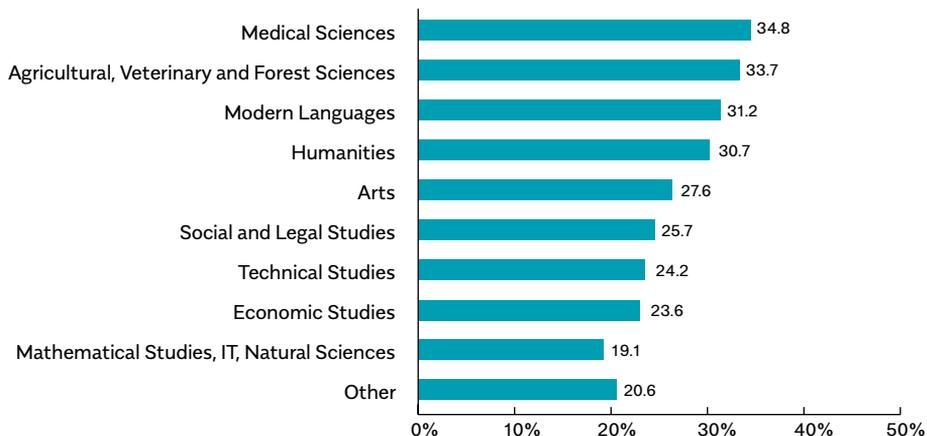
Those who graduated in later years of the programme period were more willing to carry out multiple mobilities. In 2017 almost half of the respondents declared that they had served two or more Erasmus mobilities. The percentage of such people was considerably lower among older graduates, although still very high in the case of those graduating in 2015–2016 (nearly one third of the group). Older respondents graduating before 2011 were less likely to effect multiple international mobilities.

Percentage of persons participating in Erasmus mobility projects more than once during their degree programme – breakdown by graduation year (n = 6,877)



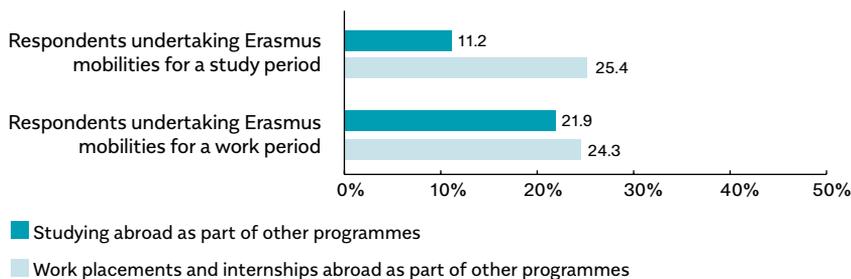
The field of study had an impact on Erasmus grant holders' number of mobilities. Multiple mobilities were carried out by students of Medical Sciences, Agricultural, Veterinary and Forest Sciences, and Modern Languages (over 30% of respondents). Those involved in Mathematical Studies, IT and Natural Sciences were less likely to do so (19.1%).

Percentage of persons participating in Erasmus mobility projects more than once during their degree programme – breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)



Respondents were also asked whether they had participated in other grant programmes, apart from Erasmus. A vast majority (66.73%) declared they had not. Those choosing to go abroad as part of another programme were more likely to undergo internships and work placements (22.35%) than continue studying outside Poland (14.02%).

Popularity of other grant programmes – breakdown by type of Erasmus mobility (n = 6,877)



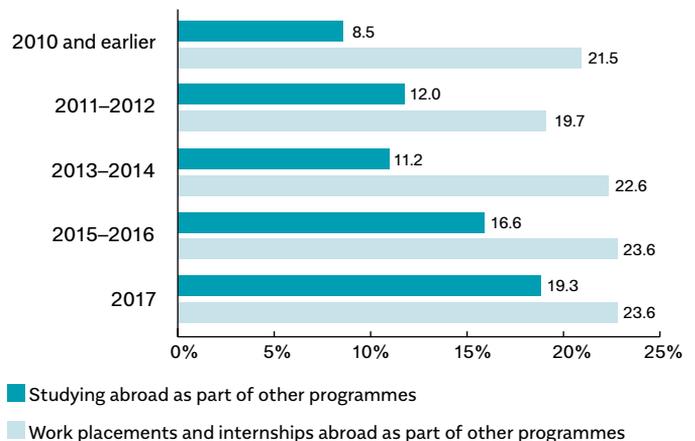
There is an interesting regularity concerning the nature of mobilities for a study period carried out under programmes other than Erasmus. Erasmus grant holders going abroad to study were more likely to choose other grant programmes to undergo internships than to study. As much as 25.4% of Erasmus grant holders underwent work placements under a different programme (only 11.2% decided to study abroad as part of a different programme). Students who underwent their Erasmus internships or work placements in a foreign institution

were generally more likely to use other programmes through which they were just as likely to go abroad to study as to carry out work placements.

The above data shows that students who have once participated in mobility projects are more likely to do so again – regardless of whether their next mobility is offered by Erasmus or any other programme.

The youngest respondents (who graduated in 2017) were not only more likely than the group of older graduates to effect multiple Erasmus mobilities, but they were also more likely to study a part of their programme at a foreign university as grant holders of programmes other than Erasmus. Less than 10% of the oldest respondents (those graduating in 2010 or earlier) used a different programme to study abroad. This percentage was gradually growing in the case of younger respondents to reach almost 20% for the 2017 graduation year. However, there were no noticeable differences in the number of work placements other than those offered by Erasmus – 20–24% of respondents of each graduation year covered by the survey had this experience.

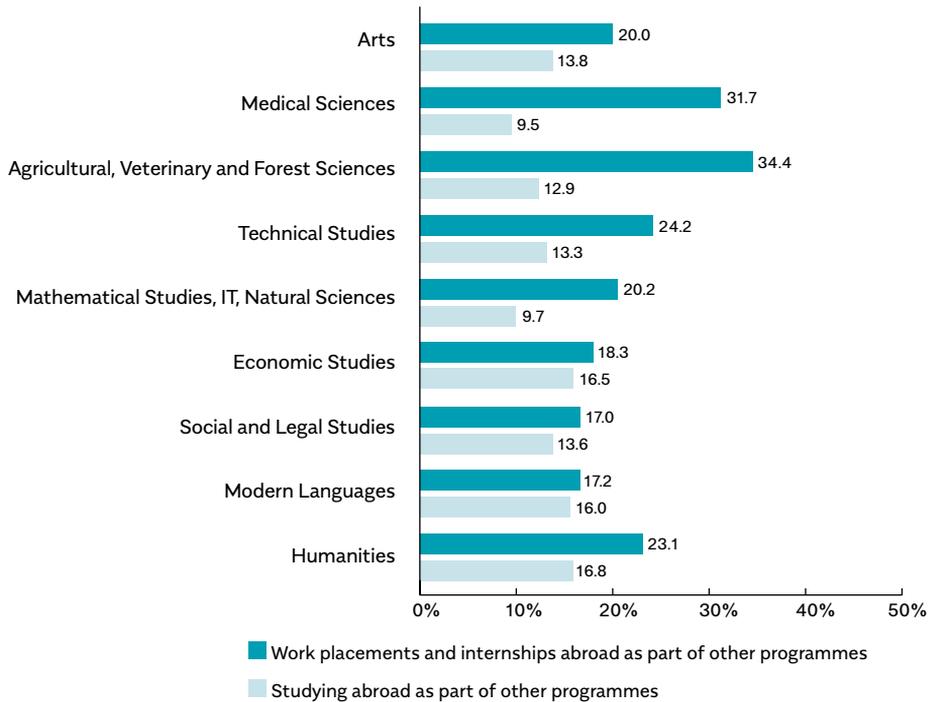
Popularity of other grant programmes among Erasmus participants – breakdown by graduation year (n = 6,877)



Between 10% and 18% of respondents representing each field of study decided to study abroad as non-Erasmus grant holders. Those involved in Humanities and Economic Studies were most likely to carry out such mobilities. Representatives of Mathematical Studies, IT and Natural Sciences were on the other end of the spectrum. Going abroad to undergo work placements was much more popular in the case of 17–33% of respondents. Those studying Agricultural, Veterinary and Forest Sciences constituted over 34% of the group, whereas

students of Medical Sciences – almost 32%. Respondents involved in Social and Legal Studies were least likely to undergo work placements abroad.

Popularity of other grant programmes among Erasmus participants – breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)



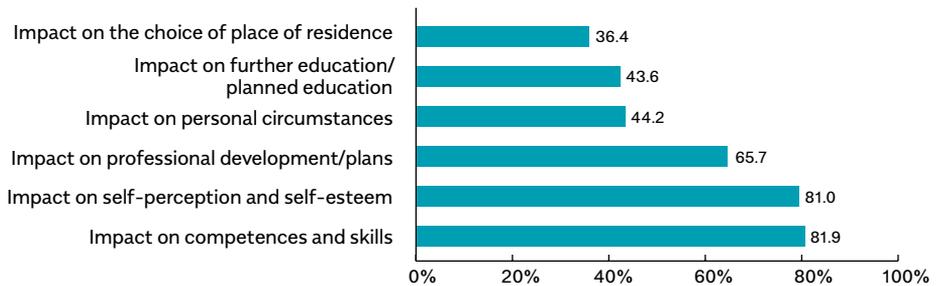
Impact of mobility on participants

Immediately upon return from a mobility project, it is usually impossible to fully realise its effect. Thanks to this survey, students were able to reflect on its impact on their life from a different perspective, that is several years after. The majority of Erasmus grant holders say that their mobility had an impact on their life and career. Only 2% of them did not see any influence of their mobility on their development and life. Interestingly, the views of those graduating in various years did not significantly differ – the influence of mobilities was seen in the same way by representatives of all graduation years covered by the survey.

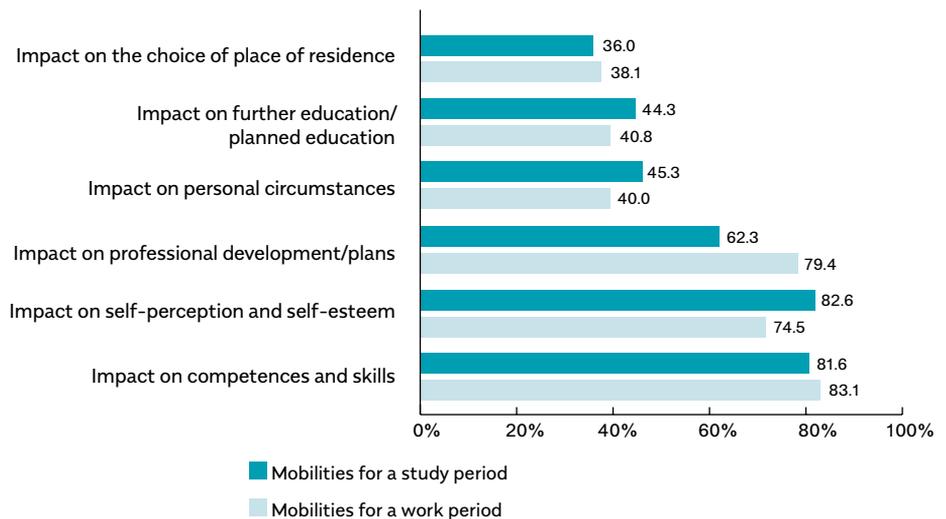
The biggest impact of mobilities is on respondents’ personal development: improved skills and competences (in the case of almost 82% of graduates) as well as self-esteem and self-perception (81%). Almost two thirds of respondents

said their mobility had influenced their career: both its progress and employment prospects (almost 66%). They were less likely to make a link between their mobility and the progression of their further educational pathway, including decisions to start a degree programme (44%). Some respondents said that their international mobility had influenced other spheres of their lives – their personal circumstances (44%) and choice of place of residence (36%) – which is an added value and an unforeseen effect of the Erasmus programme.

Impact of mobility on respondents' lives (responses of those agreeing that the grant influenced a given aspect of their life) (n = 6,877)

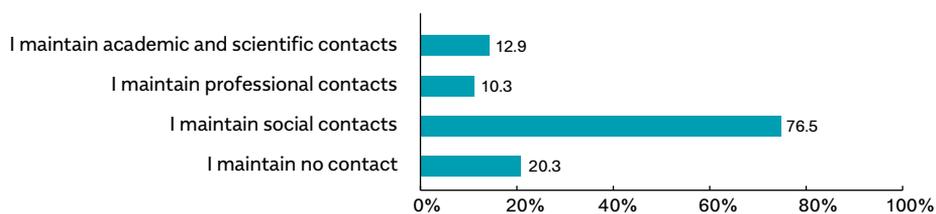


Impact of mobility on respondents' lives – breakdown by mobility type (replies of those agreeing that the grant influenced a given aspect of their life) (n = 6,877)



The respondents studying abroad did not differ in their views on the impact of their mobilities from those who participated in work placements. Both groups concluded that their mobilities had mostly contributed to the improvement of their skills, competences, self-perception and self-esteem (this effect was more frequently reported by those studying abroad than by respondents undergoing work placements there – the difference was over 8 percentage points). The perception of the impact of international mobilities on respondents' employment status and professional development differed, depending on whether those mobilities involved studying or working – respondents undergoing work placements were much more likely to stress the significance of such mobilities (the difference between the two groups was 17 percentage points). Respondents' views on other issues did not differ significantly.

Durability of contacts established during Erasmus mobilities (n = 6,877)

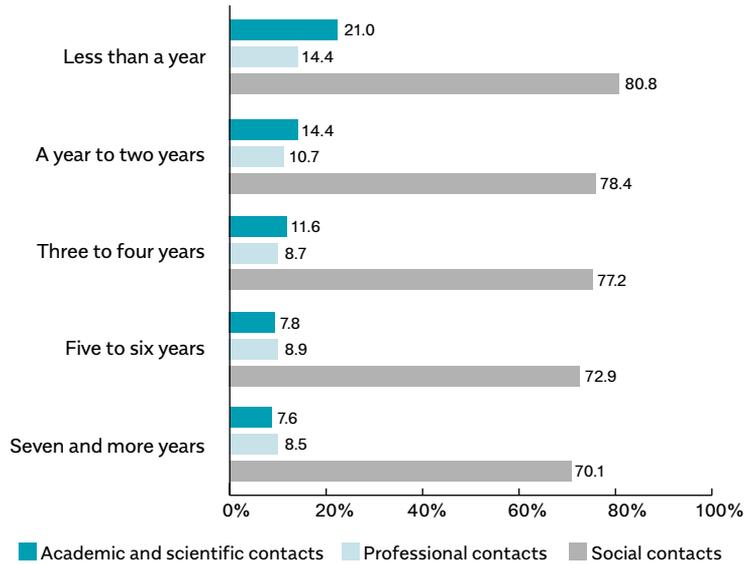


An important aspect of international mobilities under the Erasmus programme involves establishing new contacts: be it personal (social), professional or academic ones. The majority of respondents are still in touch with those they met during their mobility and only one in five say that they no longer maintain such contact. Personal contact is definitely the most durable of them all – over three fourths of respondents communicate with the peers and friends they met abroad, whereas only one in ten graduates maintain professional and academic contacts.

The durability of contacts between grant holders and people met when abroad decreases with time. The oldest respondents – that is those who graduated before 2011 – were less likely than younger ones to maintain contacts with people met during their mobility. This refers to all types of contacts: professional and private. The highest percentage of durable contacts was reported in the case of the youngest group, i.e. those graduating in 2017. Many of them declared that they were still in touch with the lecturers and researchers that they had met during their mobility period. It is noteworthy that time does not significantly weaken social relationships – over 70% of the oldest

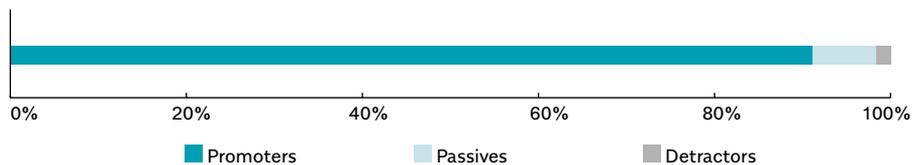
and 80% of the youngest graduates are still in touch with friends met during their international mobility. The durability of other types of relationships is not that high.

Durability of contacts – breakdown by the number of years after graduation (n = 6,877)

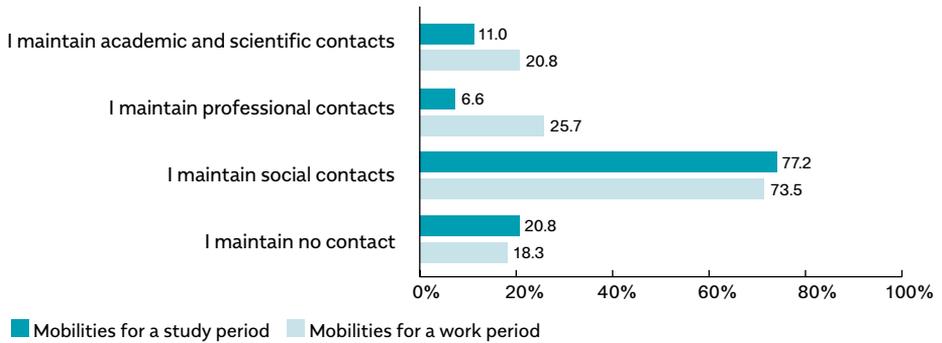


The durability of contacts is influenced by the type of mobility. Those studying or working abroad were just as likely to declare that they still maintained their private or social contacts. However, there was a significant difference in the case of professional and academic contacts – those undergoing work placements were more active in this sphere than graduates studying abroad (for example, almost 26% of trainees still maintained professional links as opposed to under 7% of students). This may be mainly caused by the fact that participants in individual types of mobility projects had different motivations.

Net Promoter Score for Erasmus (n = 6,877)

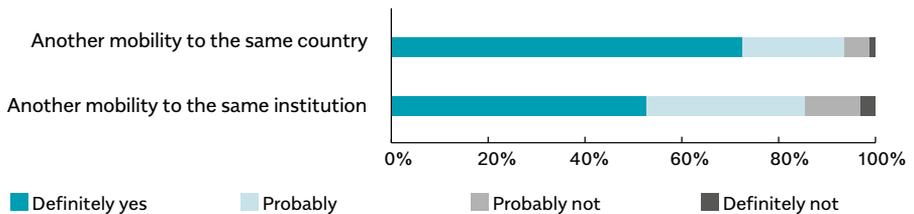


Durability of contacts – breakdown by mobility type (n = 6,877)



In reports submitted just after returning, the majority of students gave high ratings to their Erasmus mobilities. With the passage of time from the end of mobility, the number of positive ratings did not change. A vast majority of respondents would repeat their mobility experience: 93% would like to return to the same country and 85% to the same HEI or institute, which is particularly important from the perspective of the programme. This also means that respondents were more critical of their host institutions than of the country of their mobility. In this respect, the level of satisfaction was the same among respondents going abroad for different purposes (study periods or work placements).

Respondents' willingness to return to the country or institution which hosted the mobility (n = 6,877)



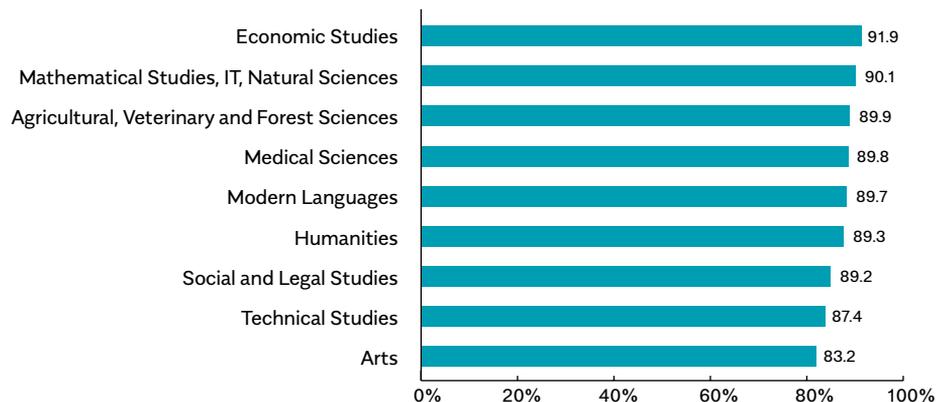
Mobilities were rated highly by their participants. The Net Promoter Score (NPS), also called the recommendation index, was used to determine this. The Net Promoter Score gauges the opinion of respondents on an issue (on a scale of 0 to 10). Respondents are divided into three groups: promoters (those who gave 9–10 points), passives (7–8 points) and detractors (6 or fewer points). The next step involves the calculation of a percentage for each of those groups. The Net Promoter Score is the difference obtained after subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters. In the opinion of the index's creator,

Frederick F. Reichheld, this tool demonstrates the actual, not just potential, loyalty of customers and users.

The Net Promoter Score illustrating the likelihood of recommending international mobilities for a study period or work placement to other people is very high – 89.37%. This means that over 90% of respondents are promoters (who gave 9 or 10 points) and the percentage of detractors is very low (just under 2% assessed their mobility at between 0 and 6 points). The Net Promoter Score is exceptionally high regardless of the type of mobility – both those who studied and those who worked abroad gave similar ratings: the number of promoters was almost identical in both groups (over 90%), the Net Promoter Score was also similar (89.63 versus 88.31, respectively).

Satisfaction with Erasmus mobilities is reported by respondents representing all fields of study. This is confirmed by the Net Promoter Score calculated for each of the groups. Arts students gave the lowest ratings (over 80) and the highest ratings were given by those involved in Economic Studies. The differentiation of ratings given to mobilities by respondents representing different fields of study is, however, not significant and in each case promoters are the largest group. The situation is similar in the case of individual graduation years – the general Net Promoter Score is very high. It is noteworthy that respondents graduating before 2011 gave the highest ratings to their mobilities, but the differentiation of ratings was insignificant.

Net Promoter Score for Erasmus – breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)



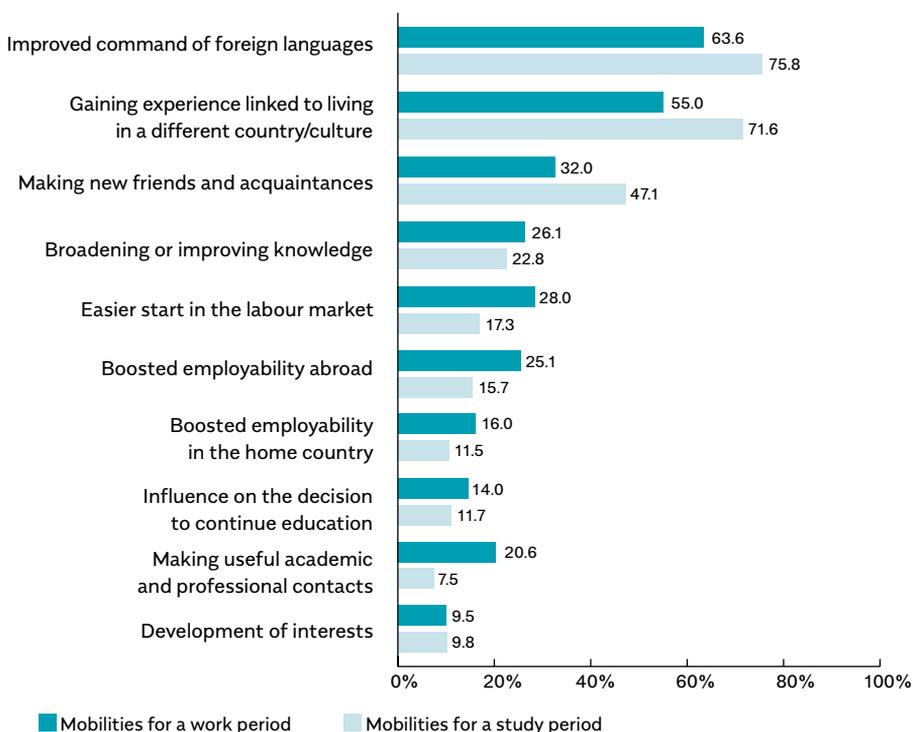
The survey also verifies whether or not respondents returning from their international mobilities shared their experiences with other students within their HEIs – not in the form of their personal opinion and recommendations, but in an institutionalised form under the auspices of the HEI or faculty authorities. Exactly

44.44% respondents reported such activities, which may be indicative of the involvement of their HEIs in promoting student participation in Erasmus.

Erasmus mobility benefits

Analysis of benefits derived from international mobilities under the Erasmus programme by grant holders was one of the most important elements of the survey. It was done to show which aspects of mobility were particularly important to students in the context of their careers and further education. Respondents were allowed to select up to three benefits they deemed to be of paramount importance. This means that data presented in the diagrams and analysed in this section refer not so much to the impact of mobilities on their participants and all benefits derived by grant holders, as to which effects of mobilities are considered essential by the largest group of respondents.

The most important benefits derived from mobility – breakdown by type of mobility (n = 6,877)

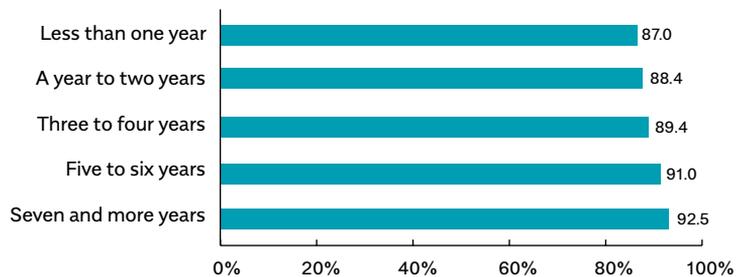


Almost three fourths of respondents say that improved language skills are the most important benefit derived from their mobilities. A large percentage of

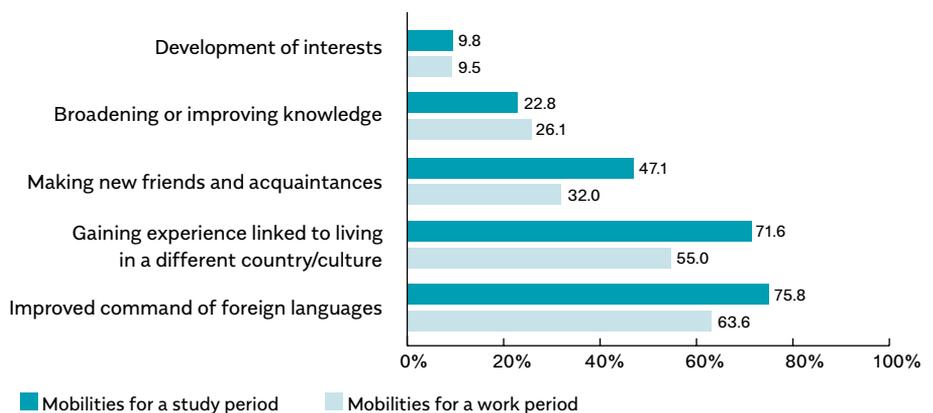
respondents also appreciate those aspects of mobility that contributed to their personal development – an experience of living in another country and culture (over 68%) and meeting new people (over 44%). Mobilities also contribute to broadening respondents' knowledge, although only 24% consider this the most important benefit.

Decidedly fewer people indicated issues directly linked to their careers, for example a better start in the labour market (19.43%), and boosted employability in Poland (12.36%) and abroad (17.51%). Few respondents emphasised the influence of their mobility on continuing higher education (12.13%). It is not that the Erasmus programme offers no such opportunities. It is simply quite clear that those benefits are not important to a large group of respondents.

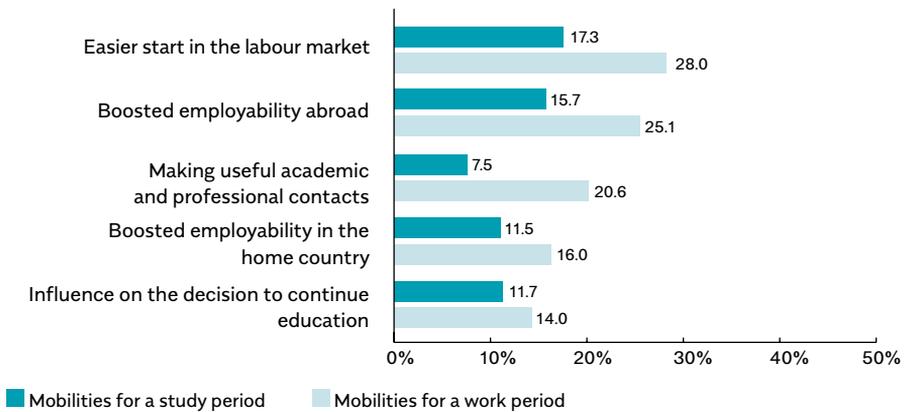
Net Promoter Score for Erasmus – breakdown by the number of years after graduation (n = 6,877)



The most important benefits derived from mobility in respect of language and intercultural competences and personal development – breakdown by mobility type (n = 6,877)



The most important benefits derived from mobility in respect of professional development – breakdown by mobility type (n = 6,877)



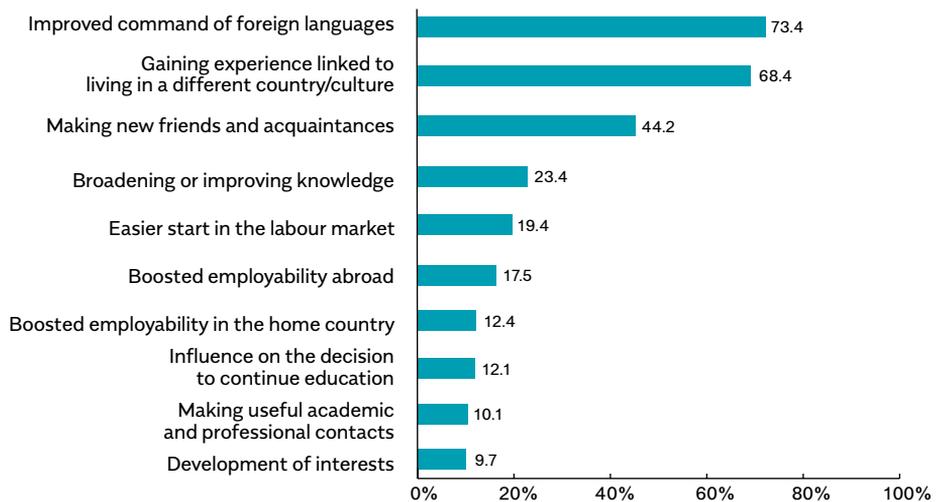
Benefits derived from mobilities are rated differently when comparing the views of respondents undergoing different types of mobilities – those linked to studying or working. The benefits that are common for both are: improved command of foreign languages and an experience of living in a different country. However, they were reported much more frequently by respondents studying abroad than by those working abroad. There is a similar difference of opinion regarding meeting new people.

Answers given by respondents participating in Erasmus work placements show that this type of mobility is significant for the development of their careers, as it facilitates the start of employment after graduation and improves the chances of finding a job. Interestingly, respondents say that mobility is less important when it comes to finding a job in the home country than abroad, although this aspect is slightly better rated by work placement participants. This group also appreciates the opportunity to establish academic and professional contacts – every fifth respondent chose this option.

The above differences relating to mobility benefits are enough to demonstrate that both types of mobility offered under the Erasmus programme considerably differ in this respect. Mobilities for a study period contribute to respondents' general development – they improve their language and intercultural competences, broaden their knowledge and allow them to establish social contacts. However, they are less likely to improve their employability (both in the Polish and the EU labour market). Mobilities for a work period also develop the same competences as mobilities carried out to study but they exert more influence on respondents' career and their employability.

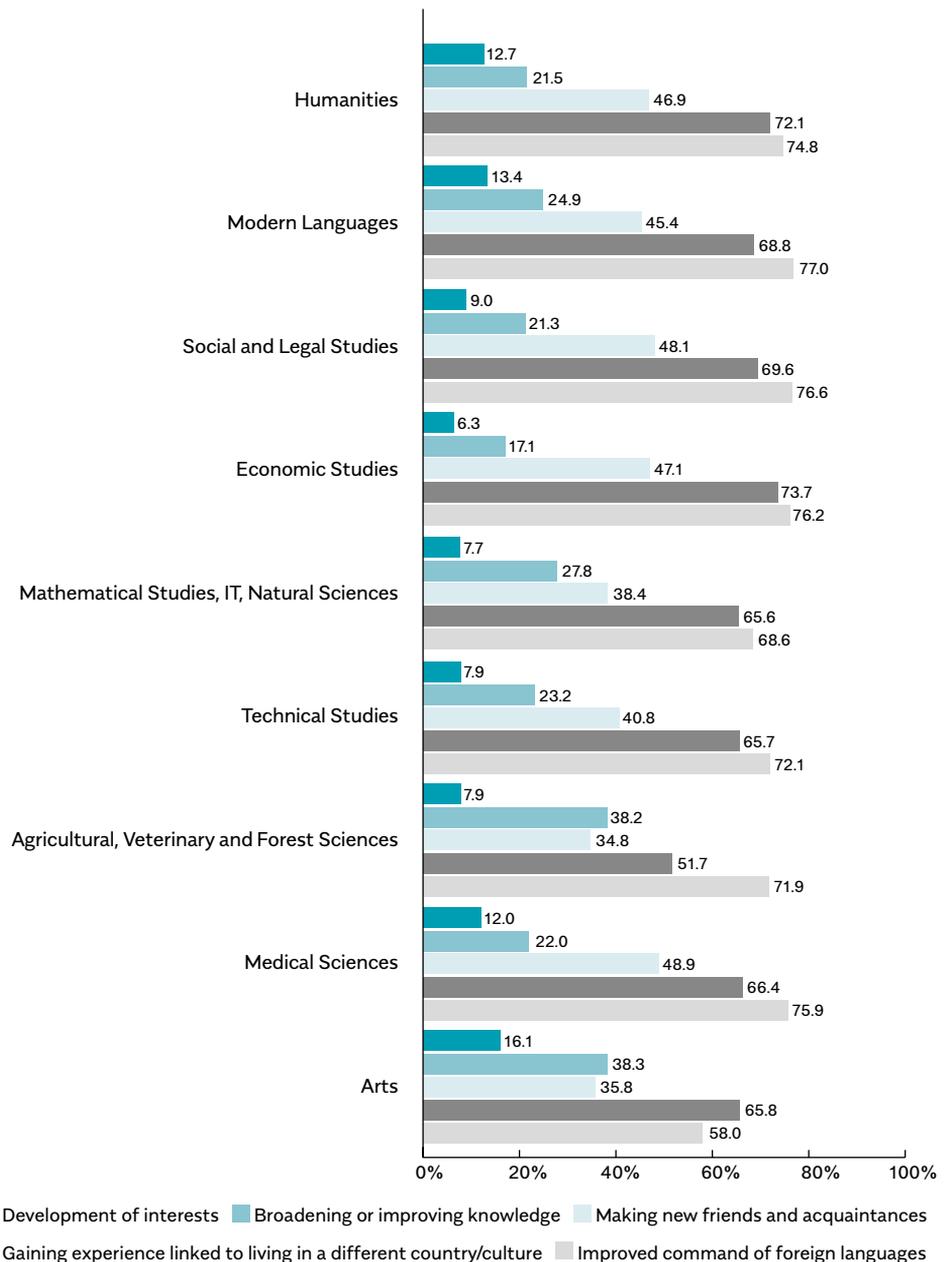
The survey also looked at ratings given to individual benefits by different graduation years. Respondents of various ages mostly gave similar ratings and ticked similar options, although there were some differences. Older graduates put more emphasis on benefits linked to improved language competences, experience of living in a different country, making new friends and expansion of knowledge. The youngest respondents graduating in 2017 were more likely to stress the influence of their mobilities on improving their chances of employability in foreign labour markets. The oldest respondents (graduating in 2010 and earlier) were more likely to notice such impact on the Polish labour market. Respondents graduating in 2017 were more likely to mention the influence of the Erasmus programme on their further education. This is not surprising, as it was the youngest group of respondents who most often said they were involved in a programme of a higher cycle. They were also more likely to indicate that establishing academic and professional contacts was an essential benefit. This is understandable in the context of the previous analyses presented in this chapter – it is this group of respondents that is most likely to maintain professional and academic contact abroad. Older graduates no longer in touch with their employers or researchers met abroad were less likely to say they had derived that kind of benefit from their Erasmus grant.

The most important benefits derived from Erasmus mobilities (n = 6,877)



Graduates representing different fields of study did not significantly differ when rating the most important benefits derived from the Erasmus programme. In their

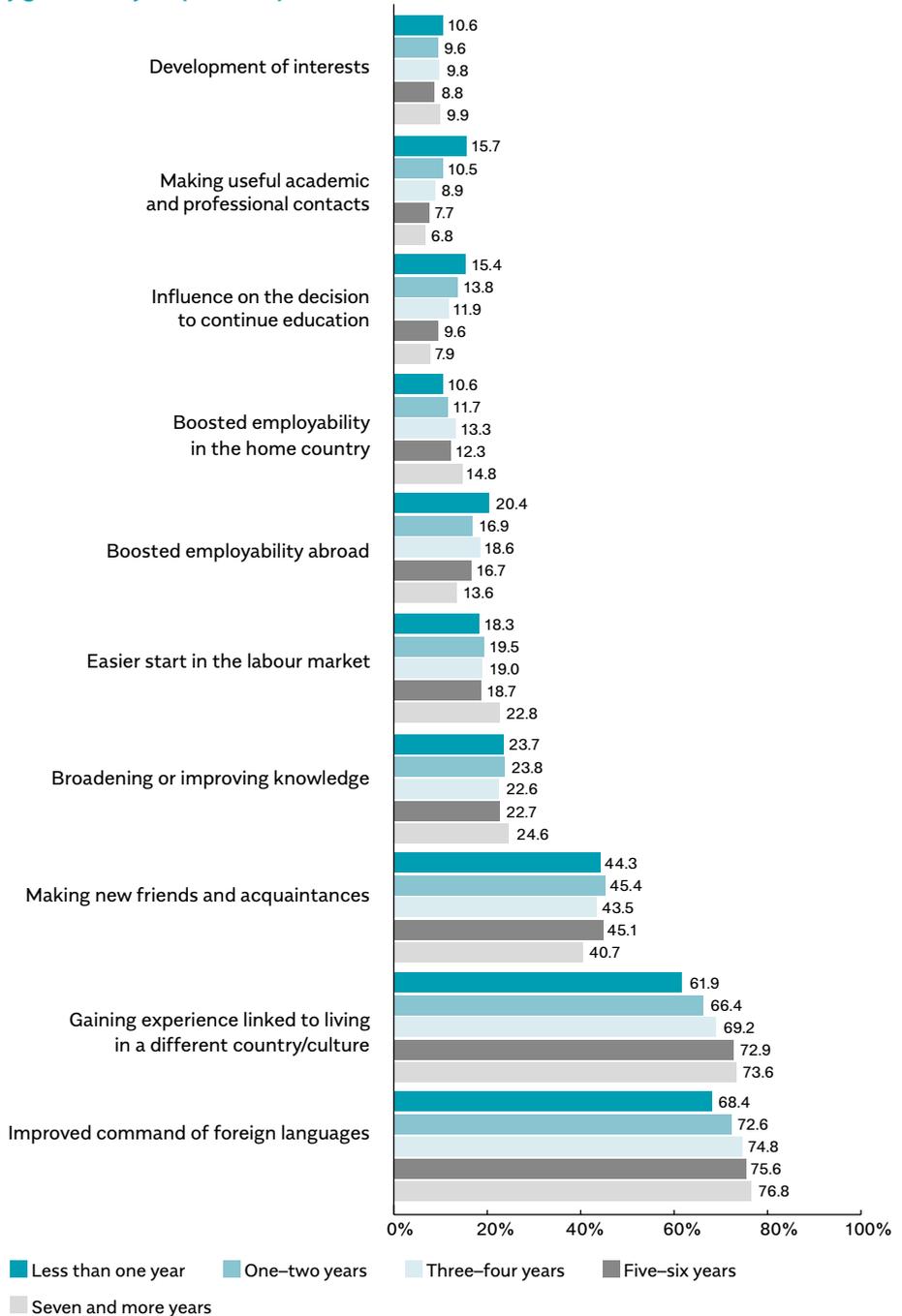
**Influence of mobility on language, intercultural competences and development
– breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)**



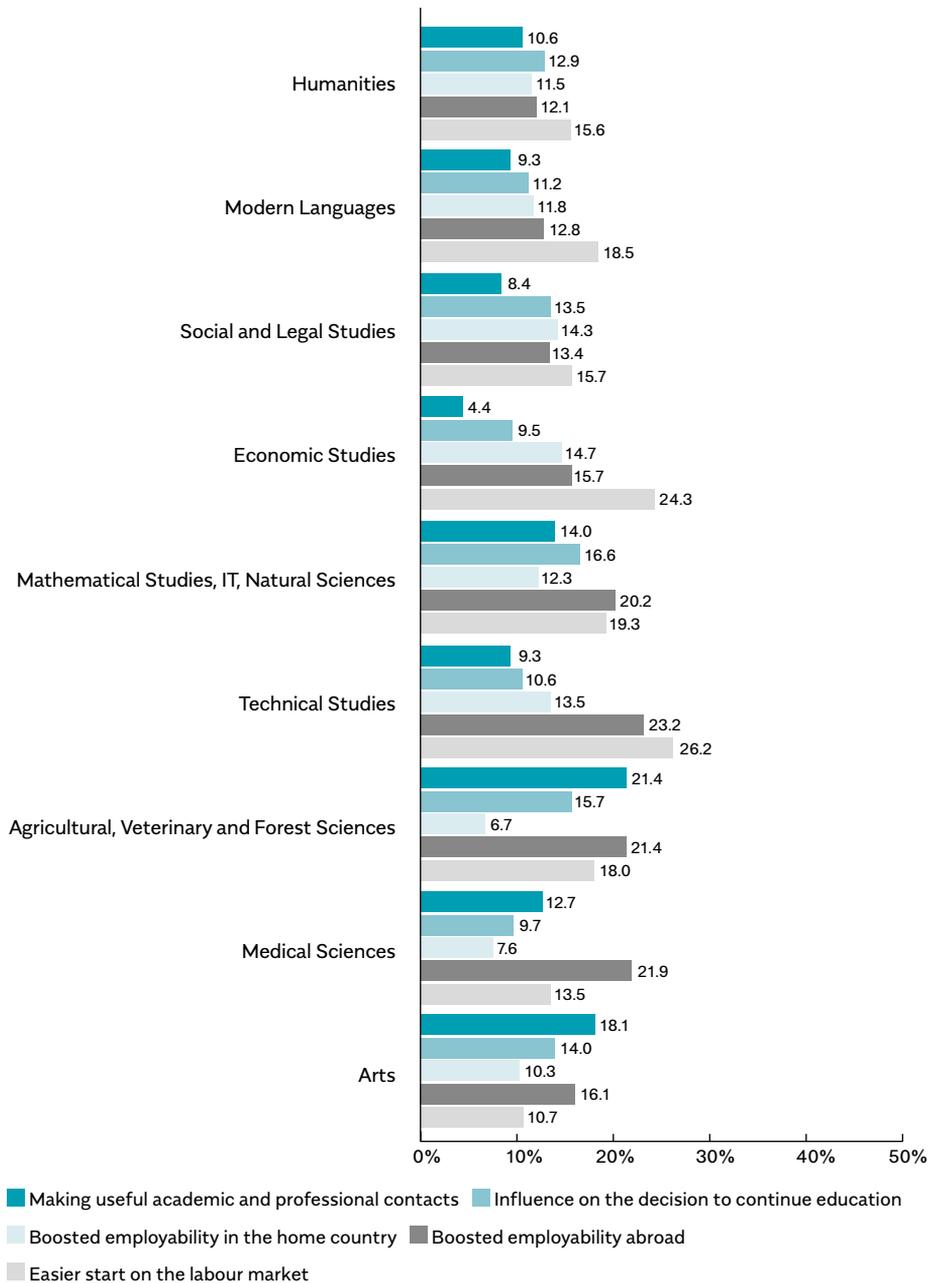
opinion improved language competences topped the list – this was particularly vital for those representing Social and Legal Studies and least important for students of Arts (this benefit was ranked second and not first only by this group). An experience of living in a different country was the least significant benefit in the eyes of students of Agricultural, Veterinary and Forest Sciences. For this group, the most important aspects were making new friends and expansion of knowledge. Educational development was also significant for students of Arts, who were additionally most appreciative of the opportunity to develop their interests thanks to mobilities.

Representatives of various fields of study differ in their opinion on the usefulness of grants for the development of their careers. Those graduating from Technical Studies were most likely to say that their Erasmus mobility had facilitated their entry into the labour market and improved their employability abroad (every fourth respondent said so). Students of Medical Sciences were just as likely to say that their grant had facilitated finding a job abroad. However, they were more sceptical about the influence of mobilities on finding a job in Poland. Graduates in Mathematical Studies, IT and Natural Sciences were more likely than other students to say that their participation in Erasmus had influenced their decision to continue education at a higher level and they put lots of emphasis on the benefits of making interesting professional and academic contacts. Students of Agricultural, Veterinary and Forest Sciences and of Arts were also appreciative of making new contacts. However, they were least likely to indicate that their grant had made it easier for them to find a job in Poland.

The most important benefits derived from Erasmus mobility – breakdown by graduation year (n = 6,877)



Influence of mobility on professional development – breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)



Career development of mobility participants



An important issue discussed in surveys focussing on the career of graduates is their professional development; from the moment of entering the labour market to further stages of career advancement. This survey looks separately into combining work and study (temporary and permanent jobs) and into respondents' current professional status. The analyses discussed here are transversal (they compare students graduating in individual years and not changes occurring within the same group in subsequent years). Further waves of the survey will complete these results by adding longitudinal study analyses and presenting trajectories for the respondents.

This survey mainly focuses on how its respondents' status on the labour market changes depending on their age (graduation year) and professional experience, and how this issue is influenced by the field of study, industry and the sector in which graduates are employed. The breakdown of respondents by those who underwent work placements or internships (Erasmus mobility type) demonstrated in the chapter on mobility is less significant here: there are no noticeable differences between these two groups. This may be due to the fact that quite a number of respondents have participated in both types of mobility.

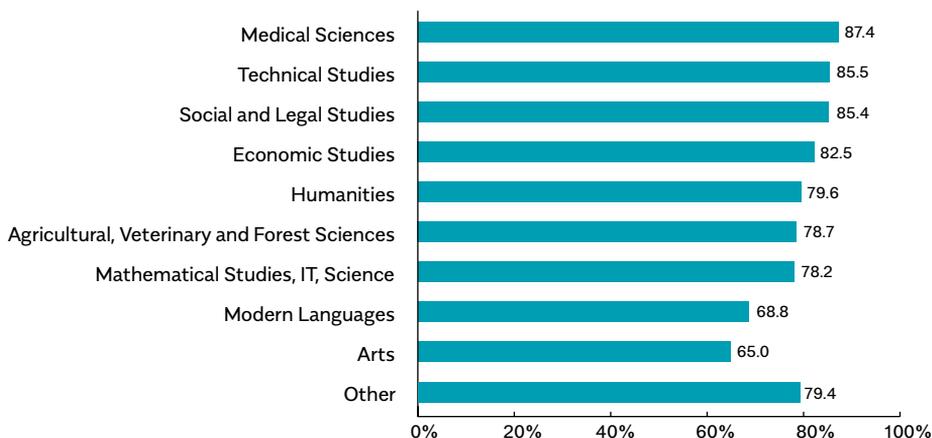
The breakdown of graduates by place of employment (Poland or abroad) turns out to be very important. This differentiation is essential because the country of employment has a bearing on the employee's situation (form of employment, remuneration) and the perception of their employment. There is also a separate analysis covering those who are self-employed or work in managerial positions, as well as those who are currently working but who remained out of employment for at least 6 months at any point in their working life.

Internships and work during studies

While studying, over 80% of respondents served internships and work placements in Poland, both paid and unpaid ones. This percentage is similar for each graduation year covered by this survey.

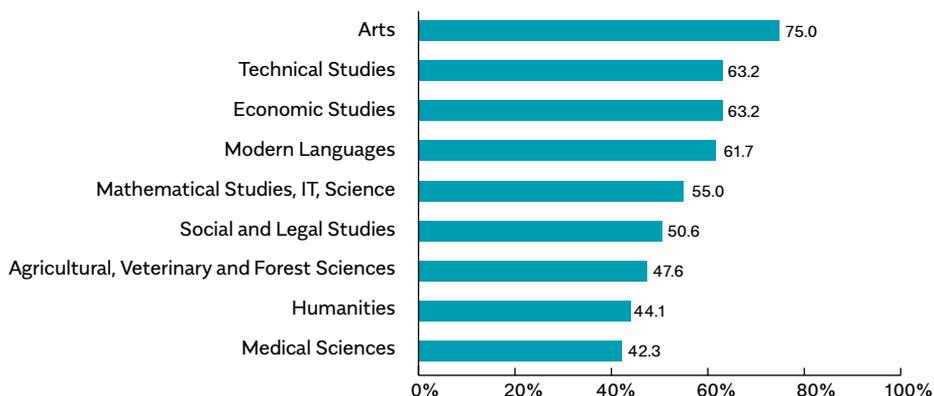
Although work placements and internships served in Poland were popular among graduates regardless of their field of study, in some cases the percentage of respondents taking part in such activities was lower. This mainly applies to students of Arts and of Modern Languages, two thirds of whom participated in internships or work placements in Poland.

**Percentage of respondents serving internships or work placements in Poland
– breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)**

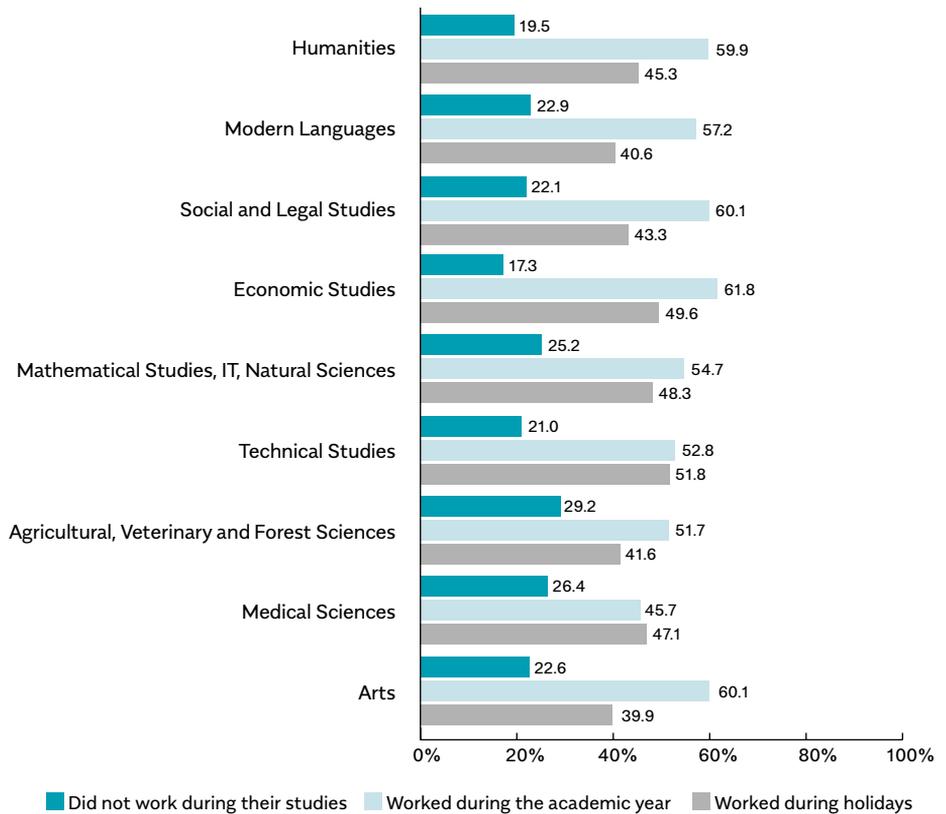


An overwhelming majority of respondents performed paid work while studying (only 22% of respondents did not have a job). They say they worked both during the summer holidays (almost 47%) and during the academic year (over 56%). Nearly one respondent in four did paid work both during holidays and periods of instruction. The percentage of working students was quite similar for all graduation years covered in this survey, with differences depending on the field of study. Work was mostly undertaken by students of Economic Studies (only 17.3% of them did not undertake paid work) and Humanities (only 19.5% did not work).

**Respondents taking up employment during studies in line with their field of study
– breakdown by field of study (n = 5,363)**



Paid work during studies – breakdown by field of study (n = 6,877)



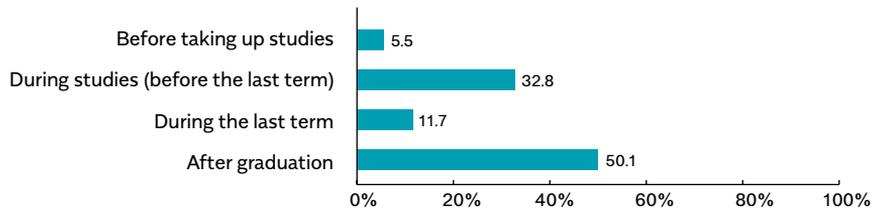
Over 56% of respondents said that the work undertaken during their studies was related to their field of study. In most cases, that kind of employment was taken up by those studying Arts (75%) and Technical Studies (over 63%), and least frequently by students of Humanities (about 44%) and Medical Sciences (about 42%). The percentage of those undertaking work related to their field of study was similar across all graduation years.

First permanent job

Almost two thirds of respondents (64.88%) say they have taken up a permanent job (understood as the opposite of temporary or occasional work, regardless of the type of employment contract, duration of employment or consistency with their further professional career). It is natural that the percentage keeps growing depending on the respondents' age – 40% of the youngest respondents said they were employees, in the case of the 2015–2016 graduation year the percentage exceeded 62%, whereas in the group of older graduates it reached 75% on average. At the time of the survey, four out of ten respondents were still working for their first permanent employer.

The moment of starting permanent employment is usually linked to the moment of graduation and transitioning from education to the labour market. Although this traditional model is still very much alive, it is not the only way to start a career. Half of the respondents found a permanent job having obtained a university diploma, yet the other half had already taken up employment earlier, including 5% prior to being admitted to an HEI, one third during the programme, and another 12% in the last term.

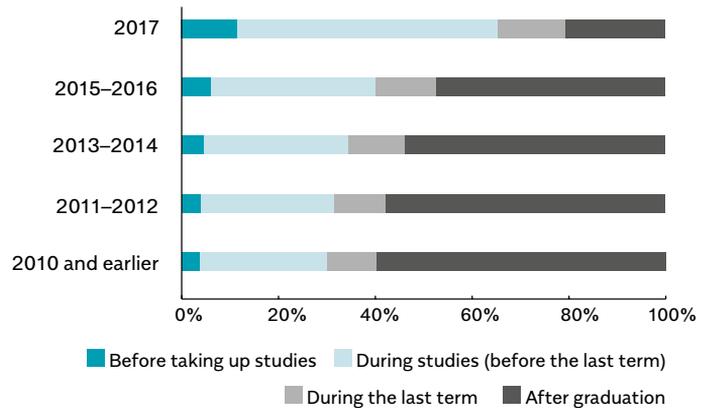
Moment of starting the first permanent job (n = 4,486)



The moment of starting the first permanent job is different for various graduation years. Most of the time, the oldest respondents (graduating in 2010 or earlier) started their first permanent job after completing their study programme. Younger graduates were more likely to start work when still studying. The youngest respondents who graduated in 2017 were exceptionally likely to admit taking up a permanent job when still studying, but it has to be borne in mind that quite a large part of this group has not been permanently employed so far. Therefore, this survey cannot provide a reliable estimate of how much earlier respondents from

this group started employment – this will be possible in subsequent years after carrying out new waves of the survey.

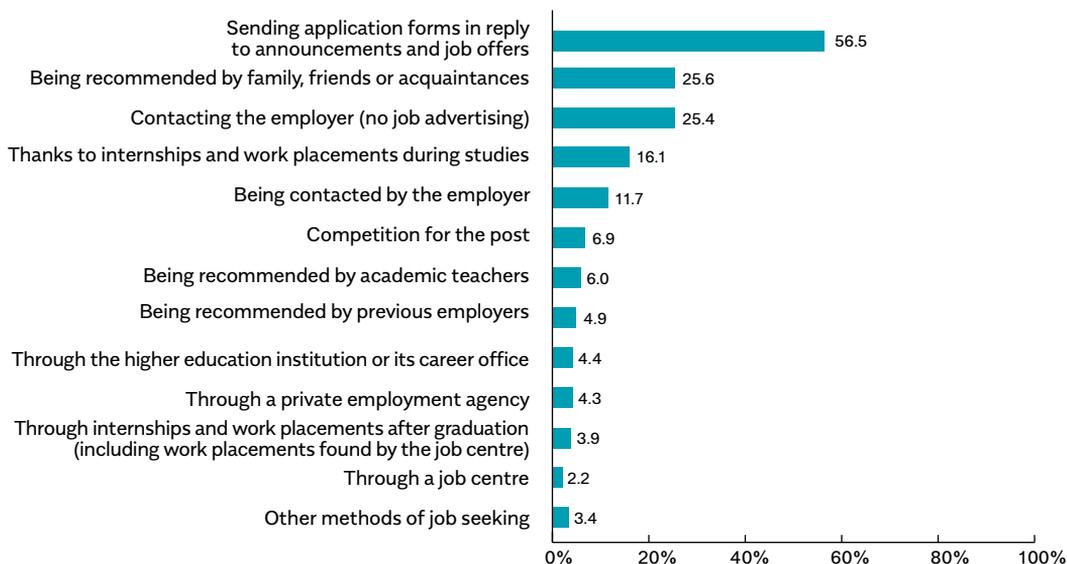
Moment of starting the first permanent job by graduation year (n = 4,486)



A vast majority of respondents say they did not need much time to find their first permanent job. Over one fourth (26.78%) of respondents looked for work for less than a month, and almost one third – for less than two months. Three out of four survey participants found their first permanent job in less than three months and almost 90% – in under half a year. Only less than 3% needed more than a year.

Most of the time, graduates submitted their applications in response to job offers posted by employers on various web portals: this method was indicated by 55.5% of respondents. One fourth of respondents submitted their documents to an employer of their choice (even if no job offers had been posted). The same percentage admitted that their first job had been obtained thanks to being recommended by a family member or a friend. Respondents also gained employment through internships and work placements (16.09%) or following contact initiated by their employer (11.7%). Only a few respondents used specialised institutions to find a job: university career offices (4.38%), employment agencies (4.34%) or job centres (2.19%). Ways of looking for the first permanent job remain the same among those graduating in subsequent years. This means that there has been no recent change to the above-described most common ways of finding employment.

Means of finding the first permanent job (n = 4,470)



Respondents were asked to indicate the factors that were of paramount significance when looking for their first job. To answer this question, they had to rank eight factors, starting from the most important one. The rankings created by different groups of respondents do not differ – they are influenced neither by the respondents' age, nor by their field of study.

The command of foreign languages, choice of a relevant field of study and professional skills top the list. It is worth mentioning that foreign languages proved to be a decisive factor in the case of those who were offered employment. It is only after linguistic competences that respondents ranked factors linked to matching candidates' skills to employers' needs (university degree and skills). Soft competences were the next entry on the ranking list. In the opinion of respondents, professional experience (gained both during work placements and previous employment) is of lesser importance. This relatively low ranking of professional experience may result from the fact that respondents were asked to indicate factors contributing to obtaining their first permanent job – therefore, they probably did not have much experience in performing it. Erasmus mobilities and references were the lowest-ranking factors. Therefore, in the opinion of the respondents, the mere fact that students go abroad to study or undergo a work placement is not decisive when it comes to employment. However, it is noteworthy that the same respondents say that improving the command of a foreign language

and the acquisition of new competences – both being vital factors when looking for a job – are the most important outcomes of foreign mobilities. Erasmus foreign mobilities may, therefore, influence respondents' further employment status indirectly.

Ranking of factors contributing to finding the first permanent job

Command of foreign languages

Graduating in a relevant field of study

Displaying professional and industrial skills

Soft competences

Past internships and work placements

Past professional experience

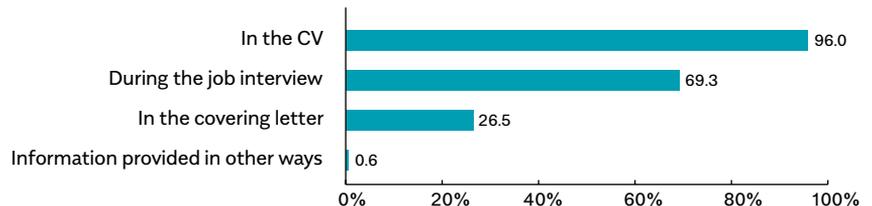
Erasmus study or work placement mobility

References

The majority of respondents say that they had to undergo recruitment procedures to obtain their first job. During the recruitment process, an overwhelming majority of respondents (88%) mentioned their Erasmus international mobility. This percentage is the same for those going abroad to study and those leaving the country to undergo internships and work placements elsewhere.

Respondents were most likely to mention their international mobility experience in job application forms: 96% say that they included information about Erasmus mobilities in their CVs and over 26% – in their covering letters. In over two thirds of cases, the issue of international mobilities was also raised during job interviews with future employers.

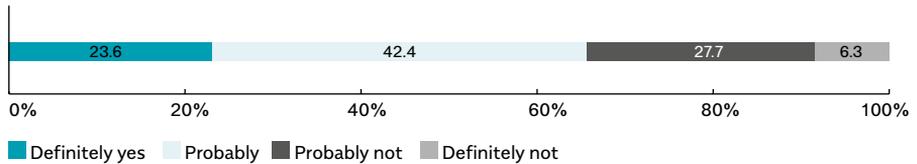
Providing information about Erasmus mobilities during the recruitment process (n = 3,558)



Two thirds of respondents admit that their Erasmus mobility helped them obtain their first job. This is all the more interesting that the same respondents regard participation in Erasmus mobilities as one of the less significant factors

contributing to finding employment. However, this only appears contradictory. Analyses show that Erasmus mobilities are not a decisive factor when it comes to offering a candidate a job. However, they are an additional asset which may help a candidate if they meet the employer's other requirements (for example command of languages or relevant university degree).

Responses to the question whether Erasmus mobilities helped respondents obtain their first permanent job (n = 4464)

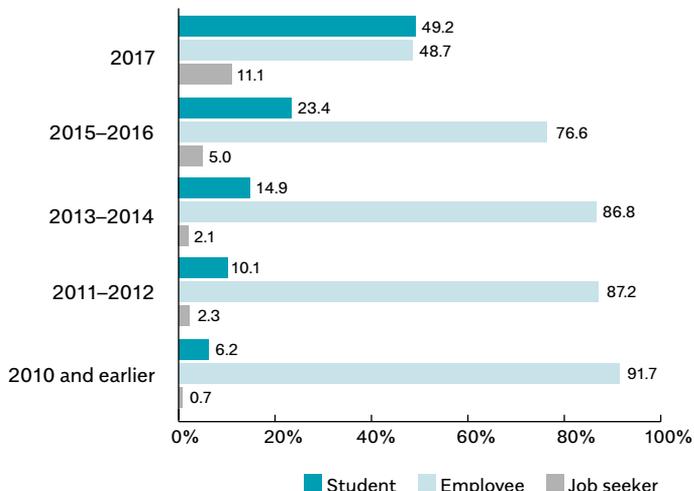


Current occupation and job

At the time of the survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents mainly pursued their careers – over 77% of all graduates were in paid employment. Almost 22% were enrolled in another university course (detailed analysis of this group can be found in the next chapter). Just under 5% of respondents say that they were out of work and were actively looking for a job, while 3% were active in voluntary service. A similar percentage of respondents said they were undergoing internships or work placements. Some of the respondents remained non-active: 2.85% were non-active due to a longer leave of absence or sick leave, 4.35% looked after the home, 2.71% said they were taking a break from work, whereas 0.17% were not in employment, education or training and were not looking for a job. A small percentage of respondents said they had experienced longer periods of unemployment at some point in their careers – 8.93% of them said they had had episodes of unemployment (with or without unemployment benefits) lasting more than 6 months.

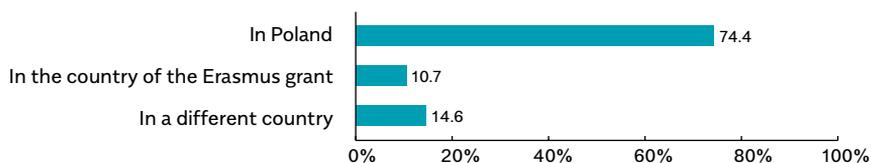
Respondents graduating in different years vary when it comes to their main professional activities. Almost all of the older respondents, that is those who graduated over 7 years prior to the survey, are professionally active and only 6.2% of them are enrolled in another study programme. Younger survey participants are more likely to continue education than be in paid employment. Half of the youngest group of respondents – those who graduated in 2017 – are currently employed, the other half are involved in education. Every tenth respondent says they are actively looking for a job. Those whose presence in the labour market is longer are much less likely to say that they are not in employment or that they are looking for a new employer.

Respondents' current occupation – breakdown by graduation year, n = 6,876



At the time of the survey, a significant percentage of respondents had already experienced working abroad: almost one fourth (23.36%) had worked abroad for 6 or more months. A vast majority of respondents – three fourths – currently work in Poland. However, the percentage of people employed abroad is very high. The analyses presented below apply exclusively to people employed in Poland, which is why they could be compared with other national graduate career tracking surveys (a description of the employment status of those working abroad is presented elsewhere).

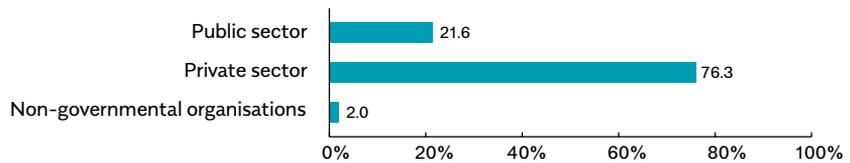
Country of graduates' current employment (n = 5,332)



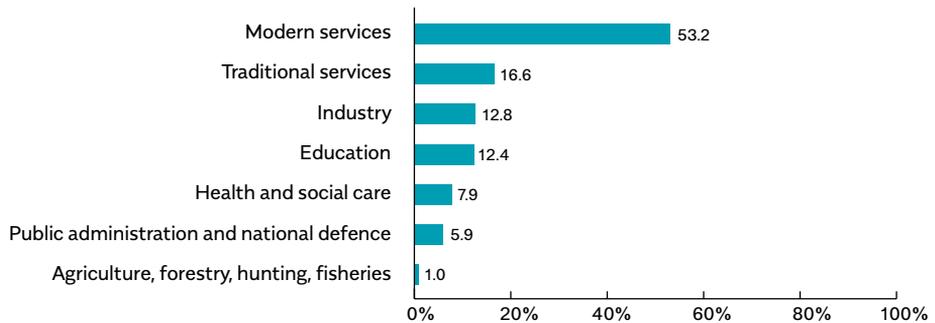
Respondents performing paid work at the time of administering this survey were mostly employed in the private sector – three fourths of them worked there. Every fifth person was employed in the public sector. Over 50% of respondents said they were employed in the modern service industry (including such areas as information and communication, finance and insurance, property market services, and professional, academic and technical activity). One in six graduates is employed in the traditional service sector, such as commerce, motor vehicle repair, transport and warehousing, the hotel industry

and tourism, administrative services and supporting activities. Other areas of activity indicated in the survey were: industry (including mining, industrial processing, the construction sector, production and distribution of electricity and gas, water supply, and waste management) offering employment to 12.78% of respondents, education (12.43%), health and social care (7.94%), and public administration and national defence (5.92%). Few respondents work in areas related to agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The above structure of employment differs from that observed in nationwide surveys. This might be explained by the specific nature of the survey sample, which includes young people and higher education graduates.

Sectors employing graduates in Poland (n = 3,967)

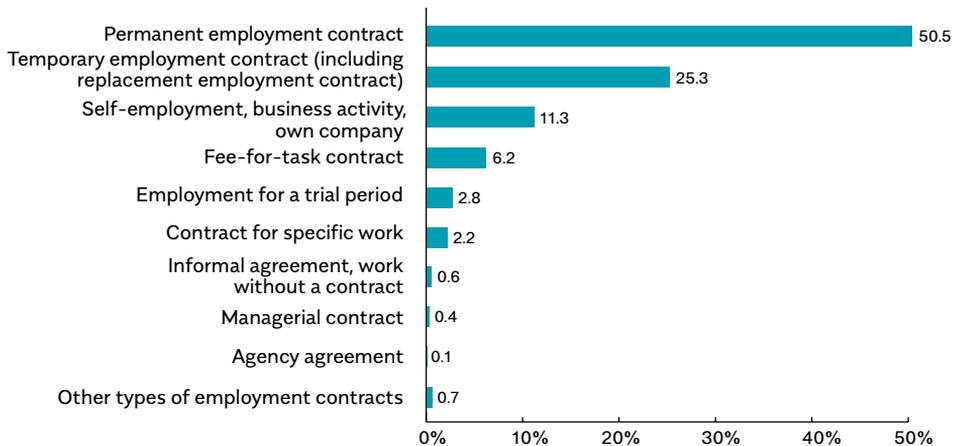


Industries employing graduates in Poland (n = 3,967)



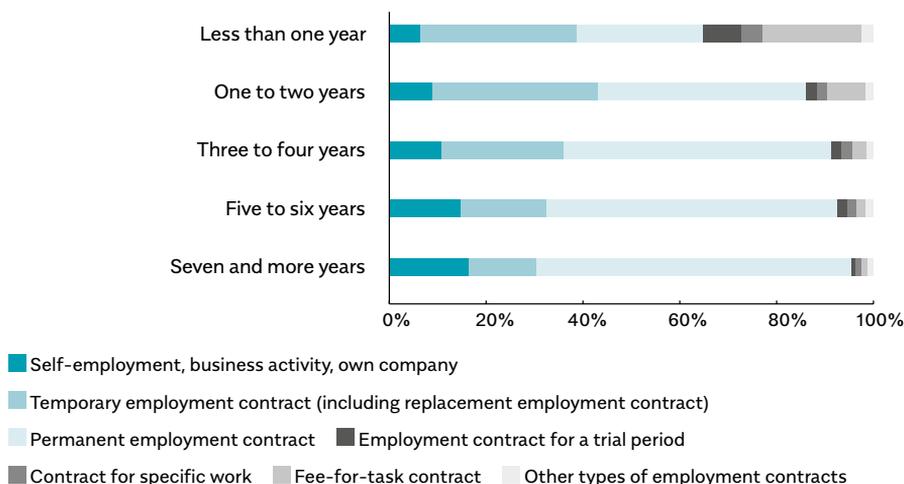
A vast majority of graduates have employment contracts: a total of 78.58%, out of which 50.52% are permanent staff, 25.31% are temporary workers, and 2.75% are employed for a trial period. Other forms of employment are much less common – 8.4% of respondents work on the basis of civil law agreements: fee-for-task contracts (6.18%) and specific work contracts (2.22%). Every tenth respondent is a company owner. Other types of agreements, such as managerial contracts or agency agreements, are not very common among respondents. Few persons say they work without a contract.

Forms of employing graduates in Poland (n = 3,967)



The percentage of permanent employees grows with the amount of professional experience, which means better employment stability as their career progresses. Among those graduating 7 or more years before the survey, almost two thirds are permanent staff. In the group of younger graduates only 25.9% have that kind of employment contract. Of the survey population, the youngest respondents are most likely to work on the basis of a fee-for-task contract (20%). The high prevalence of this kind of contract is probably linked to the fact that it is convenient to those who combine work and study. This contract is much less common among older graduates (less than 10% of those graduating not later than two years ago and under 3% of all older graduates work on its basis). The youngest graduates do not usually start their career with setting up their own company – less than 7% of this group run a business. The prevalence of self-employment grows with professional experience: it is the oldest respondents who are most likely to run their own businesses. Among those graduating over 7 years ago, 16.4% have their own company.

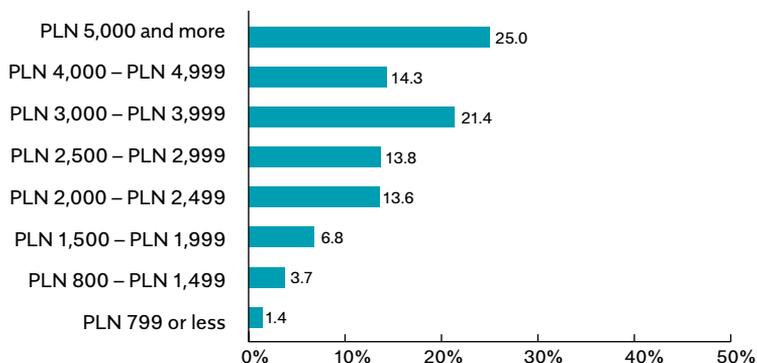
Form of graduates' employment contracts in Poland – breakdown by number of years after graduation (n = 3,967)



Most respondents declare that their average monthly remuneration is over PLN 5,000 net – one fourth of them indicate this amount. Over one fifth indicate earnings ranging from PLN 3,000 to PLN 4,000. It is noteworthy that these amounts significantly exceed the minimum pay, which in 2017 was PLN 1,450 net (about PLN 2,000 gross) – that amount of compensation for work was indicated only by 10% of all respondents. Most respondents' earnings are significantly higher than average earnings reported for the survey years. According to data from the Central Statistical Office, in 2016 average earnings amounted to PLN 3,510.67 gross (about PLN 2,500 net)²⁵. This means that at the national level half the number of employees earned less than this amount and the other half – more. However, survey respondents' earnings are higher: only one fourth of them earned less than the 2016 national average, whereas three fourths were paid more. Respondents' average earnings range from PLN 3,000 to PLN 3,999 net. Earnings indicated by most respondents are also higher than the 2017 average amounting to PLN 4,271.51 gross (about PLN 3,000 net).

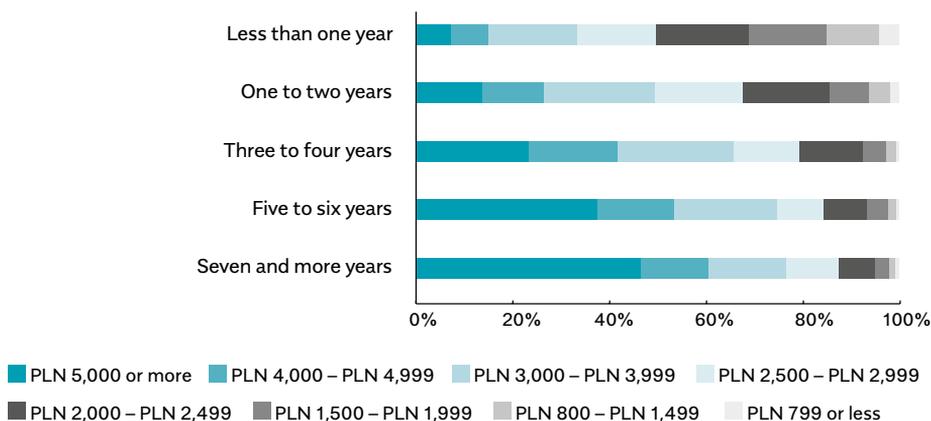
25. *Struktura wynagrodzeń według zawodów w październiku 2016 r.* [Remuneration structure by occupation in October 2016], GUS, Warsaw 2017.

Remuneration of graduates working in Poland (n = 3,967)



It is not surprising that graduates' earnings grow with their professional experience. The youngest respondents who graduated in 2017 are most likely to earn PLN 2,000–2,499 net. Those who graduated a year or two before the survey earn more than their younger counterparts, PLN 3,000–3,999 net in most cases. The same salary bracket was also indicated by those graduating within the past 3–4 years. It is also in this group that the highest salaries are observed. The respondents who graduated five or more years before the survey usually earn more than PLN 5,000 net. Almost half of those who graduated over seven years ago earn more than this amount.

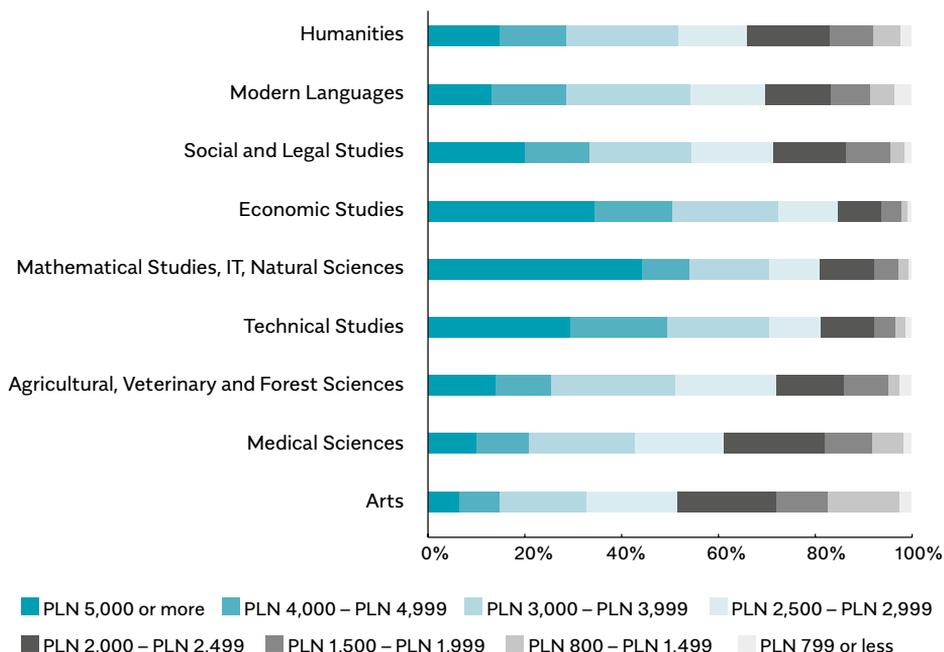
Remuneration of graduates working in Poland – breakdown by number of years after graduation (n = 3,967)



Graduates in Mathematical Studies, Information Technology and Natural Sciences receive the highest remuneration. Almost one half of this group say that their earnings exceed PLN 5,000 net. High salaries are also paid to graduates in

Technical and Economic Studies – respectively 29.5% and 34.6% of them exceed the threshold of PLN 5,000 per month. Graduates in Arts earn the least (in most cases they earn from PLN 2,000 to PLN 2,500). The earnings of respondents graduating in other fields range from PLN 3,000 to PLN 3,999 net.

Remuneration of graduates working in Poland – breakdown by field of study (n = 3,967)



Graduates in Mathematical Studies, Information Technology and Natural Sciences are those who reach the PLN 5,000 salary level sooner than all the other groups. Already within one year after graduation, one fifth of these respondents are offered that amount and there is a rapid increase in their earnings over the following years. Not later than seven years after graduation, over 50% of graduates in those fields earn more than PLN 5,000 net per month. After seven years, such earnings are reported by almost two thirds of survey participants. It should be emphasised that all respondents say there is a link between a gradual increase of earnings and more professional experience, yet the dynamics of the process are diversified. A year after obtaining a university degree, just under 9% of graduates in Economic Studies can count on a salary exceeding PLN 5,000. However, in the following years there is a significant growth in the number of people earning this much, to such an extent that their number is equal to that of graduates in Mathematical Studies, Information Technology and Natural Sciences. The dynamics of remuneration paid to graduates

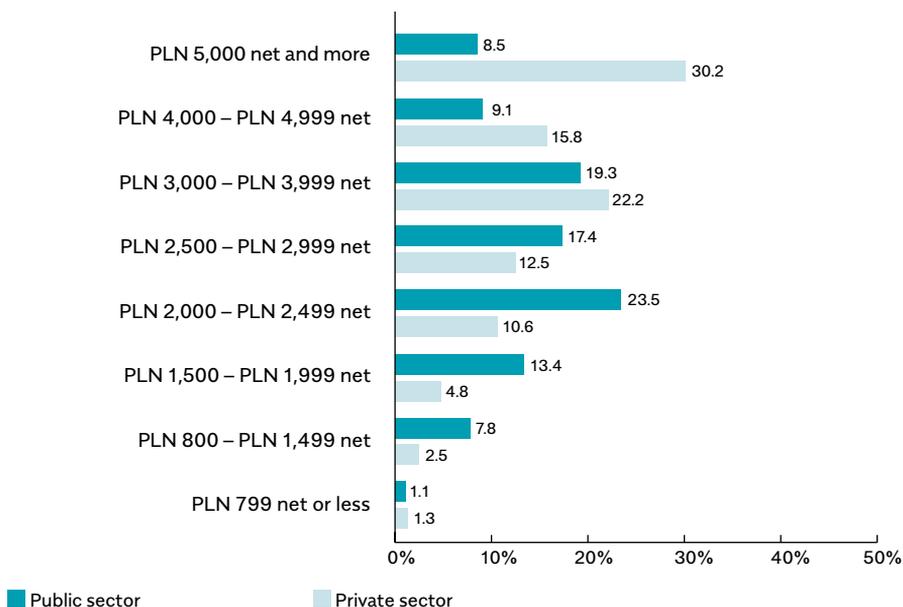
in Technical Studies are slower, but still significant. There is a certain similarity in the case of graduates in Humanities, Modern Languages and Medical Sciences. In those groups a small percentage of people earn more than PLN 5,000 shortly after graduation and although the earnings of all of those groups are gradually growing, it happens more slowly than in the case of the highest earning respondents. Even in the group of the oldest respondents (seven and more years after graduation), the percentage of graduates in Humanities, Modern Languages and Medical Sciences with the highest salaries is considerably lower than in the case of other fields of study. The analysis did not include respondents from the least numerous groups (faculties of Agriculture and Arts).

Graduates working in Poland and earning over PLN 5,000 net – breakdown by field of study and graduation year

		Number of years after graduation				
		less than one year	one to two years	three to four years	five to six years	seven and more years
Fields of study	Humanities	0.0%	9.2%	12.2%	20.8%	27.8%
	Modern Languages	2.7%	7.4%	12.8%	24.1%	25.9%
	Social and Legal Studies	10.9%	7.9%	16.5%	30.8%	37.5%
	Economic Studies	8.8%	15.4%	32.9%	56.4%	64.9%
	Mathematical Studies, IT, Science	20.3%	28.9%	43.5%	55.4%	64.3%
	Technical Studies	10.3%	16.9%	26.0%	48.9%	54.0%
	Medical Sciences	0.0%	6.0%	14.0%	10.4%	27.8%

The sector of employment is another factor influencing the amount of remuneration. In private companies, almost one respondent in three earns over PLN 5,000 net, whereas in public institutions – under 10%. Almost one half of respondents employed in the public sector earn less than PLN 2,500 net, whereas average earnings in the private sector range from PLN 3,000 to PLN 3,999. Remuneration offered by the two sectors follows different growth patterns. One half of respondents who graduated earlier than seven years ago earn over PLN 5,000 in the private sector. A significant 20% growth in the percentage of people earning over PLN 5,000 net in the private sector occurs between the 4th and 5th year of employment. In the public sector, this growth is much smaller – the percentage of those earning over PLN 5,000 among respondents graduating in different years does not differ significantly.

Remuneration of graduates working in Poland – breakdown by sector (n = 3,967)



Graduates working in Poland and earning more than PLN 5,000 net – breakdown by sector and years after graduation

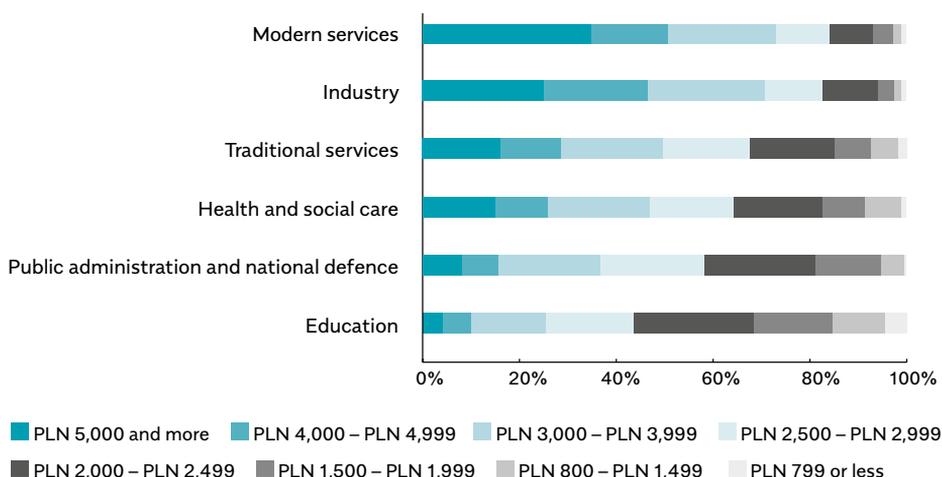
		Number of years after graduation				
		Less than one year	One to two years	Three to four years	Five to six years	Seven and more years
Sector	public	4.9%	5.3%	9.8%	10.3%	14.3%
	private	8.3%	16.0%	27.6%	45.0%	55.9%

Modern services and industry offer the highest earnings. One half of respondents employed in the former and 40% of those employed in the latter earn more than PLN 4,000 net. In both areas, less than 20% of respondents say they earn less than PLN 2,500 net. In modern services, average earnings range from PLN 4,000 to PLN 4,999 net, in industry – from PLN 3,000 to PLN 3,999 net. Traditional services, health and social care offer earnings from PLN 3,000 to PLN 3,999 net. Average earnings in both industries range from PLN 2,500 to PLN 2,999 net. Respondents working for public administration and national defence earn the least. This is also true for education – in this sector average earnings range from PLN 2,000 to PLN 2,499 net (earnings in education are lower than

in other sectors listed here). Public administration and national defense offer average earnings from from PLN 2,500 to PLN 2,999 net. Education is marked by the highest percentage of people earning less than PLN 2,000 net and the highest percentage of those earning less than PLN 800 net.

This analysis does not include industries employing the lowest number of graduates (agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries). As the size of the groups differed considerably, a decision was made not to present the amount of salaries paid in individual industries to individual graduation years.

Remuneration of graduates working in Poland – breakdown by industry (n = 3,967)

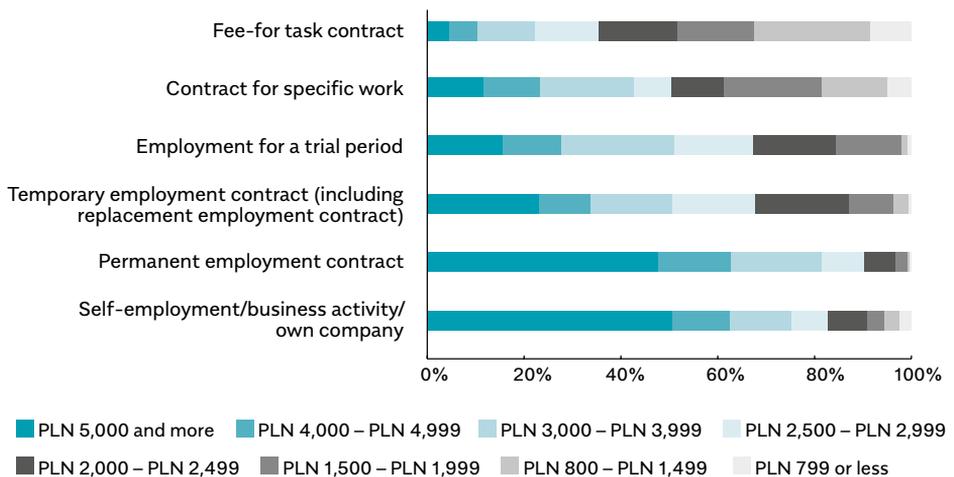


Respondents running their own business earn the most – almost one half (48.5%) earn more than PLN 5,000 net per month and their average earnings oscillate between PLN 4,000 and PLN 4,999 net. Almost identical earnings are reported by permanent staff – in this group almost one third report earnings exceeding PLN 5,000 net (the average being between PLN 4,000 and PLN 4,999 net). Earnings linked to all other types of employment contracts are lower – the average earnings of temporary staff and those employed for a trial period are the same: PLN 2,500–2,999 net. However, the earnings of graduates employed as temporary staff are much more frequently situated in the lowest bracket (under PLN 1,500 net) and the largest percentage earn from PLN 2,000 to PLN 2,499. A higher percentage of graduates employed for a trial period get a higher salary (PLN 3,000–3,999 bracket). A large variation of salaries is evident among respondents with contracts for specific work. They mostly earn between PLN 3,000 and PLN 3,999 net per month and the average earnings of the group amount to PLN 2,500–2,999. Those working on the basis of fee-for-task

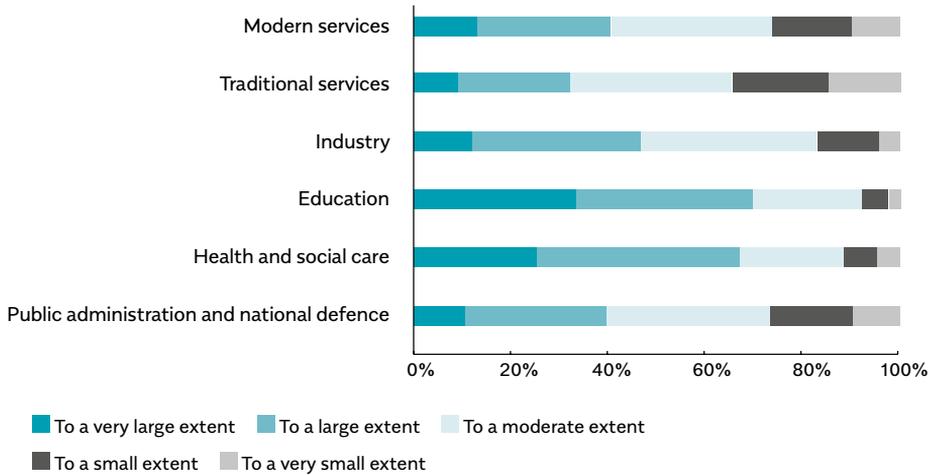
agreements are in the worst situation. One half of respondents from this group earn less than PLN 2,000 net per month and over one fourth reported earnings ranging from PLN 800 to PLN 1,499 net. Respondents from this group are least likely to obtain the highest salary, which is over PLN 4,000 net.

Over 40% of respondents say that the extent to which they use knowledge gained at university in their job is large or very large. Every fourth participant says that they basically do not use that knowledge at work, and one in three – that they use this knowledge to a moderate extent. Most of those working in education, health and social care do jobs relevant to their degree. Over two thirds of them say that they use information gained at university to a large and very large extent. In the remaining areas of employment this percentage oscillates between 32.17 and 40.58. The least consistent relationship between university degrees and jobs is evident in traditional services (over one third of people employed there do not use knowledge gained at university). The relevance of university degrees to employment is relatively low in public administration and national defence (almost 27% use information gained at university to a small and very small extent) and in modern services (over 26%). It is noteworthy that the industries in which respondents are most likely to use knowledge gained at university are those offering the lowest earnings. In the modern services sector, marked by the highest earnings, over one fourth of respondents do not perform tasks consistent with their university degree.

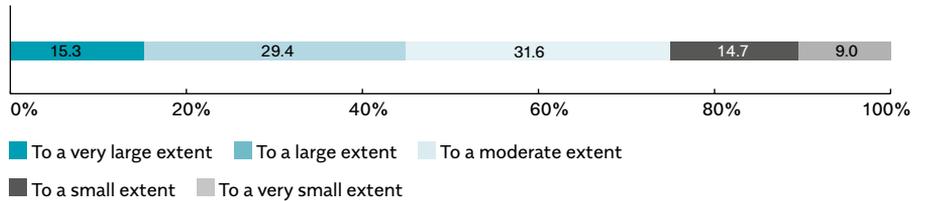
Remuneration of graduates working in Poland – breakdown by form of employment (n = 3,967)



Use of knowledge gained at university by respondents working in Poland – breakdown by sectors (n = 3,967)



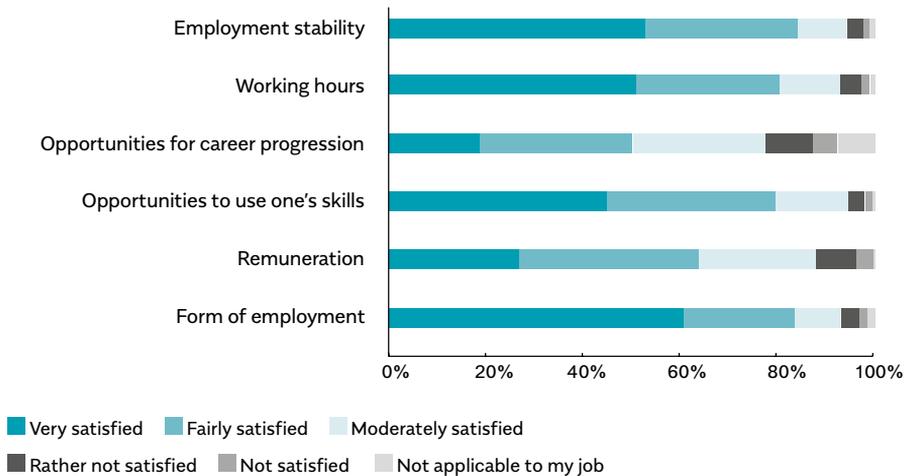
Use of knowledge gained at university by respondents working in Poland (n = 3,967)



Job satisfaction

Most respondents take a positive view of their job – about 80% are satisfied or very satisfied with their form of employment, stability, working hours and opportunities to use their skills. Only two aspects are much less satisfying in respondents’ opinion: remuneration and prospects of career progression. Interestingly, a greater number of people are more satisfied with their remuneration than with prospects of promotion. However, those respondents’ salaries exceed the national average, which might explain this viewpoint. Poor opportunities for career progression may constitute a serious problem in respondents’ professional life.

**Satisfaction of graduates working in Poland with selected aspects of employment
(n = 3,967)**



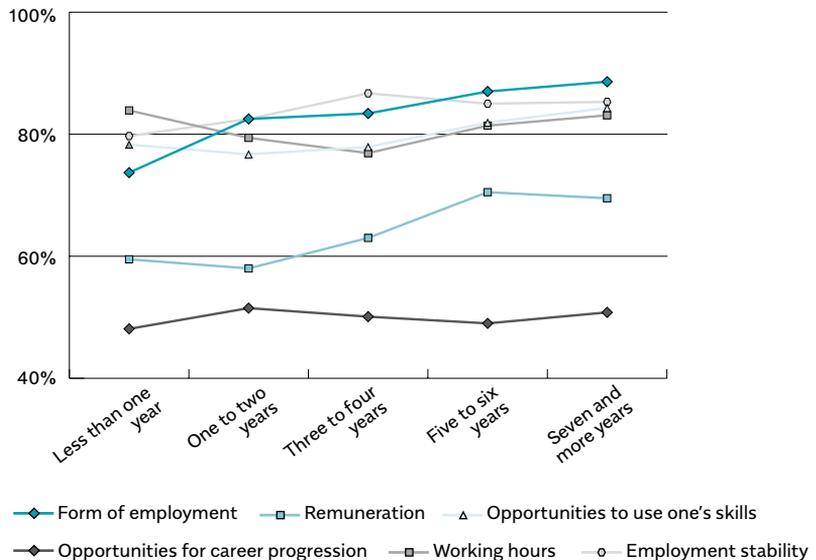
Regardless of their graduation year, respondents gave similar ratings to individual aspects of their employment. Form of employment is the area where divergence of opinions is most pronounced. Most young graduates (70%) are satisfied with their type of employment contract, the percentage goes up to 90 in the older group. This opinion may be justified by a growing number of permanent employment contracts in subsequent years after graduation. The level of older respondents' satisfaction with their salary goes up with growing professional experience. The likelihood of career progression is more or less the same: regardless of their year of graduation, about one half of respondents think that their chance for upward mobility is good or very good. It is surprising that the conviction that the amount of professional experience is linked to a bigger chance of career progression is not evident.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate the type of employment they were interested in and which of its elements they found essential. Each of them was allowed to choose not more than 5 most relevant answers – even if the remaining options were also important, the choice had to be narrowed down. Therefore, when interpreting the results, it has to be borne in mind that lower-ranking options did not prove to be unimportant, only that respondents chose not to give them the highest priority.

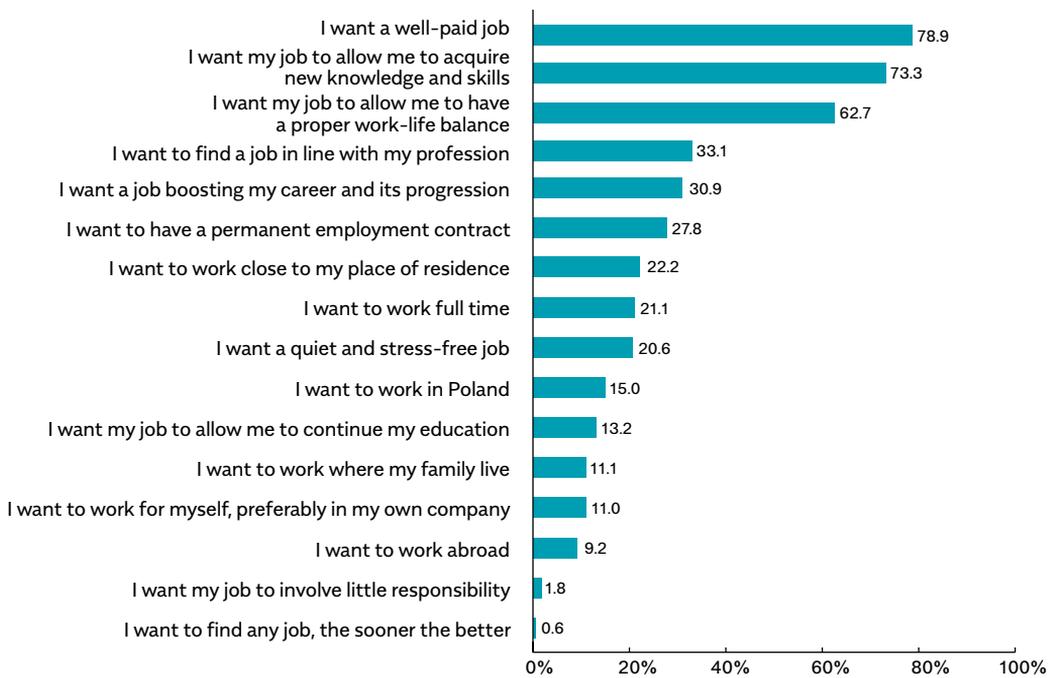
Respondents repeatedly say that they are interested in high earnings – this is essential in 80% of cases. Interestingly, almost the same percentage of respondents would like their job to offer opportunities for professional development. Only a few of them mentioned the work-life balance. These three

aspects are important for all respondents, the remaining aspects were chosen more rarely. Among them were: working in line with the acquired profession (indicated by a third of the respondents) as well as career opportunities and progression. The form of employment was not the most important aspect for respondents as a whole. However, it is noteworthy that being a permanent employee is preferred (by almost 28%) to running a business (chosen by about 11%). Respondents do not strive to go abroad (this is important to just under 10%), but they do not rule out that possibility. Working in Poland is a priority to almost 15% of survey participants. Only a few respondents say they are interested in a job that does not require responsibility or that they want to find any job – the sooner the better.

Respondents employed in Poland satisfied and very satisfied with selected aspects of their employment – breakdown by number of years after graduation (n = 3,967)

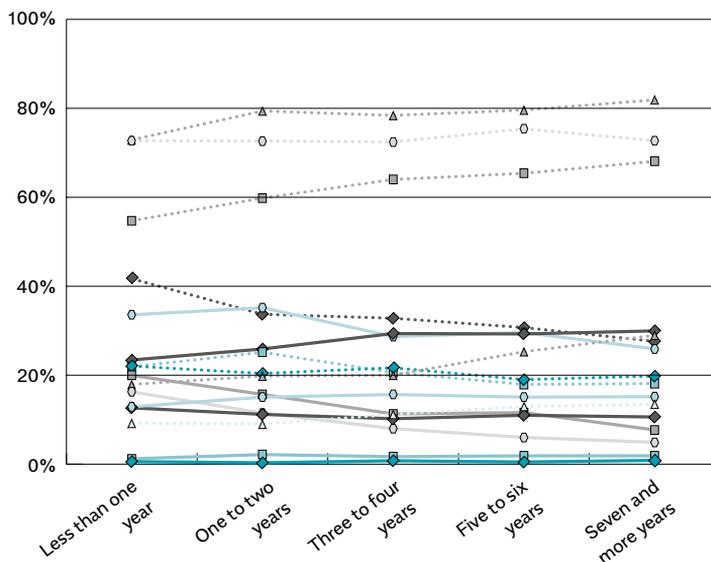


Job expectations of graduates employed in Poland (n = 3,959)



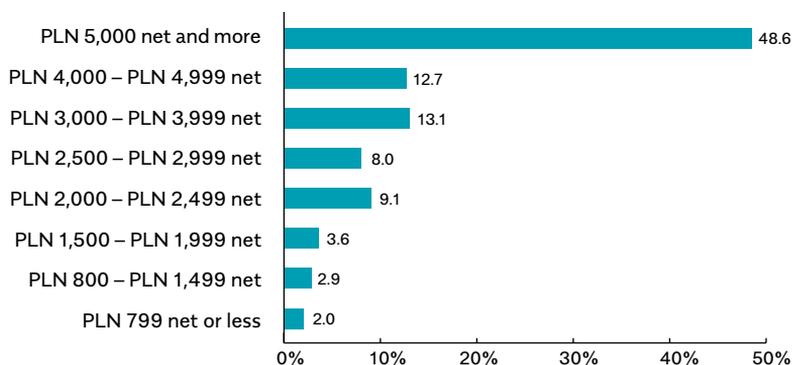
Respondents at different ages have similar job expectations, although there are certain differences in some cases. The three most important aspects – remuneration, professional development and work-life balance – top the ranking list regardless of a respondent's graduation year. It is, however, quite clear that the significance of high earnings increases with age, as does the need for a proper work-life balance. The youngest respondents expect their job to allow them to move upwards and pursue their career. They are much more likely than older respondents to expect that they will work in their acquired profession or go abroad. The significance of the remaining aspects of employment increases with age. Finding a job in the vicinity of one's place of residence and of one's family's place of residence, as well as the form of employment (permanent employment contracts) become more important.

Graduates' job expectations – breakdown by number of years after graduation (n = 3959)

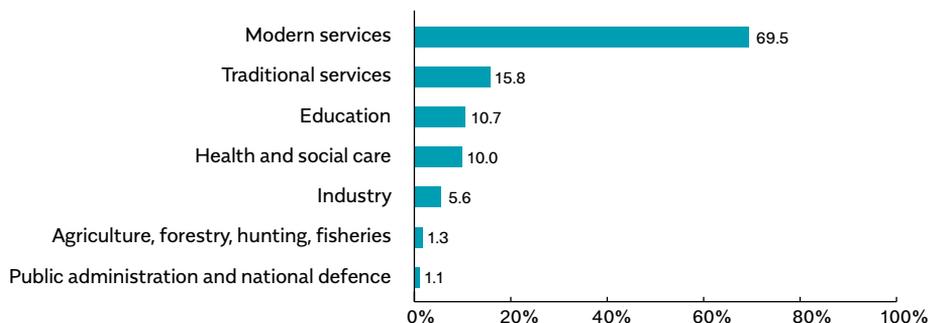


- ◆ I want to find any job, the sooner the better
- I want my job to involve little responsibility
- △ I want to work where my family live
- I want to work in Poland
- ◆ I want to work for myself, preferably in my own company
- I want my job to allow me to continue my education
- I want to work abroad
- △ I want to work close to my place of residence
- ◆ I want a quiet and stress-free job
- I want to work full time
- △ I want to have a permanent employment contract
- I want a job boosting my career and its progression
- ◆ I want to find a job in line with my profession
- I want my job to allow me to have a proper work-life balance
- I want my job to allow me to acquire new knowledge and skills
- △ I want a well-paid job

Remuneration of graduates running a business in Poland (n = 449)



Graduates running a business in Poland – breakdown by industry in which they operate (n = 449)

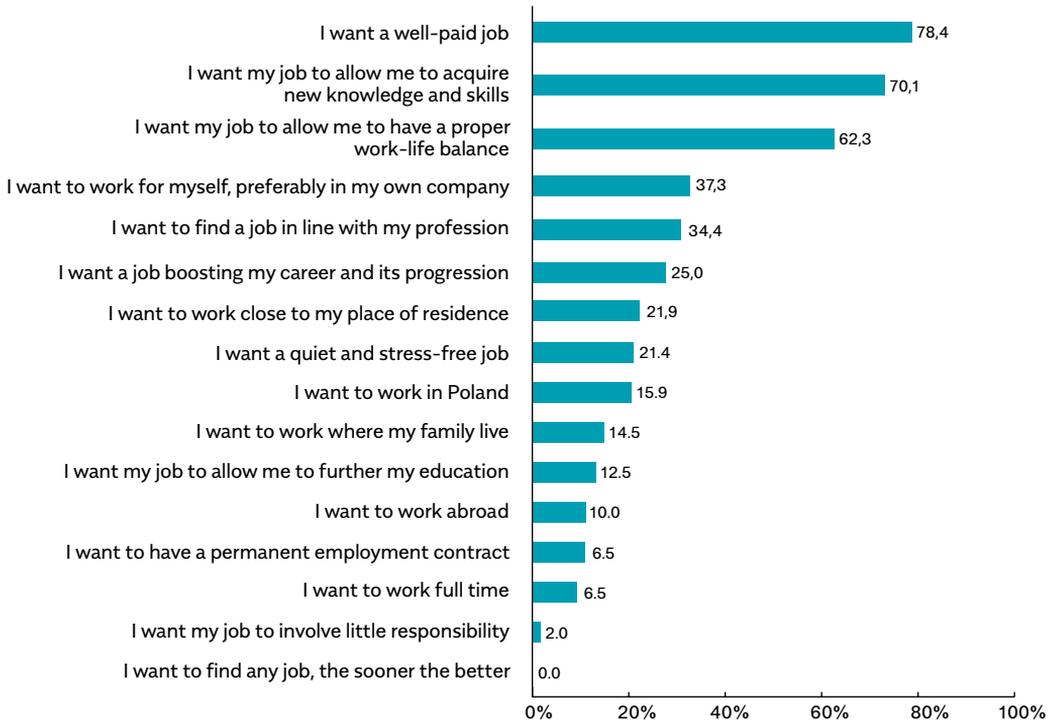


Description of respondents: entrepreneurs

More than 11% of all respondents run a business. As shown in the above analyses, the oldest respondents are most likely to earn a living in this way. When it comes to combining work with study, those who decided to start a business are not different from the rest of the respondents: they all have served internships and work placements in Poland and worked. When studying, the work they performed was in line with their field of study slightly more often than in the remaining cases (over 67%). They were also the ones to find permanent employment a little sooner – one half of them while still at university and almost 43% after graduation. However, these differences are not big and were not decisive in these respondents' choice of career path.

Among those running their own business, 8% are still studying (a percentage that is slightly lower than in the whole survey population) and over 11% said that they had once been out of employment for a period exceeding 6 months (which is slightly more than in the whole survey population). Business people were much less likely than the remaining respondents to declare that they had worked abroad for at least six months (10.47% versus 23.36% among all graduates), but this result almost matches the one in the group of respondents currently working in Poland (regardless of their employment form). One fourth have a close family member engaged in similar activity – this result is slightly higher than in the case of the remaining respondents, which may suggest that establishing one's own company is somehow linked to family experience. The percentage illustrating using knowledge gained at university in running a business was similar across the whole survey population.

Job expectations of graduates running a business in Poland (n = 449)



A vast majority of company owners (over 82%) do not employ anybody, i.e. they are self-employed. Only one in ten employ more than 2 persons.

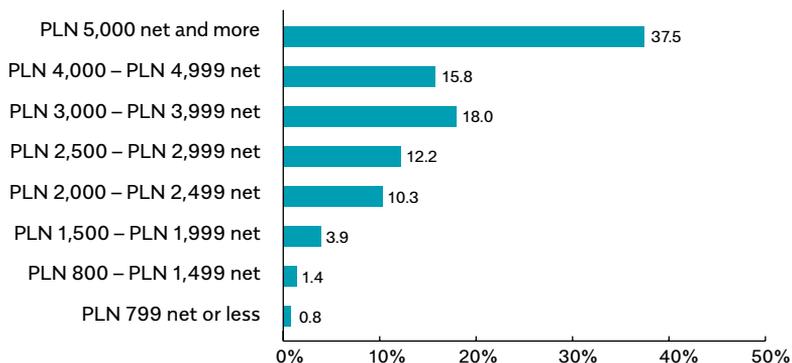
People running a business mostly operate in the sector of modern services (over two thirds), and much more rarely in other areas of activity such as industry, health and social care or public administration and national defence. Almost all respondents from this group say they work in the private sector (90%), the remaining graduates operate in the public sector (6.46%) and in the NGO sector (2%).

Business people's net remuneration is considerably higher than national average earnings and earnings reported by the remaining respondents. Almost one half of respondents from this group say that their monthly earnings exceed PLN 5,000 net. Average earnings range from PLN 4,000 to PLN 4,999 net and are the highest of all groups included in the survey.

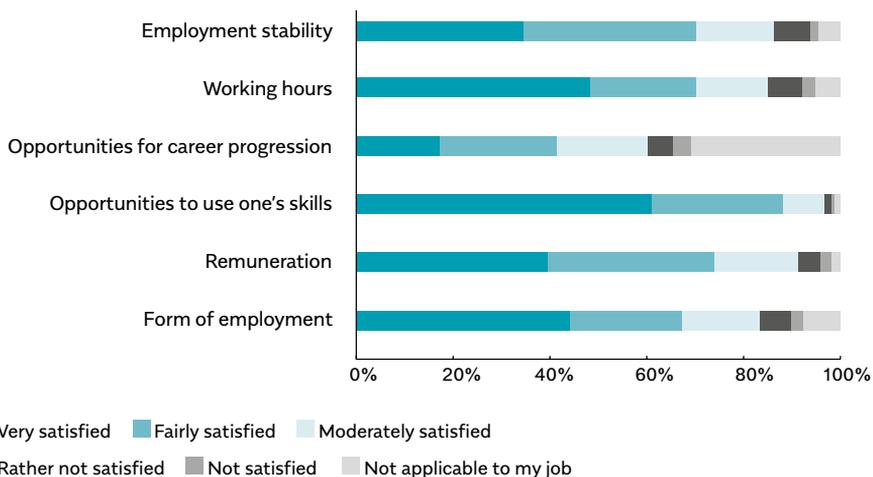
Business people's level of satisfaction with their form of employment is much lower than elsewhere – 67% of graduates are satisfied and very satisfied (the percentage for the whole survey sample is 80). They were very critical of their working hours and business stability (about 70% of positive views on these two aspects versus 80% in the whole survey population). They are more likely

than other respondents to say that their work allows them to make use of their skills (over 88% are satisfied and very satisfied, which is 9% more than in the whole survey population). Business people are much more satisfied with their earnings than the remaining respondents, but almost one third of them say that their work does not include the possibility of career progression (which is due to the specificity of this kind of employment).

Remuneration of graduates in managerial positions working in Poland (n = 1,398)



Ranking of selected aspects of employment by graduates running a business in Poland (n = 449)



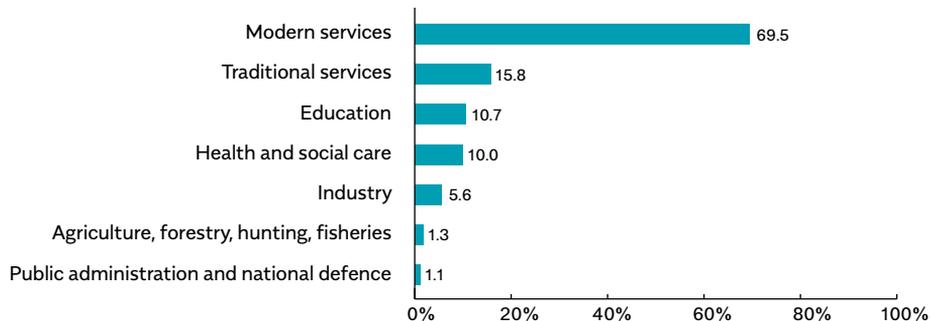
In the case of business people, the most significant expectations regarding their dream job are not different from those reported by graduates working

on the basis of other forms of employment. There are three aspects that top the list: high earnings, prospects of career progression and a proper work-life balance. Working in one's own company ranked fourth (37% of respondents) and this percentage is over four times higher than in the case of all other survey participants. Business people are the group where the percentage of those being interested in an employment contract is lower (6.47%). Therefore, business people are more satisfied with their professional status and want to continue working for their own company.

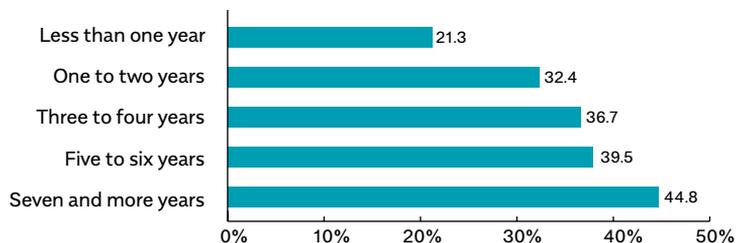
Description of respondents: people in managerial positions

Over one third (35.24%) of all respondents say they manage the work of others. The percentage of respondents in managerial positions grows with age: in most cases, such positions are occupied by the oldest respondents (almost 45%), and the youngest ones (just over 21%) are least likely to work in this capacity.

Graduates running a business in Poland – breakdown by industry in which they operate (n = 449)

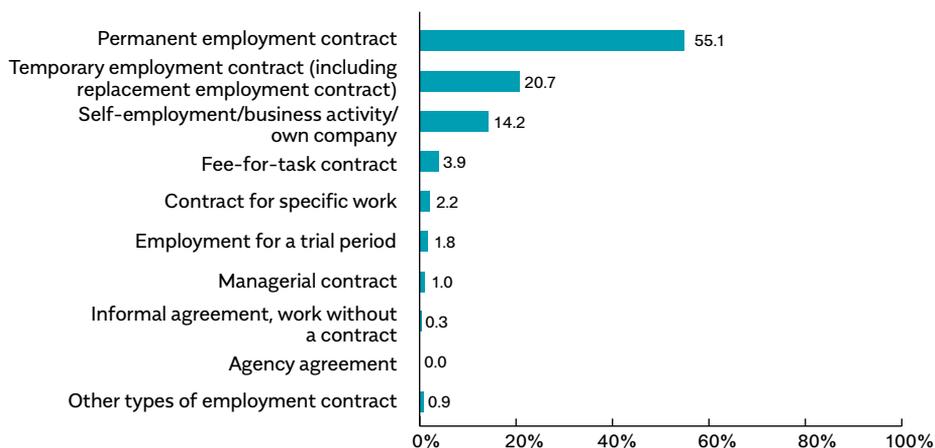


Percentage of respondents in managerial positions – breakdown by graduation year (n = 5,332)



Those in managerial positions were more likely than the remaining respondents to work while studying (especially during the academic year) and their work was more closely linked to their field of study than in the case of other respondents. They were the ones who started their first job sooner – 50% still at university and 42% upon graduation. However, this difference is not significant in relation to all respondents. Holding a managerial position does not result from loyalty to the company where a particular respondent started their career – people from this group change jobs just as often as the remaining graduates.

Form of employment contract of respondents in managerial positions in Poland (n = 1,398).



Over 11% of managerial staff are still studying (mainly PhD, Master's degree or post-graduate programmes). Just under 3% are involved with voluntary service. Nearly 6% have experienced unemployment lasting longer than half a year (this percentage is lower than in the whole survey population) and almost 9% have once worked abroad for more than six months (this is a much lower percentage than in the whole survey population, but similar to the group of business people). When it comes to applying knowledge acquired at university to their job, those in managerial positions do not differ from the remaining groups.

People in managerial positions are mainly employees: most of them are employed for an indefinite period of time, and some for a definite period (20%). In this group the percentage of people who run a business and employ a workforce is higher than in the whole survey population.

The remuneration of people in managerial positions is higher than that of all respondents – over one third of them earn more than PLN 5,000 net a month.

Average earnings are also higher and range from PLN 4,000 to PLN 4,999 net. It is noteworthy that the salaries of graduates in managerial positions are lower than the earnings of business people.

In the first year after graduation few people are offered a managerial position; this number is constantly growing in subsequent years. The fastest growth is among graduates in Technical Studies (within four years of obtaining a university degree almost one half of them occupy managerial positions) and the slowest – among graduates in Modern Languages and Medical Sciences. However, differences between individual groups are not significant. The analysis does not include fields of study represented by the smallest number of graduates (Arts and Agriculture).

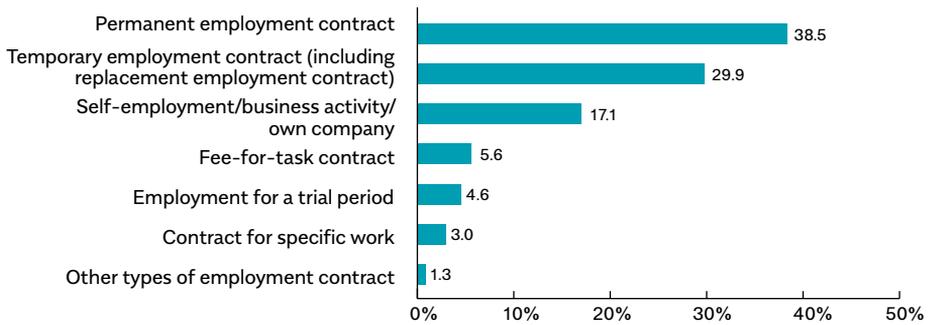
Respondents in managerial positions – breakdown by field of study and number of years after graduation

		Number of years from graduation				
		less than one year	one to two years	three to four years	five to six years	seven and more years
Fields of study	Humanities	20.8%	31.6%	39.1%	37.6%	53.2%
	Modern Languages	20.5%	21.5%	25.7%	32.5%	43.1%
	Social and Legal Studies	21.7%	32.4%	29.5%	39.8%	40.3%
	Economic Studies	27.5%	33.0%	39.0%	45.9%	39.2%
	Mathematical Studies, IT and Natural Science	13.6%	31.0%	39.7%	38.1%	49.1%
	Technical Studies	23.4%	36.4%	46.2%	47.5%	46.0%
	Medical Sciences	23.8%	33.0%	26.0%	32.5%	36.1%

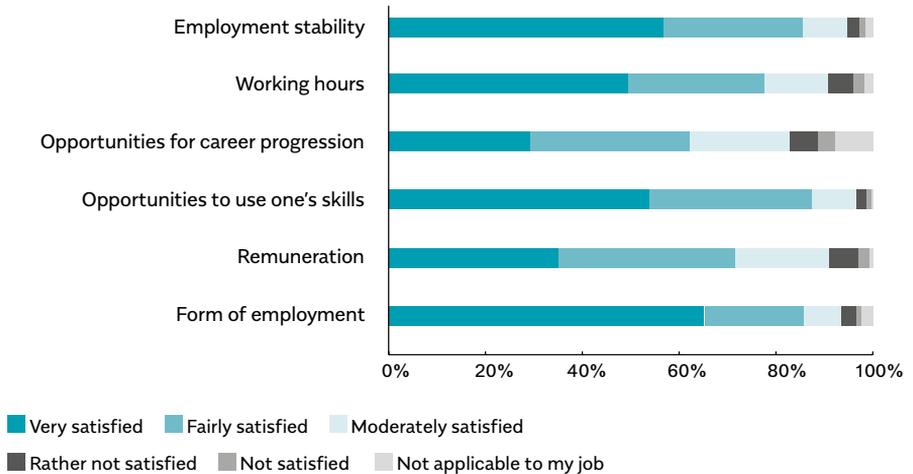
People in managerial positions are more satisfied with most aspects of their job than the remaining respondents. Their opinion on forms of employment and employment stability is the same as in the case of all others (more than 80% of favourable opinions), but they are slightly less enthusiastic about their working hours. They rate remuneration and promotion opportunities higher than the remaining graduates: 71.45% of respondents are satisfied (very or quite) with their earnings, which is about 8 percentage points more than in the case of all others, and 62% of those in managerial positions assess promotion probability as high and very high (12% more than the remaining respondents). People in managerial positions are more likely than the rest of the respondents to say

that they have an opportunity to make use of their abilities and skills in their job (87.34% of respondents).

Form of employment contract offered to respondents working in Poland who were unemployed for at least six months at some point in their life (n = 304)



Level of satisfaction of graduates in managerial positions working in Poland with selected aspects of employment (n = 1,398)



The job expectations of those in managerial positions do not differ from the expectations of the remaining groups and focus on: a high salary, professional development and work-life balance. Graduates in managerial positions were much more likely to put emphasis on the importance of rapid career development and promotion opportunities.

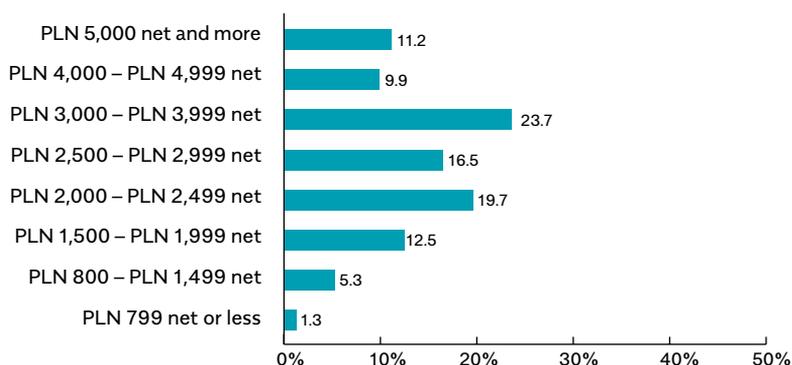
Description of respondents: people who have experienced unemployment

Almost 9% of all respondents say that they were unemployed for more than six months at some point in their life – with or with no recourse to unemployment benefits. This is all the more interesting as a vast majority of respondents say that finding their first job took them less than a month (which is discussed earlier in this chapter). This report intends to analyse the situation of working people who experienced unemployment, pinpoint factors likely to have influenced their career path and see what impact such episodes might have had on their careers.

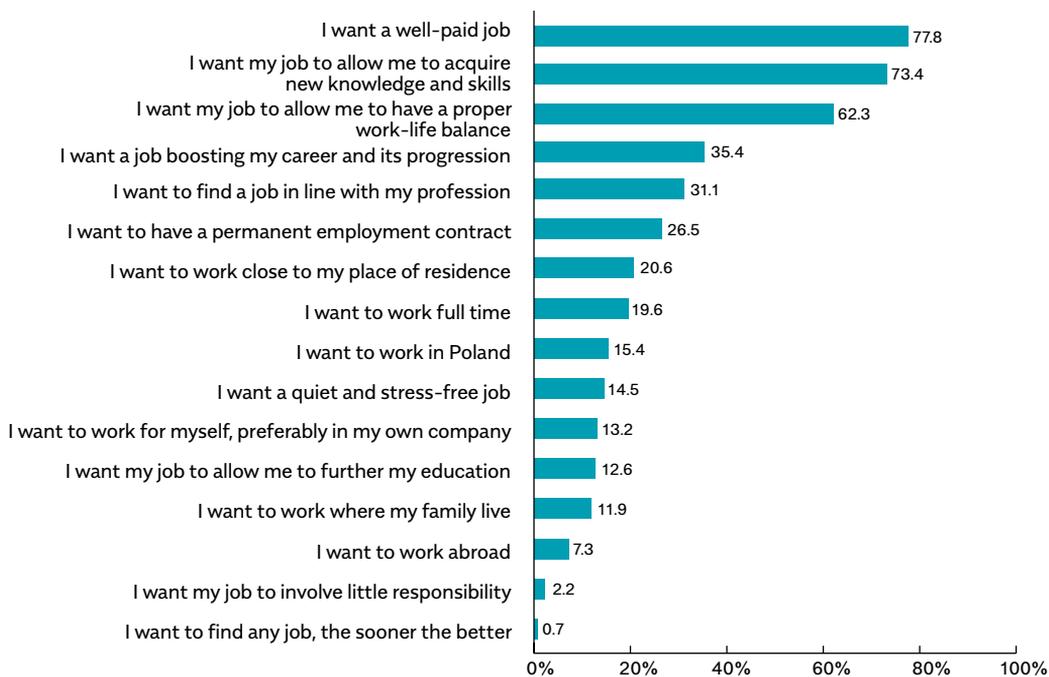
In the group of those who had been unemployed for more than six months, 12% were studying at the time of the survey and almost 10% said they were looking for a job. Almost three fourths of respondents did paid work, out of whom one third worked abroad. This percentage is significantly higher than in the whole survey population. Hence the suggestion that problems with finding work in Poland prompted those people to go abroad.

Just like the rest of respondents, those with episodes of unemployment say that at university they underwent internships and work placements, but they are slightly more likely to declare that they did not have a job when studying (28.99%). Those respondents' student jobs were less likely than in the case of the remaining respondents to be consistent with their field of study (this was said by almost 60% versus only 44% in the whole survey population). Almost two thirds of this group had a permanent job and this percentage is similar to that calculated for the remaining graduates, yet those jobs were started much later: over 69% got a permanent job only after graduation and only 23% – while still studying. In the whole survey population, decidedly fewer people (50%) started a permanent job only after graduation.

Remuneration offered to respondents working in Poland who were unemployed for at least six months at some point in their life (n = 304)



Job expectations of respondents in managerial positions (n = 1,398)



Those who had been unemployed for over six months and were working in Poland at the time of the survey were more seldom offered a permanent employment contract than the remaining groups (38.49% versus 50.52%). Instead, temporary employment contracts were slightly more frequent (almost 30% versus 25% in the whole survey population) and so was running a business (over 17% versus 11%).

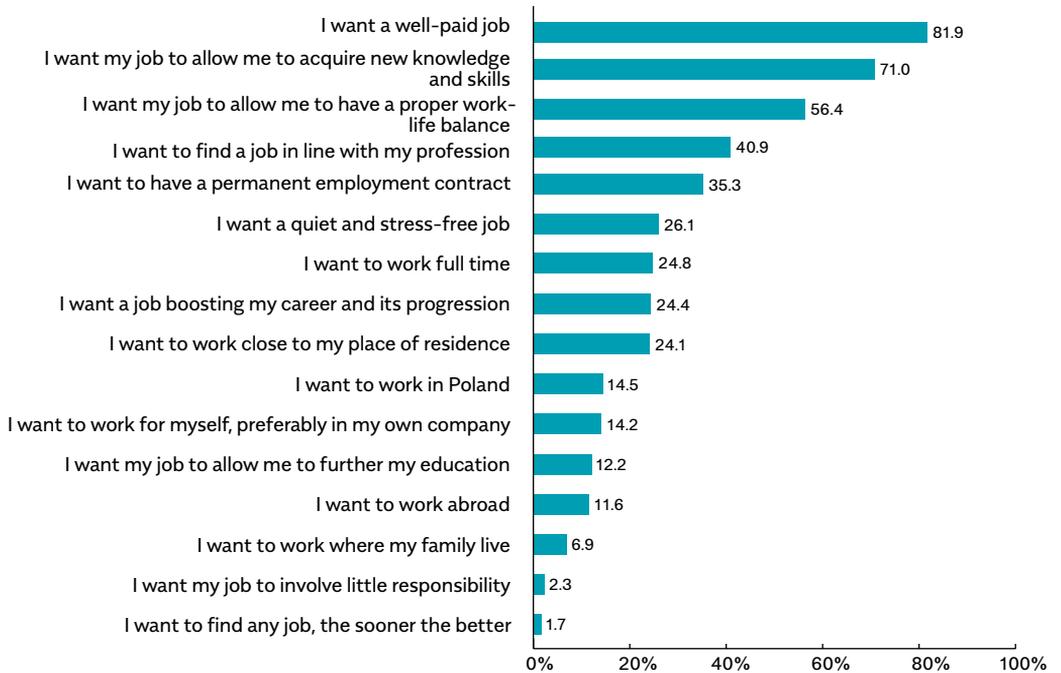
Remuneration paid to those with episodes of unemployment, but who are currently working, is much lower than salaries paid to all working respondents. Current earnings are most frequently situated within the bracket of PLN 3,000 –3,999 net, and average earnings range from PLN 2,500 to PLN 2,999 net.

Graduates with episodes of unemployment are less likely than the remaining groups to hold managerial positions (26.97% versus 35.24%), which may be indicative of problems with moving up the career ladder. They are more likely to do work which is not consistent whatsoever with their field of study, and less likely to perform jobs where they use knowledge and skills acquired at university.

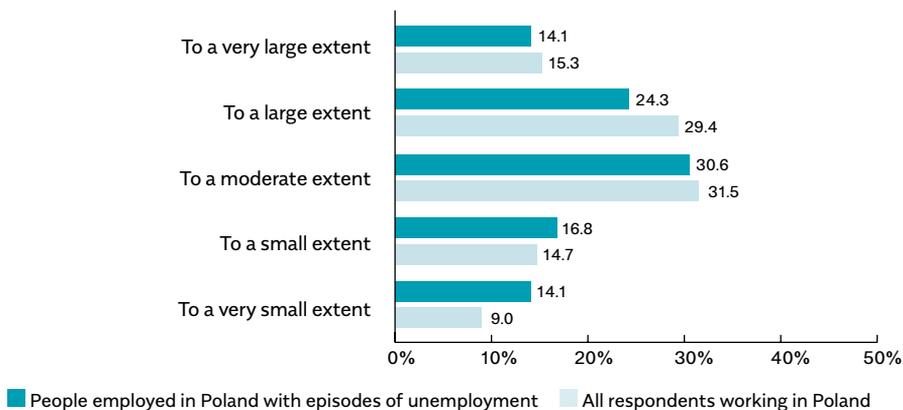
Those who have been unemployed rate just about every aspect of their current job less highly than other respondents employed in Poland. They have much more negative views on remuneration and career progression, i.e. on those aspects that

are the least satisfying to the whole group of respondents employed in Poland. It is, however, noteworthy that opportunities to use previously acquired skills in their job also attracted lower ratings. It might be due to the fact that this particular group is more likely than other respondents to do work which is not quite in line with their field of study. There are smaller differences in rating employment stability and forms of contract. Working hours are the only aspect where there are no differences between the two groups. However, it is very clear that people with unemployment episodes rate their job less highly than the remaining respondents. It may mean that unemployment occurring at an early stage of professional life (just after graduation) may result in a slower pace of professional development and doing jobs which are less gratifying and poorer paid.

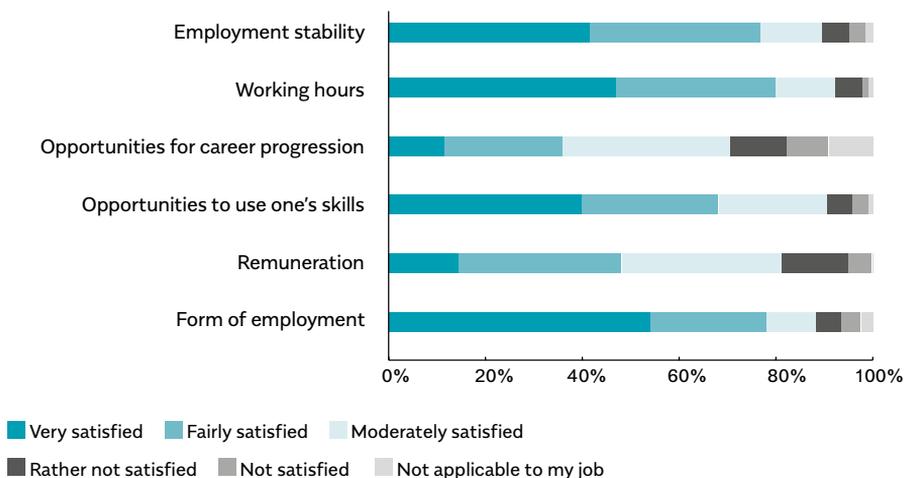
Job expectations of graduates who have experienced unemployment (n = 304)



Making use of knowledge acquired at university by respondents working in Poland who were unemployed for at least six months at some point in their life (n = 5,332)



Level of satisfaction with selected aspects of employment reported by respondents working in Poland who were unemployed at some point in their life (n = 304)



The expectations of respondents who were unemployed for at least 6 months concerning their ideal job are similar to those of the whole survey population. Therefore, the three highest ranking aspects are: adequately high earnings, opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, and keeping a good work-life balance. Differences occur in rating other aspects – people from this group are more likely than the whole survey population to declare that they would like

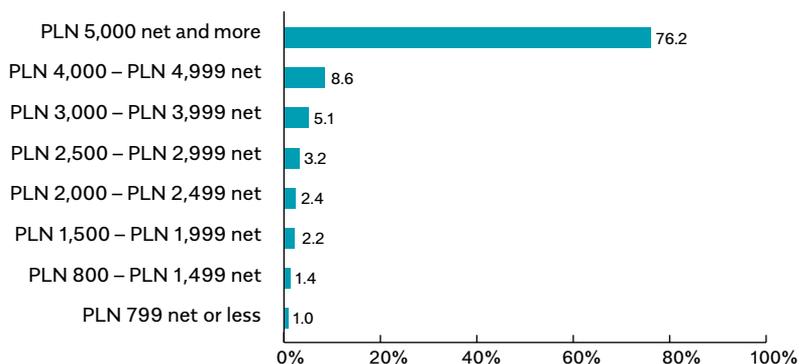
to work in their profession (40.92% versus 33.06%), be offered permanent employment contracts (35.31% versus 27.78%) and have a peaceful, quiet and stress-free job (26.07% versus 20.59%). However, they are much less likely to say that they are interested in a job that would facilitate their fast career progression and development (24.42% versus 30.94%). These results may confirm these persons' worse professional situation and indicate that the jobs they do are less stable and offer poorer chances of self-fulfilment.

Description of respondents: people working abroad

One fourth (25.60%) of the respondents are currently working abroad. Within this group just over 9% combine work with study. Those employed abroad are slightly less likely than other respondents to have undergone work placements in Poland (75.31% versus 80%), but the difference is not big. When studying, they took up paid work just as often as the rest of the respondents and that work was consistent with their field of study just as frequently as in the case of the remaining respondents. However, they were slightly less likely to get a permanent job while studying (just under 45% versus 50% in the whole survey population).

Graduates from this group are mainly permanent employees (60.15%, which is more than in the case of people working in Poland), but they are less likely to run a business (7.47% versus 11.32% in the whole survey population). The earnings of almost all of them exceed PLN 3,000 net and over three fourths earn more than PLN 5,000 net. These earnings are much higher than salaries paid those working in Poland (including business people and persons in managerial positions).

Remuneration of graduates working abroad (n = 1,365)

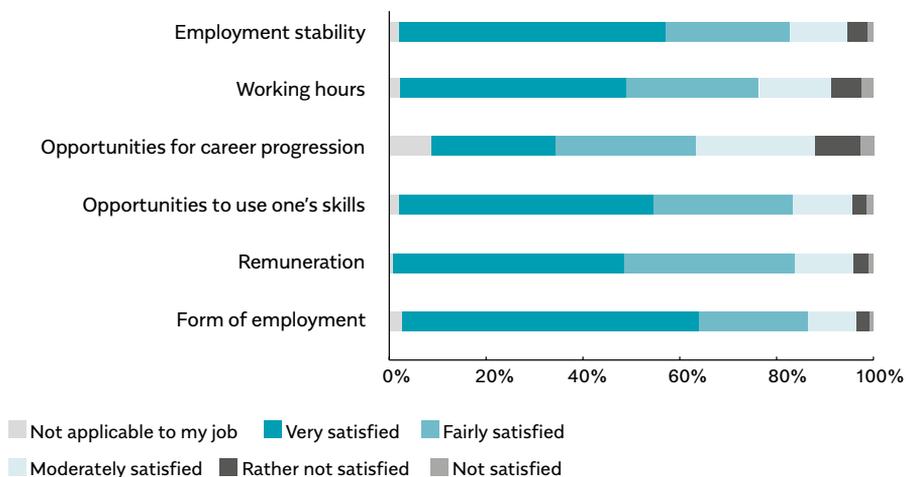


Graduates working abroad are in managerial positions just as frequently as those employed in Poland (slightly over 39%). Those working abroad do not differ from the rest of the respondents when it comes to using knowledge acquired in

higher education in their job: 51% of respondents use it to a high and very high extent, 29% – to a moderate extent and 20% – to a small and very small extent.

Ratings given to individual aspects of employment do not significantly differ from those given by respondents working in Poland. Remuneration is the only exception: almost 83% of those working abroad consider their earnings good or very good. This percentage is clearly higher than in the case of those working in Poland (the difference is just under 20 percentage points), running a business or holding a managerial position. However, the remaining aspects of employment are rated in a similar way – this refers to aspects given high ratings (form of employment, opportunities to use one’s capacities) and low ones (opportunities for career progression). Working hours and employment stability are rated slightly lower.

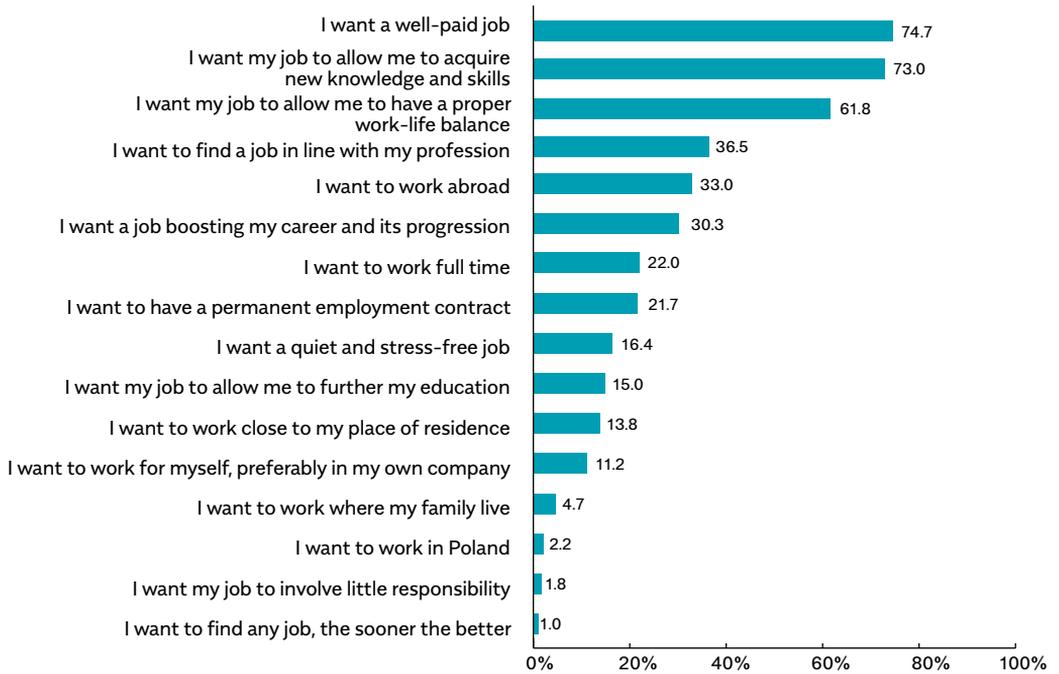
Satisfaction of graduates working abroad with selected aspects of employment (n = 1,365)



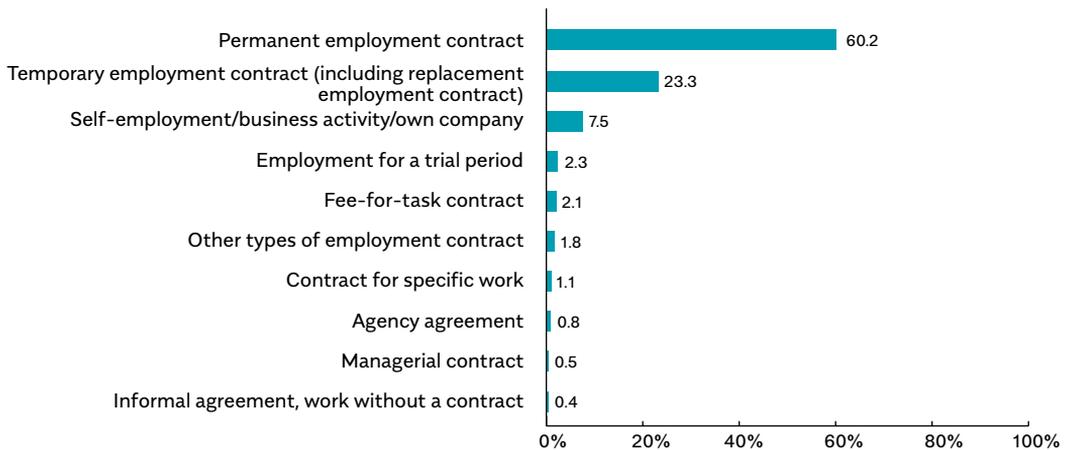
Graduates working abroad have similar job expectations as those working in Poland. The most important elements – remuneration, development opportunities and the work-life balance – are exactly the same in both groups. Those working abroad are quite content with their professional life and do not intend to return to Poland. A significantly higher percentage of respondents from this group are of the opinion that they want to work abroad (33% of them say so versus 9.17% in the whole survey population) and far fewer graduates consider working in Poland to be the most important thing (2.2% versus 15% in the whole survey population). Those respondents who have experienced moving to another country are less likely than those working in Poland to declare that they are interested in being employed close to their place of residence (13.77% versus 22.15%) and in close proximity to their family (4.69% versus 11.09%). They are

also less interested in an employment contract for an indefinite period of time (21.68% versus 27.78%).

Job expectations of graduates working abroad (n = 1,365)



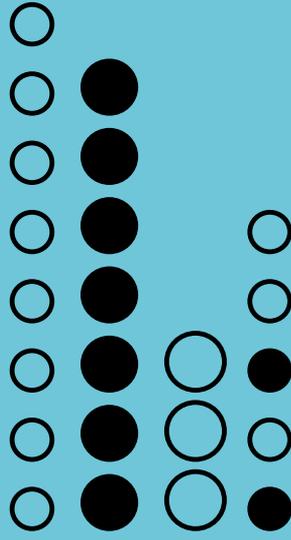
Form of employment contract of respondents working abroad (n = 1,365)



Further education, competences and languages



Home

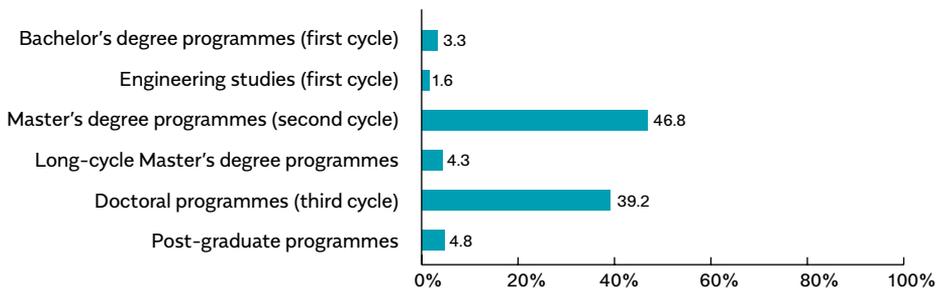


One of the key objectives of the survey tracking the careers of Erasmus grant holders was to see the development of their education paths and provide an answer to the question whether or not their mobility had influenced their decision to continue education, start another programme or an academic career. In the survey, a decision was made to shorten the analysis relating to any programmes completed (during which grant holders went abroad) in favour of expanding the analysis of respondents' current education status. An analysis of competences, skills and foreign languages was added to the description. This chapter provides information on those who decided to continue higher education by choosing a programme of a higher (for example second) cycle or a new field of study (various cycles, starting from cycle 1). A separate part of the survey looks at doctoral students and doctoral degree holders, i.e. at graduates deciding to start an academic career.

Views on completed degree programmes

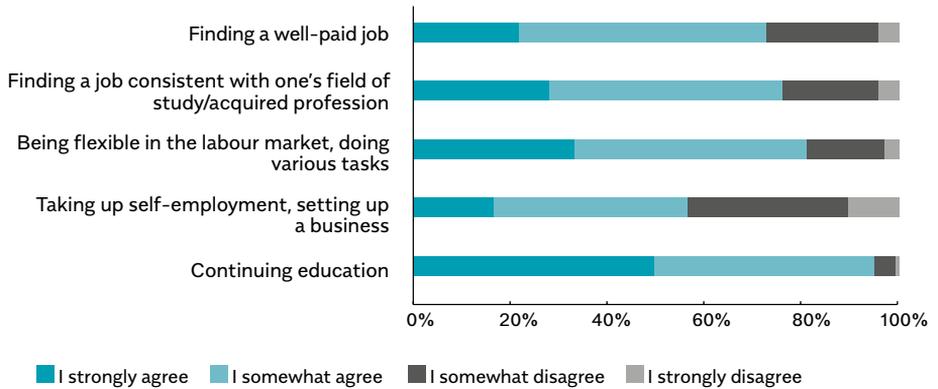
Most respondents are very satisfied with their degree programmes. Over 90% agreed (options: 'I strongly agree' or 'I somewhat agree') that thanks to their university education they were able to start further education and over 80% said that it improved their employability on the labour market. A vast majority of survey participants are of the opinion that having a university degree facilitates finding a well-paid job and that after completing a programme of their choice they have a chance to work in a relevant profession and find employment in line with their acquired profession or field of study. Entrepreneurship and establishing one's own businesses attracted lower ratings – only 56% of graduates say that their programme properly prepared them for running a business, whereas 10% say that their programme did not contribute whatsoever to strengthening entrepreneurial attitudes.

Graduates continuing higher education – breakdown by programme cycle (n = 1,492)



Respondents' views on completed degree programmes (n = 6,877)

The studies have helped respondents in:

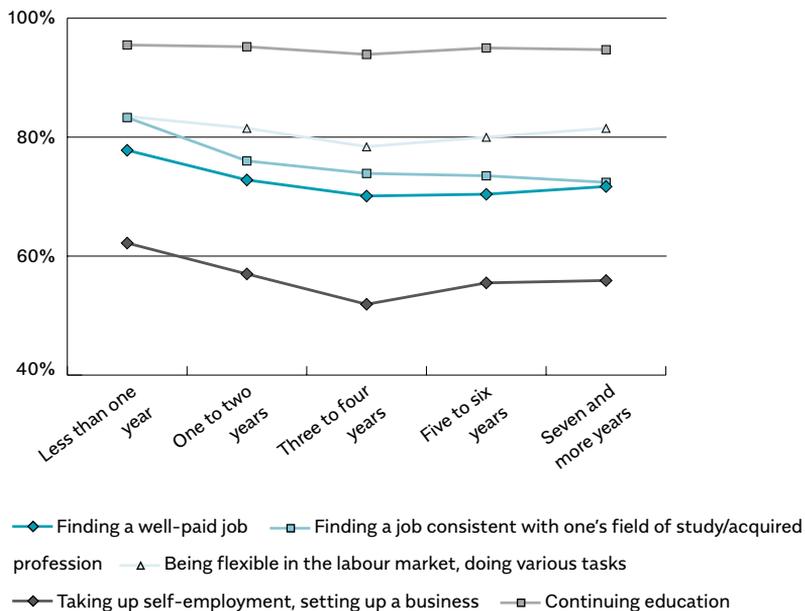


Depending on the year of graduation, respondents have different opinions on the benefits of studying. The highest ratings of all aspects in this survey were given by the youngest respondents – that is by those who graduated in 2017. Each of the aspects analysed attracted lower ratings from older graduates. These lower ratings were probably due to the fact that older respondents had already verified in practice to what degree the knowledge and skills they acquired in higher education were useful on the labour market. The impact of higher education on employability is rated similarly by respondents regardless of their year of graduation: the highest rating is given to further education, then to flexibility on the labour market, followed by getting a well-paid job in line with the acquired profession. Regardless of their age, respondents have a poor opinion on the impact of their programme on establishing a business. It is noteworthy that the conviction that it is possible to find a job in line with their programme weakens with respondents' age.

Influence of Erasmus mobility on the decision to continue higher education (n = 1,492)



Opinion on programme usefulness – breakdown by year of graduation – opinions of respondents saying that their programme had influence on selected skills (n = 6,877)



The opinions of respondents doing paid work (also in managerial positions) do not differ from those of all other respondents. There are no significant discrepancies between the opinions of those working in Poland and abroad. Respondents running their own businesses are of a slightly different opinion. They are more likely than the remaining respondents to say that thanks to their degree programme they work in their acquired profession (82.85% versus 75.96% in the whole survey population) and have established their companies (70.82% versus 56.4%). Respondents with episodes of unemployment lasting at least six months perceive their degree programmes in a different way than the remaining groups. They are much more critical of the influence of studying on high earnings (54.93% versus 72.54%) and on finding a job in line with the acquired profession (60.86% versus 75.96%).

Continuing higher education

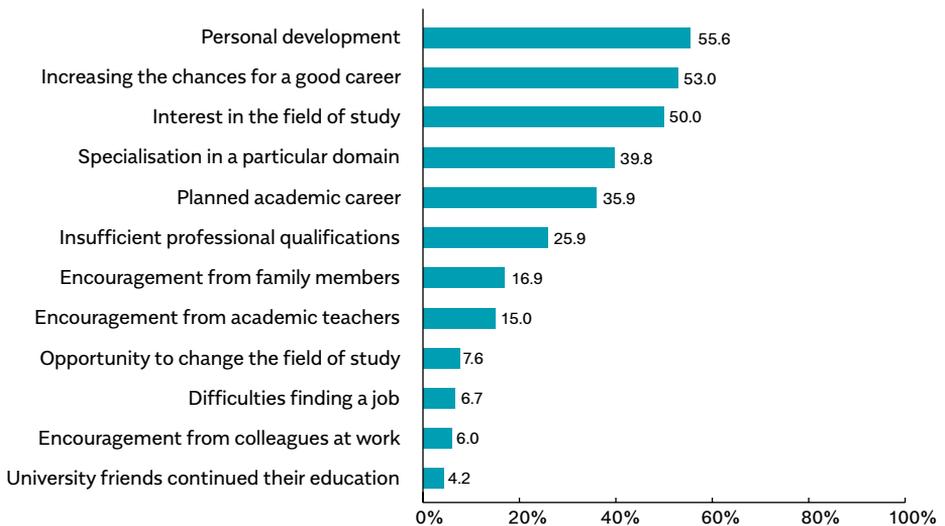
One respondent out of five (21.7%) was a student at the time of the survey. A total of 1,492 participants had this status. The largest group of respondents (47%) had started a Master's degree programme and the percentage of doctoral students was almost the same (39%). People continuing higher education were less likely to choose a first-cycle programme (Bachelor's or engineering

qualification) – only 5% of respondents made such declarations. The same percentage of respondents decided to start a post-graduate programme. These results show that respondents are more interested in continuing education in line with their original degree programme than in choosing a completely different field of study.

The majority of respondents continuing higher education are university graduates. Almost one fourth of them are graduates from universities of technology. Academies, colleges and universities of physical education were less represented. Very few respondents graduated from these kinds of higher education institutions – respectively 6.4%, 4.86% and 2.02%.

Respondents reported that their individual development (over 55%) and career development (53%) were the most important factors motivating them to continue higher education. In their opinion, being a university graduate may have a strong bearing on their employability. Issues linked to their field of study were also important – one half of them say that the decision to continue higher education was based on their interest in the field of study. Just under 40% of respondents would like to specialise in the field of their choice and over 35% would like to start an academic career.

Motivation to start a new degree programme (n = 1,492)



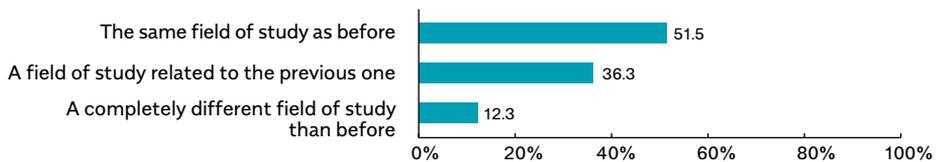
Respondents continuing higher education are busy not only with studying. Almost one half of them (46.31%) combine work and study and 4.42% are looking for a job. Almost 6% are serving internships or work placements,

the same percentage is involved in voluntary service. Respondents continuing higher education usually have temporary employment contracts (over 32%), permanent employment contracts (almost 30%) or fee-for-task contracts (18%). Respondents from this group are less likely to run a business – only 6.5% do it.

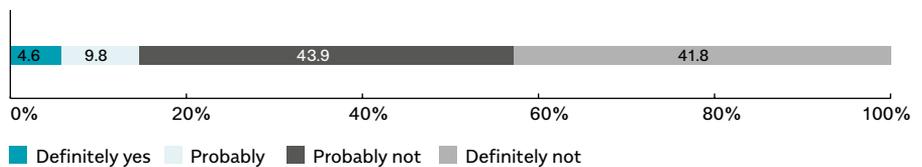
Over half the respondents say that their Erasmus+ mobility had an impact on their decision to continue higher education (one graduate in four says that the impact was significant) and only 12% say that their international mobility did not prompt them to continue higher education. Regardless of the purpose of their mobility – studying or work placement – respondents did not differ in this scope.

Most of the time, respondents decided to continue higher education in line with their original field of study – over one half of them continued education in the same field and over one third chose a field of study related to the previous one. Only 12% opted for a field of study which was entirely different from the original one. Those graduating in Social and Legal Studies (16.3%) and Economic Studies (14.2%) were most likely to make such a decision. The least likely were graduates in Mathematical Studies, Information Technology and Natural Sciences (7.7%). These choices may reflect the level of satisfaction with higher education reported by graduates in individual fields of study.

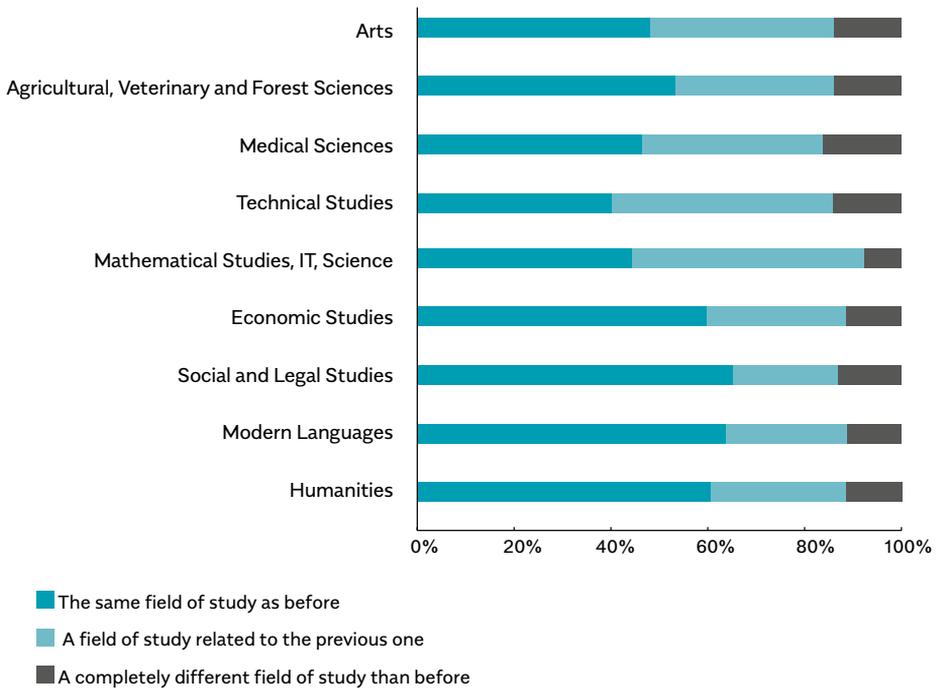
Fields of study chosen by respondents continuing higher education (n = 1,492)



Readiness to start a PhD degree programme (n = 902)

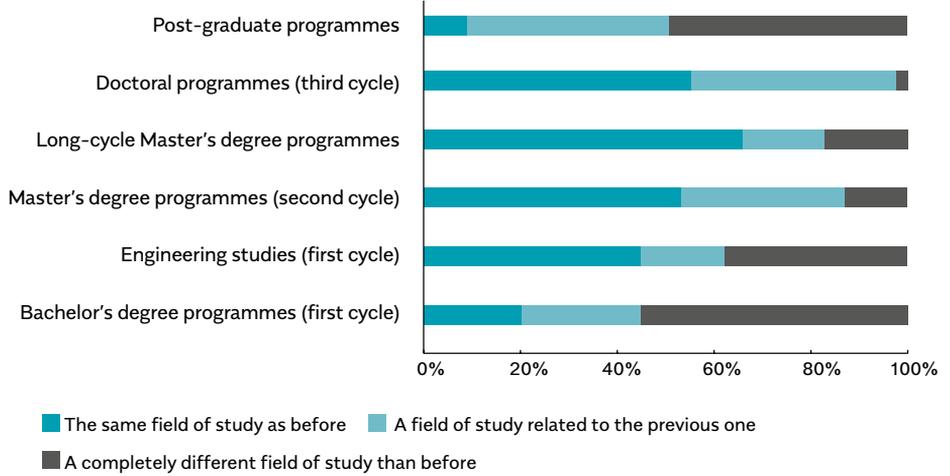


Current field of study versus previous field of study (n = 1,492)



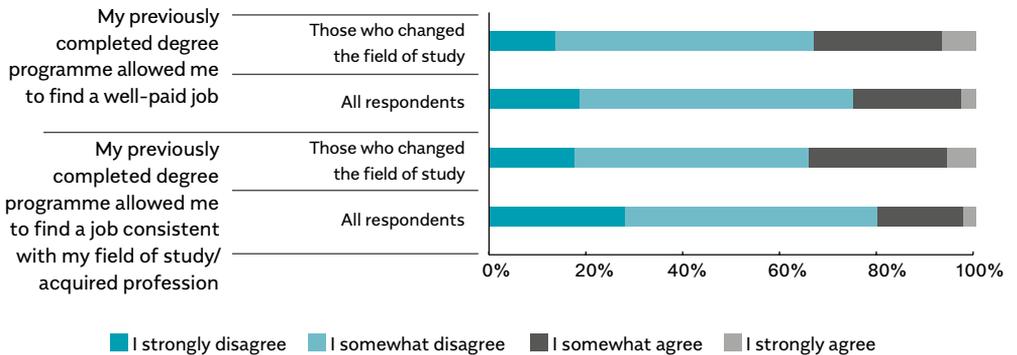
The analysis shows that respondents decide to choose a different field of study in two situations: when they start another first-cycle programme (Bachelor's or engineering qualification) or when they start a post-graduate programme (in both cases the percentage of respondents is higher than 50%). This may mean that graduates treat subsequent courses as a way to gain new qualifications and an opportunity to change their previous career path. It should be borne in mind that in the whole survey population the percentage of those studying a first-cycle programme (but already having a university degree) or a post-doctoral programme is low (only 5% in both cases). Therefore, the issue of raising qualifications requires further and detailed analysis. No radical change as to the field of study is observed among graduates continuing education at a higher level (Master's degree and PhD programmes). They usually choose the same field or a similar one.

Change of field of study – breakdown by programme cycle (n = 1,492)



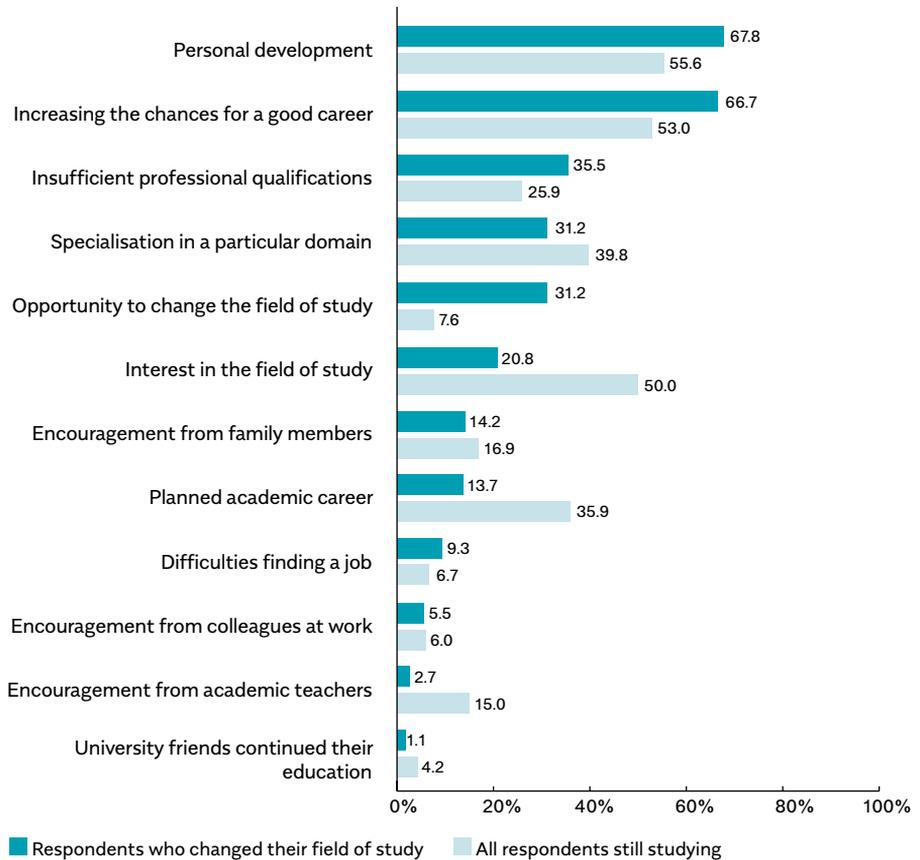
There is a difference of opinion between those choosing a completely different field of study after graduation and the whole survey population as to whether knowledge gained in higher education is useful in the labour market. The former views are more critical – they are less likely than the remaining respondents to see the influence of graduation on finding a well-paid job (the difference is over 8 percentage points), they are also less likely to declare that after graduation they have a chance to work in their acquired profession (the difference is over 14%). The fact that graduates are so critical indicates that they might be disappointed with the professional development opportunities resulting from their previously chosen field of study.

Views of respondents choosing a completely different field of study and of the whole survey population on previously completed degree programmes (n = 6,877)



This explanation of why respondents choose new fields of study which are different from the previous ones is confirmed by answers given to the question about reasons for continuing higher education. Boosted employability was much more often quoted as a reason to continue higher education by those changing their field of study than by the rest of the respondents (almost 67% versus 53%); it was the second most frequently chosen option. They also mentioned the need to raise their professional qualifications and make changes to their educational path (as they now had an opportunity to do so). However, seldom did they say that they were interested in their new field of study, which may mean that their choices were not linked to personal development but to the requirements of the labour market and the need to acquire the necessary qualifications.

Motivation to continue higher education among respondents who chose a completely different field of study and among the whole survey population continuing higher education (n = 6,877)



The majority of respondents involved in first- and second-cycle programmes do not expect to choose an academic career. This possibility is considered by only 14% (of whom 4% have already decided to do so), while over 40% firmly reject continuing higher education by joining a doctoral programme.

Lifelong learning

Almost all survey respondents – both those who continue their higher education and those who have finished studying – say that the end of formal education does not mean the end of learning as such. Having obtained their degree, they continue formal and non-formal education by participating in various courses and training sessions (only 4.78% of graduates have not broadened their knowledge after graduation). The most common forms of continuing education are: self-learning indicated by almost 60% of respondents and language courses chosen by nearly 49%. A significant number of survey participants emphasise the fact that it is either their workplace, or courses and training (compulsory or optional) organised or financed by their employer where their further education occurs. Education at work was particularly preferred by those in managerial positions (as it offered them better professional development opportunities). The same group were more likely than all the others to start a post-graduate programme (22% versus just under 16%).

Type of education undertaken by respondents after graduation (n = 6,876)



Persons involved in business also stress the meaning of various forms of education. They are more likely than the rest to undertake self-learning (almost 68% versus 59%) and participate in training outside their workplace.

They are less likely to take part in training organised by the employer. This group of respondents is more willing than the remaining graduates to participate in various conferences and seminars (almost 42% versus just under 35%) and workshops (39% versus almost 29%). Post-graduate programmes were chosen by company owners nearly as often as by persons in managerial positions (over 21%).

Graduates with a history of unemployment do not differ from the remaining survey participants in their views on further education. The only differences are noticeable in the matter of participation in courses organised outside the workplace (37.83% versus 31.71%) and in post-graduate programmes – this form of education was reported by 21.38%, which is more than across the whole survey population (close to the percentage for business people and persons holding managerial positions).

Continuing higher education was very important in the opinion of respondents choosing an academic career, that is doctoral students and PhD degree holders. They were much more likely than the whole survey population to participate in conferences and seminars (75% versus just under 35%), which is characteristic of the specificity of research work. They also took part in language courses and workshops and optional training offered by their employers. Respondents from this group also said that their education mostly occurred through self-learning.

Description of respondents: doctoral students and PhD degree holders

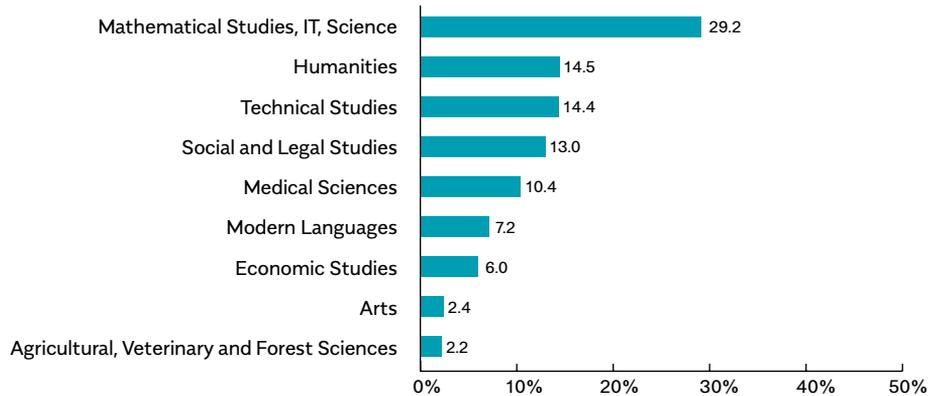
Respondents deciding to pursue an academic career, that is doctoral students and research fellows, form a separate group. They constitute 13.45% of the whole survey population (including 5.21% of PhD degree holders). Basing on the survey results it is difficult to pinpoint the factors which prompted such a high percentage of Erasmus grant holders to pursue an academic career.

A vast majority of doctoral students are university graduates (over 70%), graduates of universities of technology are also well-represented (over 20%). There are far fewer graduates of other types of higher education institutions. Graduates in Mathematical Studies, Information Technology and Natural Sciences (almost 30%) formed the largest group, and just under 15% of respondents graduated in Humanities and Technical Studies. The percentage of doctoral students among graduates in Arts or Agricultural, Veterinary and Forest Sciences was considerably lower (under 3%).

Over one half of the number of doctoral students combine work and study and only just over 3% are out of work but actively seeking employment. Other types of professional activity are much less popular among doctoral students: internships or work placement are undertaken only by 2.56%, and 3.93% are involved in voluntary service. Just over 6% of doctoral students say that they

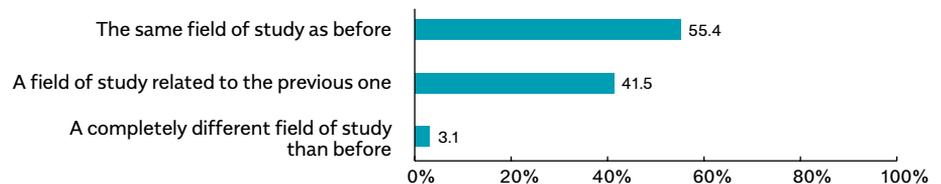
have once been unemployed for more than six months. Their percentage is higher than in the whole survey population.

Doctoral students' previous fields of study (n = 585)

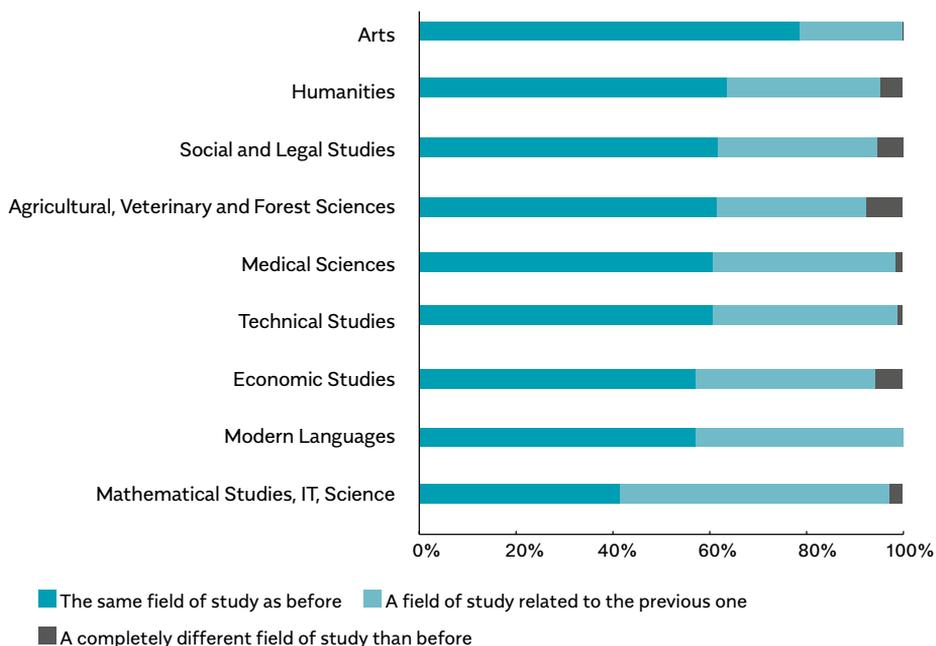


Over one half of doctoral students decided to continue higher education in the same field of study, and a new field of study related to the previous one was chosen by 42%. Only 3% changed their research area. Graduates in Arts (78.6%) and Humanities (63.5%) were most likely to continue higher education within the same field of study. Graduates in Mathematical Studies, Information Technology and Natural Sciences (41.5%) were least likely to do so. It is graduates in Agricultural, Veterinary and Forest Sciences (over 7%), Economic Studies (almost 6%) and Social and Legal Studies (over 5%) who were most likely to make a complete change in this respect.

Similarity between the field of the doctoral programme and the previous field of study (n = 585)

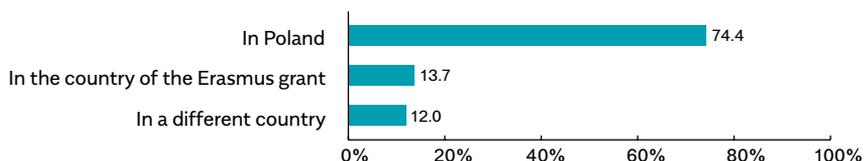


Similarity between the field of the doctoral programme and the previous field of study – breakdown by completed university programme (n = 585)



The majority of respondents continue doctoral programmes in the same higher education institution in which they obtained their Master’s degree, while 42% of respondents decided to choose a different institution. Every fourth doctoral student chose to study abroad. One half of them – in the country to which they went as part of the Erasmus programme (this percentage is higher than in the case of persons deciding to work abroad).

Country in which a PhD degree programme is pursued (n = 585)



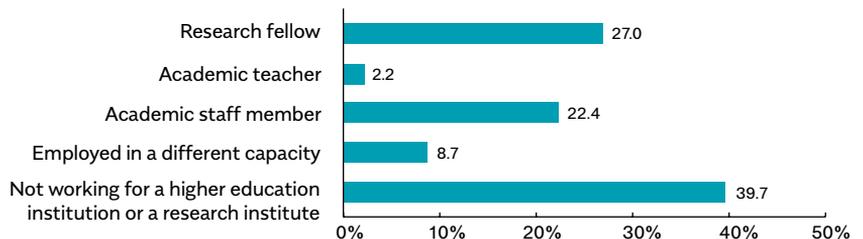
Respondents were asked to give the most important reasons for enrolling in their doctoral programmes (they were allowed to tick any number of options). The most frequent reasons were: willingness to get involved in research (over 68%) and respondents’ interest in their discipline of science (more than 61%).

The remaining options indicating that respondents were strongly motivated to start a doctoral programme ranked nearly as high: personal development (over 55%) and specialisation in the chosen field of knowledge (almost 52%). Reasons linked to respondents' career, qualification improvement and problems in finding a job, as well as employers' encouragement to further education ranked lower. This suggests that the decision to start a doctoral programme does not result – in most cases – from the willingness to boost employability, and the PhD degree as such does not necessarily improve the prospects of career development.

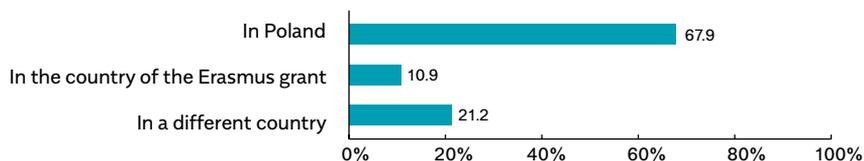
Motivation to start a PhD degree programme (n = 585)



PhD holders' workplace and nature of work (n = 370)



Country of employment of PhD holding respondents (n = 293)



Doctoral degree holders who completed a third-cycle programme (370 persons, that is 5.21% of the whole survey population) also participated in the survey. The majority of doctoral degree holders are employed (over 79%), both in higher education institutions and elsewhere. Just under 6% of this group look after their home and family, and just over 3% have no work but are actively looking for a job. Exactly 11.62% declare that at some point in their life they experienced unemployment for more than six months.

PhD holders are mostly employed in industries related to modern services (information and communication, finance and insurance, property market service, professional, academic and technical activity) and to education – this was reported by 45.05% and 42.66% of respondents, respectively. They are usually employed in the public sector (over 58%) and much more rarely in the private sector (under 36%). This particular distribution results from the fact that those respondents' occupations involve working in higher education institutions and research institutes. Doctoral degree holders mainly work in Poland, yet this percentage is significantly lower than in the case of doctoral students (and the whole survey population), which may suggest that it is representatives of this group that are most likely to work abroad. Doctoral degree holders working abroad are less likely than doctoral students to choose the country of their Erasmus mobility.

PhD holders mostly continue their academic career – 27% of them work in higher education institutions or research institutes, 22% combine research and teaching, another 2% are academic teachers and 9% work in academia in other capacities.

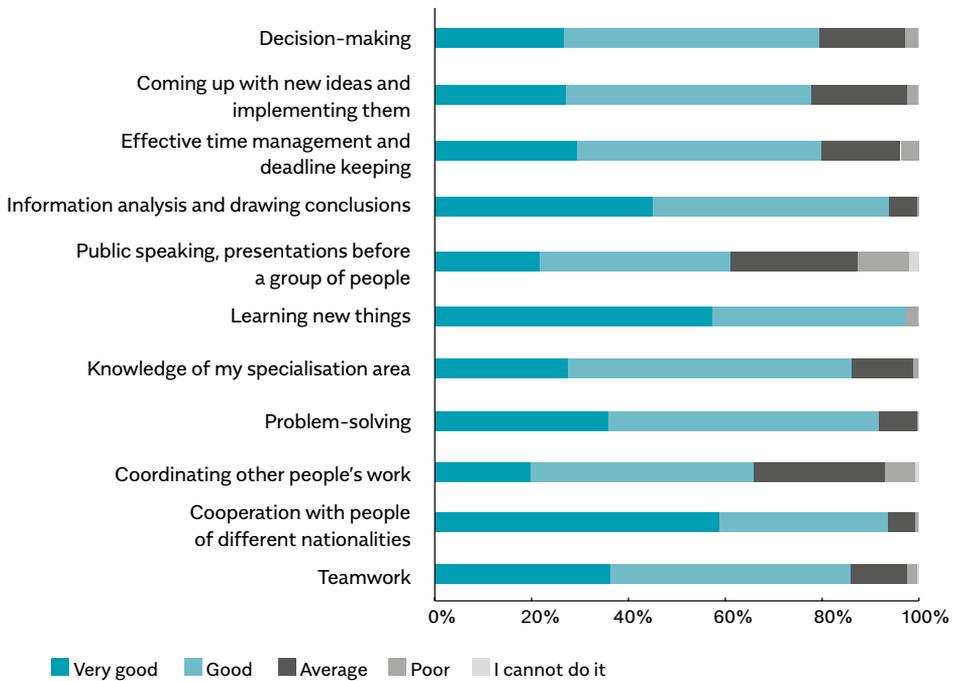
It is worth emphasising that 40% of respondents from this group have strong occupational ties with their HEIs – almost 72% say they are employed there and some (over 27%) are enrolled in another programme. They are mostly employed in the private sector (77.3%) and a vast majority of them usually have permanent employment contracts. They are more likely than the remaining respondents to run their own businesses – this form of activity was indicated by 15.5% (this percentage is 10.33 for the whole survey population and 6.8 for all PhD holders, also those working in higher education institutions). Respondents holding a PhD degree not working in a higher education institution or a research institute

are mostly employed in Poland (71.8%) – they are less likely than those working at universities to become economic migrants on completion of their doctoral programmes.

Competence rating

Respondents participating in the survey were also asked to rate their competences (their answers were declarative). The overall result in the whole group was very positive – they said they had developed their competences to a high and very high extent. This refers both to transversal competences, specialist knowledge and inter-cultural competences.

Respondents' competence rating (n = 6,876)



Respondents' competences developed to a high and very high extent (n = 6,876)

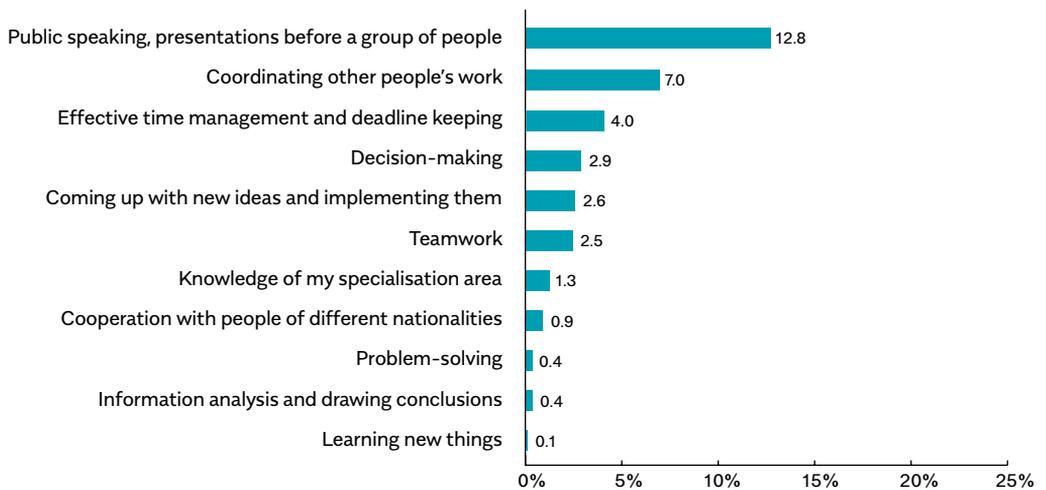


Over 97% of respondents said they could learn new things. Nine out of 10 gave high ratings to their skills needed for analysis of information and drawing conclusions on the basis of available data, to cooperation with people of different nationalities and to problem-solving. Such positive views on cultural competences were not surprising as all respondents had – as students – experienced international mobilities, studying or working in a multicultural environment.

A large percentage of graduates said that they had developed specialist knowledge and acquired teamwork skills (in both cases the percentage reached almost 86). The lowest number of very high ratings was given to public speaking and presenting information in front of a large audience (just over 61%).

Delivering a public presentation was the skill that attracted the lowest ratings – almost 13% of the respondents do not possess it at all or only to a minimum extent, over 25% say they developed it to an average extent. Coordinating other people's work is the second lowest ranking competence developed by respondents: under two thirds of them developed it to a high extent, 27% – to an average extent and 7% – rated their skills in this scope as poor or said they could not do it at all. The remaining competences were given low ratings only by a few respondents (under 4%).

Respondents' competences developed to a low extent or not at all (n = 6,876)



Respondents running their own business do not significantly differ from the remaining groups when rating their competences. Almost all of them say that they developed nearly all competences to a high or very high degree, including: learning new things (over 96%), problem-solving (over 95%), and analysis of information and drawing conclusions (93%). The lowest ratings were given to the skill of speaking in public (almost 13% do not possess this skill or developed it to a low extent) and coordinating other people's work (over 6% of negative ratings).

Respondents holding managerial positions rate their competences significantly higher. It is in this group that public speaking skills are the only ones to have attracted lower rates than the rest (over 8% of negative ratings). In their own opinion, over 80% of respondents in managerial positions developed all the remaining competences to a high or very high degree. Almost all of them say they can learn new things (over 97%), analyse information (just under 95%) and solve problems (94%).

Respondents who have experienced unemployment rated their competences high, although lower than the above groups. Almost 18% of this group say they have problems with speaking in public, almost one in ten declare they have not developed competences needed to coordinate other people's work and just under 7% say that they cannot manage their time effectively and have problems with keeping deadlines.

Respondents holding a doctoral degree and doctoral students rated the level of their competences quite high. They said that they had developed each competence at least to an average extent. Learning new things attracted the

highest ratings: 99.19% of PhD holders and 98.29% of doctoral students say they have developed this skill to a high and very high extent. Both groups rate the following aspects nearly equally high – at a level of 90%: analysis of information, specialist knowledge, problem-solving and cooperation with people of different nationalities. Coordinating other people's work attracted the highest number of negative ratings given by doctoral students and PhD holders (4.86% in the case of doctoral students and over 6.15% in the case of PhD holders). Doctoral students reported problems with keeping deadlines and effective time management (almost 6% of negative ratings) and with public speaking (about 5%).

Command of foreign languages

Respondents were asked what they thought about their command of foreign languages. They were asked about being able to communicate in the most widely spoken languages (English, German, French, Russian, Spanish, Italian) and in other less frequently taught ones. Their answers are declarative – just like in the case of competences, they are only assertions, and no additional tests were administered to confirm them.

Respondents described their command of foreign languages basing on the language proficiency levels specified in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages²⁵. The document defines six levels of language proficiency: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. Level A denotes a basic user of a language (there are two sub-levels: A1 – breakthrough, and A2 – waystage), B – independent user (also with two sub-levels) and C – proficient user (similarly with two sub-levels). The application of the Framework to this survey was justified as respondents were familiar with it. It is used in the Polish system of education and the core curriculum relating to language education is also based on this document.

Almost all respondents say they speak at least one foreign language (just one admitted not being able to speak any of the six most common languages), which is understandable as the survey was administered to people participating in international mobility during their degree programme. In principle, all respondents say they communicate in English (99.85%), which is also not surprising since this is the language most commonly taught at schools and the most extensive educational offer for Erasmus grant holders involves it. German ranks second – 65.97% say they speak the language. The remaining languages,

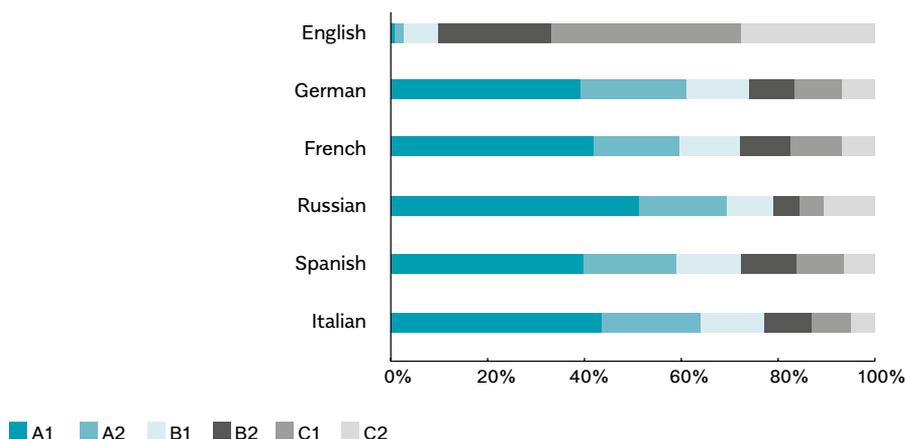
25. Information about ESOKJ: bit.ly/1VNkwm8 [Accessed 21.09.2018].

i.e. Spanish, French, Russian and Italian, are significantly less common: respectively 38.03%, 29.19%, 25.77% and 20.42% speak them.

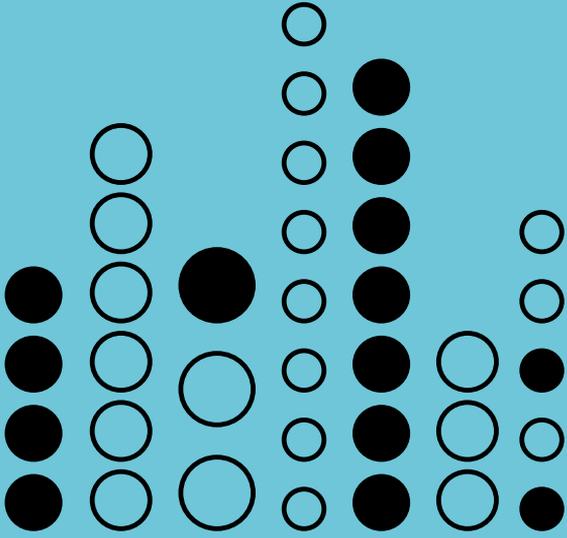
Important differences occur at the level of language proficiency reported by respondents. Obviously, English is mastered to the highest degree: only 3% of respondents say their knowledge of this language is at basic level (A1 or A2), and two thirds say they are proficient (levels C1 or C2). The remaining languages are not only less common, but the level of proficiency in them is also lower – the biggest group of respondents say their language competences were at the lowest level (A1) and only a dozen or so graduates report language proficiency at C1 or C2 level.

Respondents also mention being able to speak other European languages (Portuguese, Czech, Swedish, Norwegian) and some other less common languages (Arabic, Chinese, Latin and ancient Greek, as well as the Polish sign language). It is noteworthy that Polish was also a foreign language in respondents' answers as it is not the mother tongue of 2.7% of them. There has been a significant change to the percentage of foreigners in subsequent years: in 2010 and before the percentage of foreign respondents was 0.4%, in 2015–2016 it amounted to 2.9%, and in 2017 it was as much as 6.9%. This trend provides confirmation that there has been an increase in the internationalisation of Polish HEIs and interest in studying in Poland has been growing.

Graduates' level of proficiency in the most widely spoken languages (n = 6,876)



Conclusions



1

The Erasmus programme and its successor, Erasmus+, are the most popular initiatives in Poland offering opportunities for studying and serving work placements abroad. Out of all available offers, this programme to the largest extent contributes to increasing the mobility of Polish students, the majority of whom avail themselves of the opportunities provided by Erasmus instead of travelling as part of other programmes.

2

Respondents who use the offers of other grant programmes most often undertake international mobilities for work placements (also after serving internships as part of Erasmus). However, mobility offers for study periods at foreign universities presented by other programmes enjoy little popularity. This type of mobility is primarily the domain of Erasmus.

3

The level of Polish students' mobility has consistently grown over the past years. As compared to their older counterparts, the youngest respondents more often use the learning mobility opportunities in the framework of Erasmus and other grant programmes. Mobility is particularly important for students of Medical Sciences who repeatedly benefit from such offers, especially as far as work placements are concerned.

4

The offer of the Erasmus programme is attractive for Polish students, as evidenced by the continued popularity of mobilities in subsequent years. Project participants are highly satisfied with their stays abroad, the host countries and institutions (universities or companies). A high level of satisfaction applies both to mobilities for a work period and a study period in each graduation year and among graduates of all fields of study.

5

Key benefits for students participating in mobilities as part of the Erasmus programme include improved language skills, experience of living in another country and culture, making new friends and acquaintances and developing competences and skills. To a smaller extent, mobility contributes to boosted employability of HEI graduates. This is in particular true for study periods abroad, which impact the overall development of participants. Such mobilities contribute to improved language and inter-cultural competence, boosted self-esteem, and development of interests, but do not translate directly into functioning in the labour market (both Polish and European). In this context, mobilities for a work period are more significant.

6 Growing interest in serving work placements abroad shows that this type of mobility to a growing extent addresses the needs of students. This may be due to the fact that having served work placements greatly facilitates a start in the labour market. Mobilities for a work period contribute to the development of the same competences as mobilities for study periods, but also have a direct effect on the development of professional competences and establishment of professional relations and thus on the career of the participants.

7 Nine out of ten respondents mentioned their mobilities as part of the Erasmus programme during recruitment for work. However, in the opinion of HEI graduates, learning mobility is not a factor which is significantly helpful in the labour market. Learning trips can contribute to finding a job, but they do not constitute a key factor. Much more important elements include: language proficiency, soft skills or having served internships and work placements. Since mobilities under the Erasmus programme contribute to the development of the above competences, it is worth indicating the benefits of mobilities and listing competences that can be developed as their result in communications addressed to programme beneficiaries (students as well as employers).

8 Erasmus grant holders usually start professional careers before graduation. Almost all the respondents served internships and work placements in the course of their studies (at home and abroad), and 80% of them were professionally active, both on a permanent and temporary basis. Nearly one half of the respondents entered the labour market before completing education. It is worth noting that people who experienced longer periods of unemployment more rarely worked during their studies, and more often started their professional career only after graduation. The opposite is true for graduates working in managerial positions. They more rarely experienced unemployment in the past, more often were professionally active in the course of their studies and commenced their permanent jobs earlier than other respondents. This clearly shows that taking up employment (especially permanent one) already during studies is a successful strategy from the point of view of employability and finding better jobs in the years to come.

9 The situation of HEI graduates in the labour market is rather good, as reflected by the high level of satisfaction with work reported by respondents to the survey. The main reasons for respondents' complaints included insufficient remuneration and lack of promotion opportunities. Remuneration improves with the number of years of professional experience, but the interdependence with seniority does not apply to promotion prospects. This issue requires an in-depth analysis in subsequent waves of the study, in particular in the form of a panel survey.

Respondents who run their own businesses are most satisfied with their professional situation. A high level of satisfaction applies in particular to remuneration and opportunities for using their skills. Starting a company is not a priority for the majority of respondents, although those who already work this way are satisfied with their situation and do not dream about a full-time job.

10

The professional status of respondents in different age groups (their remuneration, form and stability of employment, job satisfaction, opportunities for promotion to a managerial position) improves with their seniority, which may reflect the predictability of the labour market and opportunities for career development. Taking remuneration into account, working in the private sector is much more advantageous than employment in the public sector. In enterprises, salaries are higher already at early career stages, and their growth in subsequent years is much faster than in the public sector. The highest salaries and their fastest growth coupled with the greatest chances of being employed in managerial positions are enjoyed by graduates in Mathematical Studies, IT and Natural Sciences, as well in Technical and Economic Studies. Significantly lower earnings are offered to those who have completed studies in the field of Humanities, Modern Languages and Medical Sciences.

11

Working in the acquired profession does not guarantee high earnings. A large percentage of respondents who worked in sectors offering the highest wages did not perform work related to their area of education. Respondents who worked in industries offering the lowest remuneration (education, health care and social work) performed jobs compatible with their education.

12

A longer period of unemployment (six months or more) at an early stage of one's career can prove problematic. The respondents who experienced such periods and are currently employed less often occupy managerial positions and receive lower salaries than other HEI graduates. They are also more critical of their professional situation. This is true of almost all aspects, from salary to promotion prospects. However, the main reasons for problems with finding jobs by HEI graduates cannot be identified based on the survey results. Apart from factors related to the commencement of the first permanent job, the assessment of the selected field of study should be taken into consideration as the respondents who have experienced unemployment are much more

critical in the evaluation of their studies than the whole survey sample. Moreover, issues relating to acquired competences should be considered as this group less positively assesses their acquired skills than the whole survey sample. However, this may be the result and not the cause of the problem. Reasons for remaining outside the labour market after graduation need to be analysed as part of further studies.

13

A significant percentage of Erasmus grant holders work outside Poland. Although on the basis of this study, it is impossible to definitively identify the reasons for migration, attention should be paid to the fact that the assessment of work in this group does not significantly differ from the majority of views presented by HEI graduates working in Poland, both as far as benefits (e.g. relating to the need for fulfilment) and challenges (related, among other things, to limited promotion prospects) are concerned. Only salaries present a significant difference as they are much higher abroad.

14

When it comes to work, the respondents' main expectations (irrespective of their professional situation) concern three elements: satisfactory salary, career advancement prospects and work-life balance. Other factors, such as willingness to work in the acquired profession or fast-tracking one's career, are less important.

15

After graduation, many respondents decided to start another study programme. For the majority of them, this was a natural continuation of their planned education path (starting a Master's degree programme after completing undergraduate studies), yet some decided to take up a new field of study as part of a first cycle programme. The most important reasons for continuing education are related to their drive to develop personally and to give their career prospects a boost. Other reasons include interest in a new area of knowledge and commencing an academic career.

16

The majority of Erasmus grant holders who decided to take up a different study programme chose to start a first cycle (leading to a Bachelor's or engineering qualification) or a post-graduate programme. Changing the field of study was not popular among respondents who continued education after the completion of a first cycle programme. When starting a second cycle programme they were most likely to continue education in the same or similar field of study. Although very few respondents to

the survey decided to completely change their field of study, it would be worthwhile to carry out detailed analyses concerning such persons and verify in what way taking up new, completely different study programmes relates to their need to change the previously selected career path.

17

Respondents who continue academic careers more frequently than others decide to migrate. This applies to both respondents with doctoral degrees and doctoral students. The latter more often than other people decide to migrate and opt for the country in which they undertook the mobility as part of the Erasmus programme. This may suggest a certain impact of mobility on the development of academic careers of respondents.

18

Many people holding the degree of doctor do not work as academics. They are neither employed by research institutes, nor by universities. Mostly – more often than other respondents – they are employed in the private sector, and a large number of them run their own businesses. They do not work in the education sector. Although the number of respondents in the analysed sample is not large, the issue of abandoning careers in academia may be significant. It may be worthwhile to conduct further studies on the causes of resignation from work at university and problems encountered by young holders of doctoral degree, as well as to carry out an assessment of the possibility for preventing the brain drain from academia.

19

Respondents highly rate their language, soft and professional skills. A strong impact of the Erasmus programme on these aspects is particularly visible. All respondents declare that they have mastered at least one foreign language (mainly English at an advanced level), and many speak several foreign languages. Another important effect of the Erasmus programme is the development of the ability to cooperate with people of different nationalities, which is useful when working in a multicultural environment, and the ability to learn new things and carry out analyses. Respondents are less capable when it comes to skills such as data presentation, public speaking (addressing large audiences) and managing the work of other people.

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