COVID-19 IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EUROPAEUM MEMBER UNIVERSITIES

REPORT 2020

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This report is a research project only. It is a joint initiative of the students from Europaeum universities and it should not be interpreted as comprising official recommendations nor as representing the official opinion of any particular Europaeum university.

The contents of this report reflect the opinions expressed by the research team only, and it is based on their interpretation of the available data. The main goal of this research was to provide a preliminary evaluation and to inspire discussion of the subject. The report does not give a full factual assessment of the universities' responses to the coronavirus outbreak and any mistakes remain the sole responsibility of the research team.

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Universities faced an unprecedented challenge when trying to protect the health and safety of their community and prevent the spread of the coronavirus. The outbreak forced all the Europaeum member universities to act immediately with very limited guidelines and support. Hence it is fully understandable that the very first steps taken could be perceived as not well coordinated. Even though some of the universities had their emergency plans ready prior to the pandemic, this was not enough to avoid some mistakes and challenges. It is a commonly accepted truism that practice differs significantly from theory and therefore certain solutions may only be reaffirmed in action. The first wave of the coronavirus outbreak was also the time to learn and adjust in order to develop policies that respond to the specific demands of the current crisis; the real test might come with the new academic semester.

Therefore, it is worth noting that this report summarizes two interconnected dimensions. First is the immediate response of the universities in the spring of 2020 to the threat posed by coronavirus. The second presents lessons learned by the universities and their initial plans for the upcoming year as the result of the previous semester.

In addition to the aforementioned categories such as "Emerging policies", "Learning and teaching", etc., communication was identified as an area which remains a common denominator for upholding proper high-quality education through managing and mitigating the level of uncertainty experienced by Faculty and students. It has always required special attention and should be treated carefully in future. Often emergency plans followed by the university administration included the regulation of communication pathways between all the members of staff and students. Our survey results clearly show that the majority of students appreciate universities' efforts in communicating coronavirus-related developments; however, not all of the interviewees were satisfied with the manner in which that communication was provided.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on higher education is yet to be fully realized and warrants further monitoring and investigation. However, as universities grapple to stay afloat and manage the crisis, a simultaneous effort should be made to address various issues that university education had been facing even prior to the pandemic. For this, an attitude which is pro-change and pro-modernization is the key, which has to be delicately balanced against existing bureaucratic, academic and pedagogical traditions.

The crisis has also created financially precarious conditions for many universities as most of them are building up their cash reserves for operating costs.

For most Europaeum network universities, student recruitment is one area which seems quite promising as the intake target for the academic year 2020–21 has either been met or exceeded, despite the expected drop in admissions. It appears that difficult economic conditions forced people to think about re-skilling or up-skilling and hence the demand for university education programmes has increased. Some governments, such as that of Denmark and Finland, have provisioned for more seats at their respective national university and have been encouraging their citizens to opt for higher education. While this crisis has forced the governments to look inward, it has also highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration at local, national and international levels. Universities therefore need to forge innovative partnerships and alliances with non-traditional stakeholders, while strengthening their existing ties, for example with bodies such as Student Councils and Trade Unions. The pandemic has also highlighted the need to engage and invest in the wider community and to undertake various initiatives in order to "give back" to local businesses and people. Transparent and inclusive policymaking is important to build trust which allows for a participative representation of these stakeholders during the decision-making process.

As the world faces more challenges with every passing day, it is pertinent for universities to listen to its students, faculty and other stakeholders and make a sincere effort to develop a sense of community and solidarity. The silver lining to this crisis could be that the higher education sector sheds its old skin and finds opportunities for reflection, re-evaluation and rebuilding towards the future.

EMERGING POLICIES	
Past developments	**Expected developments**
1. Coordination between university and national administration was crucial, especially at the beginning of crisis. 2. Emergency plans were crucial to safeguard the health and life of students and all staff members. 3. University needs autonomy.	If there is goodwill on both sides it is very likely that decisions made at the university level will be coordinated with local and national authorities. This should allow for less uncertainty, and avoid potential mistakes and misunderstandings. To better facilitate such coordination, but also to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, universities are advised to establish "crisis management teams" and prepare emergency operation plans if these do not already exist. Such teams could replace ordinary university management in emergency situations such as the anticipated second wave.

LEARNING AND TEACHING	
Past developments	**Expected developments**
1. The initial switch to online mode later transformed into various forms: hybrid, synchronous, blended 2. Online teaching introduced during confinement was rather a temporary prothesis than a fully operative and interactive methodology 3. Teaching staff and students required additional skills and knowledge to navigate new, online options fluently 4. The lack of interactivity and live participation in the discussion affects the quality of education 5. State support may be crucial in establishing just and equal rules for online examination 6. State support may be crucial in providing technologies and software to facilitate a high-quality education process	Universities are encouraged to further develop online resources and to keep some of these in the future in order to support students with disadvantages. In this way, education may become more accessible for future generations. There is a consensus, however, that in-person education is essential for the students' personal development and its lack may cause serious mental problems as well as a lower quality education process. Therefore it is recommended that students continue with face-to-face education as much as possible, and also that universities invest in further improving their remote teaching tools for those people who cannot attend the sessions physically. There is also an immediate need for clarification and definition of the new terminologies such as: "blended, hybrid, synchronous teaching". In this report the terms are used interchangeably.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS	
Past developments	**Expected developments**
1. New guidelines were developed for practical subjects such as laboratory classes, field research, etc. 2. Innovation in content delivery was crucial for students' satisfaction 3. Teaching staff largely adopted a forgiving attitude towards student work in light of the constrained circumstances in which students were working. 4. The pandemic gave opportunities to critically review the courses' curricula 5. Curricula may embrace not only the teaching but also learning plans.	Innovation is crucial to the successful delivery of course content. Critical evaluation may help in revision of parts of syllabi that have become redundant, the incorporation of diverse perspectives, and the restructuring of course content to suit better the virtual learning tools and environment. Students should be aware of the fact that the extraordinary situation will not last forever, and thus expectations towards them will gradually increase.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT	
Past developments	**Expected developments**
1. Coronavirus-related effects had a significant impact on students' well-being 2. Students should be encouraged to use mental health support services 3. Teaching staff were usually on the frontline 4. Guidelines as to how to deal with stress and the difficult situation were developed 5. Social exchange can be provided online	Universities will pay extra attention to students' well-being and mental health. Further research into differential student needs and reasoning for their choices should result in the allocation of additional resources whenever required, and the promotion of uptake of the available services. It is necessary for the future of higher education to understand the sources of students' distress during times of crisis in order to be able to offer them effective solutions and help.
STUDENT RECRUITMENT	
Past developments	**Expected developments**
1. There was an increase in the number of candidates for national programmes (designed for local and not international students) 2. International students' recruitment is challenging 3. Reputation and prestige are important factors in upholding high interest in the university offer 4. Coordination with the government may be required to ensure the arrival of prospective international students 5. Problems with ensuring the just and equal procedure and proper exchange of documents created one of the major challenges in the recruitment process at some of the universities	The universities are advised to embrace end-to-end digitalization of all their services to improve accessibility for current students, alumni and prospective students. The universities also need to be flexible in terms of access to programmes by international students who are not able to attend in-person sessions due to travel restrictions. Universities will also think of innovative solutions like a "buddy system" which pairs the incoming students with student representatives or existing students who can help to address their issues and provide support to candidates for the upcoming academic year. Further coordination with the government should mitigate the level of uncertainty in the recruitment of international students.

FINANCIAL POLICIES	
Past developments	**Expected developments**
1. State-founded universities might have a better budgetary situation in the short-term but they are also concerned with the long-term pandemic effects 2. At all member universities additional funding was provided to help students 3. The suspension of university operations caused significant disruption in all universities' income 4. Adjusting to new circumstances is also very costly	Considering that many of the universities provided additional financial support to their students and in light of the results of the survey, where that most of the students reported not being aware of these policies, it is recommended that a stronger and more direct communication be implemented so that students are better informed about the help that their universities can provide. Universities should also consider the macroeconomic impact of the pandemic and focus on cash saving plans in the near future.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS	
Past developments	**Expected developments**
1. Help for national students abroad and foreign guest students on the spot was one of the first priorities for universities after the outbreak of the pandemic 2. Providing study experience for international students is one of the greatest challenges for universities nowadays 3. The pandemic caused the rapprochement and intensification of cooperation and relations with foreign partners	It is recommended that a helpdesk or hotline for international students be set up to address their queries or concerns. Students can be provided with a "demo" of what online learning would be like if they are not able to be on-campus during their first term. Student feedback can then be generated, and appropriate changes can be made to online tools and platforms accordingly. The universities should permit students to travel to countries for exchanges or research purposes on a case-by-case basis, following a thorough risk assessment. At the same time, it is important to design new ways of holding educational and cultural exchanges as travel restrictions might continue to be a challenge for many countries. Digital communities and virtual interactions can be promoted.

No situation brings only good or bad change. The academia consensus seems to agree that although a significant shift towards the use of new technologies has occurred practically overnight, a realistic rather than optimistic perspective should be kept. The dose of realism is summarized in the following statements:

1. **Physical in-person teaching is the essence of higher education and it cannot be fully replaced by a virtual learning environment**

   > "We don't want people who know a lot about things, but who have no clue how to deal with other human beings. Institutions should reflect on what happened instead of being bluntly enthusiastic about the new online reality. We have a responsibility to understand what the social consequences of the pandemic are." (Andrea Bianchi, Professor of International Law, Director of Studies, Personal Interview, 18.08.2020)

2. **The pandemic created an obligation to develop online teaching tools to uphold the education process.**
3. **Online teaching tools may be used as complementary to traditional in-person teaching in situations where the distance barrier is difficult to overcome.**

3. INTRODUCTION

In the past few months, the world has faced an extraordinary time which has affected all aspects of life, particularly learning and education. The rapid spread of the coronavirus has forced higher education institutions to adapt quickly and respond effectively in order to continue delivering quality education while also looking after the students' safety and health. This involved a significant shift in the higher education landscape from traditional teaching models to virtual classrooms and the provision of additional support to those students most severely affected by the global pandemic.

The Europaeum, as an association of leading European universities, has been supporting this study in order to investigate whether these unexpected measures might change the future of higher education. Accordingly, this report aims to communicate good practices that the University members adopted during the confinement and the "new normality". As such, it was considered important to develop this analysis in the period of July to August 2020, when universities had already applied initial, often emergency, policies to cope with the situation, and also had more clarity on the measures to be implemented in the new academic year.

In the following pages the reader will find a comparative analysis of the 17 member universities of the EUROPAEUM, along with a report of the measures adopted in each of the universities. The main topics that are covered in this report are:

— General background

— Perception of the coronavirus pandemic impact on higher education

— Emerging policies

— Learning and teaching

— Curriculum adjustments

— Student well-being & support

— Student recruitment

— Financial policies

— International affairs

The contents of the report are based on: desk research, interviews with key stakeholders and the analysis of the survey for overall insights and recommendations.

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The contents of this analysis are a synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative information obtained from the desk research, interviews and the survey conducted.

4.1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Europaeum research team developed a survey in order to find out the perception of the students on the measures adopted by each member university. The final distribution of the responses analysed is as follows:[1]
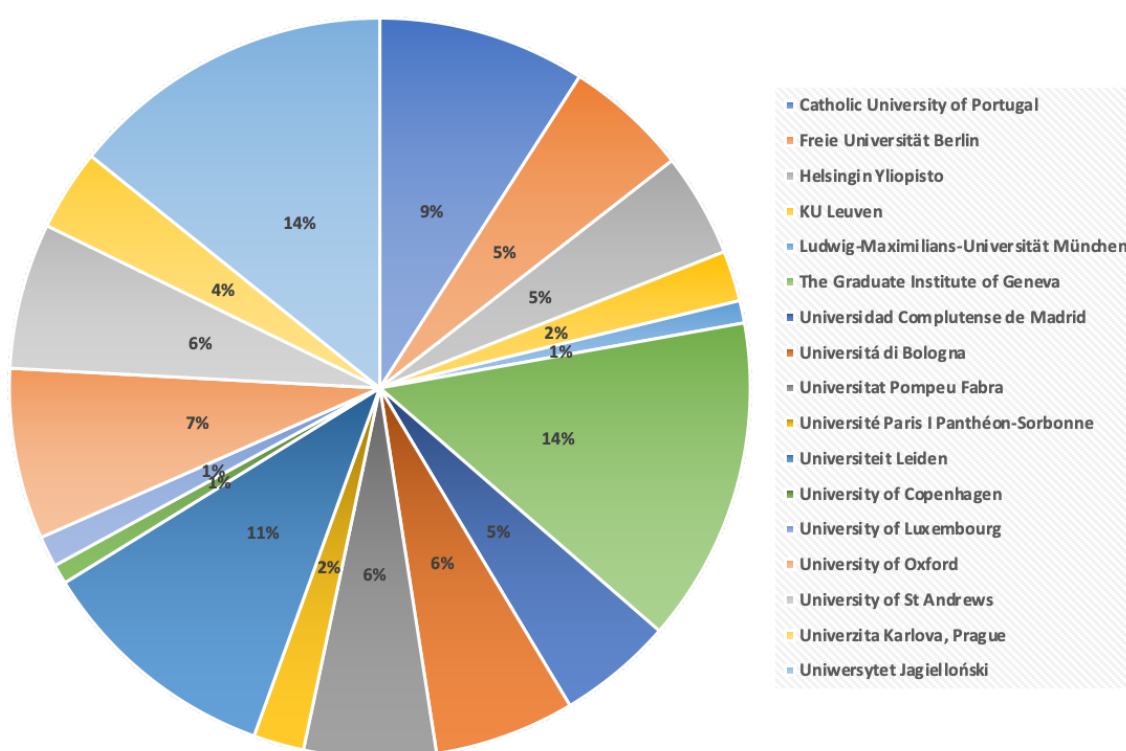
Figure 1. Final distribution of the responses per university.

The majority of students (66.7%) recognized their gender as female, 31.6% as male, 0.6% as other gender and 1.0% preferred not to answer that question. Regarding the area of study, most of the students were enrolled to Social Sciences (52.1%), then Humanities (29.9%) and in third place Maths, Physics, Physical and Life Sciences (18.0%). The average age of the respondents is 25 years, and 55.1% of them were undergraduate students, 26% postgraduate, 17.3% doctorate students and 1.1% identified themselves as "other".

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[1] For more information on the survey, please refer to the methodology section in Annex 1.

Reasons for choosing a university
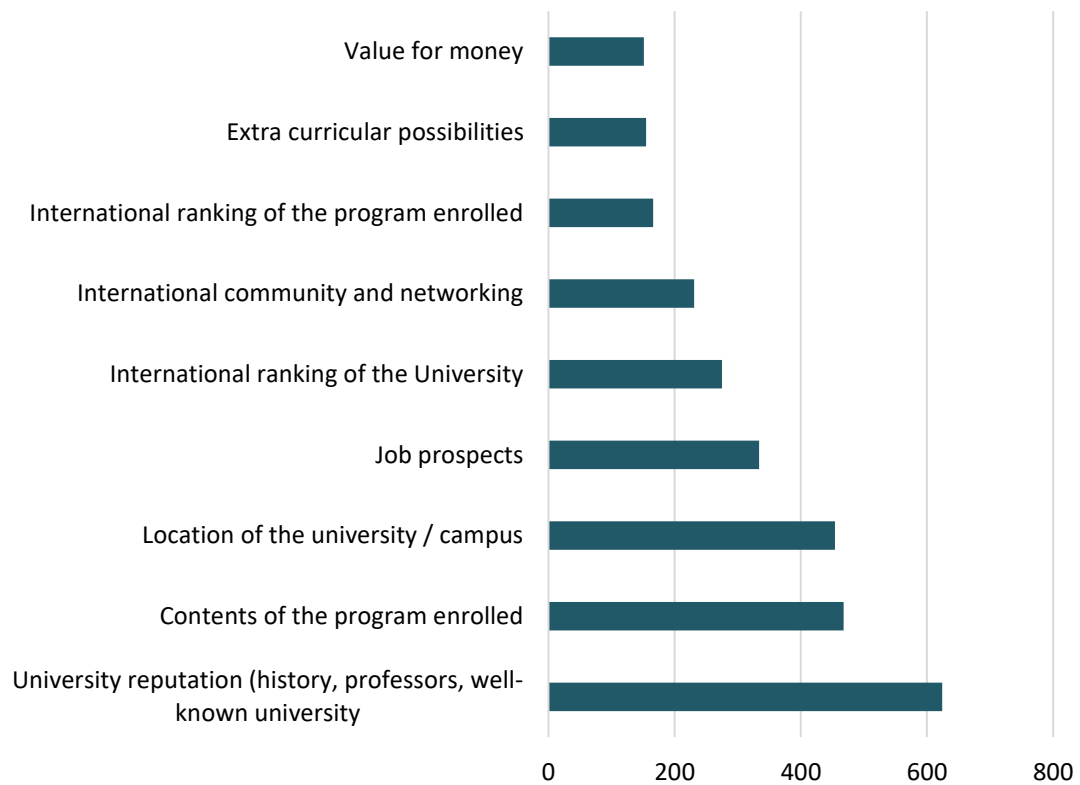
Figure 2. Reasons for choosing a university according to students.

Among the reasons for choosing a university the most relevant are the reputation, contents of the programme enrolled and the location of the university.

Overall perception on COVID-19 related communication measures

Overall, there was a satisfactory perception on the communication measures adopted by the universities. On a scale from 1–5 with *1* being *very dissatisfied* and *5 very satisfied* the respondees gave an average grade of 3.4 to all of the communication areas and the maximum value was 3.7 for the general information provided. The least liked policy was the information given about international programmes.
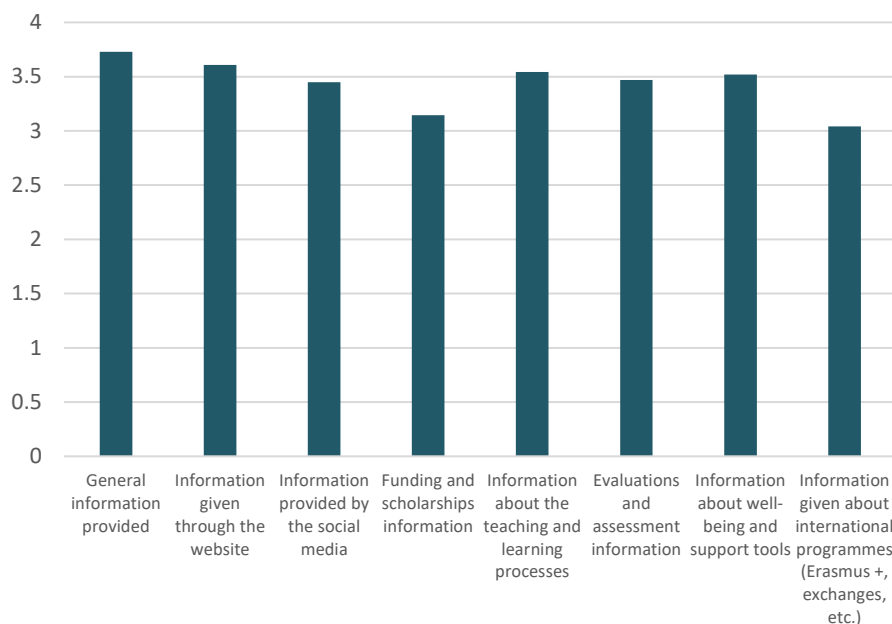
Figure 3. Satisfaction on communication in certain COVID-19 related areas according to students.

Perception of coronavirus impact

The academia cordially agrees that although a significant shift towards use of new technologies has occurred almost overnight, a realistic rather than optimistic perspective should be maintained. The dose of realism is summarized in the following statements:

1. **Physical in-person teaching is the essence of higher education and it cannot be replaced by virtual reality.** Even though the remote tools were an effective solution to continue with the courses, most of the universities emphasized the importance of in-person sessions. Many of the universities reported that this is essential for building community and to share experiences beyond just the contents of the classes. Also, it was reported by the students that these online schemes made them feel like they were alone in the school, and they did not experience the same level of interaction. In general, it is the intention of the universities to go back to in-person sessions, to the extent of the possibilities, as well as having a responsibility to understand what the social consequences of the pandemic are.

2. **The pandemic created an obligation to develop online teaching tools to uphold the education process.** During the confinement, or lockdown with its consequent social distancing, lack of knowledge about the novel coronavirus meant that the only reasonable reaction was to suspend in-person education and try to continue with the online mode. Nevertheless, once we realize that one of the priorities of higher education is not just about the raw transfer of knowledge, it becomes obvious that this type of solution may only work temporarily.

3. **Online teaching tools may be used as a complementary method to traditional in-person teaching in situations where the distance barrier is difficult to overcome.** It is still important not to underestimate the value of online teaching tools which in certain circumstances may be as important as the technology. The universities also report that they have realized that many of the online resources are essential to students with disadvantages, therefore this could benefit students with movement disabilities or those who are unable to commute to the campus. Good practice examples come from the University of Oxford and the Universitá di Bologna, among others, where the applications were used for students to keep their schedules updated with the latest news and changes. Hence, the digital tools may remain complementary to traditional education especially as a solution for students facing difficulties with the in-person mode.

The above interview findings should be confronted however, with the survey results. Some of the questions were intended to measure students' perception of the impact of coronavirus on higher education.

In the first question, students were asked whether they believed that online teaching is going to become a normal mode of education. More than half of the respondents see the pandemic as a clear change in the way education is going to be delivered, with online becoming a crucial part of education.
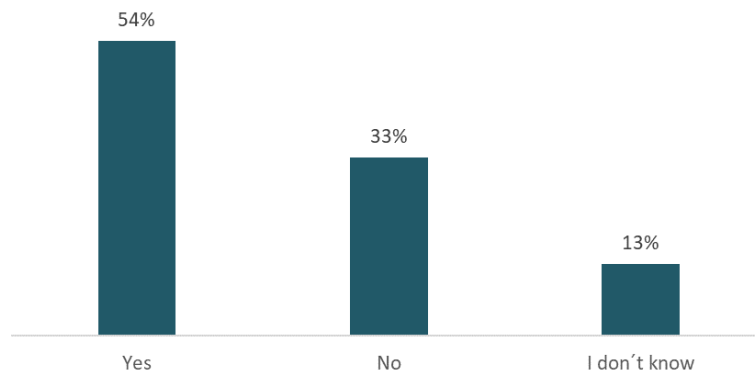
Figure 4. Students´ perception of online education as a permanent source of education.

Then students were asked if they consider online education to have less value for money than in-person education. Not surprisingly, and reflective of other findings, students feel that online education is remarkably less valuable than face-to-face education.
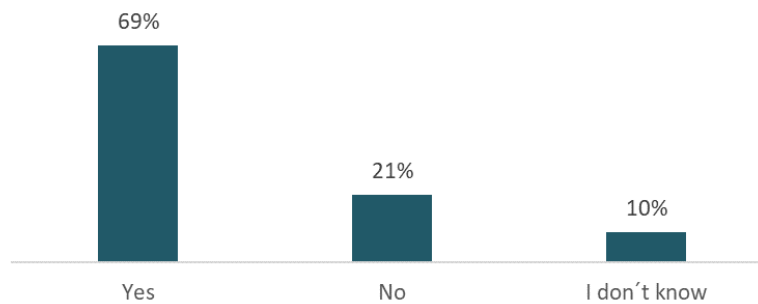
Figure 5. Students´ perception of online education to have less value for money than in-person education.

In the next question, students were asked to select which factors would they consider important when choosing a University, if online teaching becomes a normal mode of education. Good quality in online sessions, and flexibility of study hours marked high for students, but unexpectedly, the reputation and prestige continue to be one of the main factors to be considered by students.
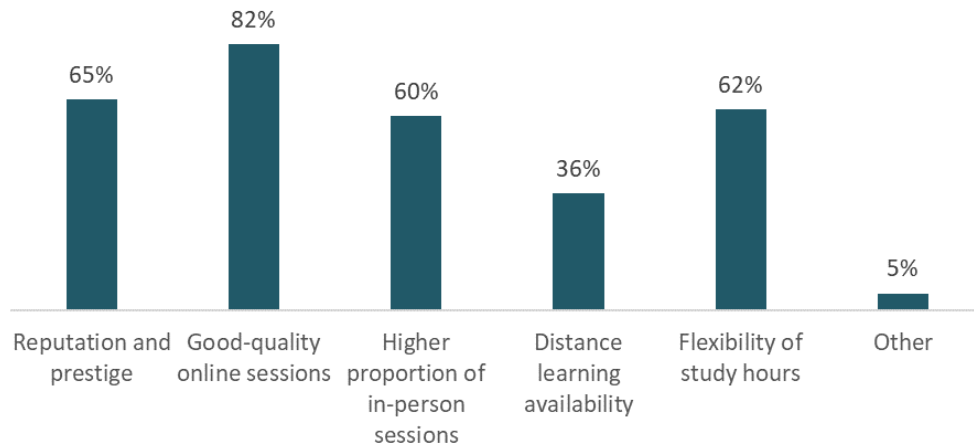
Figure 6. Importance of factors when choosing a university if online teaching becomes a normal source of education according to students.

In the next question students were asked to declare whether they would choose to study at their current university again, assuming that online teaching becomes a normal mode of education. 72% of the respondents said they would select the same university and 28% would not. In the following questions they specified the reasons why that would be.
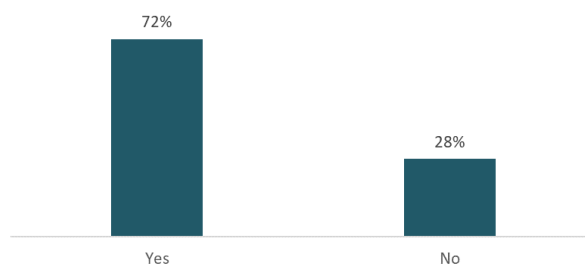
Figure 7. Percentage of students who would select the same university if online teaching becomes a normal source of education.

Of the 72% of students who said they would select the same university again, 81% would choose it for its history, reputation and quality of professors, and 69% due to the type of programmes offered. Remarkably, the international rankings of both the university and the programme were not selected by a large number of students. This raises questions regarding the efforts universities make to rank high in the different international rankings if prospective students do not value them as universities expect they would.
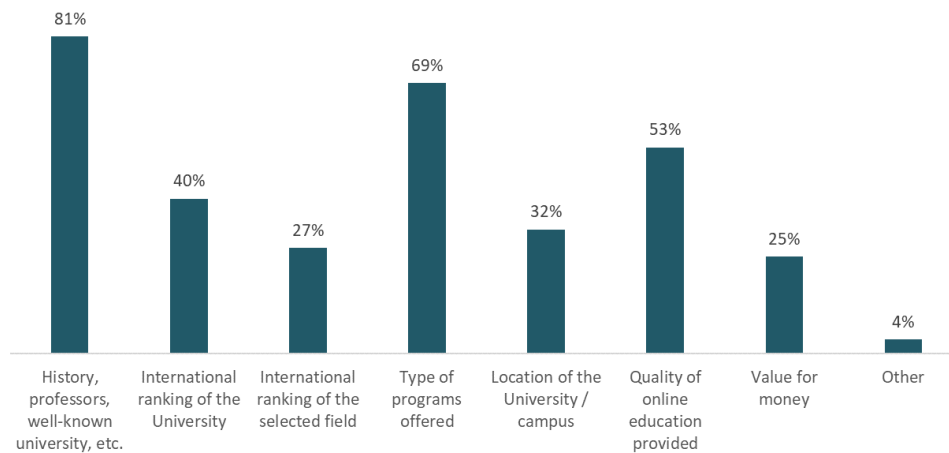
Figure 8. Reasons to select the same university again according to students.

Of the 28% surveyed students that would not select the same university again if online teaching becomes a regular mode of education, about half would rather seek universities providing in-person sessions. Furthermore, about half of them would not attend the same university due to the low quality of online education that was provided since the beginning of the pandemic. These results indicate that universities must definitely give priority to facilitating face-to-face sessions, and provide good quality online education and strategies in order to maintain the normal recruitment.
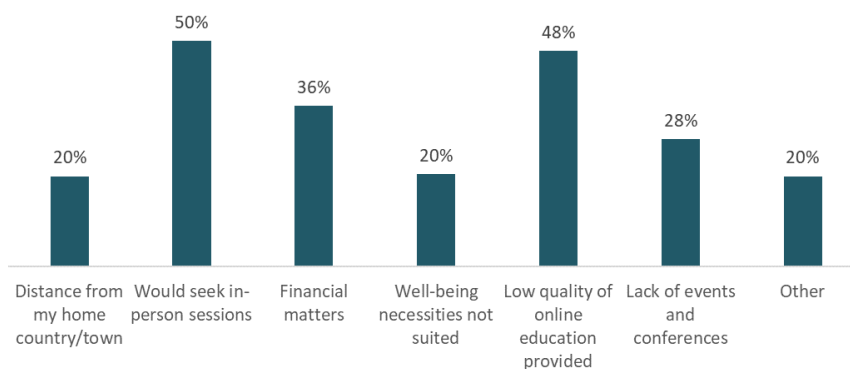
Figure 9. Reasons for not selecting the same university again according to students.

In the following questions students were asked to indicate what they would miss out on, as an important part of an in-person course if teaching continues to be online. Student life was definitely the most important

factor that students miss, along with physical contact with friends and experiencing another city or country. These results were aligned with the majority of student interviews conducted in this research. They expressed the need of having active student societies and physical contact during this important stage of life.
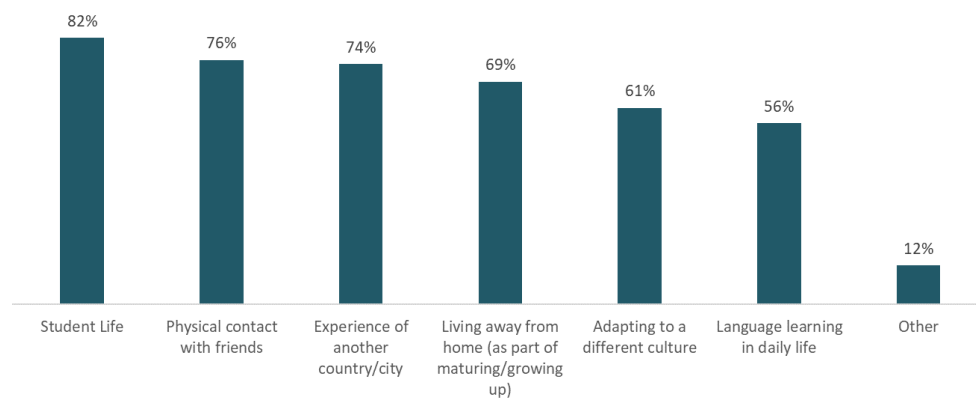
Figure 10. Factors that would be missing if in-person teaching is replaced, according to students.

4.2. EMERGING POLICIES

Coordination between universities and national and local/regional administration is crucial, especially at the beginning of the crisis

During the pandemic the coordination and implementation of governmental decisions has been rather smooth in most of the researched universities. A large number of universities avoided waiting until the government issued specific directives or regulations to deal with the novel coronavirus, but it is highly expected at the initial stage of the pandemic that national authorities together with health services will show the direction to be taken.

There were a few exceptions regarding the smooth coordination between state authorities and universities. At the very beginning of the pandemic for instance, there was uncertainty caused by no consensus on steps to be taken to prevent the spread of the virus among the academic community. From the 33 interviews, about a third of the interviewees stated that coordination and communication was slower and less systematic than was ideal.

From the survey results, students have presented a neutral attitude towards coordination between the government and the university to combat the virus impact. 22% of the students, however, were dissatisfied, and this applies across all universities.
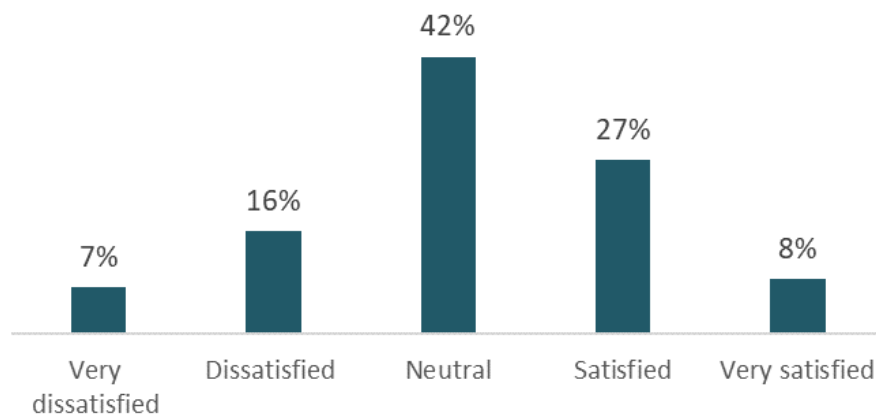
Figure 11. Students´ perception of coordination between the government and the university.

The establishment of a special task force helped with managing and coordinating the crisis

Emergency task forces or COVID-19 emergency teams were established in the majority of the 17 universities. They usually consisted of senior administrative staff, such as rectors and deans, health specialists and student representatives. With such emergency teams it was easier to manage the crisis and coordinate different aspects of university operations, but also to ensure a proper flow of information. The frequency of the meetings varied from a daily to weekly basis. Most of them ended, however, with the lifting of national restrictions and the slow recovery of normal university operations.

Emergency plans were crucial to safeguard the health and life of students and all staff members

Emergency plans were a common measure undertaken to mitigate the coronavirus impact on university operations. It usually embraced procedures to comply with health protection rules, the distribution of responsibilities amongst staff, but also communication paths.

The university needs autonomy

University operations had to be centrally regulated only to a certain extent, while leaving autonomy for its internal regulations. A certain level of autonomy should be also granted to departments, faculties or institutes, as each has its own unique character which requires specific knowledge for designing mitigating measure to be applied within them.

Policy recommendations

It seems necessary to coordinate decisions made at the university level with local, regional and national authorities. This allows for less uncertainty and avoids potential mistakes and misunderstandings. It also appears indispensable in situations such as taxation issues which were highlighted in the case of Luxembourg and required governmental intervention. To better facilitate such coordination but also to mitigate the pandemic's effect universities are advised to establish "crisis management teams" and prepare emergency operation plans. Such teams could replace ordinary university management in emergency situations such as a second wave.

4.3. LEARNING AND TEACHING

Initial switch to online mode later transformed into various forms: hybrid, synchronous, blended

As a consequence of the universities' previous experiences with online teaching, a definite combination of both traditional and remote teaching was proposed in all member universities. It is necessary to bear in mind that the terms hybrid, synchronous or blended may be associated with different types of teaching at different universities.

Online teaching introduced during confinement is rather a temporary prothesis than a fully operative and interactive methodology

In most of the universities, there was an immediate need to adapt infrastructure to provide students with online sessions. Although modes and methods have been commonly referred to as "the shift to online education", the Graduate Institute of Geneva highlights that with such little time to prepare they should instead be called "emergency remote learning tools". Nevertheless, the efforts that the universities made in this short amount of time are remarkable, and as noted by the Universitá di Bologna, "they had to do great changes, which would probably have taken years under other circumstances, in only a few months".

Teaching staff and students require additional skills and knowledge to navigate new, online options fluently

This rapid shift posed a challenge to both professors and students. From the students' perspective, this situation evidenced some pre-existing inequality gaps, because some of them lacked the necessary equipment to fully get involved in their classes (i.e. a personal computer, a good quality Internet connection, a quiet place to study or connect to the video calls, etc.). For that reason, many of the universities offered additional support to students (see section 4.5). In the case of the professors, this situation forced some of them to acquire new skills in a very short time, through the trainings provided by universities.

Lack of interactivity and life participation in the discussion affects quality of education

Students together with teaching staff agreed that in order to provide high-quality content which allows students to stay focussed during the class and fully participate in it, has to be engaging and interactive as much as possible. Offering online discussions and interactive presentations with photos and video materials instead of analysing text materials only are strongly recommended.

State support may be crucial in establishing just and equal rules for online examination

In terms of graduation, examinations and practical sessions, for most of the universities these activities had to be postponed, organized online or cancelled. Open-book examinations were the option available for students to present their exams. A challenge that universities are facing with this adopted measure is ensuring the quality of education and that this can be reflected in the degree. In only a few places like KU Leuven and FU Berlin, these activities continued when necessary in compliance with the sanitary rules and social distancing.

State support may be crucial in providing technologies and software to facilitate a high-quality education process

National authorities may direct the software providers onto a course of public tender and therefore ensure the high-quality standards of such solutions.

The aim of the questions asked in the interviews or the survey was to discover what is the level of acceptance of online, remote teaching tools in comparison with the traditional in-person mode. Also, one specific objective was to explore the possibility of shifting some of the education to online schemes, and whether this would be considered favourable both by students and teaching staff.

In relation to the survey, the largest group of students (42.4%) reported that the COVID-19 online measures affected the quality of their education in both positive and negative ways. The second highest response (41.6%) was that the students were affected in a negative way which clearly indicates that the majority of students were not happy with the online teaching tools offered by the universities during confinement.
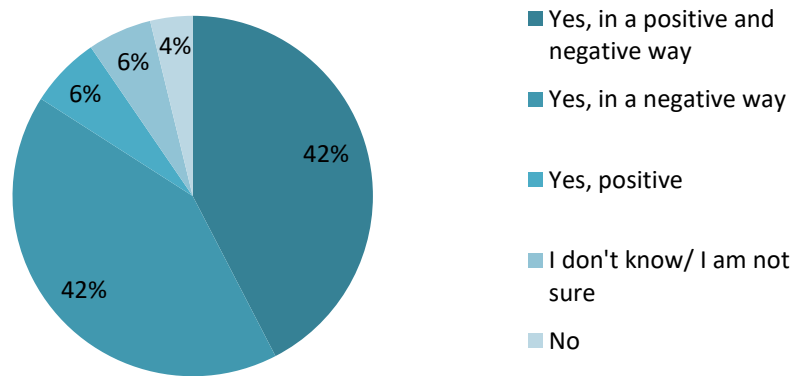
Figure 12. Students´ perception of whether the quality of education has been positively or negatively affected by COVID-19 online measures.

Among the factors considered as positive, working from home and increased productivity were the top ranked answers. And for the negatives, the most negative perceived factor was having less interaction with classmates and professors.
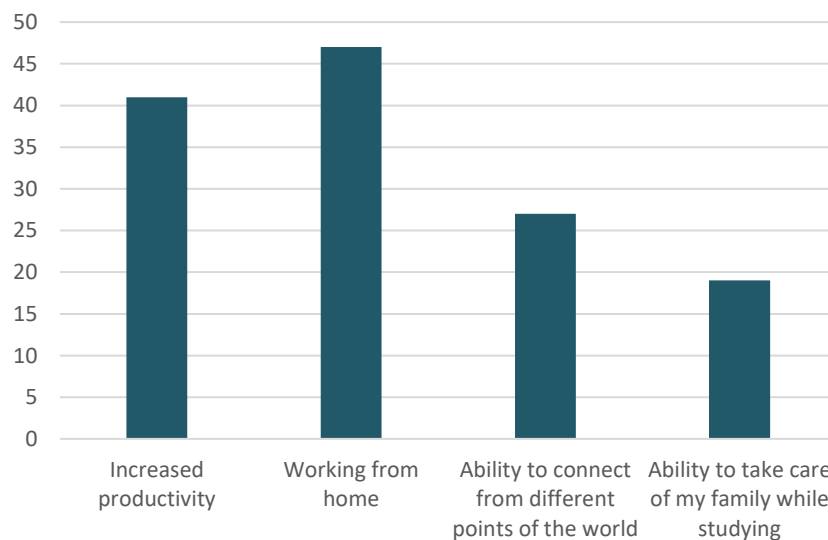
Figure 13. Positive aspects detected regarding to the COVID-19 online measures taken, according to students.
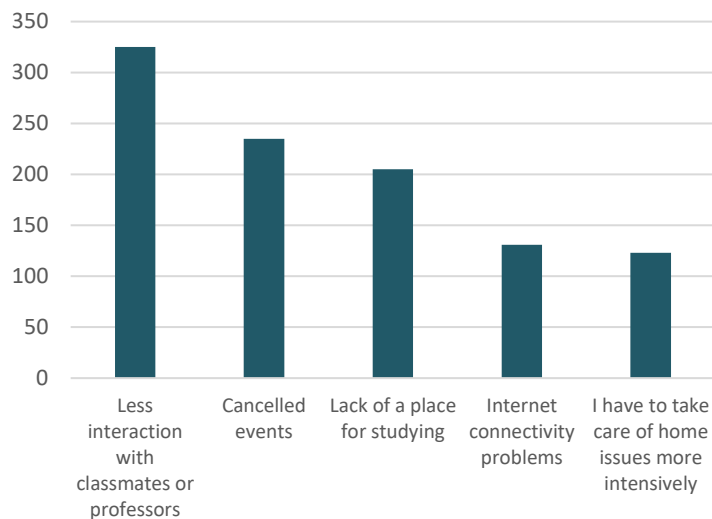
Figure 14. Negative aspects detected regarding to the COVID-19 online measures taken, according to students.

In terms of the most common online tools implemented, the students reported that having online synchronous classes was the option most used for online education, followed by online examinations and submissions. The least applied measure was WhatsApp 1:1 meetings.
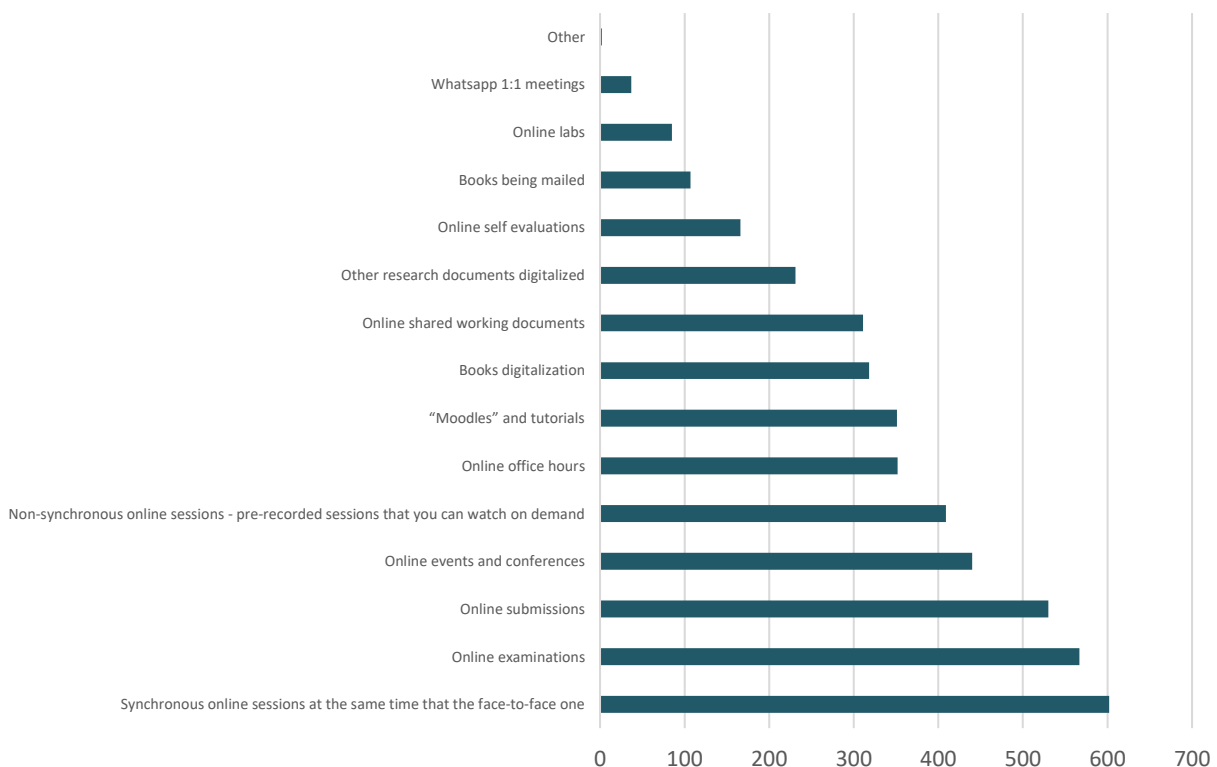
Figure 15. COVID-19 measures taken by universities related to learning and teaching during the pandemic according to students´ perception.

And, in relation to preferences, the top-three ranked options were synchronous online sessions, non-synchronous online sessions and online submissions.
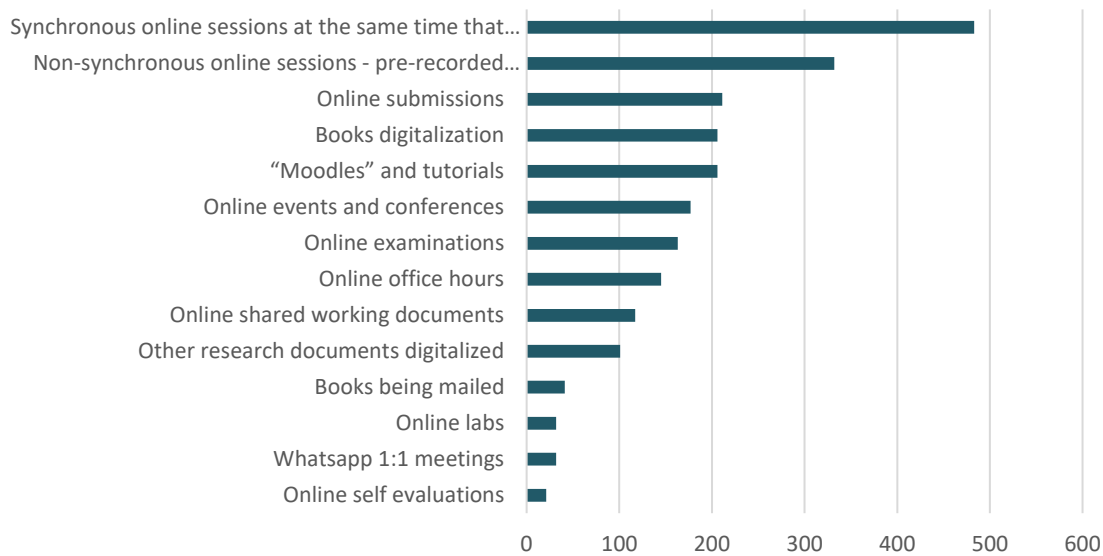
Figure 16. Learning measures most preferred by students.

The most popular reason for preferring the selected measures was the engagement it provided. In other words, that this tool made focussing easier for students.
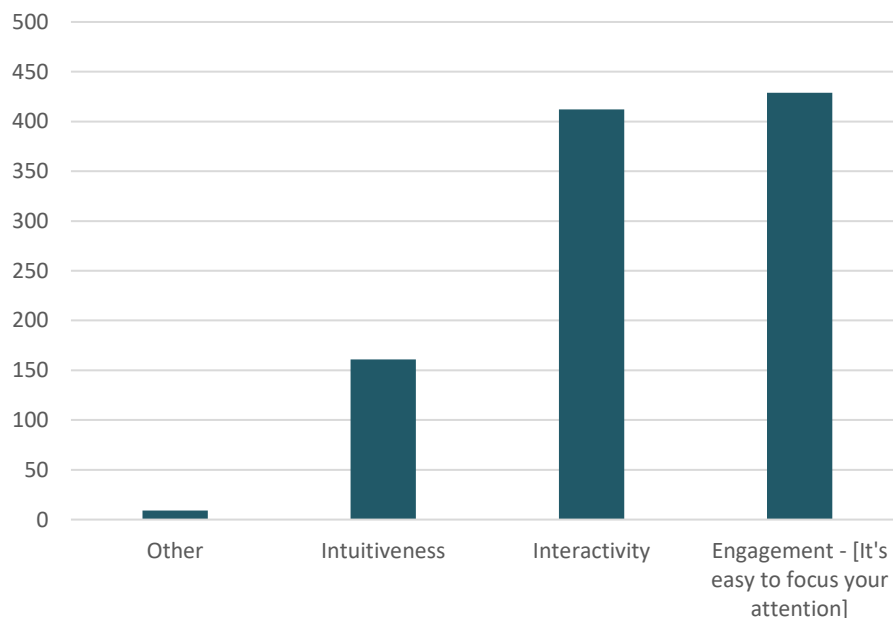
Figure 17. Important factors considered when choosing learning measures according to students.

In terms of the permanence of the online tools implemented, most of the students perceive that some of them will remain.
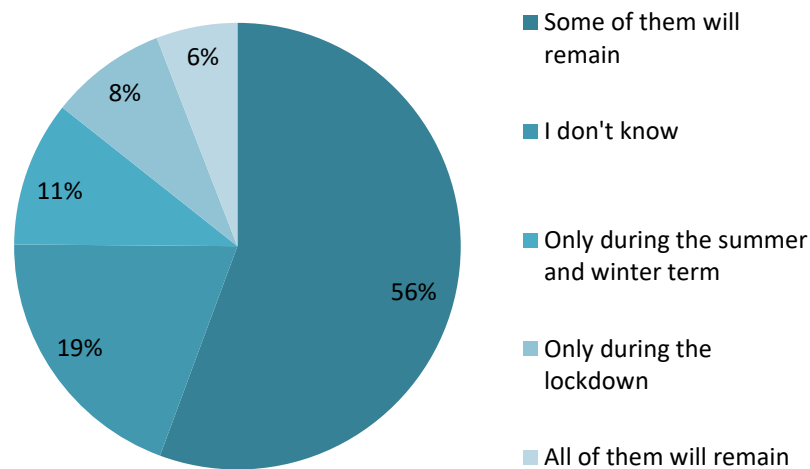
Figure 18. Students´ perception of the duration of the COVID-19 learning and teaching measures implemented.

Policy recommendations

Universities are encouraged to further develop and keep in the future some of the online resources in order to support vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, young parents, etc. In this way, education may become more accessible for future generations. There is consensus, however, that in-person education is essential to the students' personal development and its lack may cause severe mental disorders and loss of value in the education process. Therefore it is recommended that students should be able to continue with face-to-face education as much as possible, and also to further improve the remote teaching tools for those people who cannot attend the sessions physically. There is also an immediate need for clarification and definition of the new terminologies such as: "blended, hybrid, synchronous teaching".

4.4. CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

New guidelines for practical subjects such as laboratory classes, field research, etc.

Minor content changes were applied as a result of switching to an online mode. Practical courses which required the physical presence of students and teaching staff obtained new rules of procedures, complying with safety and sanitary regulations. It is worth noting that these courses have very individualized characters and it is hard to establish general rules for all of them.

Innovation in content delivery is crucial for students' satisfaction

As mentioned in the previous section, any simplification is dangerous for the quality of the course, and therefore well-thought-out methods for delivering the content are desirable.

The forgiving attitude of the teaching staff will not last forever

It was natural for everybody involved in the teaching process that more empathy and understanding should be shown during this difficult situation. Many teaching directors asked their teaching staff to be more forgiving. But what was considered extraordinary in June will become normal in October. Hence this is worth bearing in mind, especially by students, so it does not cause further frustration with them.

The pandemic gave an opportunity to critically review the courses' curricula

Some of the universities have taken steps to encourage their faculty to review the curricula. In most cases, however, any curricular changes were related to adapting existing course content for online delivery.

Curricula may embrace not only the teaching but also the learning plans

A very interesting solution was presented by the university in Barcelona. It established a sort of agreement between teacher and student and took the form of continuous assessment. Nowadays, whether taught face-to-face or online, courses will have a learning plan, in addition to the course plan, which will involve at least: a) the weekly distribution of content and learning activities; b) the deadlines and means of submitting evaluable tasks; c) the expected return of evaluable activities; d) the impact of evaluable activities on the final mark if not explicitly indicated in the course plan; and e) the expected dedication by the student to the various scheduled academic activities.

Policy recommendations

Innovation is a keyword for the successful delivery of a course content. Critical evaluation may help in revision of its redundant parts, incorporation of diverse perspectives, and restructuring of the content to suit the virtual learning tools and environment. Continues assessment also seems to be an efficient tool satisfying the needs of both teaching staff and students. However, students should be aware of the fact that the extraordinary situation will not last forever and thus expectations towards them will gradually increase.

4.5. STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

Coronavirus-related effects have a great impact on students' well-being

The coronavirus outbreak has worsened studying conditions as students are forced to navigate through health and safety issues, isolation, financial instability, and an uncertain labour market in addition to disruptions to their social and living conditions, etc. Some groups, such as international students, students

from socio-economically disadvantaged background, and those who are caregivers or have dependents, etc., are more likely to be vulnerable. However, the full impact of the coronavirus outbreak on university students' mental health and well-being is yet to be fully understood and warrants further investigation.

Most of the universities in the Europaeum network acknowledge that students need additional support these days

Some universities (e.g. the University of St Andrews) have undertaken several initiatives related to student mental health and well-being and have been working with various stakeholders such as national health services, student representatives/societies, private helplines and the community at large. Innovative initiatives such as concessions for students who are parents or caregivers (FU Berlin), providing students with SIM cards with a data plan in order to address the issue of isolation (the University of Bologna) etc., have been taken. New policies and strategies related to stress and anxiety management are also being developed, e.g. at the University of Copenhagen. However, more attention needs to be paid to understanding and addressing the differential needs of students (e.g. gender-sensitive policies).

Students should be encouraged to use mental health support services

Although the majority of the students have experienced stress due to the pandemic, only 7% reported accessing counselling or mental health support services offered by the university. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand why the uptake of these services is low, and any probable issues pertaining to any lack of easy access, correct information, stigma, etc. need to be addressed. Of the students who accessed the university's counselling services, a total 58% were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" (Figure 21).

Teaching staff are usually on the frontline

Professors and lecturers were often the first persons to be approached by students at the beginning of the pandemic with questions related to difficulties in dealing with stress, obtaining various forms of help (financial, psychological, etc.) or to a general overview of the situation and prospective measures to be taken in the future. Mainly it was the international students who looked for opportunities to talk with teaching staff.

Guidelines on how to deal with stress and difficult situations

The survey results showed that despite the fact that many students faced mental problems, very few of them looked for help with mental health support services. Therefore, publishing online guidelines on how to deal with stress may be a significant opportunity for those afraid to look for institutionalized help. Students also commented that the information available on the university websites needs to be widely disseminated through

other channels of communication, that more platforms need to be created by the university for student interactions, and access to one-on-one counselling should be improved.

Social exchange may be provided online

Certain forms of online events could be organized to help students with the socialization process. Some online platforms allow students to have their own avatars in a virtual campus. This makes it easier to move around and have discussions with individuals or smaller groups more flexibly than on platforms such as Zoom or Teams. These have been used effectively at farewell events in some universities. Different online platforms (such as Virbela) already provide virtual conferences and meeting spaces for companies around the world. As well as potential offering more flexible and personal online fora for online learning, these have considerable potential for universities to harness in order to provide social spaces for students who are already struggling to socialise during the pandemic and its restrictions across the globe.

As per the student survey, three-quarters of the total respondents reported to have experienced an increased level of stress or loneliness or other mental health issues due to the pandemic (Figure 19). In addition, the majority of the respondents (69%) reported their mental health affecting their learning experience and outcomes as "quite severe" to "severe" (Figure 20).
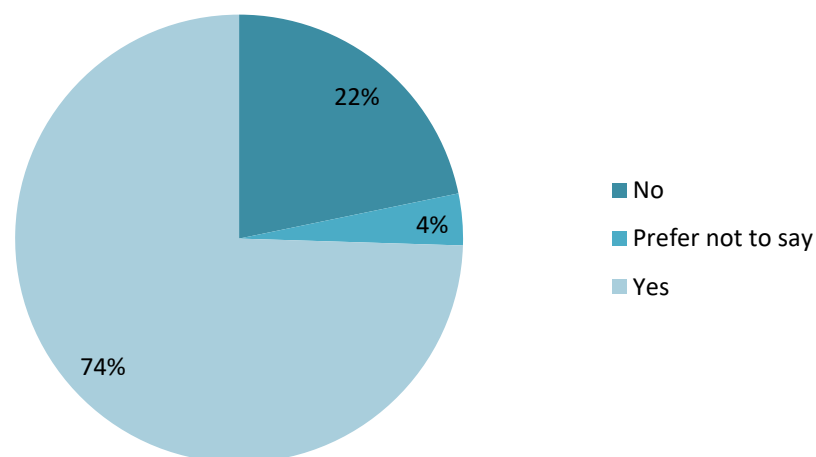
Figure 19. Increase of the level of stress or loneliness or any other mental health issues detected during the COVID-19 outbreak, according to the students.
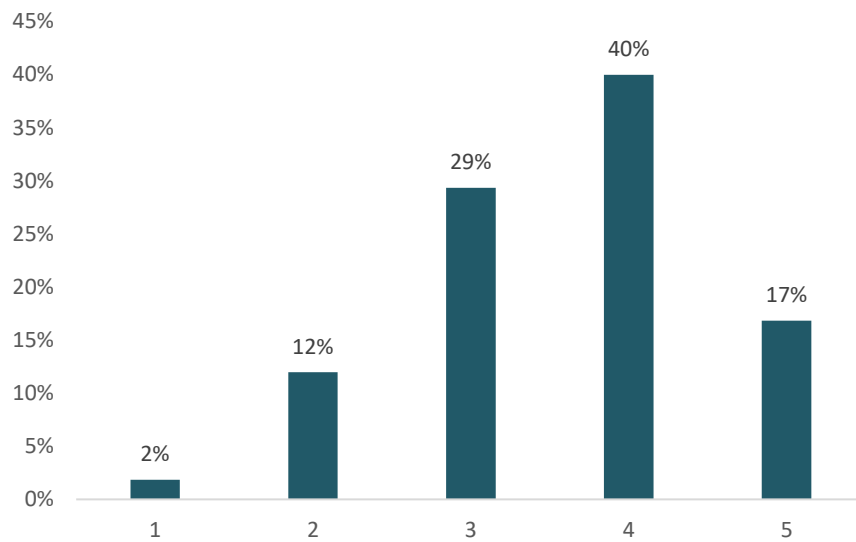
Figure 20. Degree of stress/anxiety according to students´ perceptions on the scale of 1–5 (1 = not very affected; 5 = significantly affected)
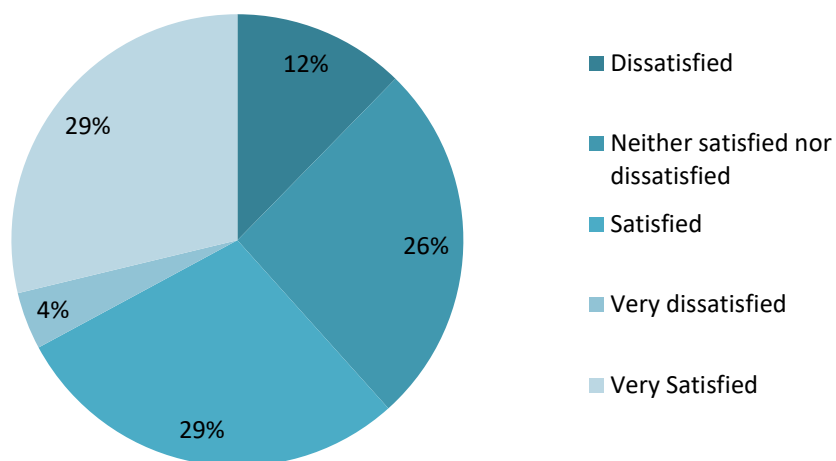
Figure 21. Students´ satisfaction with access to the university's counselling services and/or mental health support during the COVID-19 outbreak.

A large number of students (37%) reported that they mainly relied on family, partner or friends for their mental well-being and support, which was followed by Faculty / Department / College (23%). Interestingly, the student council was reported as the least effective or popular support structure (~1% respondents) (Figure 23).

- Faculty / Department / College
- Classmates / peers
- Student Council
- Student clubs or groups
- Community based networks outside University
- Family / Partner / Friends
- Not Applicable
- Other
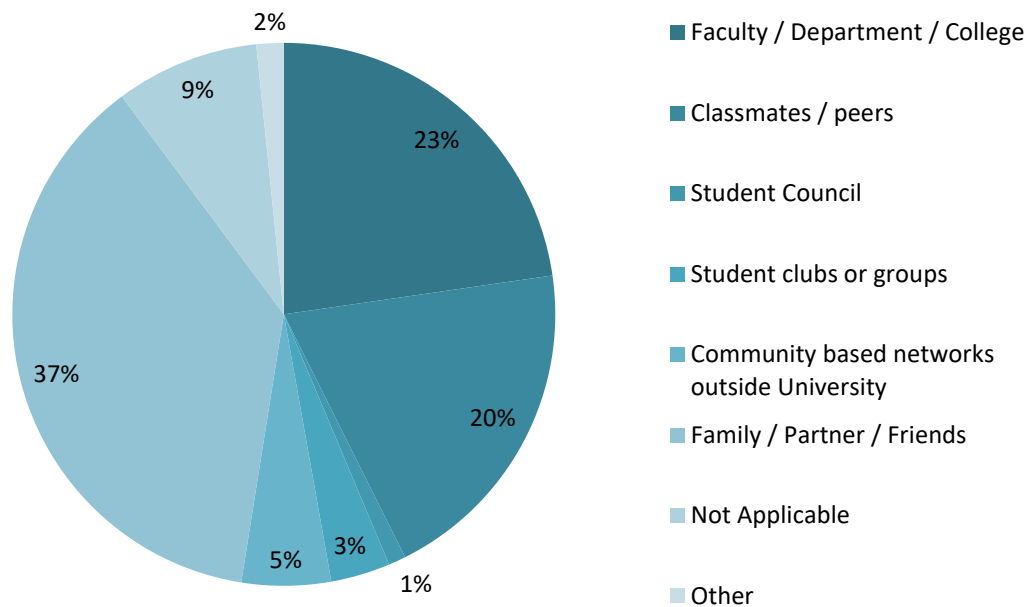
Figure 22. Groups and/or networks detected as helpers with students´ mental well-being.

Policy recommendations

It is recommended that universities pay extra attention to students' well-being and mental conditions. Further research into differential student needs and reasoning for their choices should result in the allocation of additional resources whenever required, and the promotion of uptake of the available services. It is necessary for the future of higher education to understand the sources of students' distress during a time of crisis and to be able to offer them efficient solutions and help.

4.6. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Overall, the local student recruitment has not been affected due to the reputation and image of the universities. In a few cases there have been branding campaigns to convince students of safety measures undertaken at the university during the pandemic, with the purpose of attracting more of them for the upcoming year.

An increase in the number of candidates for national programmes

Universities have reported a significant increase in the number of candidates for the next academic year. In some places, such as Geneva, a new record has been set with 428 confirmed students at the end of July. Universidad Complutense de Madrid was an exception, where recruitment was reduced due to measures to maintain physical distance in the classroom, and to ensure the health of the community.

International students' recruitment is challenging nowadays

Although universities maintained a similar or higher recruitment number of local students, the recruitment of international students has been a challenge for both undergraduates and postgraduates. Universities presented flexibility for international students in case they could not arrive in the country at the beginning of the academic year. Some universities were considering online teaching during the pandemic, with a compensation later in the academic year when the situation becomes better.

Reputation and prestige are important factors in upholding high interest in the university offer

According to the survey and interview results, good reputation and prestige next to programme contents are the major incentives for students when selecting universities for their studies. That gives a privileged position to those institutions with long histories and traditions, but it also imposes a burden and responsibility of indicating the most moral and efficient methods of dealing with the crisis.

Coordination with the government may be required in ensuring arrival of the prospective international students

It was very often mentioned by senior administration staff that a final decision on the arrival of international students may depend on Foreign Affairs ministry discretion or emergency regulations imposed by national authorities. Unfortunately, this results in much uncertainty for the recruitment process of the international students.

Just and equal procedure and proper exchange of documents created one of the major challenges in the recruitment process at some of the universities

Likewise, the digitalization of the admission process has unpredictably been a challenge in some universities. Issues ranging from paperwork to interviews were completely unexpected by the applicants and the universities.

Policy recommendations

The universities are advised to embrace end-to-end digitalization of all the services to improve accessibility by current students, alumni and prospective students. The universities also need to be flexible in terms of

access to programmes by international students who are not able to attend in-person sessions due to travel restrictions. Universities can also think of innovative solutions like a "buddy system" which pairs the incoming students with student representatives or existing students who can address their issues and provide support to candidates of the upcoming academic year. Further coordination with the government should mitigate the uncertainty level in international students' recruitment process.

4.7. FINANCIAL POLICIES

The pandemic represented a difficult situation for the finances of people all over the world, due to the confinements and the consequential closing-down of some of the industries and commerce. However, these circumstances varied from country to country and the impact was different for the universities accordingly. For some of the students COVID-19 represented a challenge when trying to cover their expenses under the stress of this situation. Some universities (i.e. Helsinki, KU Leuven, Geneva) reported that this was not a challenge, and consequently, they did not have to implement any policy to this end.

State-funded universities have a better budgetary situation in the short term, but they are concerned with the long-term pandemic effects

There is consensus that universities subsidized from the state's budget will deal much better with the financial impact of COVID-19 than private universities. The concern is how the macroeconomic situation will affect universities' finances in the future. For that reason some of the state-funded universities switched to a saving mode.

At all member universities additional funding was provided to help students

At all member universities financial policies were implemented to help students to cope with the implications of the pandemic. Some of the funds came from additional governmental support to higher-education institutions (as Catòlica Lisbon and FU Berlin). Also, some of the funds derived from university alliances and other international organisations (Munich). Accordingly, the universities which received funds provided diverse measures to support the students like direct transfers, late payment policies, enrolment cancellations, support for affordable rent, or Internet broadband devices.

Suspension of the university operations caused significant disruption to the universities' income

Due to the suspension of normal university operations many of them lost their income coming from a range of activities such as: short-term rentals, long-term rentals, course fees, etc. At Jagiellonian University this loss was estimated as approximately 4 million Euros (March, April and May).

Adjusting to new circumstances is also very costly

The crisis required additional funds to cover personal protective equipment, scholarships and the extension of research programmes.

In relation to the survey, 31.5% of the students reported financial difficulties due to the pandemic, and 53.9% reported no difficulties.
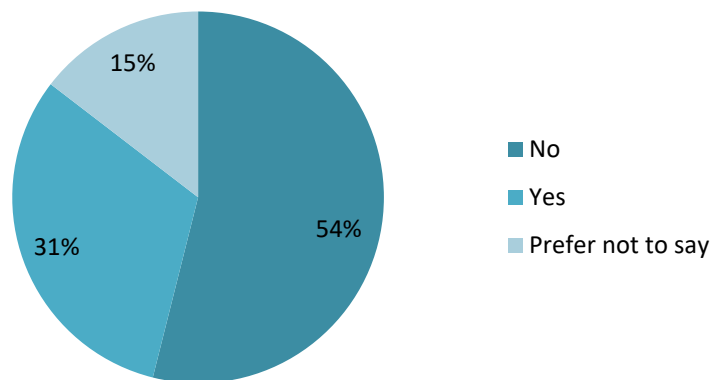
Figure 23. Students' financial difficulties detected due to COVID-19.

In terms of the awareness of students on the policies that the universities implemented on supporting students with COVID-19 related financial issues, 45% reported that they were not aware of these kinds of measures.
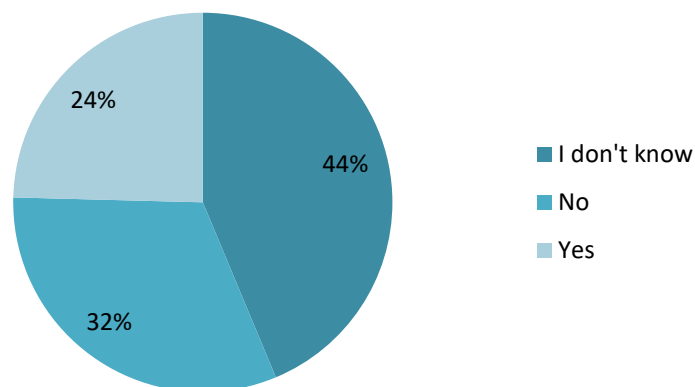
Figure 24. Students´ perception of the implementation of any extra funding for students with COVID-19 related financial difficulties by their university.

In relation to gender policies, most of the students reported there were no gender policies to support them. This is consistent with the qualitative information from the interviews.
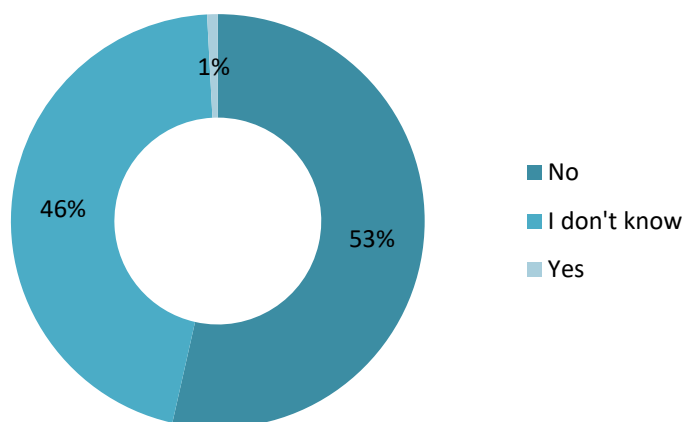
Figure 25. Students´ perception of extra funding differentiated by gender.

Policy recommendations

Considering that many of the universities provided additional financial support to their students, but that the results of the survey showed that most students reported not being aware of these policies, it is recommended that a stronger and more direct communication be implemented so that students know about the help that their universities provide. Universities should also consider the macroeconomic impact of the pandemic and focus on the cash savings for the future.

4.8. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Help for national students abroad and foreign guest students on the spot was one of the first priorities for universities after the outbreak of the pandemic

One of the very first tasks for the universities was to help their students to return home or to ensure that foreign guest students remained safe during the lockdown. It required a lot of work especially in terms of contacting diverse institutions, organizing students' travels, and most importantly, convincing them to return home, which many administrative staff perceived as very challenging. Some students also required financial or psychological support.

Providing study experience for international students is one of the greatest challenges for universities nowadays

Most of the universities are providing an option of online learning to international students who cannot travel to university campuses for the upcoming academic year (2020–21). Universities where a large section of the student body is international, e.g. the University of Oxford, are focussing on providing information and support to international students. However, there is a general consensus amongst the administrators that campus life is really important and in-person teaching cannot be entirely replaced by online platforms. This perception seems consistent with the results of the student survey which shows that a significant number of students (34%) would prefer to study in universities of their own country if their programmes are entirely online.
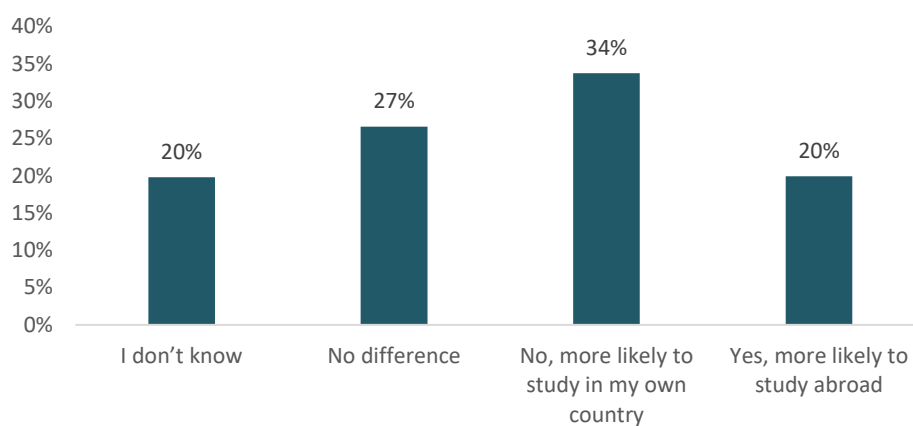
Figure 26. Students' perceptions as to whether they would make different decisions about studying abroad if higher education teaching was to be exclusively delivered in an online format.

In terms of student exchanges, some of the universities are thinking of exploring options for creating digital communities (University of Copenhagen) while others are of the opinion that virtual exchange programmes might not be that appealing to the students and might not be as effective as travelling to the host country (University of St Andrews). The majority of students seem to agree with the latter, as 50% of the respondents said that they would not consider participating in international exchanges and programmes if it were entirely virtual, while 25% said that they would (Figure 27).
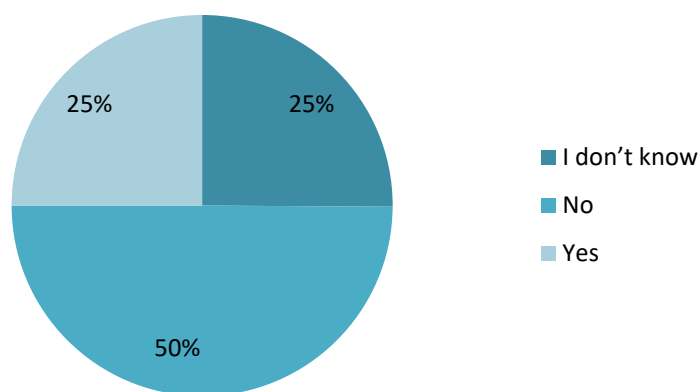
Figure 27. Students' perceptions about whether they would still consider undertaking international programmes (exchanges, Erasmus, etc.) if teaching was delivered online without any in-person experiences.

The pandemic caused a rapprochement and intensification of cooperation and relations with foreign partners

The most important positive effect of the pandemic is the strengthening of international alliances due to the digitalization of all meetings and seminars. Alternative methods of work are one of the key elements to develop the collaboration of universities besides the traditional exchange of students. Networks are working more closely than ever and expect to deepen their connections. In Prague for instance, courses are being designed with other universities in Europe as a "virtual mobility" experience. The idea is that partner universities in other countries can deliver some face-to-face content under the umbrella of Charles University, together with some online content at Charles University. This would imply a new kind of international blended learning experience.

Policy recommendations

It is recommended that a helpdesk or hotline for international students be set up to address their queries or concerns. Students can be provided with a "demo" of how online learning will feel like if they are not able to be on-campus during their first term. Student feedback can then be generated, and appropriate changes can be made to online tools and platforms accordingly. The universities should permit students to travel to countries for exchanges or research purposes on a case-by-case basis, post a thorough risk assessment. At the same time, it is important to design new ways of holding educational and cultural exchanges as travel restrictions might continue to be a challenge for many countries. Digital communities and virtual interactions can be promoted.

4.9. OTHER COMMENTS

Importance of maintaining democracy in the university

Students are usually present on the board of directors of the universities and informed or consulted about internal decisions. Unfortunately in some universities, students were excluded in the consultation or information process since the beginning of the pandemic.

Lower tuition fees

A student suggested that tuition fees should be lowered as it is considered unfair to pay the same amount of money for activities that only require access to the Internet.

Gender concerns

Some students noted a difference in the treatment due to their gender. They did not specify why, but it raises questions regarding the gender inequality that the crisis might have increased or revealed in online education or administrative treatment.

Vulnerability of the international students

Some international students commented on their vulnerability as migrants. Particularly, some doctoral students mentioned several constraints in their roles as researchers, migrants and workers, especially if they are abroad with their families.

5. INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS PER MEMBER UNIVERSITIES

5.1. UNIVSERIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA (LISBON, PORTUGAL)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Catholic University of Portugal (Catòlica or UCP) was officially established in 1967 by decree of the Holy See (Lusitanorum Nobilissima Gens). Currently the Catholic University of Portugal has four campuses: Lisbon (Headquarters), Porto, Braga and Viseu, and enrols 11,371 Students (Degree-Granting Programmes), 7,549 Postgraduate Students (Non Degree-Granting Programmes), 923 outgoing students and 2,673 international students from 99 nationalities (Catolica 2020c).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The Catholic University of Portugal is providing synchronous classes, which have proven particularly effective in reaching out to students with disadvantages or who had to travel back home due to the pandemic. Although it is not the objective to switch the teaching system, some of the activities will remain online. It has been referred that synchronous classes are effective and help students to focus on their subjects; also, the online tools and activities have been helpful in terms of productivity. However, it is also believed that human contact is essential.

Regarding administrative processes, the perception of some students is that the online substitute resources (the main means of communication with authorities and staff) are slowing communication. Accordingly, it is perceived that the tone of the written messages can be easily misunderstood, and in some cases further explanations have been required for clarity. So, in terms of communication, emails and platforms are not proving to be the best way to solve the students' problems in their relations with the administration.

Students also perceive that the "new normal" will probably make some differences in finding a job. They are expecting that this situation will ease the job-finding conditions by adopting a more flexible approach, as long as this does not require any practical on-site work. The general belief is that this is going to make jobs become more adaptable for people and for productivity.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

Portugal initially eased the lockdown on May 2020. Although in the first weeks of the pandemic the country was considered as an example of good management of the situation, cases started to increase immediately after releasing the restrictions.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

Following the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education, Catòlica developed a re-activation plan of academic and non-academic activities. According to article 4 of the Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 40-A / 2020 of 29 May, at-risk groups must remain working remotely, so those groups are exhorted to stay at home. Also, as established in article 13o B of Decree-law no 20/2020 of 1 May, the university required students and personnel to wear a face mask when on campus. Inside the buildings there are sanitizing dispensers and it is recommended that all people in the building sanitize their hands on arrival, after contact with people, before and after removing their masks, when having contact with shared work equipment, before and after meals, after using toilet facilities and at their departure (Catòlica, 2020d).

Administrative measures that have been taken

At the Catholic University of Portugal, a quick reaction was crucial to prevent contagion on the campuses. In February sanitizing dispensers were installed in all public buildings. At the same time the hygiene recommendations and "respiratory etiquette" were communicated. On 11 March in-person classes were suspended in most of the units and transferred to an online model where possible, while occupancy of the facilities was limited and only kept to minimum services. During the second week of May the university started lifting restrictions on the campus. Teaching continued in remote mode while face-to-face sessions were allowed for lab work and experimental classes at the Faculty of Dental Medicine, the Institute of Health Sciences, the School of the Arts and the School of Biotechnology.

Given that this was an unprecedented situation, the adoption of remote teaching and new means of communication provided several lessons on how universities could use information technologies to approach students in adverse circumstances. The online resources were evaluated to remain as an option to increase efficiency and to reach out to students in disadvantaged situations.

The university plans to resume its normal activities gradually. The university will encourage remote activities and teleworking, and is committed to combining in-person activities with online teaching effectively. Also, those classes that cannot be substituted by remote sessions, such as laboratories and practical lessons, will be conducted in compliance with relevant social distancing and health protection measures. For this semester, public examinations and meetings continued by virtual means, as well as all administrative work.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

For the upcoming terms at Catòlica, it was suggested to have a hybrid scheme of teaching, involving both taking in-person classes, but also making the sessions available online. Although this has been a challenging

situation, the Catholic University of Portugal has developed protocols to follow up in future terms, so that students can resume their academic and non-academic activities. For those activities or exams in which it is not considered that online tools are appropriate, there will be in-person options. In such cases participants should comply with the strictest sanitary measures, such as wearing a face mask, keeping 2 metres distance from other people and checking the temperature of students. Rooms should be occupied to one-fourth of their regular capacity, and will require disinfection, cleaning and ventilation between sessions. To use laboratories, it will be required that students and staff follow the hygiene and social distancing rules.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

For the Catòlica University, this situation posed a major challenge. Nevertheless, the institution tried to offer the optimal solutions to the extraordinary conditions under which students had to complete their degrees. For example, for those degrees that required internships as part of the curriculum, the university provided online agreements with the hosts so that students could fulfil their credits adequately.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The Catholic University of Portugal dedicated a section of its website to the issues of care and well-being during the COVID-19 crisis. Here students could find helpful articles on how to deal with stress under the pandemic, as well as how to keep their studies and professional careers on track. Some of the survey responses reflected that a number of students felt frustrated, alone and lacking in motivation to study, and that some even lost track of time during lockdown. This underlines the importance of universities taking proactive measures to support students' mental well-being.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

A decrease in student enrolment is expected to take place, especially for international students. The university is providing all administrative services remotely, hoping that this will help to keep numbers up. In this sense, students are able to reach out to staff via email, the website or by telephone.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Catòlica launched a solidarity fund aimed to help students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The university wanted to reflect their commitment towards the students so that they can pursue their careers in higher education. In this sense, the fund was estimated for €150.000 available to all students financially affected (Catòlica, 2020a).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

For the 2020–21 academic year, the university considered having all services and activities online, in order to retain international students or students abroad. This does not mean that the university will switch to an online-only scheme, but it will rather have both in-person and remote options available.

5.2. FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN (GERMANY)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Freie Universität Berlin was founded in 1948. Currently it enrols 33,000 students in Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes, and 4,000 in doctoral studies. 13% of the students in Bachelor's degrees and 27% of the Master's degree programmes are international students. Freie Universität has 11 academic departments, one joint medical school with Humboldt-Universität, and four transdisciplinary central institutes (FU Berlin, 2020a).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

There was a general perception that the COVID response measures and that the move to online learning would be temporary. The alternative formats for teaching were chosen with a focus on providing stability to teachers and students and maintaining their health and safety. It was also believed that the pandemic had led to improvements in flexibility in the university.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

German states started easing the lockdown on June 2020. At the time of writing the area still observes some measures to safeguard the health of the citizens. Social distancing of 1.5 metres is required, also, it is recommended to cover the mouth and nose with masks or scarves (The Governing Mayor of Berlin, 2020).

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

Freie Universität Berlin has been coordinating its response with the Senate Chancellery–Higher Education and Research and the other universities and colleges of Berlin. Guidelines for the winter semester on how to conduct teaching and allow students to pursue their studies have been approved (FU Berlin, 2020e). According to the State Conference of Rectors and Presidents of Berlin Universities, it is recommended that the Berlin universities continue with in-person teaching, as it is important that universities preserve their spirit as places of physical encounter. The universities in the zone will provide a mix of digital courses and in-person classes so

that students', teachers' and staff health can be secured. A significant number of courses will be offered digitally; the extent of in-presence sessions will vary according to the range of disciplines taught, however, practical teaching formats will be delivered in-person (LKRP, 2020).

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Administrative measures that have been taken

The university had to react quickly in order to adapt the delivery of teaching to the circumstances. Therefore, Freie Universität Berlin appointed a COVID-19 task force with professors and senior administration staff to cope with the situation in the most efficient way. Also, there is a dedicated section of the website that provides information related to COVID-19, which is constantly updated. Until 30 September, classes were being held via online platforms, and all assessments are being conducted remotely as well. Practical exercises and examinations were permitted to take place as long as the applicable hygiene and social distancing rules were observed (The Governing Mayor of Berlin, 2020). Oral examinations were made through video conferences and written exams were either submitted digitally or as a paper term assignment. There are some exceptions to this policy such as exams that cannot be conducted online, and in this case, examinations require the presence of the student.

Events were allowed to take place on campus, however, they were performed under hygiene regulations (max. 30 people) and the required distance between individuals. Also, rooms' capacities have been significantly reduced, and teaching will be prioritized over other activities when allocating space during the 2020/2021 winter semester. A centralized process for coordinating the reservation of study spaces (including in rooms usually used for larger scale events) was introduced to maximize socially distanced workspace available on campus. All administrative operations continued to run normally from May 2020.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

For the 2020 summer semester, some departments offered courses with on-site components that were necessary for students to complete their studies. Other than that, there was no face-to-face classroom

teaching. The winter semester officially started on 1 October 2020 and runs until 3 March 2021. The plans for return are that the courses will continue on a normal length. There will be a mixed scheme of teaching. This will involve in-person classes, but online options will be available for any students who have difficulties in taking the classes in person. Most of the courses that will be held in person involve courses for incoming and graduating students. For international students, there will be special attention regarding the difficult circumstances. The alternative formats for teaching are aimed to provide stability to teachers and students and to maintain their health and safety.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

The university kept practical courses in-person, which allowed students to continue with their education. The sessions were delivered with all due measures of hygiene and safety. However, there were some restrictions for research operations. For example, people who work with equipment that cannot be shut down and/or decommissioned quickly, were told to immediately make preparations for such decommissioning. This was to ensure that the equipment could be shut down as quickly as possible according to protocol in an emergency.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

A good practice created by the University of Berlin was that they provided a leave-permit if the student had to take care of a child or other family member. This was particularly supportive for students who were struggling with the closures of schools in the country. For those students who did not have the necessary equipment or Internet connection to online synchronous classes, the university offered specialized help that could be requested directly from the Student Union.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Applications were open during the months of June, July and August, and for international students who are not able to travel, some online options were provided.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Financial support was provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), which was intended to help students who were having proven financial problems derived from the pandemic, who needed immediate help, and who were unable to overcome their pandemic-related hardship by making use of other sources of support (FU Berlin, 2020c).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

For the winter term the university advises that any students that are required to spend a term abroad as part of their studies, do so at their own risk. In the case of international students who have difficulties taking the classes in Berlin, an online option will be provided. Also, the university has given students the opportunity to postpone studying abroad at Freie Universität Berlin (FU Berlin, 2020b).

5.3. HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO (FINLAND)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The University of Helsinki was founded in 1640. It is the largest university in Finland with more than 31,000 matriculated students of whom approximately 16,500 are studying for undergraduate degrees and 8100 employees, of whom roughly 4600 are teaching and research staff. It is comprised of 11 faculties spread across four main campuses (City Centre, Kumpula, Meilahti and Vikki). It is publicly funded and has an endowment of €634 million.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

At the University of Helsinki there is a perception that the pandemic will have a great impact on scientific research. In particular, that there will be more investment in science and research as a direct impact of the coronavirus disease and that this will in turn create an impetus for greater scientific research in general.

Furthermore, digitalization is going to promote many opportunities for innovation in teaching strategies. For the students, this crisis will change the perspective of higher education and impact their well-being. Thus, the system will have to adapt to provide well-being to the student body.

From another perspective, there is hope that exclusively teaching online does not extend beyond the duration of the crisis. Moreover, they expect that members of the university system will be asked to dedicate a greater proportion of their time and resources to research in the future (this is likely to happen due to pressure from the government).

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

The Regional State Administration announced the decision to close all educational institutions on 17 March and ban public gatherings of more than 10 people. These measures were in place until 13 May. On 15 April

the government-imposed restrictions on travel in the Uusimaa region were lifted. At the beginning of August, Finland had more than 7700 cases accumulated, with 317 active cases and 333 deaths. [update 5 November 2020: 16,902 cases, 359 deaths]

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

At the University of Helsinki there is a perception that the implementation of governmental decisions has been smooth, especially between the faculty of medicine and the government. The university took measures (closure of campuses, working from home, limited gatherings) days before the government introduced the lockdown, and its adaptation to the new enforceable measures happened naturally. However, there was never a committee or a task force to ensure the compliance of the measures.

Despite this, some members of the student body worry about whether the university will be able to sustain its successful response and hope that any additional funds needed for in-kind resources for new students will be made available. The only concern comes from the student body. They are worried about whether the university will have the necessary funds and in-kind resources for the new incoming students that will join the university in the following months.

Administrative measures that have been taken

On 18 March the University suspended in-person activities and moved to telecommuting for staff until 13 April (later extended) with a small number of exceptions. Earlier in March it had implemented a mandatory 14 day telecommuting rule for members of the university returning from abroad and placed restrictions on travel for work or study. From 1 June the university began to reopen, but recommended that remote supervision and teaching continue and extended staff telecommuting until mid-August.

The university set up a recovery plan for university operations. This plan has four stages (Helsingin Yliopisto, 2020):

  — Stage 1: Return to time-critical activities (in line with guidelines of the Regional State Administrative Agencies, including the restriction on gatherings of more than ten individuals):
  o Time-critical research in stages.
  o Compulsory laboratory courses and demonstrations of competence from 14 May.
  o Basic education in the teacher training schools from 14 May.
  o Tasks carried out previously on university premises to ensure the continuity of operations will continue to be carried out.

  — Stage 2: The crisis management team and response centres decide on a discretionary basis about returning to:

- o   Work completed on university premises. (Gatherings of no more than 50 individuals permitted.)

- o   Research: Research work conducted on university premises (upon the decision of response centres).

- o   Public examinations of doctoral theses with consideration given to the number of attendees and restrictions on travel.

- o   Teaching: Critical examinations and field courses (upon the decision of response centres).

- o   Customer service points, independent learning facilities and public attractions based on a site-specific assessment (upon the decision of the crisis management team on the proposal of response centres).

- o   Other tasks that cannot be completed remotely.

⎯ Stage 3: All activities other than public events and mass gatherings:

- o   Research: Research groups to return to normal activities, i.e., all work can be performed in the workplace.

- o   Teaching and other activities can be organized on university premises, excl. public events and large teaching sessions.

- o   Independent learning facilities on a limited basis.

- o   Extended telecommuting arrangements can continue to be used.

- o   Resumption of international activities (including travel) wherever possible

⎯ Stage 4: Normal activities.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

The rapid shifting of face-to-face teaching to online classes was a challenge for everyone at the university. At the beginning, some professors had very limited online teaching experience but during the transition period they have made great improvement.

The biggest challenge for the moment is finding ways to combine online methods that create engaging interactions with the students, whether it is with recorded lectures or live discussions online.

The students also feel that they have suffered from the online learning mode. There is a consensus that some are struggling with the new online methods.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

There were no major changes in the curriculum. The professors and teaching staff had to create new ideas and ways of delivering existing, especially more practical, content. Some professors, however, had to drop

some content that was impossible to deliver online and some courses were interrupted or cancelled for that reason.

For the students, the perception is that the content was simplified. Recorded lectures have not been the best method because they cannot dig deep into the topics and ask questions that come up naturally when studying.

The longer-term impact of these adjustments to the curriculum and teaching delivery are currently impossible to ascertain. However, the task the university now faces is to make sure that students do not lag behind in their studies because they did not receive some content.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The university recognizes that mental health problems have arisen due to isolation and poor working conditions. The administrative staff points out that for some students it has been also an advantage due to the more flexible teaching approach.

Students believe that not having access to their societies is going to hugely impact their well-being; several are already expressing their frustration. Furthermore, some students have been affected economically and that has created more mental health issues.

The university has issued guidelines to all faculty and administrative staff to deal with the situation. Professors are open to talk to the students and they are at the moment sharing experiences so that they can feed the lessons collectively learned into their individual practice. Moreover, the university increased the capacities of the Students' Health Service to help those students in distress.

The students themselves have created online meetings and activities throughout the 250 societies. They were also informing the university administration about both the advantages and disadvantages of its strategies to cope with the well-being of students.

The university itself has worked hard to ensure that the students return to experience a normal "student life" and that a sense of community and connection is created. If the pandemic allows it, they expect to have small gatherings between Freshers, returning students and professors.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

At Helsinki, a radically new way to select new students was implemented. Normally, 100% of places are allocated based on an entrance exam that all applicants sit. For the first time this spring 51% were selected after high school exams and 49% with entrance exams. Although the decision to re-organize recruitment was made

prior to the pandemic, as a result of the "Corona Crisis" some faculties have increased the number of accepted candidates using high school exam results and some faculties decided to develop a two-stage entrance exam; an online exam at first and then a small number of students for a second stage. The second stage involved recording their answers on video. The students had to demonstrate that they were alone in their space and show there was no one around. These recorded answers were graded, and they were selected. There were some technical problems, but very few, with this new method. The challenge was that this method was time-consuming, especially as it was implemented in all faculties The university does not expect to repeat this student selection method.

For students, the rapid change in entrance requirements was also a challenge. They are concerned that these changes are unfair because they were implemented both suddenly and differently for each faculty.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The university has not implemented a large-scale programme for helping students in financial distress (except for international students who pay fees). Normally, this task is the government's responsibility and the students feel they have received the necessary help with more funds.

The pandemic, however, has negatively impacted the research projects in some faculties (natural sciences mainly). The funders of research projects have agreed to extend the duration of the projects but there is uncertainty about how long the extension will be. The Academy of Finland[2] created a new funding instrument focussed on the effects of the coronavirus, this means that there is more funding for the university.

As a preparation for the long-term economic effects of the coronavirus, the university has placed a recruitment freeze for professors and staff. If the faculties want to hire someone, they must get approval from the rector. Moreover, although the faculties are independent units, the university is redistributing funds between faculties that were not affected to those who were affected by the pandemic.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The university has several Master's programmes specifically offered in English to foreign students, which will be taught in online mode in case the students cannot enter the country. New strategies have to be developed in these programs to ensure they can be accessed by the community.

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[2] https://www.aka.fi/en/

OTHER COMMENTS

The university has found that administration staff are better-off working from home than before. Their well-being has increased.

Finally, some students expressed concerns about how the pandemic has impacted the role of students in the internal participatory decision-making process in the university. Before the crisis, students were part of the decision-making body in the university, but since the beginning of the crisis the university has stopped consulting them. The students feel excluded.

5.4. KU LEUVEN (BELGIUM)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Formally founded in 1425, Leuven University (from which KU Leuven was formed in the late 1960s) is the oldest university in the Low Countries[3] and of all the existing Catholic universities worldwide. Today, KU Leuven accommodates 50,000 students, spread across the various campuses in Leuven and elsewhere in Flanders. The University and University Hospitals Leuven each employ almost 10,000 people. For research, KU Leuven ranks among the world's finest. KU Leuven has become a cosmopolitan institution in a rapidly changing urban environment. Its unique profile reconciles cutting-edge science with quality of life and openness to talent.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Even though a mix of live and virtual classes will be organized in the future, the university retains the focus on in-person education. The safety of the students in the 2020-21 academic year is a primary concern. The administrative perception appeared to be that the coronavirus crisis will not diminish the appeal of campus experience in higher education for the students and online learning is more of an interim adjustment than a long-term policy measure. Indeed, the tone of the administrative policies is indicative more in favour of traditional on-campus university experience and undertaking the necessary safety measures in order to deliver it to the students.

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[3] The Low Countries, also called the Benelux countries, consists of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown on the university area

With a population of 11.5 million, Belgium is one of the European nations hardest hit by COVID-19. As of 18 August, 2020, there have been 78,323 COVID-19 cases and 9,939 deaths in Belgium. [update: On 4 November 2020: 453,000 COVID-19 cases and 12,126 deaths] After a period of complete confinement, most of the lockdown restrictions were phased out from the beginning of May to mid-June. However, in mid-July the country experienced a sharp rise in coronavirus cases and the government tightened restrictions. It is compulsory to wear a face mask on public transport, and indoors in public places, with social distancing measures in place.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

The measures introduced by the Belgium Government in mid- March created a challenging situation that forced KU Leuven to suspend normal daily life for the foreseeable future. The university switched to long-distance education, cancelled all large-group events and encouraged the staff to work from home.

The safety measures for higher education in Flanders are subject to a framework working with 'pandemic levels'.

Administrative measures that have been taken

The university is also asking everyone to wear a face mask in indoor settings, including in the auditorium, and during face-to-face tutoring or examinations.

A colour-coded system has been adopted at the University to indicate the "threat level" of the coronavirus. Within KU Leuven, the Executive Board decides on the colour code, which can never be 'lower' colour code than the one established by the local crisis unit of the commune of the KU Leuven campus.

- Zero risk: code green - in case of a successful vaccine or herd immunity
- Low risk: code yellow - low risk
- Medium risk: code orange - fundamental preventive measures are necessary
- High risk: code red - a lockdown (light) is necessary

The framework consists of four pandemic levels which are related to i) organization of teaching and learning and ii) Student housing guidelines. For example, the teaching and learning framework describes ascending levels of restrictions on various parameters based on the colour from green to red. The parameters include - (a) classes in auditoriums, (b) classes in groups, (c) Practicals and lab exercises, (d) Work placements

(internships), (e) Incoming student mobility, and (f) Outgoing student mobility. Similar restrictions are also enlisted for student housing.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Even though distance education and teleworking was adopted to an extent, KU Leuven primarily focussed on in-classroom, on-campus education as much as possible. For the academic year 2019–20, KU Leuven was one of the very few universities from the Europaeum network which conducted on-campus written examinations instead of shifting entirely to online assessment. In order to meet the social distancing requirements, the exams were spread over different campuses and parts of the city. As of June 2020, only 14% of all the exams across the university were scheduled to take place online and this decision was mainly to provide students with a sense of "normality as much as possible in the abnormal circumstances" (KU Leuven, 2020).

As of August 2020, the university is allowing four types of examinations: (a) Written exams on campus or at a location in the vicinity of the campus; (b) Online exams with an oral component; (c) In-person oral examination with a maximum of two students preparing their exam at the same time; (d) Assessments on the basis of written submissions such as an academic paper or Master's thesis, etc.

For the first term of the academic year 2020–21, the university is determined to resume its life back on campus with appropriate safety measures, great caution and plans to reduce activities should the epidemic flare up again. The university has adopted an attitude which stresses the importance of face-to-face education and has planned for practicals, seminars, skills training, tutorials, lab exercises and interactive lectures in groups of a manageable size for the upcoming academic year. Apart from the blended teaching, KU Leuven is also considering a rotation system in the case of some courses i.e. for each lecture, 1/3 or 1/4 of students would be present in the auditorium while others will view it online via live streaming.

On site research activities were particularly impacted by the stricter "reinforced measures" taken by the Belgian government, as almost all of the daily activities were either suspended or transferred online. Lack of access to the laboratories and other resources put significant limitations on the research activities. Although the university tried to provide easier access to publications and academic resources, the importance of open access publications to the scientific community and academia was underlined during this period.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

Overall, there have not been any significant changes in the curriculum, because in-person education remains the primary focus. However, the existing curriculum has been adapted for the hybrid teaching and learning environment and the university plans to continue to hold as many lectures on-campus as possible with a twin strategy of rotation and blended teaching.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

KU Leuven has provided guidelines for mental health and well-being on the university website. The students can contact student services on campus if they want to access counselling services or in case of any queries. The university is linked to the federal public health system and students can get connected to the General Practitioner for medical support. The points of contact for support for staff are their supervisor/manager, HR adviser or the designated confidential network. Tele-Onthaal, a telephone hotline service, can also be accessed by anyone who is in need of a chat. These conversations are anonymous and free of charge.

On 8 May 2020, the university launched a campaign called "KU Leuven has your back (from 1.5 metres away)" in order to offer students a boost of encouragement and support before the start of the study and examination period in June.[4]

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Although the university acknowledges the uncertainty COVID-19 has created in terms of student recruitment, it is hoped that the number of students for the next academic year will be consistent with previous years.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

No major disruptions in the budget are noted. KU Leuven is trying to ensure that the scientific research at the university is largely shielded from the COVID-19 adverse impact. In July 2020, the university received two grants from Research England, totalling £1.5 million, to support two programmes working to dramatically increase the economic value and social impacts derived from university research, both internationally and in the UK.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

KU Leuven has approximately 11,000 international students. The university plans to provide them with an on-campus academic year in 2020–21 with safety measures, i.e. attention to quarantine and testing whenever required. The university is urging students to come to the university campus. Students can rent the university's accommodation which comprises of social bubbles.

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[4]   https://nieuws.kuleuven.be/en/content/2020/ku-leuven-has-its-students2019-back-from-1-5-metres-away

International (Erasmus) exchanges would also be continued, in accordance with the restrictions imposed by exchange partners. However, simultaneously, virtual exchanges are being planned in case of travel restrictions. This will allow the students to follow the courses offered by a partner institution while remaining on a KU Leuven campus, and vice versa. This is being planned in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh and the University of Helsinki.

5.5.   LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN (GERMANY)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU) is a public research university, which is based on several sites across the city of Munich. It was established in 1472. It has 51,025 students, 6017 academic staff, and 8066 administrative staff. It is publicly funded and has a budget of 682 million Euros. It is the second largest university of the student population. LMU offers more than one hundred areas of studies across 20 faculties and has graduated 42 Nobel laureates.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The perception is that the pandemic should not change higher education. There is a belief that higher education should take place in one space, and that is the university campus. At the LMU, the major concern is the danger of replacing face-to-face education with other teaching and learning formats. The university is recognized as a space not just for teaching but also for exchanging ideas and thoughts amongst diverse levels of academia members (professors, students, researchers). There were concerns that without the spontaneous (often informal) conversations that happen across the campus, an important facet of the intellectual environment of the university would be lost.

There is also uncertainty about the long-term positive effects and impacts. The situation is perceived as an incubator for future online training. The future will depend on how countries and universities will use different modes of education with digital technologies applied to it.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

At the beginning of August, the Bavaria State had more than 50,000 cases and 2,500 deaths. [update: At the beginning of November: more than 113,000 cases and 2,800 deaths]. It ranked number 1, as the most affected region in Germany.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

In the State of Bavaria, the measures were taken quickly in March and there was a smooth compliance and coordination between the university and the federal and regional authorities' decisions. Despite the necessary stringent measures taken by the government, LMU had space to develop, within its own procedures, new academic guidelines and policies.

In particular, the first measure was suspending all face-to-face classes at the beginning of March. Later, the authorities ordered the suspension of the beginning of the next academic term until 20 April, and the use of this time as a preparation for online teaching without concerns and uncertainty (Wissenschaftsministeriums, 2020a). There was consensus among universities that cancelling the term was not an option, thus the government gave the universities enough time to prepare, with flexibility and reliability, to the challenges of online education (Wissenschaftsministeriums, 2020b).

From 8 July, the university started reopening its premises in accordance with government guidelines (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München, 2020).

Administrative measures that have been taken

The government formulated a minimum standard with the universities, which were responsible for implementing them on their campuses.

From July, with the new directives from the government, the university adopted the following measures, among others:

— Prohibition of mass gatherings.
— Prohibition of events, including classes, lectures, etc.
— Exceptions granted for work in laboratories or other work that must be in-person, as long as everyone is 1.5 metres apart.
— Small seminars must supplement online teaching (up to 30 people 1.5 metres apart).
— Examinations should be held online but exceptionally in-person with 1.5 metres apart (maximum 8 people).
— Libraries reopened gradually, following social distancing rules.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

The university made the transition to online teaching at the beginning of the pandemic and now is planning to resume activities with a combination of face-to-face and online teaching.

Furthermore, research is normally overlooked when analysing the topic. For instance, doctoral candidates have been largely cut off from their research environment and that has had a significant impact on their work.

A fact unexpectedly revealed by the pandemic, is the inequality gap among the student body. For some, the transition has been smooth, but for others it has been more difficult due to the lack of access to proper technological means, like the Internet.

The pandemic also proved that students did not have to live in Munich, where the costs of living are unaffordable for some of them; instead they could access the online recordings of the classes. In general, there is more flexibility regardless of the challenges mentioned above.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

The perception from the administrative staff and professors is that the transition to online teaching did not greatly affect the content of the classes. Nevertheless, there is a need for preparing everyone (particularly the professors) for these new adaptations so they do not have a long-term impact on the quality of education.

 It is believed that the shift to online learning occasioned by the pandemic will create a new set of competences and opportunities for everyone, and especially for the students. These new skills may give the students a competitive edge in the job market.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

Even though there is more stress for everyone in general, it is not straightforward in that it does not equally apply to everyone. As mentioned before, some students have benefitted from the transition to teaching and learning online.

The professor we interviewed identified some issues that doctoral students in particular have to cope with, for instance, the constraints relating to the deadlines to do research and finish their theses, as well as potential visa issues. However, they largely stressed the financial and technological challenges over potential mental health strategies to deal with the pandemic.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

There is no expectation that the number of national candidates will change. There is concern, however, about a possible reduction in the number of international students if the pandemic continues.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Tuition fees do not apply at LMU. There is additional funding for some students to help them cope with the situation. Furthermore, there are extra funds for research on the coronavirus, as the university is a member of the European University Alliances on Global Health.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The university must abide by the Foreign Affairs Ministry regulations regarding incoming students. In this sense, it is a challenge that they do not have authority to receive students coming from countries that have travel restrictions.

From another perspective, this situation has created an opportunity for the university to broaden its recruitment base within and beyond Europe though developing its online teaching provision. The university also sees potential in expanding academic exchanges beyond Europe. These new experiments on connecting formats are a great opportunity to see how to harness the best out of interacting online.

5.6. THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (GENEVA, SWITZERLAND)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Graduate Institute of International Studies was founded in 1927. It is one of the oldest schools of international relations in Europe. In 2008, the Graduate Institute merged with the Graduate Institute of Development Studies, a smaller postgraduate institution also based in Geneva which resulted in the current Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.

Today, there are more than 1000 enrolled postgraduate students from over 100 countries. Foreign students make up nearly 90% of the student body and the school is officially a bilingual English–French institution. The Graduate Institute's main campus is the Maison de la paix ("House of Peace"), which opened in 2013. The Institute offers following degree programmes: Master of Arts in International Affairs, Master of Arts in Development Studies, Disciplinary Master's degree and Doctorate (Graduate Institute Geneva, 2020b).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

In Geneva a "complete change of the teaching paradigm" was acknowledged as a result of the sudden shift in perception of the remote forms of teaching, especially amongst older, "conservative" professors. This does not mean, however, that it will be a long-lasting impact with new, virtual dimension of university education. It is, rather, a temporary situation, and pandemic has created the momentum to develop the potential of digital tools for use within academia. Therefore, the change in the paradigm occurred out of the necessity of adjusting to new circumstances. "We should not aim at online being new reality of university education. The social aspect is crucial". As one professor emphasised, a pragmatic attitude needed to be taken to the benefits of online learning and those aspects of in-person teaching which could not be replicated online, as university education was about more than course content, but about important interpersonal and transferrable skills.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

By 5 August the number of diagnosed cases had reached 35,746, with 1981 deaths and 31,600 recovered (Worldometer, 2020c) [update: On 5 November: 192,000 cases and 2,275 deaths]. After complete confinement, most of the restrictions have been lifted. It is compulsory however, to wear face masks on public transport and keep to safe distancing. From 6 July 2020, people arriving in Switzerland from certain countries and areas are required to go into quarantine.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

The Swiss Federal Council declared an "extraordinary situation" on 13 March; it ordered the closure of universities and banned gatherings of over 100 people. Policies in Switzerland are set by the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) and Cantonal authorities, making it possible for different Cantons to adopt slightly different measures. From 8 June, universities began to reopen.

Administrative measures

The institute established a unit of coordination which included the director of the institute, the deans, two epidemiologists, the HR director, the administrative director and student representatives. The unit meetings take place once a week. The unit was in constant contact with federal and canton authorities. Sometimes there were difficulties as when recommendations coming from the national and local levels were contradictory. The university advised its community to follow the recommendations of local health authorities and bear in mind the significant difference between recommendation and obligation.

The unit of coordination also proposed the institute's protection plan which describes measures established by the institute to protect everyone's health and to avoid the virus' propagation. The protection plan encompassed a guide to measures and principles at the Graduate Institute which are divided into four areas dealing with all university operations (Graduate Institute Geneva, 2020a):

— S – Substitution
— T – Technique
— O – Organization
— P – Protection

In Switzerland it is a legal requirement for both private and public entities to have their own protection plans. Although the Graduate Institute's plan is very brief, it provides all the staff with basic communication paths and distributes certain responsibilities within the personnel. These plans are necessary to provide security and to give the academic community some feeling of certainty in the uncertain times.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

The Graduate Institute provided students with the survey in order to research their teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Eighty per cent of respondents prefer traditional, in-person teaching over the remote mode. It is worth noting that solutions offered during the pandemic are not typical e-learning tools. Therefore, they were called Emergency Remote Learning tools. These need to be further developed in order to provide students with high quality teaching, which is rather preserved at the moment. In August the institute organized e-learning trainings for its professors. When the pandemic is over the institute wants to keep e-learning tools for prospective students who are not able to attend classes in Geneva or for students with disabilities. Teaching during the winter semester will mainly take place in the hybrid form.

The most neglected aspect of the teaching process during the pandemic has been the social element. Uncertainty was also a significant problem, as knowledge about the virus and the way it spreads continues to develop. This uncertainty stretches across all areas of university life: from concerns about the government's capacity to take sufficient measures to protect its citizens; to frustrations about the continued absence of social interactions; to questions about how the scientific sphere will be impacted.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

There were no major changes to the substance of the programmes. The institute authorities, however, asked professors to be more forgiving in evaluating the quality of student work and the extent of their participation in courses. The main challenge for the teaching staff was to adapt content to remote teaching as all the courses were moved online. There was also opportunity given to students to transform their grades into

PASS/FAIL. After the summer semester no failure would appear in the transcripts. But this was a temporary measure to allow students to adjust to the new circumstances; it will not be replicated in the 2020–21 academic year.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

There was a clear message from institute authorities that there should be no generalization of the students' and professors' reactions. These reactions are very individualized, and this fact should be always be borne in mind.

The institute offered the following forms of student support:

— A student well-being support service: three therapist providing online sessions.
— Financial support: for students facing loss of income, a solidarity fund was estimated for 100,000 Swiss Francs.
— A students' support committee for colleagues in need, i.e. grocery shopping.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

There are no major changes to student recruitment at present. A decrease of 30%–40% in the number of enrolments was expected, but surprisingly IHEID broke the record with 428 new students confirmed by the end of July. Amongst many reasons for this situation, one was the perception of Switzerland being a safe place to live. Good reputation and prestige also help universities in attracting students, and whereas some Europaeum universities risked being adversely impacted by the perception of their national government's poor response to the pandemic, this is not the case in Switzerland.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The Graduate Institute is a private foundation but 40% of its budget comes from Swiss authorities. The main part of its income, however, comes from internal resources such as accommodation income and tuition fees.

The interest in students' admission increased during the pandemic so the institute decided to keep to the same level of tuition fees: 8000 francs per year. No major disruptions in the budget due to the pandemic were noted.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Eighty per cent of the institute students come from abroad. During the crisis it was very challenging to establish who amongst the students was in Geneva and who was not. During the spring semester no students

from Switzerland went outside the country to participate in any exchange programmes. However, 400 PhD students were carrying out their fieldwork. In those cases where institute help was required, the institute reacted immediately. For instance, two PhD students needed help in Columbia during their field research. The Graduate Institute paid for their air tickets and transferred money for their everyday expenses.

5.7.   UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID (SPAIN)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) is a public research university located in Madrid. Founded in Alcalá in 1293 (before relocating to Madrid in 1836), it is the oldest university in Spain and one of the oldest universities in the world. It enrols over 70,000 students, being the third largest non-distance European university by enrolment. It is located on a sprawling campus that occupies the entirety of the Ciudad Universitaria district of Madrid, with annexes in the district of Somosaguas, in the neighbouring city of Pozuelo de Alarcón.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Generally speaking, the pandemic's impact on the Complutense University of Madrid can be appreciated as a permanent change in the higher education sector, with an introduction of new digital tools into the learning and teaching processes. However, digital technologies are only complementary to traditional teaching. Students, academics and senior administrative staff agree that in-person teaching is the past, but also the present and future of education. In this sense, digital tools may remain in some aspects such as tutorials, administrative processes and even some meetings, but will be only a complementary tool during teaching processes.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

According to official data provided by Spain's Health Ministry, by 30 July 2020 there were 288,522 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 28,445 deaths and about 150,000 recovered people in Spain [update, 5 November: 1.28 million cases and 38,118 deaths]. Regarding the specific situation of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, there were more than 74,886 confirmed cases and about 8,451 deaths, which have made this area one of the most affected ones in the country together with the region of Barcelona (Ministerio de Sanidad de España, 2020).

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

The Complutense University of Madrid has its own regulations but, like all universities in Spain, it is linked to the Autonomous Community regulation and, beyond this, to the National Policies.

In this regard, all teaching and learning activities at all educational levels were suspended on 10 March 2020 in the whole Community of Madrid by the regional government (Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2020). Initially, this measure was going to be taken for 15 days. However, the declaration of the State of Alarm by the Spanish Government on 14 March 2020 until 21 June 2020 considerably prolonged the initial confinement (Ministerio de la Presidencia, Relaciones con las Cortes y Memoria Democrática, 2020). This situation forced the migration of such activities to online modes.

Once the initial State of Alarm[5] was lifted, the Complutense University, together with the CRUMA (Conference of Rectors of the Public Universities of Madrid), organized the 2020–21 academic year in a way that guaranteed the health security of the entire university community following all the recommendations provided by the Health Ministry and the regional government of the Autonomous Community of Madrid.

Administrative measures that have been taken

Following the recommendations and the regulations provided by the Regional Authorities and secondly by the National Government, all in-person activities were suspended from 10 March to 21 July. In the beginning, teaching and learning activities were suspended for only 15 days. After this period however, due to the increase in diagnosed cases, all in-person activities (teaching, learning, researching and administrative issues) were moved to virtual modes.

Major decisions undertaken by the university authorities (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020b) included:

— Extension of the academic calendar until the end of May 2020.
— All the assessments and evaluation processes were suspended and developed online.
— Doctoral thesis defences were suspended and they were expected to be restored from September in the virtual mode.
— Grades' and Masters' tutorials and other tutorials were held online as far as it was possible.

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[5] In Spain, there are three degrees of state of emergency (*estado de emergencia* in Spanish): *alarma* (alarm or alert), *excepción* (exceptional circumstance) and *sitio* (siege). They are named by the constitution, which limits which rights may be suspended, but regulated by the "Ley Orgánica 4/1981" (Organic Law).

— Learning and teaching activities were developed through the Virtual Campus and other virtual platforms chosen by each faculty/department/teacher—for example, Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Bb-Collaborate.

— All external practices (curricular and extracurricular) that students were developing in companies or institutions were suspended, except for those cases in which the academic tutor guaranteed that the training programme had been fulfilled and cases where the nature of the practices allowed their virtual development.

— Research processes continued, even in laboratories which required in-person activities. However, telecommuting was promoted whenever it was feasible.

— Cultural and sports activities remained suspended.

— All conferences, congresses and training courses were moved online if it was possible.

— All administrative processes were suspended from 14 March to 1 June 2020 and, beyond this period, they were progressively recovered through the use of digital certificates and in some in-person registration offices.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

For the 2020–21 academic year, the university has adopted policies that guarantee the health security of the entire university community. For this, the following principle has been followed: "maximum attendance in classes with flexibility by Faculties and by degrees, and switching to online teaching if sanitary conditions require it". Everything will be executed following already-established health and organizational protocols, especially the 1.5-metre distance between people and the proper use of face masks.

In general, at the Complutense University, a bimodal or blended teaching will be implemented, combining face-to-face classes, online classes and retransmitted classes. This means that on a normal class day there will be students who physically attend lessons in the classroom and others who will do so online. Each faculty has taken specific measures and has been given a certain freedom for designing a specific plan to implement this bimodal or blended teaching regarding their specific needs (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020d).

Taking all this into consideration, the Complutense University of Madrid has declared that:

"The Complutense University of Madrid is not an online university. Rather, it is a face-to-face university, and for good reasons. One of these reasons is that going to university is more than the obtaining of a degree. It is a stage where one grows as a person, meets many people and lives many experiences, participating in university life, in its management, in its cultural and sports activities, interacting with other colleagues and learning from them. The Complutense University is full of people rich in knowledge and experiences from whom much can be learned. (…) Not everything can be digitized and broadcasting face-to-face classes is not a substitute for classroom attendance. Teachers principally ask and interact with students who are present.

Students who are not physically present in the classroom can interact too, but not with the same intensity or in the same way as their face-to-face counterparts. Also, some practices cannot be taught remotely, and students are required to attend and participate to acquire the relevant experiences from them." (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020d)

This idea is hugely supported by the whole community, including teachers, researchers, directors and students, who have extensively claimed the importance of face-to-face education to guarantee the interaction and students' engagement in the learning process.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

Taking into consideration that the vast majority of the past in-person activities and curricular practices were cancelled, the university developed an extraordinary system of recognition of credits for undergraduate students (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020e). To minimize the impact of this crisis on them, the recognition of such credits was approved by obtaining diplomas or accrediting documents by participating in online courses developed on various platforms, such as Coursera, Google Actívate or other conferences or courses offered online by the Spanish universities.

Assessment processes were moved online during the State of Alarm at a National Level, so the final assessments were digitalized through different modifications: evaluation was done through final works and practices instead of final exams in the vast majority of the cases. Nevertheless, some of the assessment processes took place through the virtual campus in a more traditional way; that is, tests and traditional exams were moved online. These processes have raised some doubts and complaints between the student bodies, especially regarding their privacy, as they were sometimes recorded during the examinations (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020g).

The university administration anticipates that online examination will be used if needed, but each faculty has the right to choose the most appropriate method as far as health security measures are followed. When it comes to curriculum adjustments, the same applies: each faculty is able to adapt its training and evaluation plan to guarantee the quality of teaching and learning processes, as they have designed a hybrid model which in the worst-case scenario, can be migrated to the virtual sphere—including the assessment processes. At the same time, this model would become a 100% in-person model if the coronavirus effects were mitigated at some point.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

When it comes to student well-being and support, the spotlight was especially centred on technological and psychological support.

With the closure of the campuses, most of the students went back to their family homes, sometimes located far away from Madrid and, in many cases, in rural areas without a proper connection to the Internet. In other cases, although some students stayed in Madrid, they were suddenly sharing 24 hours of their time with their whole family in the same house. This fact, and the whole sanitary situation (relatives infected, deaths, etc.), caused huge uncertainty in the whole society, but also the student body. This uncertainty caused anxiety and stress episodes which the Complutense University tried to mitigate by PsiCall, a psychological helpline (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020h).

Student anxiety and uncertainty was sometimes more related to assessments and the learning and teaching methods than exclusively to the health situation. The student body, together with the teachers, has developed more effective communication through the official university authorities to try to alleviate the aforementioned uncertainty and anxiety. Nonetheless, the administrative body of the Complutense University has remarked that this situation has been extraordinary and that the decisions have been taken as quickly as it was possible considering the regional policies and the national decisions taken.

Regarding the technological support, the Complutense created a "Student´s needs mailbox", where students experiencing problems to access technological resources or experiencing any digital gaps were invited to notify their cases (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020a). However, it is important to note that giving a solution to the whole student body has been a huge deal taking into consideration its dimensions. This is, in fact, an issue the university is still working on. Namely, a major problem is that there are not enough resources (e.g. number of computers) to be lent to the whole of the student community.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Despite the pandemic, UCM has been the most sought after university in the Autonomous Community of Madrid this year due to its high reputation—25,229 students have pre-registered for the 2020–21 academic year, while the number of places assigned by the university for the new students is 15,776 (El Economista, 2020). Regarding its internationalization, this university has more than 7000 international students, which represents around 10% of its student body (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020c).

Nevertheless, due to the coronavirus outbreak and the new capacity restrictions, the number of newly enrolled students per degree has been reduced to guarantee in-person lessons and their quality.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The ordinary budget of the University Complutense of Madrid depends directly on the Government of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. There is thus uncertainty on whether the budget will be increased, and a concern that the general incomes of the university will be reduced due to the decreased numbers of new

students and cancellation of in-campus events: traditionally, the university has rented its premises for different purposes (conferences, music events, exhibitions, etc.), which represent an important income to the Complutense.

Despite the present situation, the Complutense has given some support to students affected by the COVID-19 situation: permitting the late payment of tuition fees, enrolment cancellations and other extraordinary financial aids to continue students' studies and to offset tuition fees (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2020f).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Complutense is dealing with international programmes as usual, but taking into consideration the Government´s restrictions. Although it is trying to keep as many international programmes as possible, the University Government is aware that it will be very difficult to maintain them if lockdowns are imposed again. This uncertainty about the whole situation has clearly resulted in a reduced number of requests for international programmes, especially in the first semester of the next academic year.

5.8.   ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITÁ DI BOLOGNA (ITALY)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The University of Bologna (Alma mater studiorum - Universitá di Bologna) is a public research university, considered to be the oldest university in the Western world having been formally founded in 1088. It is structured in a multi-campus way and has five campuses in Bologna, Cesena, Forlì, Ravenna and Rimini. Since 1988 it has had permanent headquarters in Buenos Aires, Argentina, which is in charge of studying the integration processes between Latin America and the European Union. Nowadays, the university enrols 87,758 students, 3079 international students from abroad on exchange programmes, and 3341 students enrolled at UNIBO who spent a study period abroad in 2016.

The University of Bologna offers 221 degree programmes and 78 international degree programmes, 62 of which are taught in English (Universitá di Bologna, 2019).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

After a heavy outbreak of COVID-19 in the Emilia-Romagna region, the situation in Bologna seemed to be increasingly under control. At the time of writing it is generally expected that the city will return to normality within the next few months. In this sense, the perception on the impact of the pandemic and the subsequent

lockdowns was more focussed on returning to in-person classes, but with many lessons learned in a very short time on the utility of online tools and digital technologies. The approach is aimed at a hybrid model where the students can have interactions and experiences from university life. Although the university is not becoming an online university, it is acknowledged that with the new modalities provided online some groups of students can benefit. These groups include students with disabilities, working people, parents, and students with restrictions on attendance to the campus.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

The impact of the pandemic on the northern regions of Italy was tremendous. As of early August, the Emilia-Romagna region accumulated over 30,000 cases (Protezione Civile, 2020) which made it the region with the third highest number of cases [update, 5 November: 62,986 cases and 4,468 deaths]. Therefore, some strict sanitary measures were taken to contain the outbreak. Within the region a return to educational activities would be allowed from 1 September, with some restrictions. Specifically, the university of Bologna, in line with guidelines from the WHO, the Ministry of Health and Regione Emilia-Romagna will follow the following rules: students must frequently clean their hands with sanitizer or soap; they must wear a mask in enclosed public spaces; avoid touching their faces; avoid gatherings; keep at least one metre from other people; and report immediately if they have any symptoms (Universita di Bologna, 2020).

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

From January 2020, when the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 disease a pandemic, the country had to implement restriction on activities in order to contain the pandemic (Governo Italiano, 2020). As it was a novel virus, the governments and educational institutions had to react quickly and with little information. As soon as the numbers of cases started to rise swiftly, by 4 March, the Government of Italy announced that schools and universities in the whole country would temporarily close (The *Guardian*, 2020) due to the COVID-19 outbreak. It was expected that the restrictions would last until the middle of April, however the situation required that the containing measures remained in place much longer.

Towards the end of June, universities started partially re-opening campuses. With the decree of 7 August (Emilia-Romagna govt., 2020) particularly in the region of Emilia-Romagna, the resumption of educational activities, including university courses, was allowed from 1 September, excluding artistic, music and dance teaching. However, educational trips and exchanges are temporarily suspended, in order to maintain social distancing. Remote teaching should also be available to disadvantaged groups of students, due to some special need such as a disability or other special circumstances. This situation presupposes a major challenge to the education sector in Italy, in order to continue providing integrated, quality training.

Administrative measures that have been taken

Although it is not the aim to change the nature of the university, most of the activities were provided on a remote basis, using online platforms and synchronous classes. This situation forced the university to reconstruct the classrooms and make them suitable for providing online teaching tools. Also, the pandemic required a very quick reaction from the university authorities.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

On 22 February the university had to shut down in-person classes and go online that very week. By 24 February 70% of the lectures were already online. They decided to go online in a synchronous mode using the Microsoft Teams platform. By March 2020, the 3667 courses related to the 221 programmes were already running remotely. During April and May, more than 12,000 examinations were developed and 10,000 students were graduated under a complete lockdown. Although all teaching activities were moved to the online modality, in terms of research, the activities remained in hybrid form.

At the time of writing (mid August 2020), the University of Bologna is currently organizing in-person classes based on what they believe to be the most probable situation at the start of the 2020–21 academic year. They are considering two scenarios: 1) everything returns to normal and 2) the lockdown continues. Some of the remote measures will remain but they will try to keep the classes in-person, because it is considered that the interaction of the students with the university and with the city is crucial for the students' learning experiences.

For the first semester of the academic year 2020–21, the University of Bologna will be offering a blended teaching scheme, which will allow activities to take place in the classroom, but which also will make them available for remote access. Due to the need for immediate adaptation back in the spring, any adequacies in online teaching that probably under different circumstances would have taken years to implement, are now available after only a few months of lockdown. For the past months the University of Bologna has been working on the infrastructure of the classrooms, implementing technological infrastructure that can comply with the needs of social distancing requirements.

Recognizing the situation as challenging has helped the teaching staff to rapidly improve their teaching methods (Universita di Bologna, 2020). In order to provide the students with everything needed for attending their classes and, at the same time, to cope with the health regulations, the university is developing an app for the students. This application will help in organizing the schedules and modality of attendance for each student, and it will be kept constantly updated.

In terms of graduations and exams, it is expected that these will be resumed in September; these activities however, will be available online as well. Internships and other professionalization schemes are currently

managed remotely, and the return to in-person activities will be considered by each of the departments separately. It is allowed within the region to resume activities on-site, nevertheless, the students will have to check the specificities with her/his department and the company or host.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

Notwithstanding the unexpected crisis that the pandemic implied for universities and other higher education institutions, the situation provided an opportunity to rethink the arrangement of the courses. In particular, the limitations on occupancy of the rooms has produced considerations of a re-arrangement of the subjects, so that the students can alternate the courses and take in-person classes that cannot be replaced by online sessions, such as laboratories, fieldwork and other tasks.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

During the COVID-19 emergency situation, the services of the Psychological Support Service (SAP) were being held online. The service is free for all university students and young people between 20 and 28 years old covered by the Health Authority (AUSL) of Bologna (Universita di Bologna, 2020). In recognition of the relevance of cultural activities to the well-being of students, events and museum exhibitions were made available for virtual visits. This has allowed the students to continue being in touch with culture and entertainment.

Also, to support students with connectivity problems, an innovative solution was that the University of Bologna provided SIM cards with a monthly data plan of 100 gigabytes. For the next academic year it is planned that students will be able to apply for transportation help, which includes bicycles to subsidies for public transport.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The University of Bologna has adopted several measures aimed at ensuring that the pandemic does not deter enrolment. It will allow students to complete the entire application process online. Applicants will be able to take the TOLC test (required to apply to many restricted-access degree programmes) remotely via an online platform. The technology of the site allows a controlled and secure environment so that students can sit their tests anonymously, but can later be identified.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The University of Bologna has received additional funds to cope with the crisis caused by the pandemic. Accordingly, the university has offered help for students who are facing financial difficulties due to COVID-19

circumstances. The funds are available for all students currently enrolled on the 2019–20 programmes. Additionally, applications can be submitted online for free. Other emergency responses include special applications for grants, additional support for finishing their credits and flexibility on accommodations contracts (University of Bologna, 2020).

At the same time, the Municipality of Bologna has provided some funds in support of affordable rent. In this sense, there are some incentives to property owners to offer rental contracts at affordable prices for students, and also to make the rentals available for short-term periods.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

For the remaining part of the academic year 2019–20, all the teaching activities and services were available online, meaning that students who left the country were able to attend lectures and take examinations remotely. For the academic year 2020–21, lectures and exams will be also guaranteed online, in case there are any restrictions due to COVID-19. A mixed teaching mode will be applied, to the benefit of international students and other students who cannot attend the classroom. Providing remote solutions is of very high relevance, for more than 40,000 students come from outside their region and there are about 10,000 international students enrolled, so not everybody will be able to travel to Bologna.

5.9.   UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD (UNITED KINGDOM)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

As the oldest university in the English-speaking world, Oxford has over 5,000 members, including academic staff, heads and other members of governing bodies of colleges, and senior research, computing, library and administrative staff. The central university is made up of many different sections, including academic and administrative departments, libraries and museums. There are roughly 100 major academic departments, which are overseen by the four academic divisions: medical sciences; mathematical, physical and life sciences; humanities; and social sciences. There are 39 Oxford colleges, which are financially independent and self-governing, but relate to the central university in a kind of federal system.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The university is cognizant of both the positive and negative effects which the coronavirus pandemic has or will bring upon it in the future. However, it is cautiously optimistic in terms of opportunities which the crisis has presented in terms of higher education, especially for research and academia. The prestige of online

academic courses has increased, and more academicians are now open to the idea of teaching online. This can provide an impetus for collaboration across sectors and geographical boundaries.

Perceptions of the pandemic among Oxford students and its Student Union have been shaped by the distinctive collegiate structure of the university. Although safety measures are implemented university-wide, colleges and their respective student bodies guide and influence many policies relating to student activities and socialization. Colleges vary in their organization, priorities and resources, and so the perception of how well the university has responded to the pandemic varies to some degree across colleges. It might be pertinent for the university to address the question of a more uniform student experience across colleges during the pandemic.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

The UK government imposed lockdown measures in England on 26 March 2020 and extended them on 16 April, 7 May and 28 May. The lockdown was eased in three steps over the period 11 May to 4 July 2020. The university has been following all the national guidelines related to safety and social distancing measures.

Administrative measures that have been taken

The University of Oxford has developed various responses to the COVID-19 crisis based on the university's existing Crisis Management Framework, which pulls together key individuals to deal with a crisis from across the collegiate university; it provides a clear decision making structure that is adaptable to specific circumstances. The university implemented this framework early in 2020, setting up Silver (tactical) and Bronze (operational) groups and subsequently set up several separate groups to develop policy and operational plans e.g. an Education Steering Group and a Business Continuity Planning Group to feed into the Bronze and Silver groups.

At the time of writing, the university is currently developing a detailed plan for the upcoming academic year for measures which will be put in place to minimize the risks to staff and students. The university's measures are informed by an expert advisory group made up of Oxford clinical academics as well as government guidance. The measures will evolve with new research, evidence and in alignment with the national policies. The principles which will guide the preparation of detailed plans are three-fold:

— Testing service: The university, in collaboration with the NHS, is implementing an in-house COVID-19 testing service to supplement NHS provision, so that all academic and non-academic staff and students of the university and the colleges can have easy access to a COVID-19 test if they think they have symptoms. This will provide assurance to them, and their families, that any new case of COVID-

19 at the university will be identified, and action taken to prevent transmission, at the earliest possible moment. This service will also help protect the local community, and ensure that the university does not put an extra burden on local NHS facilities as it welcomes the students and staff back to the university in the autumn. It will be operational by September, when students start returning to Oxford for the new academic year.

— Protective measures: The testing service will form part of a comprehensive health regime that will operate across university and college buildings and facilities, in which ensuring the safety and well-being of all staff and students is paramount. Protective measures will be in place as buildings re-open, and will include hygiene and maintenance of shared facilities, and social distancing in indoor spaces such as libraries. From the start of the new academic year, face coverings will be required during face-to-face teaching and in indoor shared spaces, with exceptions for both individuals and settings where they are not appropriate (for example on grounds of disability). A consultation is planned to determine the operational details.

— Support for health and well-being: A codified set of guidelines is under development to make clear the expectations and behaviours the university will ask of the students. The university and colleges will support all those who work and study there in adhering to government guidance, and in taking the steps necessary to maintain their health and well-being.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Post-March 2020, the university quickly and successfully transitioned to online teaching for full time programmes and examinations. However, from September 2020, it is planning to conduct some in-person teaching sessions in adherence with public health safety measures. For laboratory-based programmes, the total number of hours in labs have been reduced while the teaching days are extended.

However, for some of the part-time courses, sessions for the final term (Trinity) of 2019–20 were either cancelled or postponed. This seems to have disrupted the course schedule of students who are enrolled on these courses.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

The curriculum has undergone minimum changes, mainly in terms of content adjustments. Since the learning environment is expected to be largely online for the academic year 2020–21, a degree of simplification of courses is being undertaken. However, this interruption is being perceived as a positive as it has presented the departments and faculty with an opportunity to cast a critical look at their curricula. This also can be used to address the criticism of less diversity and internationalism in traditional programmes.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The University of Oxford is undertaking the following measures for student well-being:

— Planning for the grouping of students in "households" in college accommodation where they share high-contact facilities such as bathrooms or kitchens.

— Supporting students in college accommodation who are required to self-isolate. Students living in private accommodation will self-isolate at that accommodation, but some welfare support will be available where appropriate.

— Supporting international students in the event they have to self-isolate upon arrival in the United Kingdom.

— Ensuring online teaching is available for students who are unable to take part in face-to-face teaching.

— Supporting staff: Any member of staff who has concerns about the risks will have the option of a discussion with their Head of Department, manager or relevant College senior staff member about their particular circumstances and concerns. Academic staff in colleges should raise these issues with their Senior Tutor or Head of House. Risk mitigations will include the possibility of teaching remotely for academics.

— Providing additional support for those working from home for extended periods of time, including guidance to assist staff on home working furniture and set-ups, advice for staff and managers on how to work effectively as part of a remote team, and additional well-being resources.

— Recognizing the pressures and increased workload that are affecting many staff across the university, and exploring options for addressing those issues.

The senior management at the university also engaged with the Oxford Student Union in order to provide better well-being support to the students. The university also collaborates with the City Council for a larger involvement with the community.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Oxford has around 3,300 undergraduate places and about 5,500 graduate places each year. As of 28 July 2020, the university was expecting an increase in the number of new students for the upcoming academic year 2020–21. Even though there have been rising concerns about A-level and GCSE results in the UK, some of the Oxford colleges such as Pembroke and Worcester, have already issued public statements with a decision to admit all the offer holders despite their results.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The university has developed a contingency plan with emergency budget savings and operating expenses for the short-term, while building cash reserves and endowment funds for the long-term. The university also utilized government's coronavirus Job Retention Scheme which, at the time of writing, was due to close on 31 October 2020.

The university also provided financial support (up to £1000) to students who were adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Individual colleges also offered financial support (differential amounts) through their respective hardship funds on a case-by-case basis.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

One third of the students at Oxford, including 17% of undergraduates, are international citizens, and come from over 150 countries. The university had expected the international student numbers to decrease for the next academic year. However, so far, the numbers seem to be pretty consistent with previous years' intake.

5.10. UNIVERSITAT POMPEU FABRA (BARCELONA, SPAIN)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Pompeu Fabra University (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, UPF), is a public university in Barcelona, Spain. It was created by the Autonomous Government of Catalonia in 1990. It is composed of eight different faculties which are located in three separate campuses, each associated with its own area of knowledge: Social Sciences and Humanities (Ciutadella Campus), ITC and communication sciences (Poblenou Campus) and Health and Life Sciences (Mar Campus). It has about 12.700 students, approximately 10.000 of them being enrolled on undergraduate derees and 2.700 undertaking postgraduate studies. (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020h).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The pandemic's impact on the Pompeu Fabra University is perceived as a permanent change in higher education, as it means the improvements on flexibility for the learning and teaching processes through the use of some digital tools. However, there is a general feeling that digital technologies are only complementary to traditional teaching. Students, academics and senior administration staff agree on the importance of in-person education once the health crisis is under control. In this sense, digital tools may remain in some

aspects such as tutorials, administrative processes and even some meetings, but will be only a complementary tool during teaching processes.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

According to official data provided by the Health Ministry of Spain, by 30 July 2020 there had been 288,522 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 28,445 deaths and about 150,000 recovered people in Spain [update, 5 November: 1,28 million cases and 38,118 deaths]. Regarding the specific situation of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, there have been more than 76,332 confirmed cases and about 5682 deaths, which have made this area one of the most affected regions in the country together with the region of Madrid (Ministerio de Sanidad de España, 2020).

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

The Pompeu Fabra University has its own regulation but, like all universities in Spain, it is linked to the Autonomous Community regulation and, beyond this, to the National Policies.

Nevertheless, although the Spanish Government did not declare the State of Alarm until 14 March 2020, the Pompeu Fabra University decided to proceed with the closure of its campuses by 11 March, thus suspending all in-person activities on 13 March. In this sense, the university anticipated the scenario, and its government decided to suspend face-to-face academic activity: "the UPF government did it without intending to break the scrupulous agreement we have with the government health authorities. The situation forced us to accelerate the providing of solutions regarding our academic structure, which was due to start with the evaluation period in undergraduate studies" (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020d).

The coherence of this decision was supported later by the declaration of the State of Alarm by the Spanish Government on 14 March 2020 until 21 June 2020, which considerably prolonged the initial confinement of in-person activities regarding all university aspects (Ministerio de la Presidencia, Relaciones con las Cortes y Memoria Democrática, 2020). This situation forced most of the activities to be facilitated in online mode. Despite the uncertainty of the situation, the Pompeu Fabra managed to give an organized response for the problem, setting up its monitoring group on 27 February, consisting of Ramon Villanova, vice-rector for university community project management, and Jaume Badia, UPF general manager, and dozens of management heads from all university departments. This allowed the situation to be analysed and decisions to be taken to manage the crisis (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020f). Nevertheless, it is important to note that some students had highlighted some problems regarding the communication of the undertaken decisions through the social media.

After the State of Alarm was rescinded, the Pompeu Fabra University has organized the 2020–21 academic year in a way that guarantees the health security of the entire university community following all the recommendations provided by the Health Ministry and the regional government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia.

Administrative measures that have been taken

Following the recommendations and the regulations firstly provided by the Regional Authorities and secondly by the National Government, all in-person activities were suspended from 13 March to 21 July.

The academic year of the Pompeu Fabra University is divided into three terms (instead of two semesters). This is important, since the closure of its campuses took place during the second term examinations, and all the assessments and evaluation processes were suddenly forced to be carried out online. From 18 to 28 March, about 200 exam sessions were set online successfully. Having successfully closed the second term, on 30 March 2020, the university started teaching its third term fully online (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020k), following new regulations such as:

— All the teaching, learning, assessments and evaluation processes were developed online.
— Doctoral thesis defences and all the process related to their submission were moved online.
— Grades' and Masters' tutorials regarding the final dissertations and any other issues were held online as far as it was possible.
— Learning and teaching activities were developed through Aula Global (the virtual environment for each subject at the Pompeu Fabra University) and other virtual platforms chose by each faculty/department/teacher—for example, Kaltura Capturespace, or Collaborate. The university elaborated a specific guide regarding virtual teaching and assessment (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020g).
— Students were encouraged to continue with their external practices (curricular and extracurricular), as far as the nature of the practices allowed their virtual development (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020e).
— Research processes continued, even in laboratories which required in-person activities. However, telecommuting was promoted whenever it was feasible.
— All conferences, congresses and training courses were moved online whenever possible.
— All administrative processes were suspended from 14 March to 1 June 2020 and, beyond this period, they were progressively recovered through the use of digital certificates and in some in-person registration offices.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

For the forthcoming year, the university has organized the academic year in a way that guarantees the health security of the entire university community. For this, the 2020–21 academic year is going to be organized around a hybrid teaching model. It will combine face-to-face classes in small groups and large venues with online classes, and interaction between students and teachers. Classes involving physical presence will be reduced, and conditioned by the need of safety measures, the nature of the subjects and the availability of premises. The delivery will therefore either be face-to-face (with a reduced number of available places for students from different degrees) or online (with no face-to-face lessons required but involving interaction and not exclusively with synchronous activities) (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020a). In this sense, this model tries to hugely support the importance of in-person education and to guarantee the student's interaction and their full engagement in the learning process.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

Taking into consideration the quick and effective adaptation of Pompeu Fabra University to the pandemic and the crisis, there has not been a need for significant curriculum adjustments. Although all the teaching, learning and evaluation processes have been moved online, they have not affected the academic calendar or the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

However, due to the actual circumstances, the UPF has developed extraordinary measures for its course plans. It is important to highlight that all courses have a course plan that envisages both the content and the skills, learning outcomes and assessment instruments drawn directly from the curriculum, but the course plan does not usually include a detailed schedule acting as a calendarized learning plan. However, nowadays, whether taught face-to-face or online, courses will have a learning plan, in addition to the course plan, which will involve at least: a) the weekly distribution of content and learning activities, b) the deadlines and means of submitting evaluable tasks, c) the expected return of evaluable activities, d) the impact of evaluable activities on the final mark if not explicitly indicated in the course plan, and e) the expected dedication by the student to the various scheduled academic activities (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020a).The university's continuous assessment model will remain in place and training activities will be adapted to the hybrid teaching model: If there is a need to do them online, assessment activities should not be modified, but the content of the evaluable activities will be adapted to the situation of students' potential lockdown. Therefore, the course learning plan will consider which instrument best adapts to the learning outcomes for evaluation. (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020i).

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

Regarding student well-being and support, the Universitat Pompeu Fabra has been especially focussed on technological and psychological support. Because of the closure of the campus, most of the students went back to their family home, sometimes without a proper Internet connection. On the other hand, they were suddenly forced to share 24 hours of their time with their whole family in the same place. This, together with the whole sanitary situation (relatives infected, deaths, etc.), caused huge uncertainty in the students. This uncertainty caused them anxiety and stress episodes which the Pompeu Fabra University tried to mitigate by its psychological support service (SAP) (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020c).

Alongside the University Community Assistance Service (SACU), through its programme "UPF Inclusió", the university has been responsible for facilitating participation of the students affected by the pandemic, especially in those cases where the process of the illness or health status prevented the student from duly following the academic subjects. Through these services, the UPF has identified some problems raised in the student body, mainly related to lack of online methodology and digital skills, problems in accessing the Internet and technology, lack of a solid learning environment at home (desk, proper office, etc.) and other psychological problems related to anxiety, the deaths of relatives, isolation and other medical issues. Unfortunately, despite all the efforts, according to the university managing staff and its students, it very difficult to find a solution for the whole student body.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The Pompeu Fabra University enrols between 13,000 and 14,000 students per year (El Mundo, 2020) and, despite the pandemic and the actual situation, the UPF does not foresee a drop in enrolments for the forthcoming academic year according to what Jaume Casals, UPF rector, revealed in an interview granted to the Agencia Catalana de Noticias" (ACN, "Catalan News Agency"): fewer undergraduate students are not envisaged, and this "will not be very different" in the case of pre-enrolments for Master's degrees, although foreign mobility will be limited "at least during the first term" (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020j).

However, its huge internationalization rates in postgraduates' programmes (about 44% of students are international (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020h)) has raised some concerns within the university's authorities. However, they trust that their university's reputation and image will mitigate the effects the pandemic could have on internationalization. Nevertheless, to mitigate the possible effects of the pandemic, especially for first-year courses, the university has reinforced its student support, with more intensive actions carried out by tutors. The reception sessions for new students are scheduled between late September and early October, and during the first term, various activities will be set specifically for new students and those who have no prior knowledge of UPF (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020b). Also, virtual spaces will be provided for horizontal socialization and mentoring, both face-to-face and online, as well as via Aula Global.

All UPF students are assigned a tutor from the start of their academic studies, who will monitor their academic progress and offer advice, support and guidance in the student learning processes, according to the tutorial action plan at their centre. In addition to the tutor, several centres include the figure of the mentor, usually a senior student who provides academic and extra-academic support and motivates and shares personal experiences to which students, especially newcomers, can relate (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020i).

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Regarding the ordinary budget of the Pompeu Fabra University, which depends directly on the Government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, there is uncertainty about whether it will be increased. Besides, there is a feeling that the university's general incomes will become reduced. This is due to the expected decrease in incoming students and because of the cancellation of the events developed in the campus, which represent an important income to the university (the university used to rent its areas for different purposes, such as exhibitions, concerts or other events).

Despite the uncertain financial situation, the UPF has provided certain facilities to students affected by the COVID-19 situation, such as extraordinary financial aids to continue studies and offset tuition fees (Barcelona School of Management, 2020).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

At this point, it is necessary to highlight that the internationalization of this university is something important to consider as, on average, about 28% of undergraduate students participate in an international mobility programme and about 27% of its lecturers are international (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2020h). In this sense, the university authorities are guaranteeing the best quality teaching, even in the worst-case scenario, and will be also safeguarding the international experience through digital communities and students' associations if the lockdown has to return.

5.11. UNIVERSITÉ PARIS 1 PANTHÉON-SORBONNE (FRANCE)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The University of Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne is a public university focussed on social sciences and humanities. It traces its roots back to the thirteenth century and was restructured in 1970. It has over 43,500 students and 1430 teachers and teacher-researchers. It has 14 academic departments and 5 institutes based on 25 sites across Paris and the Île-d-France.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The perception is that the pandemic will have a long-term impact on education due to the new methods of distant learning. Although there are some limitations to online learning, there will be room for trying different ways to deliver the content of the curriculum, while combining it with traditional strategies such as small seminars and developing facilities for meetings with social distancing. There is also the perception that education is a collective process where people need to meet face-to-face, and this means professor–student, student–student, researcher–researcher, to develop more knowledge collectively.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

At mid-August, the numbers of cases in France were rising above 2500 daily. The country, and specially Paris, is risking a second strong wave that may jeopardize the plans for easing the restrictions to combat the coronavirus [update, 5 November for France: 1.54 million cases and 38,674 deaths].

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

In Paris, the measures to contain the spread of coronavirus were taken swiftly by the government in March. It was announced on 13 March that all French universities would close on 16 March. There was no coordination between the educational authorities and the university. This left the university having to implement changes at short notice and with little guidance. In turn, this made delivering course content challenging. Inside the university, there were different ways to approach the new situation by faculties, so the university suspended its operation for a week to adapt. As the professors, students and staff were adapting to the different online tools there was some confusion and uncertainty, especially at the beginning.

It took several months for the university to finalize a policy on examinations. Many students and professors wanted to cancel examinations, as the students' studies had been impacted not only by the coronavirus crisis, but also by several months of strikes that had occurred earlier in the academic year. The government,

however, wanted students to take online examinations. Following litigation in the French courts that lasted two months, judges ordered that the students would have to sit online examinations.

On 7 August the Ministry of Education announced that Universities would reopen from September, with a strong recommendation that students wear masks and mandatory 1m social distancing measures. The Ministry also announced that international students would still be able to take up their places in the autumn, that processing visa applications from international students would be given priority and that visas that expired between 16 March and 15 June would automatically be extended for 6 months.

Administrative measures that have been taken

At Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne a phase of gradual reopening of activities in alignment with the government decisions began on 11 May. Students will not be able to return to the centres of the university before September. The university took measures in the following matters:

—— Teaching and exams
—— Internships and work-study conditions
—— International mobility (depending on the decisions of the Foreign Affairs Ministry)
—— Health and social well-being for the students
—— University elections

LEARNING AND TEACHING

The university made the transition to online teaching until further notice. The pandemic however, revealed the importance and necessity of in-person activities to develop research and classes.

In contrast, the pandemic individualized education; the learning and teaching process is not collective anymore, but consists in one individual in front of his/her screen. Nevertheless, this individualization provided an opportunity to reframe previous individual activities of education such as writing a Master's or PhD thesis.

In the end, learning and teaching during this time for students in Paris represented challenges both educationally and socially. Some students did not have enough IT tools to continue the courses and others were severely affected mentally because of the isolation and lack of a human connection.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

The perception of how the curriculum was affected depends on the course in question. Bachelor's degrees are completely different from Master's degrees in this regard. Bachelor's degrees were more affected

because of the adjustments of the content. Undergraduate students learn much more from attending classes and interacting with the professors and classmates than most postgraduate students, who rely heavily on interactions with their supervisors.

Two-year Master's students will be affected by the crisis even more, because they do not have a good access to traineeships right now. These traineeships are important for making contacts, for proving their skills and getting a job later on. In contrast, three months of crisis during a four- or five-year course is not catastrophic, and there is still opportunity to make up for the lost time and knowledge.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The university has supported the students by providing computers and IT tools to the students who need them. Also, they implemented a plan to help students in financial distress, for example, to buy groceries.

The mental well-being of students was not really a top priority in Paris. The university provides a counselling service through the medical services, but it was not prioritized to help students coping with the emotional and mental distress of the coronavirus.

Regarding the "student experience", at the beginning of the pandemic the social media of the university were creating innovative and funny online content to keep the student body entertained.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

There is an expectation that the numbers of new students will increase because of the modification of high school exams in France. Prior to the pandemic the entrance rate was 85%, after the pandemic it was 95%. This implies that the numbers will increase, and the university will have to find ways to accommodate them.

With time and the advancement of the pandemic will likely be further changes on how students experience studying in these circumstances.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The university implemented a special fund to cover the costs of students in need, i.e. food or IT tools to continue studying. This was provided by the fund for campus life (which is a one-off payment of €90 for student life in the university).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The university must abide by the Foreign Affairs Ministry regulations regarding incoming students. This is a challenge, as they do not have authority to receive students coming from countries that have travel restrictions. The impact is unknown, however, and they will have to adapt depending on how the situation changes.

5.12. UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN (THE NETHERLANDS)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Leiden University (Universiteit Leiden, LEI) is a public university in Leiden, Netherlands. Founded in 1575 by William, Prince of Orange, it is the oldest institution of higher education in the Netherlands. The university has almost 31.000 students and 7100 staff. It comprises seven academic faculties many of which are found in the historic heart of city of Leiden and in a campus located in The Hague. Within them, it offers 47 Bachelor's programmes and 78 Master's programmes (Universiteit Leiden, 2020g).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The pandemic has fostered the use of digital teaching tools due to the immediate need of transforming the education process to remote mode. Both senior administrative staff and professors are clear that digital technologies are only complementary to traditional teaching and they strongly agree on the importance of in-person education. In this sense, digital tools may remain for some aspects, such as administrative processes and other issues related to staff members, but in-person teaching processes urgently need to be recovered.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

According to official data provided by the Dutch Government agency RIVM, by 4 August 2020, there were 55,955 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 6150 deaths in the Netherlands [update, 5 November: 390,000 cases and 7,769 deaths]. Regarding the specific situation of Leiden´s University area (Leiden and The Hague), located in the South Holland region, there have been more than 12,189 confirmed cases, which have made this area one of the most affected regions in the country (Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu, 2020).

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

Leiden University has its own regulation but, like all universities in the Netherlands, it is linked to the decisions of the Cabinet and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW). In addition, it needs to achieve a consensus within the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) in order to take any decisions.

On 12 March 2020, Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced several measures for schools and universities, which also applied to Leiden University. Thus, on the next day, taking the advice of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) and the Central Government, the university decided to cancel all face-to-face teaching, exams, inaugural lectures and events for prospective students (Experience Days and Student for a Day). It also closed all study areas and restaurants and libraries services, encouraging its staff to work from home as far as it was possible. All forms of teaching, assessments and examinations were cancelled from 13 March until 20 March 2020. Leiden University used this time to prepare for online teaching starting from 23 March until the end of the academic year. It also established a committee led by Leo Harskamp (Chief Security Officer) in response to the coronavirus situation and emergency situations.

Although Leiden University was forced to take urgent decisions to mitigate the coronavirus effects, its communication through a specific platform created within the university website (Universiteit Leiden, 2020e), and the creation of this urgency committee, helped to deal with the uncertainty among students, staff, researchers and lecturers.

Administrative measures that have been taken

Following the recommendations and the regulations provided by the National Government and the Cabinet and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Leiden University decided to adopt a number of key measures (Universiteit Leiden, 2020f):

— Almost all of the teaching, learning, assessments and evaluation processes were online from 23 March to the end of the academic year. Learning and teaching activities were developed through different virtual platforms, like Microsoft Teams and Kaltura Live Room (Zoom was forbidden due to it undermining privacy issues) (Universiteit Leiden, 2020b). Besides, the university elaborated a specific *Manual for Digital Examinations* and a *Code of Conduct for Remote Teaching.* These documents were focussed to students and lecturers and provide guidelines for teaching and learning in digital learning environments, covering aspects such as privacy and online etiquette (Universiteit Leiden, 2020c).

— All events were cancelled until 1 September 2020.

— PhD ceremonies were firstly cancelled from 17 March until 6 April 2020. After that they were held online, and from 1 June, PhD defences could again be held on the campus with a limited number of people (a maximum of 20) physically in attendance, live-streamed for others who are interested.

— Research processes continued, even in laboratories which required in-person activities. However, telecommuting was promoted whenever it was feasible.

However, despite the initial measures later being lifted in the Netherlands, and some of the restrictions disappearing, the campuses recovered only some of their activities:

— On 8 June a booking system for a limited number of study spaces in the libraries was introduced.

— From 15 June, some on-campus classes (practicals), supervision and exams were possible for a limited number of students depending on the needs of their degree programme. The teaching took place in fixed timeslots for a maximum of 20% of the regular student capacity and exams were made possible in those cases where they could not be held online, and also for final-year or vulnerable students as well as practicals.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

For the forthcoming year, the university has organized the academic year in a way that guarantees the health security of the entire university community but also the best quality education. For this, the 2020–21 academic year is going to be organized around a hybrid teaching model with a mixture of on-campus and online teaching. The aim is that around a quarter of the teaching will be held face-to-face on campus, although this may differ depending on faculty. Practicals, small tutorials and tutor meetings for first-year students, in particular, will be held at the university buildings (Universiteit Leiden, 2020m). The model tries to support the importance of in-person education and to guarantee the students' interaction and their full engagement in the learning process, which is positively rated by the whole Leiden University´s community.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

Taking into consideration the organized and effective adaptation of Leiden University to the pandemic and the crisis, there has not been a need for significant curriculum adjustments. Besides, it is important to acknowledge that, although the teaching format has been different, the contents of the programmes have remained the same and the degree certificate is worth the same as if it had been obtained through face-to-face lessons (Universiteit Leiden, 2020m).

Still, it is important to note some minor measures taken to mitigate the coronavirus effects on Leiden University students´ curricula (Universiteit Leiden, 2020d):

- Students have been given an extension for the Binding Study Advice (BSA).[6] That is, students who are prevented from meeting the requirements of the BSA for their study programme will be given an extension. They will have the opportunity to achieve the BSA standard requirements in the next academic year. These changes were announced by the Minister of Education on 19 March, following discussions with the VSNU, the organization of universities in the Netherlands.

- The enrolment deadline for Bachelors' programmes was extended by one month.

- As students are not permitted to go on any study-related trips abroad that are linked in any way to Leiden University, credits will not be awarded for work completed abroad during trips that started after 12 March, and the university is not liable for such trips.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

Providing psychological support has been the main focus of the actions developed to tackle student well-being. Most of the students went back to their home towns after the different campuses closed. Others remained isolated in student residences. All of this caused psychological problems for students. These were especially related to isolation and disillusion and Leiden University tried to mitigate them by creating a platform called "Healthy University @Home" (Universiteit Leiden, 2020k). This platform offers various tips regarding mental well-being, nutrition, and physical health and how to cope with the new situation when it comes to social interactions, the new study and working conditions and work pressure, among others.

Leiden University also offered a different kind of support through a student helpline, the "Listening Phone", which has been set up by the Student Support Services for anyone feeling anxious, stressed or lonely. Leiden University has also offered support through its programme "Sport online with the USC", an active and physical programme by the University Sports Centre (USC), which offers live classes (e.g. yoga, hip-hop or core training) on its social media accounts.

Finally, it is worth noting that the university decided to join "Caring Universities", an initiative aimed at improving the psychological well-being of students. The goal is to offer students free online interventions for various psychological issues. An anonymous online questionnaire can provide insight into the students' mental health by offering personalized feedback about their mood, stress and anxiety based on their answers (Universiteit Leiden, 2020j).

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[6] Binding study advice (BSA) is a recommendation issued by the examination board regarding whether or not a student will be permitted to continue their studies on the degree programme on which they are enrolled.

All of these tools have helped the vast majority of students and other university staff to cope successfully with their different physical and psychological problems related to the coronavirus situation.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Leiden University enrols about 31,000 students per year, out of which about 11,500 are incoming international students (Universiteit Leiden, 2020g). This means that, 30% to 40% of its students are international, an important consideration for the planning of the 2020–21 academic year.

Although Leiden University does not foresee a drop in enrolments for the next academic year due to its reputation, achieved throughout its 445 years of history and through its high quality education, its huge internationalization rates have raised some concerns in the university's authorities. In this sense, the university not only has a specific website focussed on new students but also on international ones. Being aware of the importance of international students for its development and sustainability, it has clearly understood that these students may not be able to travel to the Netherlands for the start of the academic year, so they will be allowed to start the programme online (Universiteit Leiden, 2020n).

FINANCIAL POLICIES

As the main ordinary budget of Leiden University depends directly on the Central Government (Universiteit Leiden, 2020g), uncertainty exists on whether it will be increased or not. Nonetheless, there is a feeling that the general incomes of the university will be reduced due to the coronavirus crisis.

Finally, although the university has not given specific funding to students affected by the COVID-19 situation, it has facilitated the reimbursement of cancelled travels to study abroad or discontinued by the situation (Universiteit Leiden, 2020i), and has actively disseminated some national aids, as the compensation given by the Dutch Employee Insurance Agency for loss of income from a part-time job (Universiteit Leiden, 2020a).

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Leiden University has decided that educational exchange programmes within and outside Europe will not go ahead in the first semester of the next academic year. This applies to both Leiden students who want to study abroad (outbound students) and international exchange students who want to study at Leiden (incoming students). However, the university has secured that, due to the importance of international programmes, depending on how the coronavirus situation develops, they will anticipate what kind of exchanges will be possible in the second semester (Universiteit Leiden, 2020l).

In addition., it is important to highlight that students planning to go abroad for another activity such as an internship, fieldwork, research project, medical clerkship or compulsory study may have to apply for specific permission.

5.13. KØBENHAVNS UNIVERSITEIT (DENMARK)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The University of Copenhagen (UCPH) is the oldest university in Denmark, founded in 1479 and with over 38,000 students and more than 9,000 employees. The university consists of six different faculties, with teaching taking place in its four distinct campuses, all situated in Copenhagen. It operates 36 different departments and over 200 separate research centres in Copenhagen, as well as a number of museums and botanical gardens in and outside the Danish capital. The University of Copenhagen also owns and operates multiple research stations around Denmark, with two additional ones located in Greenland.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The university duly acknowledges that higher education will undergo a change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with an increased focus on digitized education. However, the university wants to retain the aspects of traditional face-to-face teaching as much as possible while simultaneously exploring online learning tools and spaces.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

On 11 March 2020, the Danish government issued a notice for the physical lockdown of all educational institutions in the country to avoid the spreading of the coronavirus. In early August 2020 the UCPH campuses reopened, but with restrictions. The distance requirement of 1 metre remains valid, consistent with the guidelines from 2 July from the Ministry of Education and Research. The Danish Government has implemented border control at all of Denmark's borders and airports as part of the effort to curb the spread of coronavirus. At the time of writing (August 2020), only Danish citizens or travellers with a creditable purpose are let in, with both work and study defined as creditable purposes.

[update, 5 November: 51,042 cases and 729 deaths]

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

Following the government lockdown on educational institutions, the UCPH campus was closed and all students were advised to stay at home. Consequently, all teaching and examinations were moved to the online mode. From 15 June 2020, the Danish government eased the restrictions and allowed all employees not included in previous reopening phases to attend the university in person. Students who need to attend classes or exams that require in-person presence are allowed to come to campus if notified directly. From 8 August 2020, all other students could return to campus in the government's fourth reopening phase.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, UCPH had undertaken a project focussing on the digitization of education. The university is therefore planning to capitalize on the work undertaken in this project so far by adapting it to the COVID-19 context. For the upcoming academic year, mainly digital tools and platforms will be used along with in-person sessions in small groups, with social distancing measures in place. The university is also taking additional steps to maintain the quality of teaching by encouraging the faculty to design their online courses to be interactive, and to make periodic improvements in teaching based on student feedback.

One of the challenges which the university faced during the transition to online education was a pushback from some of the faculty who raised concerns related to being recorded, and related issues around intellectual property rights and privacy. Online education was seen as a threat to the physical university. However, the senior management is trying to address these concerns and maintains that the online tools are supplementary to in-person education and will not replace the physical university experience.

All exams (including thesis submissions) and teaching went online. One of the concerns was maintaining the standard of open-book online assessments to be on a par with written examinations. In order to ensure the standard, either the difficulty level was raised, or the total exam duration was reduced, depending on the courses. However, the format of the examination remained largely unchanged. As per the preliminary observations of August 2020, there was no significant change in the number of students who signed-up, withdrew from or passed the mid-term examination for the academic year 2019–20. Students whose studies are adversely impacted due to COVID-19 reasons can apply for a dispensation, which will be considered by the study boards and evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

The curriculum remained largely unchanged for most of the courses. In only in a few courses was the curriculum adjusted to suit the changed environment, e.g. courses which required physical interviews, lab research, international travel, etc.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The Student Counselling Service (SCS) provides advice for students who need help in relation to social, psychological and psychiatric issues. The staff includes psychologists, medical consultants and social workers. These services were online from April but have become in-person since mid-July 2020. Due to the general increase in the level of anxiety and stress induced by the COVID-19 outbreak, the government has provided additional funding for the SCS in order to enhance its resources and capacity. In addition to the SCS, students can access free personal counselling via the university chaplains at the University of Copenhagen. Students in all faculties at the university have the opportunity to speak to a student chaplain. The chaplains are available to perform religious rituals and for personal conversations. Conversations are confidential and students of all religious beliefs or no belief are welcome to see the chaplains.

As per the preliminary findings of one of the internal surveys, students did not utilize the fellow-student networks any less during the lockdown, which reveals their isolation. As a response, the university issued guidelines to encourage students with social interactions, and with using the online platforms for professional / academic goals. Additionally, the Department of Psychology is currently developing a policy on the management of stress and anxiety.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

As per the directives provided by the Danish government, 300 additional seats were added across different programmes for the intake of the academic year 2020–21. As of July 2020, student recruitment has increased by approximately 10% and 7831 students were offered a place for the undergraduate programmes at the university. The government is also trying to nudge its citizens into up-skilling or re-skilling by enrolling for higher education in order to boost the economy.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

As the University of Copenhagen is a government-funded institution, no significant disruptions in the budget are anticipated. However, the main concern has been about research spending as the overheads are significant for some projects. When research is delayed within an academic year it can have an adverse impact on the overheads. This was particularly a challenge for Natural Science and Health Science faculties, as a large fraction of their research budgets is privately sourced. However, the research projects have largely resumed their work as of July 2020.

The Danish government offers SU (the Danish Students' Grants and Loans Scheme). Due to COVID-19, the government has undertaken following five initiatives with respect to SU:

- Extra SU loan: for students receiving SU.
- Extra completion loan: for students who are at the end of their higher education.
- Increased allowed amount of earnings: for students who participate in the COVID-19 alert.
- Extra SU loan: for students in higher education who are in paid internships in March, April, May, June, July and/or August 2020.
- Extended period with completion loan: for students in higher education and private education who have used all their completion loan or SU and are not yet entitled to ordinary completion loan.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The University of Copenhagen has a strong international environment with 5,500 international students out of a student body of 39,000. The university also offers Open University courses and summer schools of which many courses are either cancelled or offered as online courses in 2020 due to COVID-19.

5.14. UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The University of Luxembourg was founded in 2003. It is a public research university with an international, multilingual and interdisciplinary character, situated on three sites: Belval Campus, Kirchberg Campus and Limpertsberg Campus. It offers many bilingual and multilingual study programs in French, English and German across its 14 bachelor's and 42 Master's degrees, as well as several Masters courses and doctoral schools entirely taught in English. The University of Luxembourg consist of three faculties (The Faculty of Science, Technology and Medicine, The Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance, The Faculty of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences) and three interdisciplinary centers (The Interdisciplinary Centre for Security, Reliability and Trust, The Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine, Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History). There are 6,423 students from 125 countries enrolled and roughly 1061 academic staff (including doctoral candidates). All Bachelor's students have to spend a mandatory semester abroad, reflecting the importance attached to mobility. (Université du Luxemburg, 2020c).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

A general view of the pandemic impact on the University of Luxembourg is that it has changed the higher education sector permanently. This change is not only negative. The "coronavirus crisis" caused the immediate introduction of digital teaching tools to help academic staff to facilitate their courses. It is worth noting that before the pandemic there was no willingness to introduce such solutions. Still, there is a

consensus that digital technologies are only complementary to traditional teaching. Lecturers prefer live teaching over remote teaching.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

As of 31 July there were 6616 confirmed cases, 114 deaths and 5027 recovered (Worldometer, 2020a) [update, 5 November: 19,634 cases and 167 deaths]. It also seems that from 20 June Luxembourg went through a second wave of the pandemic with gradually rising number of daily cases. Thanks to its relatively small population, Luxembourg is the first country in the world which has tested all of its citizens for coronavirus.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

The University of Luxembourg is financed by the state and therefore its operations are overseen and regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research. *Règlement d'Ordre Intérieur de l'Université du Luxembourg 2019* (Université du Luxemburg, 2020d) is the law approved by the minister of higher education and research and it establishes general rules of functioning of the University of Luxembourg. This document was amended due to the coronavirus situation on 26 May 2020 by the annex entitled "*Dispositions temporaires exceptionnelles pour le semestre d'été 2019–2020 dues à la crise Covid-19*" which adjusted university operations to pandemic circumstances. The annex preamble stresses that the exceptional measures were intended to ensure that students would not be unfairly penalized for circumstances outside their control during the pandemic crisis.

The university has autonomy when it comes to making internal decisions, and this was the case during the coronavirus outbreak in the country. The University of Luxembourg also has the advantage of being placed in a small country, which makes it easier when university officials want to get in touch quickly with the most important people in the country.

The 'Research Luxembourg COVID-19 Taskforce' is an initiative under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research which aims to establish a common and well-thought-out exit strategy and a large-scale testing strategy "based on a voluntary diagnostic test accessible to the population, including cross-border commuters of the Greater Region" (Research Luxembourg, 2020).

The government of Luxembourg also acted immediately when the problem of taxation arose for those university employees who commute and cross the border. Remote working caused some initial confusion but was quickly fixed by the agreement between Luxembourg, Germany, France and Belgium in order to establish distance-working guideline and an exemption for the fiscal rules.

In addition, tough decisions such as shutting down the university were discussed with government and health authorities The university ensured a regular exchange of information with the ministers and health authorities who were providing their expertise.

Administrative measures that have been taken

The university took early action to prepare for the possibility of the pandemic arriving in Luxembourg. University guidelines were developed in February 2020 prior to the pandemic outbreak in the country. *The University of Luxembourg COVID-19 Crisis Plan* embodied four different scenarios as well as a list of the critical functions within departments (Université du Luxembourg, 2020a). This was developed for each university department, together with guidelines on how to act in each scenario. The aforementioned scenarios deal with the following situations:

— Scenario 1: UL student in Luxembourg tested positive for virus
— Scenario 2: UL employee in Luxembourg tested positive for virus
— Scenario 3: UL student in mobility blocked or tested positive
— Scenario 4: Suspension of teaching activities, partial or full campus shut down

Guidelines covered areas and issues such as (Université du Luxembourg, 2020b):

— Online/Semi-Online Defences and Transitory Measures During Covid-19
— What to do if I think I am infected
— RETURN TO CAMPUS: Guidelines for students
— RETURN TO CAMPUS: Plan for students
— RETURN TO CAMPUS: STAGES
— Guidelines for staff members
— Guidelines for line managers and team leaders

In March 2020 the COVID-19 Crisis Team was established, and amongst members of the team there were the following people: the Rector, the Head HR, the Head of Communications, the Head of the Rector's office, the Director of Administration, the Head of Security, and a PR advisor. At the beginning they were meeting every day; at the later stage of the pandemic they met twice a week.

"Without these guidelines students and staff would feel left along, and it would be complete chaos. As in every crisis, there was an immediate and huge need for communication and advice and guidelines" (personal interview, 23.07.2020).

LEARNING AND TEACHING

The university has decided to offer blended/hybrid teaching in the winter semester. Small groups will be taught in-person and larger groups will be in remote mode, with some live streaming of classes wherever possible. Such a decision has an impact on the planning of both content and assessment, e.g. 1- or 2-hour lectures are less successful in remote mode than short lectures with more discussion.

The university is not planning further than the winter session. An immediate reaction by the university to support the research of PhD students included the purchase of 200 laptops, which were distributed amongst Doctoral students and teaching staff.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

The university administration anticipates that programmes will extend their use of continuous assessment in order to reduce the need for in-person examinations. No significant changes to curriculum content were envisaged. The key change will concern the extensive use of audio-visual and digital support for teaching.

Since the University of Luxembourg moved to remote teaching and also to the hybrid mode for the winter semester of 2020–21, the administration aimed to keep the quality and content of the curricula as intact as possible. From the experience with remote teaching during the summer semester 2020, the quality and content of the curricula have been kept intact; in some instances it produced more enriching experiences as teachers were thinking in terms of innovative ways of teaching while students benefited from a more student-centred learning experience.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The most pressing problems for the University of Luxembourg concerns students and their well-being. During the lockdown students missed out on social exchanges and students believed much more could have been done. Financial issues also appeared troublesome. Students could not afford to go back home, and they were losing their jobs—which had often allowed them to cover everyday expenses. To address these issues the University of Luxembourg offered the following supports:

— A video platform for psychological advice
— The Rector's daily communication (staff + students, all together 9000 people every day). They later limited these emails to twice a week. The overall message was—WE CARE ABOUT YOU!

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The university raised funds for students in need. There was financial support for those who lost their jobs. Vouchers to buy groceries were provided and rent relief was negotiated with landlords.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the enrolment of students from outside the Schengen zone may result in a delayed start for some programmes. Student recruitment appears to be one of the most problematic spheres of university operations and at the time of writing (mid August) delays in student recruitment already reach two months. This was due to the need for the university to move its entire recruitment system online at the height of the pandemic crisis when it was facing many other pressures.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Although there were no delays in payments within the university, the financial impact could be perceived in both the short- and long-term perspectives.

Short-term:

— Reduced net expenses as a result of decreased spending in catering, travel and events and reimbursement by the public health insurance for staff absences.
— Increased investment in additional IT (laptops for remote work, licences, video screening) and security materials (masks and disinfectant).

Long-term impact expected due to:

— Possible delays in recruitments.
— The extension of research projects beyond the initial duration, which might lead to a deferral of the related payments, with an impact on the related annual financial Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
— Due to the economic crisis, the impact on the public finances of the country and possibly on the future public endowment of the university.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

More than 50% of the university students come from abroad. Some of them were blocked outside the country. The university was forced to work as a liaison office—gathering information from embassies, travel agencies and partner universities, transferring funds and instructing its students.

5.15.   UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS (UNITED KINGDOM)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The University of St Andrews is a public university in St Andrews, Fife, Scotland. It is the third-oldest university in the United Kingdom and English-speaking world. It has approximately 8000 undergraduates and 2,100 postgraduate students. The university offers over 900 undergraduate courses and a large number of postgraduate opportunities. The four academic faculties (Arts, Divinity, Medicine and Science) collectively encompass 25 schools. A dean is appointed by the Master of the United College to oversee the day-to-day running of each faculty. Students apply to become members of a particular faculty, as opposed to the school within which teaching is based.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The focus on restarting the research projects is important, while the effective delivery of learning and teaching will evolve as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. The university seems to be open to embracing change, while also playing to its unique strengths, such as its location, which has been relatively safe for in-person university education during the pandemic.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

The COVID-19 pandemic was first confirmed to have spread to Scotland on 1 March 2020. With the UK death toll hitting 335 deaths and 14 in Scotland [update, 5 November: 68,444 cases and 2,927 deaths], the UK Prime Minister announced a nationwide "Stay at Home" order on 23 March which was reviewed every three weeks. As of August 2020, the university is slowly resuming its on-campus operations as the UK government eases the lockdown.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

In July 2020, the Scottish Government published a 'Coronavirus (Covid-19) Further and Higher Education' sustainability plan in which they pledge support for: Funding; Supporting Research; Additional Student Resources; Post-Graduate Study, Employability Support and Skills; Supporting Digital Inclusion; Changing Support for EU students (increased fees from 2021/22 to be put towards scholarships); Attracting International Students; Working with Colleges and Universities to Restart Activities Safely; Working Together on Scotland's Recovery.

Administrative measures

The university's coronavirus response structure was as follows:

— Gold command: senior management headed by the Vice Chancellor.
— Silver command: the operations group which eventually expanded to around 70 members, in charge of stakeholder communication and liaising with staff.
— Bronze command: individual management leaders within the operations structure and in charge of coordination and implementation.

The university has structured its COVID-19 policy response around the following major work-streams, each of which is headed by a member of a senior management team. Student representatives are also on the board of each of the work-streams and the university is trying to get them involved in the formulation of policies, strategies and decisions.

— Learning and teaching student experience focussing on blended learning and due delivery.
— Restarting research projects and activities.
— Staff and student well-being.
— Safe working environments, which involves the reopening of building and residences; the restarting of contracted activity on-site.
— Epidemiology: providing advice and guidance from emerging scientific evidence around COVID-19.
— Communications: Gold command source for policies, guidelines, etc. and ensuring that students receive these messages.
— Community engagement: the university sponsors various local initiatives through the University Community Fund and encourages students to volunteer for community projects.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

For the next academic year, all lectures to large classes and some smaller classes will be delivered online (remote learning). Different online tools are used, such as: learning material via MySaint, lecture recordings via Panopto and Microsoft Teams for discussions/tutorials.

The lecture captures a policy which was introduced in 2019, and which allowed students to access video-recorded lectures. However, there was quite a lot of pushback from a number of academics who did not like the idea of being recorded, and there were concerns about privacy and copyright. Therefore, the university introduced the policy as an opt-in, and it was not compulsory even though there was pressure from the students to make it mandatory. One of the developments as a result of the coronavirus crisis was that the university was able to successfully overcome resistance from the faculty, and the policy became mandatory.

The due delivery is focussed on maintaining the quality of education. As of now, the university has adopted a two-pronged strategy which focusses on hybrid learning and flexible teaching environments: (a) In order to ensure safety, any sessions which exceed 35 participants will be delivered online, and hence small-group face-to-face teaching is being promoted; (b) the university is encouraging students to come to the campus for the first term of the upcoming academic year or as soon as possible thereafter. However, for the students who cannot come to the university due to genuine reasons, virtual learning options will be provided.

The Scottish government has issued a 2-metre social distancing policy. However, this has created two major challenges regarding 1) practical teaching in science laboratories and 2) the organisation of study spaces, libraries and PC laboratories. At the time of writing (mid August) the university is waiting for an update on this guideline and has developed a contingency plan which can reduce the distance to 1 metre provided additional mitigation measures are in place.

As per the student survey conducted by St Andrews Student Association, the student response to online examination was overwhelmingly positive. The university is therefore considering continuing with online examinations for the academic year 2020-2021.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

Certain adjustments have been made to adapt the existing curricula with respect to blended learning, and credit-bearing micro courses are being designed for executive professionals.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The university has issued guidance to students on how to keep mentally and physically well while studying remotely. In addition to the NHS-linked medical and counselling support, students can also access Community Aid St Andrews (CASA) services. CASA is a group run by voluntary members of the St Andrews community which aims to mobilize support for others in response to the coronavirus.

The university sponsors a community health hub in order to triage students for instant professional support as quickly as possible. Another support structure is run by trained first-responders in mental health first aid, who are co-located with the university's security services.

The university is also going to set-up a dedicated COVID-19 Rapid Response Team to advise self-isolating students with guidance and information, to have protocols and processes in place and, to provide access to support including periodic check-ins.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

To alleviate any scepticism around the next academic year, the marketing campaign of the university has focussed on the "Safe, Supportive, Scottish" campaign which encourages students to take up the on-campus St Andrews experience. The university is expecting an increase in the student uptake this year.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The university's senior management team took a decision of "zero pay-cuts policy" for the staff, in order to signal solidarity and team spirit. Like many other universities, the COVID-19 crisis has impacted the university's finances. Both the Scottish and UK governments have provided a degree of financial support to St Andrews. However, less than 15% of the operating expenses of the university is publicly funded and hence, the university is currently relying on its cash reserves for the next financial year.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The university is anticipating no decrease in response from international students and has been running a marketing campaign to encourage students to travel to the University of St Andrews.

5.16. UNIVERZITA KARLOVA (PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Charles University of Prague is a publicly funded university that was founded in 1348. There are currently 17 faculties, 3 institutes and 6 other centres for research, teaching, and development. Its budget is around $400 million USD (8.9 billion CZK). Charles University has close to 50,000 students and more than 7900 employees. Of this number, almost 4500 are academic and research staff, across more than 300 accredited degree programmes that offer over 630 different courses.

More than 20,000 students are studying for Bachelor's degree programmes, almost 25,000 for Master's programmes, and 8000 for PhD programmes. The university has over 7000 students from other countries. And every year, just fewer than 9000 students complete their studies.

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

At Charles University there is the perception that online tools are going to change higher education in the long term. It is expected that these tools will be used in the future across programmes in combination with face-to-face interactions.

Furthermore, the pandemic actually represented a leap forward in deepening alliances with other universities in Europe and creating a completely new job market when everything goes online.

It is acknowledged that teaching through online tools is not the same as teaching in-person. Education depends not only on transmitting data and information to the students, but also on the students' influence and interaction between them.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

At mid-August, the Czech Republic had more than 20,000 cases confirmed, and less than 400 deaths due to the coronavirus [update, 5 November: 379,000 cases and 4,133 deaths]. However, there is a risk that a second wave might arrive if the rise in the number of cases is not controlled.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

The university complied with regulations introduced by the government. There was coordination between the university and national authorities, for example with online examinations, but overall the government did not intervene in the adaptation processes of the university.

Administrative measures that have been taken

The university took administrative measures in regard of remote work from home as well as learning and teaching strategies. Furthermore, it adopted programmes to help students to cope with mental and financial stress, in coordination with the government. The restrictions are expected to be reduced in the new academic year depending on the development of the pandemic.

One of the most important decisions was to extend the deadlines for applications to sit the entrance examinations. Moreover, the teaching period was extended by one to four weeks depending on the faculty and the type of the degree programme.

At all faculties, the examination period was modified, and all faculties adjusted (changed or postponed) deadlines independently (Univerzita Karlova, 2020).

LEARNING AND TEACHING

The rapid shift of face-to-face teaching to online classes was a challenge for everyone at the university. Many professors did not feel adequately prepared, and they relied on different techniques to continue their courses. Some made more use of online platforms like Zoom, while others preferred to use traditional teaching materials like readings. The government offered financial and technological support, and currently the university is working on structuring new tools to deliver the content better.

For students it has all been a challenge. Although it is hard to affirm that the majority have been negatively impacted, it is clear that some students have more challenges for several reasons; e.g. not having a proper environment to work in, or not having the usual natural interaction with classmates and professors.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

Curricula were adjusted depending on the programme of study. For instance, law and social sciences were affected in different ways to the medical faculty. The teaching and administrative authorities are taking compensation measures such as prolonging classes to ensure that students receive the content.

There is an expectation that content and its quality will be the same even if the delivery method is different in the next academic year. Furthermore, there is hope that the pandemic will not affect the ability of students to enter the job market in the long term.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The university increased psychological support for its students. The department in charge of providing counselling services was enlarged at the beginning of the pandemic to cope with the number of students requiring their services. Furthermore, there was economic assistance for students in need of computers and IT tools.

The measures to ensure students' well-being were handled differently by each academic programme.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The authorities at Charles University expect that the numbers of local students will not decrease due to the coronavirus. However, there are doubts regarding the 10% of foreign students if the pandemic impedes them departing their country or arriving in the Czech Republic.

The expectation is that at the beginning of the next academic year the restrictions in Prague will be lifted and therefore a return to the campus will be possible. Necessary online adjustments will be introduced in case more strenuous restrictions are re-imposed.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

The authorities at Charles University have implemented strategies to help students in financial distress. Normally students do not pay fees at Charles University, but for some programmes and international students there is a tuition fee that has been cancelled for six months.

Furthermore, the university has implemented a financial plan with the government to help students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. These funds are provided by the government and they must be used in the campus or for study matters exclusively.

In the near future the government will not decrease its funding of the university. There is a risk of certain funding cuts, however, if the pandemic continues and the economic situation of the government deteriorates. Moreover, if there is a reduction in the number of international students, it will affect the finances of the university as well.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

At Charles University, students are expected to come to the country without restrictions. There is readiness, however, to adapt to distant learning for those who cannot enter the Czech Republic.

Furthermore, courses are being designed with other universities in Europe as a "virtual mobility" experience. The idea is that partner universities in other countries can deliver some face-to-face content under the umbrella of Charles University, together with some online content at Charles University. This would imply a new kind of international blended learning experience.

Charles University values the rapid strengthening of international alliances to cope with the crisis together with partner institutions, which are working more closely now than ever.

5.17. UNIWERSYTET JAGIELLOŃSKI (KRAKOW, POLAND)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Jagiellonian University (Uniwersytet Jagielloński) was founded in 1364 by Casimir III the Great. It is the oldest university in Poland, the second oldest university in Central Europe, and one of the oldest universities in the world.

The campus of the Jagiellonian University is partially located within the old city of Kraków. In 2017 a new campus was opened outside the city centre. The university consists of 15 faculties, including the humanities, law, the natural and social sciences, and medicine. It has more than 40,000 students. More than half of the student body are women. The language of instruction is usually Polish, although several degrees are offered in either German or English. The university library is one of Poland's largest (Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 2020a).

PERCEPTION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

At the Jagiellonian University the perception of the pandemic impact on higher education is twofold—both positive and negative. At the same time, it is divided into short- and long-term effects. The overall opinion, however, is that academic teaching might never be the same. again.

Amongst some short-term effects, confusion and anxiety within the academic community, especially for students, was initially mentioned, whereas long-term effects refer to new perception of technology and the opportunities it gives to prospective teaching and learning. Physical contact is still invaluable and needed, and remote teaching would never fully replace it. One of the biggest concerns is how technology could be used without any loss of quality in teaching.

EMERGING POLICIES

The pandemic impact and status of the lockdown in the university area

As of 4 August there were 48,149 confirmed cases 1738 deaths and 35,056 recovered patients in Poland (World Health Organization, 2020). t also seemed that from the end of July Poland started to go through a second wave of the pandemic with sharply rising number of daily cases especially at the beginning of August (Worldometer, 2020b) [update, 5 November: 567,000 cases and 6,842 deaths].

Initially, the Polish government imposed travel restrictions and closed the borders which significantly affected university operations. Yet in June limitations were lifted and therefore Jagiellonian University allowed its students and employees to travel abroad in exceptional circumstances.

Universities such as Jagiellonian which have University Hospitals faced particular challenges, something which was stressed by a senior member of the university leadership in a personal interview. (personal interview, 28.07.2020).

Five outbreak clusters were identified at the university from the beginning of the pandemic. Unfortunately, only six out of 3800 tested employees were immune to the novel coronavirus.

Country COVID-19 temporary policies on higher education

From the very beginning the university was in a difficult situation due to lack of institutional recommendations from the Ministry of Higher Education and professional cooperation with health authorities. The ministry revoked the autonomy of the university in its internal affairs and the Health Authorities (SANEPID) did not have any recommendations except for closure of contaminated buildings. As the aforementioned institutions were not able to advise on what to do in cases of student or employee infection, the university had to come up with its own solutions and methodology. The internal policies were regulated with the Rector's Ordinances and Chancellors Communication (Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 2020b). It embraced everyday life practices such as commuting, teaching and using personal protection equipment, but also remote teaching and learning recommendations, research and field trips guidelines, etc.

The university also worked out rules for internal quarantine and tracing people from an infected individuals contact list. It closely cooperated with University Hospital in providing financial support (raising funds for protective equipment) and COVID-19 tests for university employees and students. It is worth mentioning here, that especially at the beginning of the pandemic, commercial tests were not available.

While there was no precise help in terms of everyday operations, the Ministry of Higher Education was very clear with their expectation that the university would return to "normal" operations as soon as possible. After many requests from other universities, the Ministry finally decided to run the emergency team and produce their recommendations.

Administrative measures that have been taken

The university was not prepared for the pandemic. "Chaos was present at the beginning, but we were thinking about people, not about developing procedures to be followed" (personal interview, 28.07.2020). The Rector's Collegium meeting (COVID-19 emergency team) took place every day. Later, deans of the departments and students' representative were invited to participate in the meetings once a week. As a result the following measures were undertaken at the university:

— Remote working for everyone at the university; Jagiellonian University is the first university in Poland to introduce this procedure; it included obtaining electronic signatures, procedures for electronic circulation of documents, etc.).

— Creating a critical functions list to uphold basic university operations such as payment of salaries.
— Contacting all employees and students who had resided abroad before borders closed, in order to help them in organizing their returns.
— A communications scheme was drafted.
— The strict monitoring of people entering university premises—dorms are important points of possible contamination—electronic cards plus gates to measure students' temperature and to disinfect their hands; isolation rooms for every dorm are planned to be introduced.
— To preside over the collegium of Rectors from Kraków Public Universities, who came up with recommendations for the higher education sector in Kraków, as a result of the lack of recommendations coming from the Ministry of Higher Education and health authorities. The Ministry of Higher Education later asked for the conclusions of the meeting, where recommendations were drafted, which they later published as their own recommendations.

The university administration started to work remotely; the electronic circulation of documents was used very effectively. Long-standing bureaucratic traditions are proving difficult to displace completely, however. For instance, the Questors Office prefers physical signatures on every document, despite the easy availability of electronic signatures. There are some concerns that the benefits of digital circulation may not be preserved.

Students' representatives are very satisfied with the improved efficiency of communication with top university officials. For example, there are special "teams", or working groups, where students can be in constant contact with the vice-rectors. This used to be impossible in the past.

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Out of 35,000 students less than 20,000 were expected to come back to university for the winter semester. The hybrid model of teaching will be preferred as it is impossible to ensure the students' safety with traditional teaching only. Learning tools, however, depend on departments and their characteristics. Therefore, the administration provided well-thought-out strategies for students coming back to university (which years, which particular students, etc.). PhD students preferred remote learning as it allowed them to combine their studies with their employment outside the university.

It is still problematic that a large number of students skip their online classes, and from the professor perspective information provided by the university authorities could have been more thorough and innovative in terms on how to use online tools. Students are having problems in understanding the discrepancies in measures undertaken by the Polish government and university authorities. Why is it permissible to go to a pub or a wedding or on holiday, but to have restrictions placed on mixing with scholars and teachers in class, or to

do research abroad? Doctoral students also lacked some functionalities of Microsoft software which are normally available for teaching staff. Limited access to libraries and rooms for work in the university premises was also challenging for many students.

In August 2020 the student government of Jagiellonian University published a report containing insights into student's perceptions on remote learning methods entitled "Organization of the Education Process with the emphasis on the remote learning forms—Student Perspective." The recommendations were developed on the basis of a student survey, the results of the Academic Teachers Survey and the Student Satisfaction Barometer, which took place on 1–15 June 2020, together with comments sent by students. The report deals with the issues of supporting students, informing internal stakeholders about the implementation of the education process, forms and methods of conducting classes, ensuring hygiene within the education process, and good practices that arose within the university during the confinement and suspension of traditional classes.

CURRICULUM ADJUSTMENTS

 No major adjustments were introduced in the content of the courses.

STUDENT WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

The psychological effects of the lockdown were very difficult to deal with. Students were terrified, and many lecturers and professors were on the front line. They were the first to answer questions and advise students on what to do. On the other hand, more time spent at home allowed people to focus on themselves and their families. Of course, other problems of university life did not disappear. There was a general need for contact with other people.

The Student Support and Adaptation Centre "SOWA" (www.sowa.uj.edu.pl) is responsible for providing psychological support at this difficult time. Advice is offered in both English and Polish. Furthermore, PhD students were provided with a questionnaire in which they could suggest which areas are in need of support.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The medical school suspended recruitment for international students who pay tuition fees as it is not possible to provide them with quality education. Apart from that, no major obstacles were noted in the recruitment process.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

All financial receivables of the university are being paid on time, including scholarships, salaries and others. There were no cuts in payments. The loss of university income is estimated at nearly 4 million euros (March, April, May).

Although the Ministry of Higher Education has not granted the university any extra subsidies, its financial situation is stable, mainly because of its external income. The university received an additional funding of 5 million euros for the coronavirus research team, but it is a dedicated funding and cannot be used elsewhere.

In addition, the university decided to ensure:

— an increased number of scholarships and easier access to them
— dorms payment relief of 50%
— rent relief of 50% for external companies, mainly restaurants, for a period of three months (cost of 100,000 € per month)
— no short-term rentals in the university premises
— purchase of personal protective equipment, often at above market rates

On top of that, any research projects which have been extended and need additional funding will have to have those costs covered by the university, as the Ministry of Higher Education states that it has no extra funds.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Foreign students who pay tuition fees will be the first to be allowed to participate in classes physically as this is often a part of their sponsorship contract.

In terms of fieldwork the university is able to support students, including PhD students, in all relevant matters except for the cost of COVID-19 treatment. The problem is that no insurance companies are offering such services.

It was one of the biggest challenges for the university administration to handle all the students from abroad, including Polish students who resided outside the country. Uncertainty about the planning of the next academic year caused coordination problems amongst universities.
Sometimes it was about the individual attitude of each student; firstly to get in touch with Polish students abroad, and secondly to convince them that it is better for them to return.

There are, however, some advantages to the new situation: for example, virtual contacts within diverse networks are much more intensive than prior to the coronavirus, A mobilization of international society to cooperate in order to contain the pandemic is observe,. for instance, the UNA EUROPA initiative "Ten Days for Europe Start-up."[7]

OTHER COMMENTS: COMMUNICATION ISSUES

— One of the advantages of the pandemic is that networking with other colleagues from the university is much easier and therefore cooperation is much closer.

— Communications from the university authorities to teaching staff could become overwhelming: "After six emails received from the rectorate, I didn't want to read it anymore. Its content was bulky and overwhelming—too much text."

— A lack of translation into the English language of the Rector's ordinances and communications.

— A lack of consolidated texts of the Rector's ordinances.

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[7] https://www.una-europa.eu/stories/una-ten

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7. ANNEXES

7.1. ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

We have developed an exploratory analysis of the 17 member universities of the Europaeum.

A multidisciplinary approach was adopted in the report, drawing on insights from political science, public administration, sociology, law and communication science, to better capture good practices in the new higher education environment. In addition, we believe that it is important to include student voices and have thus focussed much of our analysis on the student experience.

In order to identify both good practices and the specific challenges universities face(d), not only did we draw on publicly available information for each member university (a list of sources is provided the References, above), but also based our research on 36 semi-structured interviews which we conducted with administration, professors and student representatives of the aforementioned universities (Table 1). We interviewed 16 senior administration staff, 9 professors and 11 student representatives, whose experiences have given us a clear idea about the situation in the 17 universities. The interviews we were able to conduct were limited in some circumstances by local conditions: in some universities it is common for the majority of academics and managerial staff to concentrate their annual leave in the summer months and in addition, many more individuals across all universities very understandably were on leave during the period of our study after an intensive and difficult summer term.

Member universities of the Europaeum	Directive representative	Professor representative	Student representative
Universidade Católica Portuguesa			2
Freie Universität Berlin	1		1
Helsingin Yliopisto	1		1
KU Leuven	1		
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München	1	1	
The Graduate Institute of Geneva	1	1	
Universidad Complutense de Madrid	1	1	1
Universitá di Bologna	1	1	
University of Oxford	1		1
Universitat Pompeu Fabra	1	1	1
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne		1	1
Universiteit Leiden	1	1	2
Københavns Universiteit	1		
University of Luxembourg	1	1	

University of St Andrews	1		
Univerzita Karlova, Prague	1		
Uniwersytet Jagielloński	2	1	1
Total of interviews	**16**	**9**	**11**

Table 1. Distribution of the semi-structured interviews done through the member universities of the Europaeum.

All the interviews displayed in Table 1 were conducted from 15 July to 18 August 2020 and were anonymized to keep a real vision of the situation without compromising any of the individuals interviewed, as during the interviews there were topics covered related to personal experiences and opinions.

Namely, the guideline designed for the interviews, included in Annexe 2 of this report, was based on the following lines:

— Perception of the coronavirus pandemic impact on higher education.

— Emerging policies: emergency and urgent policies related to government decisions.

— Learning and teaching processes: challenges, difficulties, best-practices.

— Student well-being & support: more common problems detected.

— Financial support: student special financial support.

— Student recruitment: university reputation and special decisions taken.

— Financial policies: university public and/or private funding.

— International affairs: continuality, feasibility and importance of exchange programmes and other international issues.

— Other important ideas to be considered.

The data obtained through the interviews has been analysed though an open-coding procedure, identifying the following categories with their correspondent sub-categories:

— General perception:

  o Permanent changes in very specific areas (online tutorials/digital tools/administrative tasks) + traditional system (face-to-face lessons/practical content).

  o Temporary policies (1–2 years).

  o Uncertainty.

  o Improvements in flexibility.

  o Health concerns.

— Emerging policies:

- o Relation with the government's regulations.

- o Slow and chaotic measures due to governments/university authority's regulations.

- o Independent and flexible measures depending on areas.

- o The measures were more focussed on basic levels of education instead of universities.

- o Urgent and temporary decisions.

- o Problems with communicating the decisions taken.

— Learning and teaching processes:

- o Lack of an existing online methodology and digital skills.

- o Problems in accessing the Internet and/or technology.

- o Lack of a solid learning environment at home (desk, proper office, others).

- o Interactivity with the students (feedback, engagement).

- o Efforts to preserve quality in education.

- o Concerns regarding online assessments and evaluation.

- o New etiquette/protocol for teaching and learning online (how to use the camera, how to wave the hand, etc.).

— Curriculum adjustments:

- o Laboratories, internships and practical content have been affected, and will need to be made up in-person when possible.

- o Everybody is in the same situation.

- o Enterprises would prefer hiring those students that have suffered this situation (i.e. they have shown to be prepared for a digital world).

— Student well-being & support:

- o Problems regarding uncertainty.

- o Psychological problems: anxiety, deaths, isolation, medical issues, disillusion, etc.

- o Psychological assistance: PsiCall (UCM), UPF Inclusió, e-mail box, students mentoring system (Leiden), etc.

- o Technical support / material aid (computers, Internet cards, etc.).

- o Gender differences.

— Student recruitment:

- o Differences by country reputation.

- o Problems recruiting international students.

- o Importance of reputation and university image.

- o Problems in postgraduate programmes.

- o Importance of in-person education / non-online universities / (importance of the 1st year in in-person university degrees).

- o Branding image campaign to improve reputation.

- o Guaranteeing health security.

— Financial policies (including funding/scholarships):

- o Specific funding.

- o Facilitation of the payment of tuition fees and enrolment cancellation.

- o No / I don´t know about funding.

- o Difficulties obtaining public funding.

- o Importance of the funding obtained through renting university spaces.

— International affairs:

- o Not to travel if it is not extremely necessary / exchanges will not take place.

- o Try to keep all our international programmes going as far as it is possible or government policies allow it.

- o International exchanges are going to decrease.

- o Offer the best quality in teaching.

- o Digital communities (through students associations).

- o International experience will almost disappear (if teaching goes online).

- o We will need to keep adapting to an ever-changing environment/situation

- o International experience goes far beyond the room/university.

— Others:

- o Teacher´s rewards: guaranteeing quality is very demanding.

- o Importance of digital skills both for the student and the teacher body.

- o Lack of uniformity in responses.

- o Importance of physical and face-to-face experiences.

- o Importance of the balance between face-to-face lessons vs. health safety.

- o Need for investing in distance learning facilities.

Beyond these interviews, and considering the importance of including the students' voices in this report, we also designed a survey. The main insights provided by the interviews served as a guidance to design the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted to take into account the experiences students

have had regarding the adjustments their university has made during the pandemic. This way, we would also like to help students at the member universities to go forward as decision-makers through the recommendations made in this report.

The questionnaire includes 47 questions designed to capture data on the learning and teaching environment, student well-being and support, the financial environment, international programmes and exchanges, and the future of higher education (see Annex 3 for the complete questionnaire).

The dissemination of the survey was carried out through the online platform Survey Planet.[8] It was conducted from 15 July to 15 August through the 17 university members. The response to the survey in individual universities likely depended upon various factors, including the number of enrolled students over the summer and whether the university has a culture of students taking the summer as vacation. In at least one university there may also have been survey fatigue as some member universities have been surveying their own students on similar topics in order to reflect upon their provision during the pandemic. In total 1020 responses from students were obtained. From the 1020 responses the distribution per university was as follows[9]:

Member university	# of responses	%
Universidade Católica Portuguesa	74	9.07
Freie Universität Berlin	44	5.39
Helsingin Yliopisto	37	4.53
KU Leuven	18	2.21
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München	8	0.98
The Graduate Institute of Geneva	116	14.22
Universidad Complutense de Madrid	41	5.02
Universitá di Bologna	50	6.13
Universitat Pompeu Fabra	47	5.76
Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne	18	2.21
Universiteit Leiden	87	10.66
Københavns Universiteit	7	0.86

[8] www.surveyplanet.com

[9] There was an overrepresentation of Uniwersytet Jagielloński. To fix the uneven distribution, a random sample of 116 of the 320 responses was taken, which is equivalent to the maximum value of the rest of the responses, which affected the final distribution of the responses analysed as above.

University of Luxembourg	11	1.35
University of Oxford	61	7.48
University of St Andrews	52	6.37
Univerzita Karlova, Prague	29	3.55
Uniwersytet Jagielloński	116	14.22
Total	**816**	**100**

Table 2. Final distribution of the survey responses.

These results were qualitative and quantitatively analysed through open-coding and descriptive statistics. And the insights presented are general to the University-Members. In order to preserve the qualitative information from the responses of Uniwersytet Jagielloński, all the open-ended questions answered by its students were considered for the elaboration of the analysis.

7.2.   ANNEX 2: SUMMARIES OF EACH UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

The Catholic University of Portugal provided a lot of personal guidance to students regarding the transition to online classes, creating an efficient online education system to increase education flexibility. Besides, they believe that online education can ease students' job search and insertion in the labour market. However, students think that this online method is not the best one for education. Namely, they think that the online experience lacks proper interaction, both between students and with teachers, and therefore does not equal in-person classes.

FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN

Freie Universität Berlin created a special taskforce to deal with the policies imposed by the pandemic, and also gave additional well-being support to its staff, students and researchers. Through this special committee—the special taskforce—a hundred-people event was organized to think about the future of education and its delivery in online mode. Finally, there is a strong conviction that some aspects cannot be digitized, so, unfortunately, if the COVID-19 situation further worsens, certain classes will not be taught.

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO

At the University of Helsinki, there is a perception that the pandemic will have a great impact on scientific research rather than only on the learning and teaching systems. This means there will be more investment in science and research as a consequence of the coronavirus disease, which presumably will boost science in general.

Furthermore, although digitalization is going to present many opportunities for innovation in teaching strategies, the general hope is that online teaching will not extend beyond the duration of the crisis. Moreover, it is expected that the university system will dedicate their time and resources to scientific research instead of furthering education programmes.

KU LEUVEN

Even though distance education and teleworking were followed to an extent, KU Leuven is primarily focussing itself on in-classroom and on-campus education. The university has adopted an attitude which stresses the

importance of face-to-face education and has planned to develop practicals, seminars, skills training, tutorials, lab exercises and interactive lectures in groups of a manageable size during the upcoming academic year. Apart from blended teaching, KU Leuven is also considering a rotation system for some courses (i.e. for each lecture, 1/3rd or 1/4th of the students would be present in the auditorium while the rest would attend the lecture online via live streaming). At the time of writing, KU Leuven is conducting on-campus written examinations (only 14% of all the exams in the university were scheduled to take place online). In this sense, the university is allowing four types of examinations: (a) written on-campus exams; (b) online exams with an oral component; (c) in-person oral examinations; (d) assessments based on written submissions.

LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITÄT MÜNCHEN

This university has good expectations for online training as an incubator for education and the job market. Also, they have been fostering research through additional funding (especially research on COVID-19). However, there is a negative outlook on international recruitment, which is a challenging task for the university authorities taking into account the government's restrictions.

THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, GENEVA

In Geneva a "complete change of the teaching paradigm" was acknowledged as a result of the sudden shift in perception of the remote forms of teaching, especially amongst older, "conservative" professors. This does not mean, however, that it will be a long-lasting impact with a new, virtual dimension to university education. It is, rather, a temporary situation.

As a reaction to the pandemic the institute established a Unit of Coordination which implemented the Institute's Protection Plan.

 In August the institute organized e-learning training for its professors. Even after the pandemic is over the institute wants to retain e-learning tools for prospective students who are not able to attend classes in Geneva, or for disabled students. Teaching during the winter semester will mainly take place in the hybrid form. The interest in student admission increased during the pandemic, so the institute decided to maintain the same level of tuition fees: 8000 francs per year. No major disruptions in the budget due to the pandemic were noted.

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID

Because the vast majority of the past in-person activities and curricular practices were cancelled, the Complutense University of Madrid established an extraordinary recognition of credits for undergraduate

students. To minimize the impact of this crisis on them, the recognition of such credits was approved through obtaining diplomas or accrediting documents of participation in online courses developed on various platforms, such as Coursera, Google Activate or other conferences or courses offered online by Spanish universities. Additionally, senior managing staff at the Complutense University are highly aware of the importance of reputation, and they have stressed the need for working on this in order for recruitment not to become affected.

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITÁ DI BOLOGNA

The Universitá di Bologna has managed to teach classes under the new regulation and has taken important decisions such as providing people with a poor Internet connection with USB broadband devices. Moreover, in recognition of the relevance of cultural activities to the well-being of students, events and museum exhibitions are available online for virtual tours. This has allowed students to continue being in touch with culture and entertainment.

Furthermore, in order to cope with the health regulations, the university is developing an app for the students. This application will help to organize the schedule and modality of attendance for each student, and it will be kept constantly updated.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

The University of Oxford has implemented the health protection guidelines provided by the government through an emergency team. When planning for a return to onsite operation, it has taken some decisions such as reducing the total number of hours in labs while the teaching days have been extended. Nevertheless, every single department was given a freehand on deciding the learning environment and curriculum adjustment. As a result, some of the part-time programmes did not offer online modules and the term was cancelled, making it necessary for students of these programmes to extend the total time for their completion of the programme, which was inconvenient to some of them. Furthermore, the university has provided financial security to its students, offering funding support to those affected by COVID-19 (up to £1000).

Finally, it is important to remark that the University of Oxford has a well-organized support system focussed on identifying the new challenges, which has been possible through the involvement of all stakeholders, including students, administration and teaching staff, and also the cooperation with local authorities.

UNIVERSITAT POMPEU FABRA

Pompeu Fabra University has developed extraordinary measures for its course plans. All courses have a course plan that envisages both the content and the skills, learning outcomes and assessment instruments drawn directly from the curriculum. The course plan however does not include a detailed schedule serving as a calendarized learning plan. Nowadays, whether taught face-to-face or online, courses will have a learning plan, in addition to the course plan, which will involve at least: a) the weekly distribution of content and learning activities, b) the deadlines and means of submitting evaluable tasks, c) the expected return of the evaluable activities, d) the impact of evaluable activities on the final mark if not explicitly indicated in the course plan, and e) the expected dedication by the student to the various scheduled academic activities.

In addition, this university has built an important community created through the different students´ associations linked to the UPF, and with both the students and the government teams, which are designed to foster feelings of solidarity and to continue developing (virtual) activities if lockdown has to return.

UNIVERSITÉ PARIS 1 PANTHÉON-SORBONNE

The French government has taken action and implemented policies without coordinating with individual universities. Consequently, there is a lack of coordination between the government and the university in several aspects. This in turn has led to the perception that the university was not fully prepared to deal with the mental health issues of the students, preparing suitable modes of examination, or advising graduate students on entering the job market.

Nevertheless, the number of students entering the next academic term is not expected to be affected, and there is a positive feeling about the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. It is noteworthy that the university has helped students with some extra funding, not only for computers but also to purchase food.

UNIVERSITEIT LEIDEN

Universiteit Leiden and its well-structured communication system is highly remarkable. They not only provided the whole university community with a website where all the content/news related to coronavirus was published, but also elaborated a specific Manual for Digital Examinations and a *Code of Conduct for Remote Teaching*. Also, support for students was provided through an online telephone line, a caring initiative and other psychological supports formulated through a platform called "Healthy University @Home", where also advice related to a healthy life are provided.

However, it is also important to stress the fact that Universiteit Leiden has decided to cancel any international activity for the winter semester (special permissions are only possible in extraordinary cases).

KØBENHAVNS UNIVERSITEIT

Importantly, the Danish government determined that promoting higher education would be part of its plan to boost the national economy. Consequently, the University of Copenhagen has fostered recruitment actions. As a result, student recruitment has increased by 10% this upcoming academic year (compared to the previous year).

The university is also taking additional steps to maintain the quality of teaching by encouraging the faculty to design their online courses to be interactive and to make periodic improvements in teaching based on student feedback. One of the challenges which the university faced during the transition to online education was the pushback from some of the faculty members who raised concerns related to being recorded, and issues related to intellectual property rights and privacy.

Student counselling services have received additional funding from the government. The Department of Psychology is currently developing a "stress and anxiety management policy" for the faculty and students. Moreover, after realizing that many students are not using peer networks during the crisis, the university is now developing guidelines for them to stay connected during these times, especially for academic/professional collaboration.

UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG

The general view of the pandemic impact at the University of Luxembourg is that it has changed the higher education sector permanently. It is worth noting that before the pandemic there was no willingness to introduce such solutions. There is a consensus that digital technologies are only complementary to traditional teaching. Lecturers also prefer live over remote teaching.

The University of Luxembourg established guidelines at a very early stage, in February 2020 prior to the pandemic outbreak in the country. *The University of Luxembourg COVID-19 Crisis Plan* embodied four different scenarios as well as a list of the critical functions within departments (Université du Luxemburg, 2020a). In March 2020, once the threat became more immediate, a COVID-19 Crisis Team was established.

The university has decided to offer blended/hybrid teaching in the winter semester. Small groups will be taught in-person and larger groups will be in remote mode, with some live streaming of classes wherever possible.

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

The University of St Andrews had a robust response to the COVID-19 crisis. Before March 2020, they had put a plan in place for the measures. They handled all three phases—pre-lockdown, during lockdown and ease of lockdown—pretty well. The university has also focussed on hybrid learning (mainly face-to-face activities combined with certain online elements) and on creating dedicated student helpdesks. The university is working on setting up a dedicated COVID-19 Rapid Response Team to advise self-isolating students with guidance and information. It is also working on having protocols and processes in place and providing access to support, including periodic check-ins.

In addition, the university has structured its COVID-19 policy response around major work-streams, each of which is headed by a member of a senior management team. Student representatives are also on the board of each of the work-streams and the university is trying to get them involved in the formulation of policies, strategies and decisions.

Even though constant and accurate communication was a challenge, the university identified any existing problems early and addressed them. It has, for instance, implemented a "zero pay-cuts policy" for the staff as a sign of solidarity and team spirit.

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA

This university has a remarkable interest in creating networks among European universities. There is a strong conviction that the pandemic represented a leap forward in deepening alliances with other universities in Europe, thus creating a completely new job market. An example of such cooperation is represented by courses organized as a "virtual mobility" experience. The idea is that partner universities in other countries can deliver some face-to-face content under the umbrella of Charles University, together with some online content there. This would imply a new kind of international blended learning experience.

Finally, it shall be mentioned that although students usually do not pay fees at Charles University, there are tuition fees for some programmes and international students which have been cancelled for six months to financially support these students.

UNIWERSYTET JAGIELLOŃSKI

The overall opinion is that academic teaching will never be the same. National guidance on some key issues was absent. The university responded initially with daily meetings of the Rector's Collegium as a COVID-19 emergency team which later included weekly participation from deans of department and student

representatives. Internal policies were regulated by the Rector's Ordinances and Chancellors Communication (Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 2020b). It embraced everyday life practices such as commuting, teaching and using personal protection equipment, but also remote teaching and learning recommendations, research and field trip guidelines, etc.

The hybrid model of teaching will be preferred as it is impossible to ensure students' safety with traditional teaching only. Learning tools, however, depend on departments and their various characteristics. Therefore, the administration provided well-thought-out strategies for students coming back to university (which years, which particular students etc.)

Only the Medical School suspended recruitment for international students who pay tuition fees, as it is not possible to provide them with quality education. Apart from that, no major obstacles were noted in the recruitment process.

All financial receivables of the university are paid on time, including scholarships, salaries and others. There were no cuts in payments. The loss of university income is estimated at nearly €4 million (March, April, May).

7.3. ANNEX 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Date:	
Interviewer:	
Interviewee:	
University:	

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a number of changes to the world and our daily lives. The academic arena is not exempted; in some universities we have had to migrate from an on-site system to fully online-based teaching.

Objective:

The following questions are aimed to provide a deeper insight into the situation, in order to contribute to a university-based analysis and best practices report by the end of August 2020. This report will be available for each university member of the Europaeum.

Questions:

1. General perception: Do you think the pandemic situation is going to change the meaning of higher education in the long-term?

2. Emerging policies:

    1. What have been the responses from governments and education authorities in terms of COVID-19? (Consider teaching, attendance, education delivery and others that come to your mind.)

3. Learning and teaching processes:

    1. What is your perception about learning and teaching under COVID-19? Have they changed? In what sense?
    2. How would you say students are dealing with it?
    3. What are the main challenges that you found?

4. Curriculum adjustment:

    1. How do you think practices and practical content are affected?
    2. Are they going to have any impact in the future, for example to access a job position?

5. Student well-being & support:

    1. How would you describe the impact the pandemic has had on students' well-being?
    2. Have you implemented any practices to help students to cope with this situation?

6. Student recruitment:

    1. What are the impacts on recruitment for the university?
    2. How would the university ensure the students' experience if the lockdowns remain for a long time?

7. Financial policies (including funding / scholarships):

    1. Have you implemented any extra funding for students affected by COVID-19?
    2. Do you consider that the pandemic has had any implication on attracting funds?

8. International affairs:

    1. Is the university still having students abroad or will it go fully online?
    2. How will the university ensure the international experience and quality on education for foreign students if going online?

9. Others:

    1. Is there any specific issue you would like to mention or that you believe is relevant for the research?

7.4. ANNEX 4: STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Presentation

Your university is a member of the Europaeum, an association of 17 of the leading universities in Europe, and it has agreed to participate in this study about the impact of COVID-19 on the member universities. The study is being conducted by a team of Masters and Doctoral students (three from the University of Oxford, one from Complutense, Madrid, and one from the Jagiellonian University, Kraków) coordinated by Professor Dr. Hartmut Mayer. Your participation would be enormously appreciated, and your contribution will help this group of universities to learn from the crisis in ways in which we hope will help future students.

All replies are confidential to the team and the data will only be used in an anonymized form for research purposes and will be held on our secure server for six months before being deleted. If, exceptionally, we would wish to quote you on an attributable basis, we will ask your permission.

If you have any questions, please contact our team representative, Marcela Reynoso < email >

The EUROPAEUM, founded in Oxford in 1992, is a network of 17 leading European universities that runs various joined MA Programmes, Spring and Summer Schools, conferences and workshops. It provides student and faculty exchanges (more info at europaeum.org).

Please be aware that the duration of this survey would be about 15 minutes. We really appreciate your effort to reflect your opinion, but feel free to choose not to answer some of the open-ended questions.

A. BASIC INFORMATION

A1. Age (open)

A2. Gender

    a.   Female

    b.   Male

    c.   Other

    d.   Prefer not to say

A3. Please select the name of your university:

1. Universidade Católica Portuguesa
2. Freie Universität Berlin
3. Helsingin Yliopisto
4. KU Leuven
5. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
6. The Graduate Institute of Geneva

7. Universidad Complutense de Madrid	13. Københavns Universiteit
8. Universitá di Bologna	14. University of Luxembourg
9. University of Oxford	15. University of St Andrews
10. Universitat Pompeu Fabra	16. Univerzita Karlova, Prague
11. Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne	17. Uniwersytet Jagielloński
12. Universiteit Leiden	

A4. Which is your area of study?

a. Humanities

b. Social Sciences

c. MPLS (Maths, Physics, Physical and Life Sciences)

A5. Which is your level of studies?

a. Graduate

b. Postgraduate studies

c. PhD programme

d. Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your native language).

A6. What kind of student are you?

a. National student

b. International student from an EU country

c. International student from a non-EU country WITH a visa needed

d. International student from a non-EU country WITHOUT a visa needed

A7. What is your financial status?

a. Full scholarship

b. Partial scholarship (>50% of tuition fees)

c. Partial scholarship (<50% of tuition fees)

d. Self-funded

e. Loan

f. Prefer not to say

g. Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your native language).

A8. Why did you choose to study at your current university? Select all that apply (Tick box)

a. University reputation (history, professors, well-known university)

b. International ranking of the university

c. International ranking of the programme enrolled

d. Contents of the programme enrolled

e. Location of the university / campus

f. International community and networking

g. Increased value for money

h. Increased extracurricular possibilities

i. Increased job prospects

j. Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your native language).

A9. Regarding the COVID-19 crisis, how satisfied are you with your university's communications during this time? (Tick box)

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	No applicable
General information provided						
Information given through the website						
Information provided by the social media						
Funding and scholarships information						
Information about the teaching and learning processes						
Evaluations and assessment information						
Information about well-being and support tools						
Information given about international programmes						

(Erasmus +, exchanges, etc.)					

A10. How satisfied are you with the coordination between the government at any level and the university in the response to the COVID-19 crisis?

    a.   Very satisfied

    b.   Satisfied

    c.   Neutral

    d.   Dissatisfied

    e.   Very dissatisfied

A10-A. Would you like to let us know why? (Feel free to answer this question in your native language.) Open-ended question. Optional

A11. Has the government at any level implemented gender differentiated policies?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

A11-A. Would you like to tell us which gender policy has been implemented? Open-ended question. Optional

B. LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

B1. Would you consider that the quality of your education has been affected by COVID-19 online measures?

    a.   Yes, in a POSITIVE way

    b.   Yes, in a NEGATIVE way

    c.   Yes, in a POSITIVE and NEGATIVE way

    d.   I don´t know / I am not sure

    e.   No

B1-A. (If **YES/POSITIVE**) What are the factors you consider as positive?

    a.   Increased productivity

    b.   Working from home

    c.   Ability to connect from different points of the world

    d.   Ability to take care of my family while studying

    e.   Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your native language).

B1-B. (If **YES/NEGATIVE**) What are the factors you consider as negative?

    a.   Less interaction with classmates or professors

    b.   Cancelled events

    c.   Lack of a place for studying

    d.   Internet connectivity problems

    e.   I don't have a proper space for studying

    f.   I have to take care of home issues more intensively

    g.   Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your native language).

B1-C. (If **YES/POSITIVE & NEGATIVE**) What are the factors you considered when making your statement?

    a.   Increased productivity

    b.   Working from home

    c.   Ability to take care of my family while studying

    d.   Ability to connect from different points of the world

    e.   Less interaction with classmates or professors

    f.   Cancelled events

    g.   Lack of a place for studying

    h.   Internet connectivity problems

    i.   My practical sessions have changed or been suspended/ cancelled

    j.   Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your native language).

B2. To the best of your knowledge, what are the COVID-19 related **LEARNING AND TEACHING** measures your university has implemented to continue with education during this pandemic? Select all that apply. (Tick box)

    a.   Synchronous online sessions combined with face-to-face teaching.

    b.   Non-synchronous online sessions: pre-recorded sessions that you can watch on demand.

    c.   "Moodles" and tutorials

    d.   Online office hours

    e.   WhatsApp 1:1 meetings

    f.   Online labs

    g.   Online events and conferences

h. Book digitalization

i. Other research documents digitalized

j. Books being mailed

k. Online examinations

l. Online submissions

m. Online self-evaluations

n. Online shared working documents

o. Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your own language).

B3. How would you score the following measures? (Tick box)

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	No applicable
Synchronous online sessions: sessions at the same time as face-to-face ones. Non-synchronous online sessions: pre-recorded sessions that you can watch on demand.						
"Moodles" and tutorials						
Online office hours						
WhatsApp 1:1 meetings						
Online labs						
Online events and conferences						
Book digitalization Other research documents digitalized						
Books being mailed						
Online examinations						
Online submissions						
Online self-evaluations						
Online shared working documents						

B4. From the following options select the three learning measures you preferred the most.

Select all that apply.

a. Synchronous online sessions: sessions at the same time as face-to-face ones.

b. Non-synchronous online sessions: pre-recorded sessions that you can watch on demand.

c. "Moodles" and tutorials

d. Online office hours

e. WhatsApp 1:1 meetings

f. Online labs

g. Online events and conferences

h. Book digitalization

i. Other research documents digitalized

j. Books being mailed

k. Online examinations

l. Online submissions

m. Online self-evaluations

n. Online shared working documents

B4-A. Which of the following factors made you prefer your selected answers?

a. Interactivity

b. Intuitiveness

c. Engagement: (It's easy to focus your attention)

d. Other. Please specify (feel free to answer this question in your native language).

B5. To the best of your knowledge, what is going to be the duration of the COVID-19 learning and teaching measures implemented?
Select one option.

a. Only during the lockdown

b. Only during the summer and winter terms

c. Some of them will remain

d. All of them will remain

e. I don't know

C. STUDENTS' WELL-BEING & SUPPORT

C1. How would you rate the following measures? (Tick box)

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	No applicable
Exemptions of examinations due to COVID-19 related causes						
Exemptions of submissions due to COVID-19 related causes						
Suspended classes						
Suspended examinations						
Suspended submissions						
Well-being support meetings						
Well-being support platforms						
Well-being general information						

C2. Have you experienced an increased level of stress or loneliness or any other mental health issues during the COVID-19 outbreak?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. Prefer not to say

C2-A. On the scale of 1–5 (1 being "Least Affected" and 5 being "Most Affected"), please rate how much your mental well-being has affected your overall learning experience and/or outcomes. *Select one option.*

$$1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5$$

C3. Have you accessed your university's counselling services / mental health support during the COVID-19 outbreak?

    a. Yes

    b. No

c.   Prefer not to say

C3-A.1. (If **YES**) How satisfied were you with the quality of support that was provided?

a.   Very Satisfied

b.   Satisfied

c.   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

d.   Dissatisfied

e.   Very dissatisfied

C4. Did any of these groups / networks help you with your mental well-being?
Select all that apply.

a.   Faculty / department / college

b.   Classmates / peers

c.   Student council

d.   Student clubs or groups

e.   Community-based networks outside university

f.   Family / partner / friends

g.   Other (please specify: _____)

h.   Not applicable

C5. What can be improved upon for better mental health support to the students? Feel free to answer this question in your native language.
Open-ended question. Optional.

C5. Do you consider that the pandemic situation and its responses has affected your domestic environment?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I don't know

D. FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

D1. Have you had any financial difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

a.   Yes

b.   No

c.   Prefer not to say

D1-A. Would you like to tell us what kind of financial difficulties?

Open-ended question. Optional.

D2. To the best of your knowledge, has your university implemented any extra funding for students with COVID-19 related financial difficulties?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

D2-A. To the best of your knowledge, have any of these extra funding been differentiated by gender?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

D3. To the best of your knowledge, have any of your sponsors implemented any extra funding for students with COVID-19 related financial difficulties?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

D3-A. (If **YES)**, Write the name of your sponsor. (Open question.) Feel free to answer in your native language.

D3-A2. To the best of your knowledge, have any of these extra fundings been differentiated by gender?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

E. INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES **AND EXCHANGES**

E1. If higher education teaching were exclusively delivered in an online format, would you make/have made different decisions about studying abroad?

    a.   Yes, more likely to study abroad

    b.   No difference

    c.   No, more likely to study in my own country

    d.   I don't know

E2. If teaching were delivered online without any in-person experiences, would you still consider undertaking international programmes (exchanges, Erasmus, etc.)?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

F. FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

F1. In your opinion, do you think that online teaching will become a normal source of education?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

F2. Do you consider online education to have less value for money than in-person education?

    a.   Yes

    b.   No

    c.   I don't know

F3. Assuming that online teaching became a normal resource of education, which are the factors that you would consider when choosing a university?

    a.   Reputation and prestige

    b.   Good-quality online sessions

c. Higher proportion of in-person sessions

d. Distance learning availability

e. Flexibility of study hours

f. Other. Please specify. Feel free to answer in your native language.

F4. Assuming that online teaching became a normal resource of education, would you choose to study in your current university again?

a. Yes

b. No

F4-A. (If **YES**) Which of the following could be reasons for choosing your university again?

a. Reputation and prestige of the university (history, professors, well-known university, etc.)

b. International ranking of the university

c. International ranking of the selected field

d. Type of programmes offered

e. Location of the university / campus

f. Quality of online education provided

g. Value for money

h. Other. Please specify. Feel free to answer in your native language.

F4-B. (If **NO**) Which of the following could be reasons for you not choosing this university again?

a. Distance from my home country/town

b. Would seek in-person sessions

c. Financial matters

d. Well-being necessities not suited

e. Low quality of online education provided

f. Lack of events and conferences

g. Other. Please specify. Feel free to answer in your native language.

F5. If all teaching were online, what do you think students would be missing out on as an important part of an in-person course?

a. Student life

b. Physical friends

c. Experience of another country/city

d. Living away from home (as part of maturing/growing up).

e. Adapting to a different culture

f.   Language learning in daily life

g.   Other. Please specify. Feel free to answer in your native language.

G. FINAL QUESTION: OPEN QUESTION

G1. Do you have any other comments or thoughts you would like to share with us? Feel free to answer in your native language.

8. AUTHORS' PROFILES

Jennifer García Carrizo

Jennifer García Carrizo is an expert in Branding and Communication, having worked as PR & Communication Manager for several start-ups (2019-2020) and at the Complutense University of Madrid (Information Science Faculty, 2015-2016). She has experience as Communication and Advertising Responsible at Infoactualidad (2012-2014) and as an assistant account executive at Omnicom Group (2012-2013).

Jennifer holds a PhD in Communication (Cultural and Creative Spaces and Citizen Participation, 2015-2020), a Digital & Audio-visual Communication MA (2014-2015) and an Advertising and PR Bachelor´s Degree (2010-2014) and has been awarded multiple times during her career: FPU (Spanish Ministry of Education, 2016-2020), 3 Minute Thesis Competition (Complutense University of Madrid, 2017), National Prize of University Education (Spanish Ministry of Education, 2013-2014). She was one of the Europaeum Scholars in 2018-19, working on the project 'Europe Listen and Respond: how to improve the EU's public consultation platform'.

Daniel Gołębiowski

Daniel Gołębiowski is a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at the Faculty of International and Political Studies, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, with a research focus on 'International cultural relations as an instrument of the EU foreign and security policy. Example of Saudi Arabia.' Because of his interests in culture and its potential role as an instrument in the EU external actions, he puts an emphasis on the relations between the EU and the Arab countries. Daniel is also an entrepreneur and co-founder of Nahda Foundation, a non-profit organization which has been established to increase awareness among Polish people about the Middle East and its cultural diversity. He has experience of working for public institutions such as the European Parliament and in 2020 he took on the role of Assistant Director for Postgraduate Studies in Diplomacy at the Jagiellonian University. Daniel was one of the Europaeum Scholars in 2018-19, working on the project 'Europe Listen and Respond: how to improve the EU's public consultation platform'.

Muktai Panchal

Muktai Panchal is a public health professional with over half a decade of experience in India and holds a postgraduate degree in public policy from the University of Oxford. She has led various international development projects involving policy development, health system strengthening, social determinants of health, public-private partnership and community engagement. As a Technical Advisor, she supported the Government of India in developing the country's first policy for resource mobilization and greater political commitment towards Tuberculosis elimination. She is an advocate of equitable access to healthcare, patient-centric care, gender-responsive services, and ethical global health governance.

Marcela Reynoso Jurado

Marcela Reynoso Jurado was a MPP Candidate at Blavatnik School of Governance (Oxford). She holds a BA in International Relations and an MA in Gender and Law from the National Autonomous University of Mexico and has worked at the public sector for the past five years as a public policy and legislative advisor for the Mexican Federal Congress. Currently, she is Division Chief at the Mexican Social Security Institute in the evaluation unit.

Andres Felipe Saavedra Reyes

Felipe has participated in the formulation and implementation of the Colombian foreign policy and development policies in several topics, including public utilities, water security and circular economy. In his last position before embarking on the MPP at the Blavatnik School of Government (Oxford), he was the coordinator of international cooperation projects to bridge the gender gap in rural areas and contributed in policymaking to implement the Peace Agreement in Colombia. Previously, he studied for a BA Law at Universidad Javeriana (Colombia) where he has also been a lecturer of international economic law and public policy since 2016. He strongly believes that people deserve to be governed by evidence-based policies tailored to improve their wellbeing.

Image: KU Leuven, Rob Stevens