

Research Report

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Students with a delayed transition into Higher Education

with a special focus on
Austria, Lithuania, and Romania

A comparative study and exploration
of Eurostudent VII data

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1 Summary: Students with a delayed transition into Higher Education

This report examines students with delayed transition into the higher education system, particularly in Austria, Lithuania and Romania. Delayed transition is defined as starting studies at the earliest two years after leaving school. **Throughout, only students who completed their schooling in the home country are considered.** According to this definition, **23 % of students in Austria, 11 % in Lithuania and 10 % in Romania** are delayed transition students.

In **Lithuania**, students with delayed transition (60 % women) are mainly part-time students studying Business/Law or Health & Welfare and are more than twice as likely to be in the non-university sector than students with direct transition. Accordingly, 64 % are older than 30 years and also 64 % are employed more than 20 h per week. Even 87 % describe themselves primarily as workers who study on the side. Therefore, their monthly budget depends very much on their income from employment. Nevertheless, almost one in three say they have (very) great financial difficulties, which is about 20 % more than in Austria and Romania or than direct transition students in Lithuania.

All these attributes also tend to apply to students with delayed transition in **Austria** (although officially there is no part-time study), but here the difference to students with direct transition is much smaller. However, most students with delayed transition are male (54 %; although more students are female overall). “Only” just under half are over 30 years, they study twice as often in the non-university sector, but the distribution according to fields of study differs only slightly from those with direct transition. “Only” 40 % work more than 20 hours per week, “only” 53 % see themselves primarily as gainfully employed who study on the side, and “only” half of them have a monthly budget that depends very much on their income from employment. A quarter have financial difficulties, which was less than in Lithuania and Romania in 2019, but still 40 % more than for direct transition students in Austria.

The characteristics of delayed transition students in **Romania** are sometimes more like their Lithuanian counterparts, sometimes to their Austrian counterparts. Romania thus lies between Lithuania and Austria on this issue. Also in Romania, students with delayed transition are mostly male (like in Austria), 67 % are older than 30 years (like in Lithuania), but “only” 21 % are officially not full-time students and (as there is no non-university sector) all study at universities. More than half are in Business/Law or Engineering. But even 70 % are employed more than 20 h/week and almost 80 % describe themselves as employed who study on the side. For two-thirds, the monthly budget depends very much on their earned income. As in Austria, 25 % report financial difficulties, only slightly more than among direct transition students.

In Austria, 38 % of students with a delayed transition came to university via a **non-traditional route**, i.e. they did not receive a Matura at the end of their school career (but either caught up on the

Matura later or acquired another form of university entrance qualification). In Romania this is 21 %, but in Lithuania only 9 %.

In all three countries, the proportion with **parents with a university degree** is significantly lower than among students with direct transition. Also in all three countries, students with delayed transition report less frequently that it was always clear for them to study in higher education one day. The difference to students with direct transition is particularly large in Austria, namely by a factor of 2.

Of ten possible (ISCED) fields of study, 56 % of students with delayed transition in Austria choose one of the top 3 (direct: 53 %), while in Lithuania and Romania the choice of **field of study** is much more concentrated, with around 70 % choosing one of the top 3 fields. However, in these two countries, students with direct transition are also more concentrated on only three fields (in LT 61 %, in RO 64 %). In Lithuania, this is due to the fact that students with delayed transition choose Business/Law significantly more often and Health & Welfare slightly more often than students with direct transition. In Romania, Business/Law is also chosen significantly more often, but Health & Welfare less often than by students with direct transition. In Engineering, on the other hand, the differences are not particularly great in both countries.

A **multivariate, logistic regression model** shows that the probability of studying with a delay depends above all on whether you were already employed before studying, the older you are and the more strongly you reject the statement "It was always clear I would study in higher education one day". The higher the parental education, the lower the probability of studying with a delay. The chosen field of study has different effects in the individual countries, gender has no effect and the number of hours in employment only has a slightly negative(!) effect in the model for all Eurostudent countries and in the model for Austria, but none in Lithuania and Romania.

Students with a delayed transition in Lithuania and Romania are less likely to **report difficulties in their studies** (apart from compatibility problems with their job) and higher motivation to study (no data are available for Austria on this). In all three countries, they rate their teachers' **competences** higher and their relationships with their teachers better than direct-transition students. This is especially true for the students in Romania. Romanians also report much less often that they are **isolated** from their peers, which is also the case in Lithuania (in Austria there is practically no difference to students with direct transition). It is therefore not surprising that (at least in Romania and Lithuania) students with delayed transition would **recommend their studies** more often than students with direct transition. The intention to **switch or drop out** is also significantly lower among Lithuanian students with delayed transition. However, the share with low study effort (max 20 h/week) is higher than among direct transition students, in Lithuania by 7 %, in Austria by 14 % and in Romania by 30 %.

A **temporary study abroad** is difficult for students with a delayed transition to realize, mainly because of their employment and family. Only in Austria, where students with direct and delayed transition differ less strongly, some have completed such a stay abroad.

Overall, students with delayed transition rate many **aspects of their study situation** as more satisfactorily than students with direct transition. While the differences between these two groups are usually greatest in RO, there are only very slight differences in most aspects in AT.

A closer look at the **organizational and political framework** of the three countries shows, that only Austria, which has the highest proportion of delayed transition students, presents alternative pathways to traditional higher education admission. Although prior learning, such as work experience, is generally not utilized for higher education admission across the three countries, there are occasional opportunities for recognition of professional experience for course credits. Given that many delayed transition students are employed, enhancing study flexibility can be advantageous for their circumstances. There are official part-time programs in Romania and Lithuania. Since there is not any (full) distance learning available, students in all three countries have profited from the expansion of online programmes during the COVID-19 epidemic, or at the very least, certain online courses inside degree programmes. While none of the countries have comprehensive measures directly addressing delayed transition students, Austria implements policies tailored to older students and those with prior work experience, and Lithuania is planning specific funding for this group. Romania focuses on reducing dropout rates, including among delayed transition students.

2 Introduction

European higher education policymakers generally agree that for the higher education system to be socially equitable, the demographic composition of students should reflect the social structure of the population (EHA 2020). To address this issue, several nations have developed alternate pathways into higher education, enabling students to enrol without having finished the required upper secondary education or to finish secondary school and begin higher education later in life.

In this report the study situation and background of students with delayed transition into higher education are examined, taking a closer look at Austria, Lithuania, and Romania. The following questions will be at the centre of this research:

- What are the characteristics of students with delayed transition?
- How do students with delayed transition perceive their study situation?
- What organisational and political measures are in place/planned in Austria, Lithuania and Romania that affect delayed transition students?

In the following sections, an overview of the underlying methodology is given before the results are presented. In the annex of this report, you can find detailed tables on the characteristics of direct/delayed transition students in different countries.

3 Methodology

This study uses the micro dataset from the EUROSTUDENT VII project (2018-2021) (Cuppen et al. 2023) which covers all facets of contemporary student life: students' backgrounds (social and demographic background), their experiences and conditions for studying (quality, time, budget, and mobility), and their living circumstances (work, resources, costs, and housing situation). 26 countries took part in the project, 16 of which provided their micro data (AT, HR, DK, EE, GE, IE, LT, LUX, NL, FI, PO, SL, NO, SE, RO)¹. The data used by EUROSTUDENT is self-reported by the students. The EUROSTUDENT dataset includes a significant amount of information not found in other sources, such as official statistics, because of the nature of these data.

In this study only domestic students, i.e., those who attended the regular school system (excluding evening classes or schools for adults) in the country regardless of their citizenship are considered. Delayed transition is defined as starting studies at the earliest two years after leaving school. In our analytical sample, 23 % of students in Austria, 11 % in Lithuania and 10 % in Romania are classified as delayed transition students. The data was descriptively analysed and is presented in graphs and tables within this report. These variables were also used to calculate a multivariate logistic regression model.

Additionally, guided interviews with policy makers from Austria, Lithuania and Romania were conducted to discuss the findings and obtain further information on the policies in the countries. The interviews (~1 h/interview, 2 virtually, 1 in person) have been recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed (Froschauer/Lueger 2003).

4 Core characteristics of students with direct or delayed transition

The main characteristics of students with direct or delayed transition to higher education are summarised here. The focus is on Austria, Lithuania, and Romania (Table 1) compared to 13 other EUROSTUDENT VII countries for which microdata are available (Table 5 in the annex).

Two comparisons are addressed: firstly, students with direct and delayed transition into the higher education system within a country are compared, secondly, these two groups are also compared across all countries. This "double comparison" is sometimes difficult to present linguistically because the starting point (the general composition of the student population) is different in each country. For example, if 18 % of delayed transition students have characteristic X, that may be little compared to those with direct transition in the same country, but a lot compared to other

¹ EUROSTUDENT VII micro data can be requested here: <https://metadata.fdz.dzhw.eu/en/data-packages/stu-es7?page=1&size=10&type=surveys&version=2.0.0&access-way=download-suf>

countries. Therefore, the differences in one country are mostly presented as a ratio, which is then easier to compare between countries, regardless of the different starting points.

Gender:

- In all 16 countries, most students are female (AT 55 %, LT 56 %, RO 56 %).
- However, among students with a delayed transition, in 7 countries including AT and RO males predominate.
- Conversely, in 7 countries the proportion of female students among those with a delay is higher than among those with a direct transition (including LT).

Age

- In all countries, students with a delayed transition are (by definition) older than students with direct transition.
- However, the higher share of students older than 30 years shows that they are far older in some countries.
- In SI, 10 times more are over 30 years old, in FR 9 times more, in LT 8.4 times more (64 % of all delayed), in RO 5.5 times more (67 %) and in AT 3.5 times more (46 %). In FI and LU “only” about twice as many are >30Y.

Educational background of parents

- Only in DK is the share of students whose parents have a higher education degree (ISCED 6-8) about the same among those with direct as of those with delayed transition. In all other countries, their share among students with delayed transition is lower.
- In SE, among those with delayed transition, a quarter less have parents with a higher education degree.
- In nine countries, the proportion with tertiary educated parents among those with delayed transition is at most half as large as among those with direct transition.
- These nine countries include our comparison countries: In AT, the proportion of children of university graduates among students with delayed transfer is only 48 % of the share among those with direct transfer, in LT it is 45 % and in RO only 35 %.
- Looked at this another way, 18 % of delayed transition students in AT have graduate parents, 26 % in LT, but only 14 % in RO.

Impairment limiting their studies

- In some countries, the share of students with a study limiting impairment is higher among those with a delayed transition, in FR and SI it is even twice as high.
- In AT (13 %) and LT (12 %) it is only slightly higher, however, in RO (4 %) it is significantly lower (largest difference to the share among students with direct transition of all 16 states).

Type of higher education institution

- In RO and SE there is no non-university sector, in LU it is only being established.
- In all other countries, students with delayed transition are significantly more likely to be found in the non-university sector – with the major exception of FR, where the proportion in the non-university sector is almost 2/3 lower than among those with direct transition.
- In SI, the proportion is almost reversed: 77 % of students with direct transition study at universities, while 75 % of those with delayed transition study at non-universities.
- In NL, even 88 % of those with delayed transition study in the non-university sector.
- In AT, the share of students with a delayed transition is almost twice as high in the non-university sector (34 %) as among students with direct transition, in LT their share is even more than twice as high (63 %)

Fields of study

- When it comes to the choice of fields of study, “Education”² is particularly striking: In seven countries, this field is chosen significantly more often by students with delayed transition than by students with direct transition, in FR even 3.2 times as often.
In four countries, on the other hand, this group chooses “Education” much less frequently, and in the other five countries about the same number of times.
In AT the proportion of both groups is approximately identical, in LT 2.3 times more frequent among students with delayed transition, and in RO 1.8 times more frequent.
- In almost all countries, “Business/Law” is chosen roughly equally often by both groups or significantly more frequently by students with a delayed transition (ratios: AT 1.1, LT 1.3, RO 1.3).
- “Information and communications technology (ICT)” is more popular among students with delayed transition in six countries, while ICT is hardly studied by delayed students in other countries, including LT and RO (ratios: AT 1.2, LT 0.2, RO 0.2)
- On the other hand, “Engineering” is usually chosen to a similar extent by both groups (ratios: AT 1.1, LT 0.9 RO 1.1).
- “Health/Welfare” is chosen 1.3 times more frequently in LT by students with a delayed transition (share 21 %), in AT to an almost identical extent (ratio 0.9; share 9 %), but less frequently in RO (ratio: 0.7; share 13 %).³

Top 3 fields of study (out of 10) studied by students with delayed transition

- AT: Business/Law 25 %, Education 16 %, Engineering 15 %. SUM of Top 3: 56 %
- LT: Business/Law 36 %, Health/Welfare 21 %, Engineering 16 %. SUM of Top 3: 72 %
- RO: Business/Law 29 %, Engineering 26 %, Health/Welfare 13 %. SUM of Top 3: 68 %

² The field of Education includes teacher training and scientific studies in the area of pedagogy.

³ Unfortunately, no distinction can be made between Medicine and other Health studies.

- The top 3 fields of study and the concentration on these three fields of study does not differ in AT between students with direct or delayed transition. In RO, the concentration is comparable, but “Business/Law” is clearly chosen less often by students with direct transition. In LT, students with direct transition also choose “Business/Law” less often, but also “Health/Welfare”, which is why the concentration on three fields of study is also somewhat lower.⁴

Access route to higher education

- In almost all countries, nearly all direct transition students enter higher education via the traditional route (Matura, A-levels obtained in the regular school system, not as adults), only in LU it is 85 %.
- In 10 countries 20 % or more of those with a delayed transition entered HE via a non-traditional route.
- In SI these are 41 %, in AT 38 %, in PL, NL, LU they are more than 30 % (RO 21 %, LT 9 %).
- However, in the EUROSTUDENT data, someone who did not complete the upper-secondary certificate at the end of school but later in life is also counted as non-traditional.

Paid employment

- In 11 countries, about 90 % or more of the students with delayed transition were employed before their studies, including our three comparison countries AT, LT and RO.
- In most countries, less than half of the students who transitioned directly worked before studying. However, DK is noticeable here, with 80 % employment experience also in this group.
- The share of students working more than 20 h/week is around twice as high or more among those with delayed transition in 11 countries including AT (40 %), LT (64 %), RO (70 %).
- Only in FR where relatively few students work more than 20 h, the share of students with delayed transition is slightly lower.
- In IE and NL, employed students with delayed transition are more than three times more likely to consider themselves as employed students who study alongside (as opposed to students who work alongside) than employed students with direct transition.
- In AT it is 1.8 times more (53 %), in LT twice as many (87 %) and in RO 1.5 times more (78 %).

Financial situation (as of 2019)

- In 9 (out of 16) countries, more than 50 % of students with a delayed transition depend strongly (>75 % of their budget) on self-earned income.
- This also includes AT (51 %), LT (64 %), and RO (67 %).

⁴ For comparison, the top 3 fields of study of students with direct transition are:
 AT: Business/law 23 %, Education 17 %, Engineering 14 %. SUM of Top 3: 53 %
 LT: Business/law 26 %, Engineering 19 %, Health/Welfare 16 %. SUM of Top 3: 61 %
 RO: Engineering 23 %, Business/Law 22 %, Health/Welfare 18 %. SUM of Top 3: 64 %

- In all countries (but LU), the share of students with financial difficulties is higher among those with delayed transition, most of all in FR and HR.
- In AT it is 44 % higher (25 %), in LT it is 19 % higher (29 %) and in RO it is 10 % higher (25 %).

Study intensity

- In nine countries the share of students with a delayed transition who study with low intensity (up to 20 h/week for courses and self-study time) is higher, in three it is lower and in the other countries there is no difference.
- A higher share of low intensity students is particularly visible in LU and SL (more than twice). In AT the share is slightly higher (+14 %), in LT a bit higher (+7 %) but in RO it is +30 % higher.
- Thus, in AT, 32 % of students with delayed transition study “de facto” part-time (regardless of their official status at the university), in LT it is 21 % and in RO 29 %.

Table 1: Characteristics of students with a delayed transition into higher education in Austria, Lithuania, and Romania

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Sex						
Female	57%	46%	56%	60%	57%	46%
Male	43%	54%	44%	40%	43%	54%
Age						
Up to 21 years	29%	3%	51%	3%	51%	2%
22 to <25 years	34%	17%	29%	9%	29%	11%
25 to <30 years	24%	35%	12%	24%	8%	20%
30 years or over	13%	46%	8%	64%	12%	67%
Educational background: highest educational attainment of parents						
Low (ISCED 0-2)	3%	7%	1%	4%	4%	18%
Medium (ISCED 3-4)	44%	58%	42%	70%	52%	64%
Short-cycle tertiary (ISCED 5)	15%	16%	0%	0%	4%	4%
Tertiary (ISCED 6-8)	38%	18%	57%	26%	41%	14%
Type of higher education institution						
University	82%	66%	71%	37%	100%	100%
Other HEI	18%	34%	29%	63%	0%	0%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Current formal status as a student						
Full-time student	100%	100%	87%	30%	95%	79%
Part-time student	n.a.	n.a.	14%	70%	2%	9%
Other (e.g. correspondence)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3%	12%
Field of study¹						
Education	17%	16%	4%	8%	3%	5%
Arts and humanities	10%	11%	10%	4%	8%	7%
Social sciences	8%	9%	9%	5%	9%	7%
Business, admin. & law	23%	25%	26%	35%	22%	29%
Natural sciences	11%	7%	4%	0%	4%	3%
ICTs	6%	7%	7%	1%	8%	2%
Engineering	14%	15%	19%	16%	23%	26%
Agriculture & veterinary	1%	1%	3%	6%	5%	7%
Health & welfare	10%	9%	16%	21%	18%	13%
Services	1%	0%	2%	3%	0%	0%
Working experience before entering HE						
Yes, for at least one year and at least 20h/week	7%	79%	11%	77%	14%	81%
Yes for at least one year less than 20h/week	36%	12%	3%	5%	2%	4%
Yes, but less than one year			39%	10%	14%	6%
No	57%	9%	47%	8%	71%	9%
Number of working hours (incl. students without paid job with 0h)						
0h	37%	29%	48%	24%	61%	17%
1-20h	42%	31%	18%	13%	10%	13%
>20h	21%	40%	34%	63%	28%	70%
Relation employment and content of study programme (only working students)						
1 Very closely	33%	35%	31%	45%	31%	40%
2 -	16%	19%	16%	15%	15%	13%
3 -	11%	13%	14%	13%	19%	18%
4 -	11%	9%	11%	6%	10%	8%
5 Not at all	30%	25%	29%	22%	25%	21%
Self-categorisation as student/worker						
Student	72%	46%	62%	18%	50%	22%
Worker	28%	54%	38%	82%	50%	78%
Entry qualification						
Non-traditional route	0%	38%	1%	9%	3%	21%
Traditional route	100%	62%	99%	91%	97%	79%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Main source of income (>75% of total income)						
Family	24%	6%	38%	11%	46%	15%
Self-earned income	22%	41%	22%	43%	17%	48%
Public student support	1%	8%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Other/mixed	53%	46%	40%	43%	34%	36%
Recipients of public student support						
Yes	24%	39%	30%	38%	17%	12%
No	77%	61%	71%	63%	83%	88%
Students with/without financial difficulties						
With financial difficulties	18%	25%	24%	29%	23%	25%
Neither nor	22%	24%	34%	30%	30%	35%
Without financial difficulties	60%	51%	41%	41%	47%	40%
Study intensity (weekly workload spending on taught courses and personal study time)						
Low (0-20h)	28%	32%	20%	21%	15%	19%
Medium (20-40h)	46%	47%	51%	40%	45%	52%
High (>40h)	26%	21%	29%	39%	40%	28%
Housing situation: students living with/without parents						
Living with parents	28%	12%	30%	13%	58%	22%
Not living with parents	72%	88%	70%	87%	42%	78%
Students with/without impairment limiting them in their studies						
With impairment	12%	13%	11%	11%	5%	4%
Without impairment	88%	87%	89%	89%	95%	96%

¹ Field of study: Social science including Journalism & Information; Natural science incl. Mathematics & Statistics; Engineering incl. Manufacturing & Construction; Agriculture incl. Forestry & Fisheries.
Source: Eurostudent VII micro data (Cuppen et al., 2023).

5 Assessment of the study situation in Austria, Lithuania, and Romania

Students with delayed transition are affected by fewer of the surveyed **difficulties** in their studies than students with direct transition (see Table 2). On the one hand, students with delayed transition are more likely to report difficulties due to obligations in a paid job. On the other hand, they are also more likely to report being satisfied with the support they receive from their higher education institution when it comes to balancing study and their paid job. However, they are far less likely to indicate a lack of **motivation** for their studies as a difficulty (direct 34 % vs. delayed 9 % in LT; 32 % vs. 7 % in RO; data on difficulties are not available for AT).

Students with delayed transition rate the competences of their **teachers** and the teacher-student-relationship much more positively than students with direct transition. Especially in RO, students with delayed transition find far more often that teachers can explain well (“strongly agree”: direct 28 % vs. delayed 59 %). Likewise, delayed students more often report that teachers show interest in what they say or motivate them to do their best – this is especially the case for LT and RO.

In LT and especially in RO, delayed students feel less isolated from their peers than students with direct transition, in AT there is nearly no difference between those two groups. This is a somewhat surprising result, as students with a delayed transition are more likely to have other commitments in addition to their studies, such as working more hours and – due to their older age – are also more likely to have a family of their own.

In general, students who start their studies with a delay would **recommend their study programme** more often, whereby the difference in AT is only slight. While students with a delayed transition in LT are less likely to state that they want to change or abandon their studies compared to direct students (“don’t want to change”: direct 57 % vs. delayed 71 %), there are hardly any differences in AT and RO between students with a direct and delayed transition in this respect.

Another aspect that can be observed across all three countries is that students with delayed transition more often rate their own **study performance** as equal to that of their fellow students, while students with direct transition more often think that they are better or worse than their fellow students.

In AT, only half as many students with delayed transitions have temporarily **studied abroad** compared to those with direct transitions. In RO and especially in LT, very few students with delayed transition have completed such a stay abroad at all. In all three countries, delayed transition students report separation from partner(s) or child(ren), loss of a paid job and financial burden as big obstacles to study abroad much more often than students with direct transition.

A rather apparent but confirming result is that students with delayed transition report less often that it was always clear for them to **study in higher education** one day. It is notable that on this question the difference between students with delayed and direct transition is one of the largest differences in AT (“strongly agree”: direct 52 % vs. delayed 25 %), while otherwise they differ only slightly in most aspects compared to RO and LT.

Overall, students with delayed transition rate many aspects of their study situation as more satisfactory than students with direct transition. While the differences between these two groups are usually greatest in RO, there are only very slight differences in most aspects in AT.

Table 2: Assessment of the study situation in Austria, Lithuania, and Romania

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of difficulties in the study programme out of 10 surveyed						
No difficulty	n.a.	n.a.	18%	19%	38%	41%
One	n.a.	n.a.	24%	30%	28%	35%
Two	n.a.	n.a.	22%	25%	18%	15%
Three	n.a.	n.a.	17%	13%	11%	5%
Four	n.a.	n.a.	10%	7%	4%	3%
Five or more	n.a.	n.a.	9%	6%	2%	1%
Experienced difficulties during studies due to...						
Standard of work in study programme (e.g., demanding exams/papers, etc.)						
No	n.a.	n.a.	63%	59%	84%	91%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	37%	41%	16%	9%
Organisational issues at HEI (e.g., organisation of schedule, space restrictions in classes, mandatory attendance, etc.)						
No	n.a.	n.a.	71%	79%	86%	96%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	29%	21%	14%	4%
Administrative issues at HEI (e.g., delayed grades/credit transfers, registration procedures for course/exams, etc.)						
No	n.a.	n.a.	79%	88%	100%	100%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	21%	12%	0%	0%
Other study-related aspects						
No	n.a.	n.a.	86%	92%	82%	92%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	14%	8%	18%	8%
Financial difficulties						
No	n.a.	n.a.	70%	77%	90%	89%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	30%	23%	10%	11%
Obligations of paid job						
No	n.a.	n.a.	80%	65%	84%	62%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	20%	35%	16%	38%
Childcare obligations/pregnancy						
No	n.a.	n.a.	97%	87%	98%	92%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	3%	13%	2%	8%
Health issues/impairments, accidental injuries						
No	n.a.	n.a.	90%	93%	98%	99%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	10%	7%	2%	1%
Lack of motivation						
No	n.a.	n.a.	66%	91%	68%	93%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	34%	9%	32%	7%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Other personal reasons (e.g., family matters)						
No	n.a.	n.a.	85%	86%	88%	91%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	15%	14%	12%	9%
No difficulties						
No	n.a.	n.a.	82%	81%	62%	59%
Yes	n.a.	n.a.	18%	19%	38%	41%
Assesment of lecturers						
Sum index: Teachers seen very positive						
1 Strongly agree	10%	13%	20%	38%	23%	52%
2 -	39%	41%	42%	38%	30%	25%
3 -	38%	34%	27%	18%	29%	17%
4 -	12%	10%	9%	4%	15%	5%
5 Do not agree at all	2%	2%	1%	2%	4%	1%
Lecturers give helpful feedback						
1 Strongly agree	14%	17%	24%	37%	25%	51%
2 -	31%	32%	36%	35%	22%	20%
3 -	28%	27%	24%	18%	25%	16%
4 -	19%	17%	10%	6%	14%	7%
5 Do not agree at all	9%	8%	5%	5%	14%	6%
Lecturers motivate to do best work						
1 Strongly agree	13%	15%	21%	38%	21%	50%
2 -	28%	29%	29%	33%	18%	19%
3 -	32%	31%	27%	16%	25%	16%
4 -	19%	17%	14%	8%	18%	8%
5 Do not agree at all	8%	8%	8%	5%	18%	7%
Lecturers extremely good at explaining things						
1 Strongly agree	10%	12%	22%	33%	28%	59%
2 -	32%	35%	43%	37%	30%	22%
3 -	40%	37%	24%	21%	27%	12%
4 -	14%	12%	8%	5%	10%	4%
5 Do not agree at all	4%	4%	3%	5%	5%	2%
Get along well with lecturers						
1 Strongly agree	27%	32%	51%	65%	40%	63%
2 -	46%	45%	34%	23%	30%	21%
3 -	22%	19%	11%	9%	21%	11%
4 -	4%	3%	3%	2%	6%	3%
5 Do not agree at all	1%	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Lecturers interested in what students has to say						
1 Strongly agree	20%	23%	24%	41%	32%	58%
2 -	34%	35%	30%	33%	26%	20%
3 -	28%	26%	27%	13%	23%	14%
4 -	12%	10%	13%	7%	12%	4%
5 Do not agree at all	5%	5%	6%	6%	8%	3%
Social integration						
Sum index: Isolation from fellow students						
1 Strongly agree	8%	8%	7%	4%	9%	6%
2 -	15%	14%	13%	10%	14%	11%
3 -	24%	25%	21%	24%	23%	18%
4 -	31%	30%	30%	30%	25%	24%
5 Do not agree at all	23%	22%	28%	32%	28%	42%
Knows a lot of fellow students to discuss subject-related questions						
1 Strongly agree	37%	37%	37%	36%	38%	51%
2 -	33%	32%	30%	29%	23%	19%
3 -	17%	17%	19%	19%	20%	16%
4 -	10%	8%	9%	11%	12%	8%
5 Do not agree at all	5%	6%	5%	5%	7%	5%
Contact with many students in study programme						
1 Strongly agree	30%	28%	34%	42%	36%	47%
2 -	23%	23%	28%	32%	20%	18%
3 -	19%	21%	17%	15%	20%	18%
4 -	17%	17%	13%	8%	13%	11%
5 Do not agree at all	10%	11%	7%	3%	11%	6%
Academic integration						
I often have the feeling that I don't really belong in higher education						
1 Strongly agree	n.a.	n.a.	7%	4%	8%	8%
2 -	n.a.	n.a.	9%	7%	6%	7%
3 -	n.a.	n.a.	13%	14%	11%	9%
4 -	n.a.	n.a.	21%	17%	13%	12%
5 Do not agree at all	n.a.	n.a.	50%	58%	62%	64%
It was always clear I would study in higher education one day						
1 Strongly agree	52%	25%	68%	57%	72%	53%
2 -	20%	14%	16%	19%	13%	15%
3 -	11%	15%	9%	13%	9%	15%
4 -	8%	15%	3%	5%	3%	7%
5 Do not agree at all	9%	31%	4%	7%	4%	9%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Satisfaction with study programme						
I would recommend my current main study programme						
1 Strongly agree	35%	38%	28%	41%	33%	51%
2 -	35%	33%	28%	31%	22%	20%
3 -	18%	18%	21%	14%	23%	16%
4 -	8%	7%	13%	7%	11%	7%
5 Do not agree at all	4%	4%	10%	6%	11%	5%
I am seriously thinking about changing my current main study programme						
1 Strongly agree	3%	2%	6%	4%	6%	5%
2 -	3%	3%	7%	3%	4%	7%
3 -	5%	4%	12%	7%	10%	10%
4 -	10%	9%	19%	16%	12%	10%
5 Do not agree at all	79%	82%	57%	71%	68%	68%
I am seriously thinking of completely abandoning my higher education studies						
1 Strongly agree	2%	3%	5%	3%	5%	5%
2 -	3%	4%	5%	3%	3%	4%
3 -	5%	7%	9%	7%	6%	6%
4 -	10%	12%	12%	11%	8%	8%
5 Do not agree at all	79%	74%	69%	76%	79%	77%
Satisfaction with support by HEI with...						
Study support services (e.g., organised tutoring, (academic) writing, bridging courses, mentoring)						
1 Entirely sufficient	12%	14%	16%	21%	15%	24%
2 -	28%	25%	15%	18%	15%	16%
3 -	33%	33%	22%	18%	19%	17%
4 -	19%	18%	10%	7%	12%	6%
5 Not sufficient at all	8%	9%	9%	12%	18%	13%
Don't need/want support	n.a.	n.a.	28%	24%	22%	25%
Provision of learning facilities (e.g., library, computer centre, work places)						
1 Entirely sufficient	22%	25%	36%	45%	21%	26%
2 -	28%	27%	28%	22%	19%	17%
3 -	21%	21%	17%	12%	21%	17%
4 -	19%	17%	9%	9%	11%	6%
5 Not sufficient at all	9%	10%	6%	5%	10%	9%
Don't need/want support	n.a.	n.a.	5%	7%	17%	25%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Support to balance my studies and paid job¹						
1 Entirely sufficient	10%	13%	12%	21%	11%	21%
2 -	19%	19%	14%	17%	13%	16%
3 -	28%	25%	19%	16%	18%	16%
4 -	25%	23%	17%	14%	13%	9%
5 Not sufficient at all	17%	19%	22%	19%	22%	13%
Don't need/want support	n.a.	n.a.	15%	14%	24%	24%
Support to balance my studies and family¹						
1 Entirely sufficient	10%	13%	12%	19%	11%	19%
2 -	19%	19%	13%	17%	13%	16%
3 -	28%	25%	19%	20%	18%	18%
4 -	25%	23%	11%	11%	13%	9%
5 Not sufficient at all	17%	19%	11%	16%	21%	13%
Don't need/want support	n.a.	n.a.	34%	18%	24%	25%
Support in the preparation for my (future) work life						
1 Entirely sufficient	9%	11%	14%	19%	16%	23%
2 -	21%	21%	19%	20%	16%	15%
3 -	39%	38%	25%	21%	19%	15%
4 -	20%	19%	17%	11%	14%	9%
5 Not sufficient at all	11%	11%	14%	14%	21%	14%
Don't need/want support	n.a.	n.a.	10%	14%	15%	24%
Own performance						
Performance in study programme in comparison to fellow students						
Much better	8%	7%	18%	17%	14%	13%
Somewhat better	32%	29%	38%	32%	33%	28%
Just as good	41%	44%	35%	47%	38%	44%
Somewhat worse	16%	16%	8%	4%	13%	13%
Much worse	4%	5%	1%	0%	3%	3%
It is often hard to discover what is expected of me in my current study programme						
1 Strongly agree	5%	5%	13%	12%	19%	11%
2 -	16%	16%	25%	20%	20%	15%
3 -	25%	25%	25%	23%	26%	24%
4 -	33%	32%	22%	22%	16%	18%
5 Do not agree at all	20%	22%	15%	23%	19%	32%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Labour market preparation by study programme						
For the national labour market						
1 Very well	15%	20%	17%	21%	20%	33%
2 -	30%	28%	35%	31%	22%	21%
3 -	24%	22%	24%	25%	22%	16%
4 -	13%	12%	10%	7%	12%	7%
5 Very poorly	6%	5%	7%	7%	10%	6%
Unable to rate	12%	14%	8%	8%	12%	18%
For the international labour market						
1 Very well	6%	8%	10%	15%	12%	22%
2 -	16%	15%	22%	24%	13%	14%
3 -	20%	18%	27%	27%	18%	15%
4 -	16%	13%	16%	11%	16%	11%
5 Very poorly	11%	9%	12%	8%	22%	13%
Unable to rate	31%	37%	13%	15%	18%	25%
Mobility						
Temporary enrolment abroad						
No	90%	94%	91%	100%	97%	99%
Yes	10%	6%	9%	0%	3%	1%
Obstacles to study mobility						
Seperation from partner, child(ren)						
1 Big obstacle	17%	27%	19%	40%	18%	46%
2 -	15%	16%	11%	9%	8%	8%
3 -	12%	12%	11%	13%	11%	9%
4 -	9%	8%	7%	6%	7%	4%
5 No obstacle	48%	37%	53%	31%	56%	33%
Seperation from social circle						
1 Big obstacle	13%	13%	13%	16%	17%	21%
2 -	20%	17%	17%	8%	14%	9%
3 -	20%	20%	21%	22%	20%	17%
4 -	19%	17%	16%	12%	15%	11%
5 No obstacle	28%	33%	33%	43%	35%	42%
Financial burden						
1 Big obstacle	29%	39%	37%	47%	35%	46%
2 -	23%	21%	29%	19%	21%	14%
3 -	18%	15%	18%	19%	19%	16%
4 -	13%	9%	6%	5%	9%	8%
5 No obstacle	16%	16%	10%	10%	16%	17%

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed	Direct	Delayed
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	90%	10%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Loss of paid job						
1 Big obstacle	24%	43%	26%	63%	17%	52%
2 -	11%	11%	12%	9%	6%	8%
3 -	10%	10%	12%	11%	7%	8%
4 -	10%	7%	7%	4%	5%	4%
5 No obstacle	45%	29%	44%	14%	66%	27%
Lack of motivation						
1 Big obstacle	8%	10%	13%	10%	11%	14%
2 -	13%	13%	18%	12%	9%	8%
3 -	18%	20%	26%	26%	21%	19%
4 -	18%	16%	16%	16%	16%	11%
5 No obstacle	42%	41%	27%	35%	42%	49%

^{1°} In Austria, "to balance my studies and paid job" and "to balance my studies and family" were asked together as "support to balance study and other areas of life". Therefore, identical values are shown here for both items (work and family) for Austria.

n.a.: Not available, not included in the national survey or not comparable

Source: Eurostudent VII micro data (Cuppen et al., 2023).

6 Excursus: Working & studying

As described above, a large share of students, especially of those with a delayed transition, is working while studying. Among working students, a difference can be made between the group that considers themselves foremost as students (with a job on the side) and those who see themselves as workers (studying as add-on) (see Table 3).

Taking a closer look at the subgroups of (self-perceived) “workers” and “students” (including non-working students) of Austria, Lithuania and Romania shows, that in all three countries about two thirds or more of “workers” with delayed transition are 30 years or older. Compared to “students” with a delayed transition, an even smaller share of the “workers” has parents with tertiary education background.

In Austria, it is more common for delayed transition “workers” than for “students” to study at a non-university. In Lithuania and Romania (where such programmes officially exist), higher shares of part-time students can be found among “workers” with delayed transition. The shares of students in the field of “Business, administration & law” are even higher among delayed transition “workers”. On the other hand, less students studying “Health & welfare” are among this group. In Romania “workers” are also particularly more often found in the field of “Engineering”.

Not unexpectedly, also the dependency on income sources varies a lot between “workers” and “students” with delayed transition. The share of students depending on self-earned money is more

than twice as high among “workers” than among “students”, and accordingly, “students” are a lot more likely to depend on family than “workers”. While there are no big differences in Romania, in Austria and Lithuania “workers” with delayed transition less often receive public support.

Regarding study intensity, the differences are most striking for Austria: While about every fifth “student” with delayed transition studies with low intensity, it is about half of the “workers” (LT 19 % vs. 22 %, RO 16 % vs. 22 %).

Table 3: Students with delayed transition who see themselves as “students” or “workers”

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Delayed transition		Delayed transition		Delayed transition	
	“Students”	“Workers”	“Students”	“Workers”	“Students”	“Workers”
Share (Row%)	14%	9%	4%	7%	11%	8%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Age						
Up to 21 years	4%	0%	3%	3%	4%	1%
22 to <25 years	23%	7%	16%	5%	17%	6%
25 to <30 years	40%	28%	28%	21%	26%	14%
30 years or over	34%	64%	52%	70%	52%	79%
Educational background: highest educational attainment of parents						
Low (ISCED 0-2)	7%	9%	1%	6%	15%	19%
Medium (ISCED 3-4)	56%	61%	69%	71%	62%	65%
Short-cycle tertiary (ISCED 5)	16%	18%	0%	0%	4%	5%
Tertiary (ISCED 6-8)	22%	12%	30%	23%	19%	11%
Type of higher education institution						
University	72%	58%	37%	36%	100%	100%
Other HEI	28%	42%	63%	64%	n.a.	n.a.

	Austria		Lithuania		Romania	
	Delayed transition		Delayed transition		Delayed transition	
	“Students”	“Workers”	“Students”	“Workers”	“Students”	“Workers”
Share (Row%)	14%	9%	4%	7%	11%	8%
Total (Col%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Current formal status as a student						
Full-time student	100%	100%	52%	19%	84%	76%
Part-time student	n.a.	n.a.	48%	81%	6%	11%
Other (e.g. correspondence)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	10%	13%
Field of study¹						
Education	17%	15%	5%	10%	5%	5%
Arts and humanities	12%	8%	8%	2%	8%	6%
Social sciences	10%	8%	3%	5%	7%	7%
Business, admin. & law	17%	37%	29%	39%	27%	31%
Natural sciences	10%	4%	1%	0%	3%	3%
ICTs	6%	8%	3%	0%	2%	2%
Engineering	16%	13%	15%	17%	24%	28%
Agriculture & veterinary	1%	0%	8%	5%	7%	8%
Health & welfare	11%	5%	25%	19%	17%	10%
Services	1%	0%	4%	3%	0%	0%
Main source of income (>75% of total income)						
Family	9%	0%	25%	5%	34%	4%
Self-earned income	13%	81%	21%	54%	27%	59%
Public student support	13%	0%	4%	1%	5%	1%
Other/mixed	65%	19%	50%	40%	34%	36%
Recipients of public student support						
Yes	51%	18%	50%	31%	13%	11%
No	49%	82%	50%	69%	87%	89%
Study intensity (weekly workload spending on taught courses and personal study time)						
Low (0-20h)	21%	51%	19%	22%	16%	22%
Medium (20-40h)	50%	43%	43%	39%	49%	55%
High (>40h)	30%	6%	38%	40%	35%	23%

¹ Field of study: Social science including Journalism & Information; Natural science incl. Mathematics & Statistics; Engineering incl. Manufacturing & Construction; Agriculture incl. Forestry & Fisheries.
Source: Eurostudent VII micro data (Cuppen et al., 2023).

7 Probability being a student with delayed transition: a logistic regression model

A logistic regression (direct vs delayed transition) shows across all EUROSTUDENT countries⁵ ($R^2=0.480$) that regular employment before starting university (min 20 h/week for at least 1 year), older age (especially over 25y) and the rejection of the statement that "it was always clear I would study in higher education one day" provide the highest explanatory contributions for those who study with delayed transfer (see Table 4). A higher educational background of the parents, on the other hand, has a significantly negative effect (i.e. the higher the parents are educated, the lower the probability of studying with a delayed transition). The fields of study (reference = Humanities) Education, Business/Law, Health and Services have a weakly positive effect, while science has a negative effect. Gender and the other fields of study have no significant effect. The extent of employment only has a bivariate positive effect, in the multivariate model this becomes negative.⁶

This "European model" can also be seen across the board in our three countries of comparison, particularly age and work experience before studying. In addition, in Austria ($R^2=0.631$), women have a significantly lower effect to study with delayed transition, as well as (compared to Humanities) the fields of Education, Business/Law, Sciences, ICT and Engineering, while all other fields of study have no significant effect. The parents' educational background also has no significant effect. In Lithuania ($R^2=0.573$) Agriculture/Fishery/Veterinary has a strong positive effect, and tertiary background of parents has a strong negative effect, as well as Social Sciences and Engineering. Gender has no significant effect. In Romania ($R^2=0.482$), the educational background of the parents also plays a strongly negative role. The smaller the extent of studying, the more likely someone is to study with a delayed transition, and male also has a very small positive effect. However, no field of study has a significant effect.

⁵ Number of cases per country standardised in order to compensate for the different population and sample sizes.

⁶ In a multivariate model, the effects are calculated when all other characteristics in the model are constant. In this case, if employment prior to studying, age, fields of study, etc. are identical for individuals, then and only then does a higher number of working hours have a small negative effect on the probability of being a student with delayed transition. If only (bivariate) students with and without delayed transition are compared, then delayed students are employed to a greater extent.

Table 4: Logistic regression: Probability of being a student with delayed transition

	EURO-STUDENT	Austria	Lithuania	Romania
Work experience before studying	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑
Older age	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	↑↑
"It was always clear I would study in higher education one day"	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓
Female		↓		↘
Higher educational background of the parents	↓↓		↓↓	↓↓
Extent of employment	↘	↘		
Extent of studying	↘	↘		↘
Fields of Study (Ref: Humanities)				
Education	↗	↓		
Social Sciences			↓↓	
Business & Law	↗	↓		
Sciences	↓	↓		
ICT		↓		
Engineering		↓	↓↓	
Agriculture/Fishery/Veterinary medicine			↑↑	
Health & Welfare	↗			
Services	↗			
Financial difficulties		↗		
Impairment	↗			
Not living with parents	↗			
R^2	0.480	0.631	0.573	0.482

Even though in EUROSTUDENT delayed is defined as "only" at least two years after the regular upper secondary school leaving certificate, most students with delayed transfer are significantly older. In Austria, 80 % are over 25 years old (46 % over 30 years old), in Lithuania 88 % (over 30y: 64 %) and in Romania 86 % (over 30y: 67 %). It is therefore not surprising that in the multivariate analysis, biographical characteristics (age, employment before starting university, self-assessment that it was *not* always clear to study one day and (except in Austria) the educational background of the parents) show the greatest effects. Gender and the positive or negative demand for individual fields of study are also added in individual countries. However, numerous other variables do not show any significant effects.

Not included in the model are non-traditional higher education admissions (because they are implicitly part of the definition of delayed) and non-university higher education sectors because they do not exist in all countries. This also applies to part-time programmes. But both non-traditional

admissions and a preference for the non-university sector and part-time studies are visible in all countries where this is possible or exists.

It is assumed, that because delayed transition students often are already in professional life, they tend to choose a career-orientated education, which increasingly takes place at non-universities. In addition, some subjects (which are predominantly found at universities) are less likely to be started at an older age due to their longer duration (e.g. medicine). Moreover, non-universities are generally more widely distributed throughout the country and therefore easier to access for working students.

8 Political and organizational frameworks

This final section provides a more detailed presentation of the three countries that are the subject of this study, highlighting the opportunities for starting higher education (later in life) as well as the political priorities of the respective nations that may impact the decision to pursue higher education later in life as well as the perceived study quality.

8.1 Possibilities to access higher education

The accessibility of higher education for individuals from diverse backgrounds and the possibility to start studying later in life can be enhanced by offering alternative pathways to higher education.

In **Austria**, there are three alternative ways to start tertiary education outside regular admission. With the exam "Berufsreifeprüfung," [professional Matura] you can study any subject at any institution in Austria and the European Union – i.e. a fully-fledged Matura received via second-chance route. The "Studienberechtigungsprüfung" [university entrance qualification examination] only allows enrolment in certain degree programmes, therefore only specific knowledge for these degree programmes is tested. Such examinations are possible for any degree programme. Without a Matura but with a vocational qualification, it is possible to study at some Universities of Applied Sciences by taking additional exams, most commonly in Maths, English, and German. Prior learning is often recognized as academic credit in a programme, especially at UASs.

In **Lithuania** candidates must complete at least one state Matura exam and meet minimal learning outcomes as determined by performance outcomes, entrance exams, and additional requirements imposed by the higher education institution to be admitted into the Lithuanian higher education system (Eurydice 2023a). Although prior learning cannot be used to gain entrance to higher education, it is occasionally accepted as academic credit in a programme.

Without an upper secondary certificate, one cannot enrol in higher education in **Romania** (Eurydice 2023b). There is currently no prior learning assessment and recognition system in place in Romania,

despite some talk about microcredits and commitments to flexibility in the 2015–2020 National Strategy for Tertiary Education (Dervis 2022).

8.2 Policy measures

Although students with delayed transition are not always the main target group of policies in the three countries, there are some measures in place that help to improve the (study) situation of these students.

Certain policies in **Austria** provide assistance to older students and those who have worked in the past. Study grants of at least 943 €/month (independent of parental income) are available for individuals who have worked for at least four years (earning money over a specific threshold) and who are no older than 32 at the beginning of the program. The maximum age at which this support can be received has been increased over the last few years. At present, the study grant can be received up to the age of 37 at the start of studies if an additional year of self-support is proven for each age over 32. A scholarship of this kind is awarded to 28 % of all students with delayed transitions (34 % among beginners with delayed transitions).

Although there are numerous countries where part-time study is an option to encourage (older) persons who are working to start higher education, Austria does not have a formal program for part-time study. Universities of Applied Sciences offer "part-time" programs that require fewer hours per week, but last more weeks per year and thus involve the same annual workload as full-time studies and are therefore also classified as such. Nonetheless, many higher education establishments (particularly public universities) allow students to follow their own semester schedules when studying. Because of this, a large number of students earn much fewer than the 60 ECTS credits that are required for graduation each academic year, which lengthens their studies and may result in the loss of student support and tuition payments. That means many Austrian students enrol in full-time programs yet study part-time. 100 % online programmes are not very common, but there is a few, including a very popular law programme. Nonetheless, there is an examination centre in every federal state as part of a collaboration with the Distance-Learning University in Hagen, Germany.⁷

In **Lithuania** there is currently a voucher system in place, that allows some students to study for free. Starting in 2024, for each study field 10 % of these vouchers will go to students with a few years of working experience, thereby encouraging studying later in life.

Studying part-time in Lithuania means that the duration of the study programme is 1.5 compared to full-time studies, for students to have less workload per semester while paying the same for the whole programme. In recent years less of those programmes are offered, as other forms of flexibility increased. There are now more programmes with partially distance courses (at least 5 % of the

⁷ However, these students are then formally studying in Germany and are not part of the Austrian student population.

teaching is required to be face to face), evening studies and blocked classes. Many higher education institutions try to attract non-typical students, including those with a delayed entry or working besides their studies by making their programmes more flexible.

Romania has just adopted new education laws that contain a national program to tackle dropout rates in higher education, with a special focus on students with a delayed transition. Previous studies in the country showed dropout rates of older students (mainly with delayed transition) are higher than those of younger ones.

Part-time study programmes are also offered in Romania, but not very common. Higher education institutions are free to decide their fees and usually offer lower ones (per semester) for part-time studies (which take longer to finish). Working students are no specific target group for political measures in Romania, that is why there is no financial support for this group. However, some higher education institutions try to support working students, e.g., by offering courses in the evening. It is not allowed to provide programmes that are fully online, but blended classes, with some face-to-face lectures are offered.

9 Annex: Characteristics of students with a delayed transition in all countries

Table 5: Characteristics of students with a delayed transition into higher education, all countries

	Austria		Croatia		Denmark		Estonia		Finland		France		Georgia		Hungary		Ireland		Lithuania		Luxembourg		Netherlands		Poland		Romania		Slovenia		Sweden	
	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del		
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	78%	22%	86%	14%	68%	32%	95%	5%	97%	3%	85%	15%	89%	11%	89%	11%	93%	7%	88%	12%	89%	11%	90%	10%	93%	7%	66%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Sex																																
Female	57%	46%	59%	51%	58%	58%	60%	66%	54%	55%	54%	60%	52%	27%	54%	56%	53%	47%	56%	60%	52%	45%	52%	49%	58%	58%	57%	46%	59%	47%	58%	64%
Male	43%	54%	41%	49%	42%	42%	40%	34%	46%	45%	46%	40%	48%	73%	46%	44%	47%	53%	44%	40%	48%	55%	48%	51%	42%	42%	43%	54%	41%	53%	42%	36%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	
Age																																
Up to 21 years	29%	3%	40%	12%	16%	1%	31%	0%	19%	1%	65%	20%	50%	13%	33%	1%	66%	3%	51%	3%	19%	3%	53%	17%	40%	2%	51%	2%	43%	0%	35%	3%
22 to <25 years	34%	17%	37%	29%	49%	26%	31%	8%	34%	17%	25%	24%	36%	22%	40%	17%	18%	9%	29%	9%	48%	30%	30%	32%	41%	14%	29%	11%	36%	11%	36%	25%
25 to <30 years	24%	35%	16%	24%	27%	41%	17%	27%	25%	34%	7%	26%	12%	54%	17%	32%	6%	20%	12%	24%	15%	31%	13%	28%	12%	24%	8%	20%	15%	26%	16%	37%
30 years or over	13%	46%	7%	34%	8%	31%	21%	65%	23%	48%	3%	30%	2%	12%	10%	50%	10%	68%	8%	64%	17%	36%	4%	23%	7%	60%	12%	67%	6%	63%	13%	36%
Educational background: highest educational attainment of parents																																
Low (ISCED 0-2)	3%	7%	2%	3%	5%	7%	5%	10%	4%	10%	6%	17%	2%	6%	6%	20%	14%	51%	1%	4%	9%	25%	7%	18%	16%	38%	4%	18%	3%	15%	4%	11%
Medium (ISCED 3-4)	44%	58%	52%	69%	21%	20%	24%	45%	25%	34%	28%	42%	19%	40%	32%	46%	31%	25%	42%	70%	15%	42%	33%	45%	38%	42%	52%	64%	39%	59%	27%	33%
Short-cycle tertiary (ISCED 5)	15%	16%	8%	9%	16%	17%	10%	12%	12%	14%	18%	13%	19%	12%	9%	10%	12%	8%	0%	0%	4%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	4%	17%	7%	11%	12%
Tertiary (ISCED 6-8)	38%	18%	39%	19%	59%	56%	61%	33%	60%	41%	48%	28%	59%	42%	54%	25%	43%	16%	57%	26%	72%	28%	59%	37%	47%	20%	41%	14%	41%	20%	58%	44%
Type of higher education institution																																
University	82%	66%	85%	69%	61%	40%	80%	62%	57%	33%	70%	89%	86%	78%	83%	74%	72%	53%	71%	37%	95%	95%	40%	12%	77%	36%	100%	100%	77%	25%	100%	100%
Other HEI	18%	34%	15%	31%	39%	60%	20%	38%	43%	67%	30%	11%	14%	22%	17%	26%	28%	47%	29%	63%	5%	5%	60%	88%	23%	64%	0%	0%	23%	75%	0%	0%
Current formal status as a student																																
Full-time student	100%	100%	76%	44%	100%	100%	96%	94%	92%	76%	n.a.	n.a.	100%	100%	80%	30%	89%	56%	87%	30%	98%	91%	93%	74%	72%	21%	95%	79%	82%	22%	91%	90%
Part-time student	n.a.	n.a.	24%	56%	n.a.	n.a.	4%	7%	8%	25%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	20%	70%	11%	44%	14%	70%	2%	9%	6%	23%	28%	79%	2%	9%	18%	79%	10%	10%
Other (e.g. correspondence)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

	Austria		Croatia		Denmark		Estonia		Finland		France		Georgia		Hungary		Ireland		Lithuania		Luxembourg		Netherlands		Poland		Romania		Slovenia		Sweden	
	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del		
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	78%	22%	86%	14%	68%	32%	95%	5%	97%	3%	85%	15%	89%	11%	89%	11%	93%	7%	88%	12%	89%	11%	90%	10%	93%	7%	66%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Field of study¹																																
Education	17%	16%	7%	6%	6%	8%	7%	13%	6%	6%	3%	9%	4%	1%	13%	12%	8%	9%	4%	8%	1%	0%	10%	17%	6%	14%	3%	5%	10%	5%	11%	17%
Arts and humanities	10%	11%	8%	7%	11%	12%	17%	12%	11%	10%	12%	19%	10%	13%	7%	13%	14%	17%	10%	4%	18%	4%	7%	7%	10%	6%	8%	7%	9%	2%	10%	8%
Social sciences	8%	9%	7%	6%	11%	8%	11%	9%	7%	6%	9%	14%	17%	10%	8%	5%	7%	8%	9%	5%	10%	18%	12%	7%	12%	9%	9%	7%	9%	4%	12%	11%
Business, administration & law	23%	25%	28%	27%	19%	11%	15%	22%	18%	19%	28%	29%	31%	32%	23%	32%	18%	22%	26%	35%	33%	44%	27%	25%	21%	31%	22%	29%	18%	34%	13%	15%
Natural sciences	11%	7%	4%	2%	7%	3%	9%	4%	6%	2%	12%	7%	4%	3%	3%	1%	13%	4%	4%	0%	3%	0%	7%	2%	5%	1%	4%	3%	6%	1%	6%	4%
ICTs	6%	7%	8%	12%	5%	4%	10%	6%	10%	7%	2%	2%	3%	8%	9%	8%	9%	9%	7%	1%	6%	21%	4%	5%	7%	3%	8%	2%	5%	3%	4%	4%
Engineering	14%	15%	17%	10%	11%	13%	8%	7%	19%	18%	16%	9%	11%	16%	16%	10%	12%	10%	19%	16%	6%	3%	10%	6%	19%	8%	23%	26%	19%	20%	26%	14%
Agriculture & veterinary	1%	1%	3%	8%	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	3%	0%	0%	3%	4%	4%	2%	2%	1%	3%	6%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	5%	7%	3%	1%	1%	2%
Health & welfare	10%	9%	13%	12%	26%	37%	16%	19%	17%	24%	14%	9%	13%	7%	12%	11%	12%	13%	16%	21%	23%	9%	17%	23%	11%	16%	18%	13%	13%	13%	18%	25%
Services	1%	0%	6%	10%	2%	4%	6%	7%	3%	5%	4%	2%	3%	5%	6%	5%	4%	6%	2%	3%	0%	0%	5%	6%	8%	10%	0%	0%	7%	15%	1%	2%
Working experience before entering HE																																
Yes, for at least one year and at least 20h/week	7%	79%	8%	51%	36%	69%	19%	78%	21%	74%	6%	52%	6%	29%	9%	70%	12%	74%	14%	78%	22%	51%	11%	55%	12%	75%	16%	82%	13%	85%	22%	82%
Yes, for at least one year less than 20h/week	36%	12%	1%	0%	19%	8%	7%	4%	7%	5%	3%	5%	2%	15%	4%	4%	13%	6%	3%	3%	3%	0%	27%	12%	4%	6%	2%	4%	6%	2%	10%	6%
Yes, but less than one year			31%	14%	26%	13%	44%	8%	31%	11%	30%	18%	10%	16%	37%	15%	31%	8%	39%	12%	27%	19%	14%	12%	45%	11%	14%	5%	40%	3%	41%	9%
No	57%	9%	60%	34%	20%	10%	30%	10%	41%	10%	61%	25%	82%	40%	50%	11%	44%	13%	45%	7%	49%	30%	48%	22%	39%	8%	69%	8%	41%	10%	28%	4%
Number of working hours (incl. students without paid job with 0h)																																
0h	37%	29%	50%	27%	36%	40%	33%	21%	47%	39%	61%	49%	67%	50%	44%	19%	39%	39%	48%	24%	51%	42%	25%	20%	44%	15%	61%	17%	36%	8%	54%	46%
1-20h	42%	31%	23%	19%	58%	55%	26%	16%	31%	32%	28%	31%	12%	18%	27%	15%	44%	19%	18%	13%	43%	38%	63%	50%	19%	7%	10%	13%	33%	11%	40%	45%
>20h	21%	40%	27%	54%	6%	5%	41%	64%	22%	29%	11%	20%	21%	32%	29%	66%	17%	42%	34%	63%	5%	20%	12%	30%	37%	78%	28%	70%	30%	81%	7%	9%
Relation employment and content of study programme (only working students)																																
1 Very closely	32%	34%	25%	24%	38%	39%	41%	47%	43%	48%	28%	31%	25%	40%	34%	36%	15%	34%	31%	42%	23%	14%	17%	28%	29%	43%	30%	41%	28%	38%	30%	35%
2 -	16%	19%	16%	22%	16%	14%	16%	16%	20%	18%	16%	14%	14%	13%	18%	19%	8%	21%	16%	16%	22%	25%	15%	18%	13%	14%	16%	13%	17%	22%	15%	10%
3 -	11%	13%	14%	13%	13%	11%	12%	14%	11%	10%	8%	14%	20%	22%	13%	16%	10%	16%	14%	14%	12%	13%	12%	15%	12%	12%	19%	17%	11%	16%	11%	10%
4 -	11%	9%	11%	11%	10%	9%	9%	5%	9%	8%	8%	7%	11%	0%	8%	8%	12%	7%	12%	6%	19%	15%	15%	12%	8%	8%	10%	10%	11%	12%	11%	12%
5 Not at all	30%	25%	34%	30%	24%	26%	22%	19%	18%	16%	40%	35%	30%	25%	27%	21%	54%	23%	27%	22%	24%	32%	40%	27%	38%	23%	24%	18%	34%	11%	33%	33%

	Austria		Croatia		Denmark		Estonia		Finland		France		Georgia		Hungary		Ireland		Lithuania		Luxembourg		Netherlands		Poland		Romania		Slovenia		Sweden	
	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del		
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	78%	22%	86%	14%	68%	32%	95%	5%	97%	3%	85%	15%	89%	11%	89%	11%	93%	7%	88%	12%	89%	11%	90%	10%	93%	7%	66%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Self-categorisation as students/workers																																
Student	70%	47%	71%	40%	90%	91%	56%	22%	64%	56%	0%	0%	72%	60%	58%	15%	79%	33%	57%	13%	82%	69%	89%	65%	49%	14%	47%	22%	68%	15%	89%	86%
Worker	30%	53%	29%	60%	10%	9%	44%	78%	36%	44%	0%	0%	28%	40%	42%	85%	21%	67%	43%	87%	18%	31%	11%	35%	51%	86%	53%	78%	32%	85%	11%	14%
Entry qualification																																
Non-traditional route	0%	38%	3%	15%	3%	15%	2%	26%	6%	9%	0%	28%	1%	21%	2%	8%	2%	29%	1%	9%	15%	37%	5%	32%	3%	32%	3%	21%	3%	41%	3%	16%
Traditional route	100%	62%	97%	85%	97%	85%	98%	74%	94%	91%	100%	72%	99%	79%	98%	92%	98%	71%	99%	91%	85%	63%	95%	68%	97%	68%	97%	79%	97%	59%	97%	84%
Main source of income (>75% of total income)																																
Family	24%	6%	34%	24%	n.a.	n.a.	22%	11%	8%	5%	36%	17%	45%	34%	27%	13%	24%	10%	38%	11%	39%	22%	12%	5%	35%	11%	46%	15%	19%	8%	3%	3%
Self-earned income	22%	41%	18%	35%	n.a.	n.a.	28%	45%	23%	30%	8%	17%	9%	26%	20%	50%	23%	47%	22%	43%	6%	8%	11%	28%	26%	61%	17%	48%	26%	73%	9%	11%
Public student support	1%	8%	1%	0%	n.a.	n.a.	1%	0%	21%	20%	15%	23%	14%	1%	2%	1%	8%	5%	1%	2%	4%	21%	10%	11%	3%	2%	3%	2%	4%	0%	47%	40%
Other	53%	46%	47%	40%	n.a.	n.a.	49%	43%	49%	45%	41%	42%	32%	38%	51%	37%	46%	38%	40%	43%	50%	49%	67%	56%	36%	26%	34%	36%	52%	19%	42%	46%
Recipients of public student support																																
Yes	24%	39%	28%	11%	0%	0%	28%	33%	76%	68%	67%	70%	51%	11%	47%	22%	36%	23%	30%	38%	46%	36%	64%	60%	17%	16%	17%	12%	41%	7%	85%	85%
No	77%	61%	72%	89%	0%	0%	72%	67%	24%	32%	33%	30%	49%	90%	54%	78%	64%	77%	71%	63%	54%	64%	36%	40%	83%	84%	83%	88%	59%	93%	15%	15%
Students with/without financial difficulties																																
With financial difficulties	18%	25%	17%	28%	21%	30%	21%	28%	20%	29%	17%	30%	36%	40%	22%	31%	27%	35%	24%	29%	28%	26%	19%	25%	27%	34%	23%	25%	23%	30%	14%	20%
Neither nor	22%	24%	28%	30%	22%	26%	27%	32%	25%	25%	29%	34%	37%	34%	30%	35%	31%	31%	34%	30%	31%	36%	26%	30%	29%	34%	30%	35%	27%	22%	17%	20%
Without financial difficulties	60%	51%	55%	42%	58%	44%	52%	39%	55%	46%	54%	36%	27%	26%	49%	34%	41%	34%	41%	41%	41%	38%	55%	45%	43%	32%	47%	40%	50%	48%	69%	60%
Study intensity (weekly workload spending on taught courses and personal study time)																																
Low (0-20h)	28%	32%	18%	17%	13%	13%	22%	19%	32%	31%	21%	26%	39%	27%	29%	43%	17%	29%	20%	21%	5%	12%	13%	18%	17%	15%	15%	19%	19%	40%	21%	20%
Medium (20-40h)	46%	47%	47%	48%	55%	54%	50%	41%	48%	47%	42%	41%	46%	63%	48%	41%	54%	45%	51%	40%	49%	34%	55%	55%	54%	68%	45%	52%	48%	47%	52%	55%
High (>40h)	26%	21%	35%	35%	32%	33%	28%	40%	20%	22%	37%	33%	15%	9%	23%	16%	29%	26%	29%	39%	46%	54%	31%	27%	28%	17%	40%	28%	33%	13%	27%	25%
Housing situation: students living with/without parents																																
Living with parents	28%	12%	45%	40%	7%	2%	21%	13%	6%	2%	37%	24%	66%	43%	34%	28%	48%	19%	30%	13%	18%	2%	48%	37%	40%	22%	58%	22%	44%	22%	20%	6%
Not living with parents	72%	88%	55%	60%	93%	98%	79%	87%	94%	98%	63%	76%	34%	57%	66%	72%	52%	81%	70%	87%	82%	98%	52%	63%	60%	78%	42%	78%	56%	78%	80%	94%

	Austria		Croatia		Denmark		Estonia		Finland		France		Georgia		Hungary		Ireland		Lithuania		Luxembourg		Netherlands		Poland		Romania		Slovenia		Sweden	
	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del	Dir	Del		
Share (Row%)	77%	23%	89%	11%	78%	22%	86%	14%	68%	32%	95%	5%	97%	3%	85%	15%	89%	11%	89%	11%	93%	7%	88%	12%	89%	11%	90%	10%	93%	7%	66%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Students with/without impairment limiting them in their studies																																
With impairment	88%	87%	87%	86%	83%	76%	91%	93%	78%	76%	90%	80%	91%	89%	91%	88%	82%	77%	89%	89%	84%	86%	79%	74%	84%	85%	95%	96%	89%	77%	79%	78%
Without impairment	12%	13%	13%	14%	17%	24%	9%	7%	22%	24%	10%	20%	9%	11%	9%	12%	18%	23%	11%	11%	16%	14%	21%	26%	16%	15%	5%	4%	11%	23%	21%	22%

Dir: Direct transition; Del: Delayed transition.

n.a.: Not available, not included in the national survey or not comparable.

¹ Field of study: Social science including Journalism & Information; Natural science incl. Mathematics & Statistics; Engineering incl. Manufacturing & Construction; Agriculture incl. Forestry & Fisheries.

Source: Eurostudent VII micro data (Cuppen et al., 2023).

10 Sources

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