

# **Student mobility in Western Balkan countries**





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**Research report**

Milos Basic,  
Phd. Associate Professor at Faculty  
of Political Sciences - Podgorica

## COLOPHON

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Research report

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AUTHOR Milos Basic, Phd. Associate Professor at Faculty of Political Sciences - Podgorica

COORDINATION  
Gerrit Rauws  
Director, King Baudouin Foundation  
Stefan Schäfers  
European Programme Advisor, King Baudouin Foundation  
Michèle Duesberg  
Assistant, King Baudouin Foundation

GRAPHIC CONCEPT PuPiL  
LAYOUT Jean-Pierre Marsily  
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## FOREWORD

The main goal of this survey was to identify the perception, attitudes and experiences of students from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia regarding studying abroad. In this context the survey explored the motivation and expectations towards studying abroad, the main problems and obstacles, the question how students obtain information as well as potential negative effects of being abroad. Moreover, the survey intended to bring some background information into the debate on student mobility in the Western Balkans and specially the so called isolation of the region: a debate which is often marked by personal experience of few and less on facts and figures.

The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire. Before the fieldwork was conducted, three groups of respondents were identified in relation to their experience of studying abroad and so we created a separate questionnaire for each group, namely:

- students who had already studied abroad;
- those who were considering studying abroad;
- and those who were not considering studying abroad.

It should be born in mind when considering the results of this study that the sample only covered students currently studying in their home country. Those who have studied abroad but are not studying now and those who are currently studying abroad were not part of the sample.

The questionnaire was rather extensive with a total of 576 items. Since the research was comparative in nature, the same sample design was applied in each of the four Western Balkan countries. The sampling frame was university faculties and departments in each country. This design was projected to give a multistage random sample of 550 respondents per country, resulting in a total of 2137 respondents from all four countries.

This study was carried out by Prof. Milos Besic from University of Podgorica in collaboration with the Serbian Student Union, the University of Montenegro Student Parliament, the Albanian Student Government and the Republic of Srpska Student Union. The study was conducted within the framework of the 'Smart Visa for Students from the Western Balkans' (the Smart Visa project) initiated by the King Baudouin Foundation in 2006. The purpose of the project was to identify possibilities for optimising conditions for students from the Western Balkans to take up long- or short-term studies in the European Union. The Smart Visa project itself was in response to recommendations drawn up by the International Commission on the Balkans in their 2005 report 'The Balkans in Europe's Future', which pointed out that only a very small number of students in the Western Balkans have ever been abroad and that those who do wish to study pursue their studies in the European Union experience difficulties in doing so.

With this quantitative survey the King Baudouin Foundation hopes to give impulses into the debate on how studying abroad can become a normal pattern in the Western Balkans as achieved in the European Union. Gaining experiences abroad is an important part of students' education and will form highly qualified personalities who will help to build up democratic and pluralistic societies in the region and foster the integration of the region into the European Union. However, it is of high importance to create incentive systems to attract these people to come back to their home countries as the risk of brain drain should not be underestimated.

Universities and in general the educational system in the Western Balkans have changed heavily in the recent years and are still changing today. More changes are needed to improve the situation of students who are interested in studying abroad: improved information availability on opportunities to study abroad, more scholarships, more help from universities for students who are interested in studying abroad, easier procedures, improved recognition of exams to name just a few results of the survey. The results of the survey show that the call for improvements does not only go in direction to university administrations but also to local governments, the international community and foundations. As foundation being active for more than 10 years in the region the King Baudouin Foundation took this study as basis for the development of a new programme named 'Student Mobility in the Western Balkans'. The programme will support as of 2009 existing scholarship programmes and selected universities in the region in motivating and advising students to study abroad as well as in improving the information availability.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The key findings of this research are that whilst students in the Western Balkans are interested in studying abroad:
  - the **levels of interest are markedly** different across the countries (under a third in B&H and Serbia, but half in Montenegro and 71% in Albania);
  - among those who are interested in studying abroad, **there is considerable lack of knowledge about facilities** available for helping them to do so;
  - and **students feel that there is little information, support or encouragement provided by their universities.**
2. The small percentages of students who have already experienced study abroad (the highest was 2% in Albania) seems to confirm the potential for a serious information campaign among university students on study opportunities abroad.
3. The research shows that general lack of interest in travelling outside their own country is not an issue since more than 70% of all students possess a passport and have travelled abroad. Indeed more than two thirds of them had visited EU countries (except in Albania, where only a third had done so).
4. Students' motivations for foreign study are above all general career development and opportunities and specialization in their field of study.
5. Not surprisingly, studying abroad presents potential anxieties, not least of which was being away from family and friends. However, worries about being at a sufficiently high academic level and social integration were mentioned by a significant number of students, as well as fears that foreign qualifications would not be recognised in their home country.
6. Difficulties in obtaining visas are often cited in political debate as a reason for not studying abroad, but the research shows that this is but one inhibiting factor (and not even the most important, except in Albania). In addition to ignorance about scholarships and exchange programmes, the problems of long and frustrating administrative procedures, financial insecurity and the general lack of information and support are issues that should be addressed if students in the Western Balkans are to be encouraged to study abroad.
7. Today's generation of students looks above all to the Internet for information and those in the Western Balkans are no different. The 'information gap' could and should be filled by providing more information on university and other websites and might usefully be complemented by some form of student testimonials (e.g. on websites or in informal campus meetings from those who have studied abroad) since word of mouth from peers who have had experience of the application processes as well as actually studying abroad is felt to be the most reassuring.
8. Finally, and somewhat disturbingly, although more than a third of students said they would seek work in their own country, a significant minority said they planned to work elsewhere (as many as a quarter in B&H and Serbia).

## SAMENVATTING

1. De belangrijkste bevindingen van dit onderzoek zijn dat studenten in de westelijke Balkan belangstelling hebben om in het buitenland te studeren, maar dat:
  - het **niveau van belangstelling duidelijk verschilt** van land tot land (minder dan een derde in Bosnië-Herzegovina en Servië, maar de helft in Montenegro en 71% in Albanië);
  - bij degenen die belangstelling hebben om in het buitenland te studeren, er **een aanzienlijk gebrek aan kennis bestaat over de faciliteiten** die beschikbaar zijn om hen daarbij te helpen;
  - **studenten het gevoel hebben dat** hun universiteiten **weinig informatie, steun of aanmoediging** bieden.
2. De lage percentages van studenten die al de ervaring hebben van een buitenlandse studie (het hoogste bedroeg 2% in Albanië) lijken het potentieel te bevestigen voor een ernstige informatiecampagne bij universiteitsstudenten over studiemogelijkheden in het buitenland.
3. Het onderzoek wijst uit dat een algemeen gebrek aan belangstelling voor buitenlandse reizen geen probleem vormt, aangezien meer dan 70% van alle studenten een paspoort heeft en al naar het buitenland is gereisd. Meer dan twee derde van hen heeft inderdaad al een bezoek gebracht aan EU-landen (behalve in Albanië, waar dat slecht geldt voor een derde).
4. De motivatie van de studenten om in het buitenland te studeren, heeft vooral te maken met een algemene carrièreontwikkeling en kansen tot specialisatie op hun studieterrein.
5. Het valt niet te verwonderen dat studeren in het buitenland ook mogelijke angsten met zich mee brengt, niet in het minst het verwijderd zijn van familie en vrienden. Maar een groot aantal studenten vermeldde ook bezorgdheid over een voldoende hoog academisch niveau en over sociale integratie, evenals de vrees dat buitenlandse diploma's niet zouden worden erkend in hun thuisland.
6. In politieke discussies worden problemen om een visum te verkrijgen, vaak vermeld als een reden om niet in het buitenland te studeren, maar het onderzoek toont aan dat dit slechts een van de belemmerende factoren is (en zelfs niet eens de belangrijkste, behalve in Albanië). Naast de onwetendheid over studiebeurzen en uitwisselingsprogramma's, zouden ook de problemen van langdurige en frustrerende administratieve procedures, financiële onzekerheid en het algemene gebrek aan informatie en steun moeten worden aangepakt om studenten in de westelijke Balkan aan te moedigen om in het buitenland te studeren.
7. De huidige generatie van studenten zoekt vooral informatie op het internet en dat is niet anders voor jongeren in de westelijke Balkan. De 'informatiekloof' kan en zou moeten worden gedicht door meer informatie te verstrekken op websites van universiteiten en andere sites. Een waardevolle aanvulling zou kunnen bestaan in de een of andere vorm van getuigenissen van studenten (bv. op websites of tijdens informele campusvergaderingen door degenen die in het buitenland hebben gestudeerd). Immers, informatie die men verkrijgt via mond tot mond van collega-studenten die ervaring hebben met de aanvraagprocedure en ook met het effectief studeren in het buitenland wordt als zeer betrouwbaar beschouwd.
8. Ten slotte is het enigszins zorgwekkend dat hoewel meer dan een derde van de studenten stelde dat zij werk zouden zoeken in eigen land, een aanzienlijke minderheid toch ook meedeelde dat zij van plan zijn om elders te werken (zelfs tot een kwart in B&H en Servië).

## SYNTHÈSE

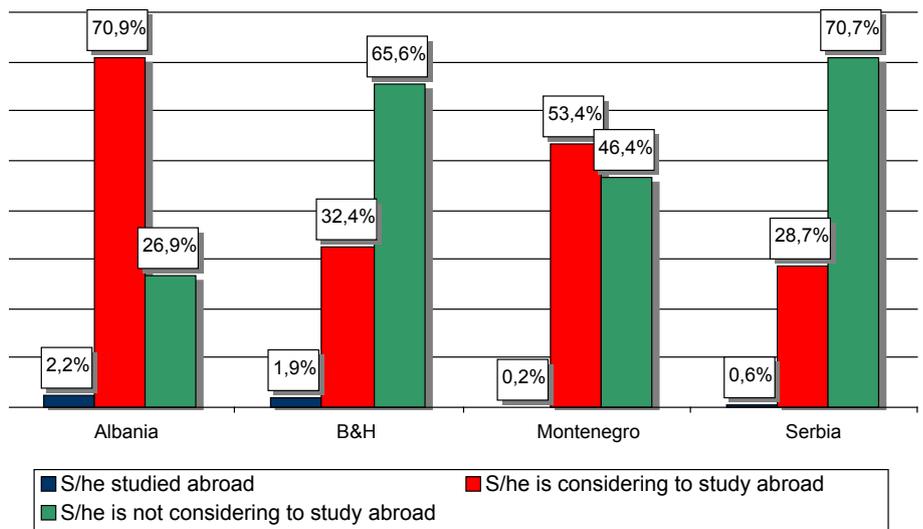
1. Selon les principaux résultats de cette étude, les étudiants des Balkans occidentaux manifestent de l'intérêt pour des études à l'étranger mais:
  - les **niveaux d'intérêt diffèrent considérablement d'un pays à l'autre** (moins d'un tiers en Bosnie-Herzégovine et en Serbie, la moitié au Monténégro et 71% en Albanie);
  - les étudiants intéressés par des études à l'étranger **ne connaissent pas les moyens** à leur disposition pour les aider à concrétiser leur projet;
  - les **étudiants disent recevoir peu d'informations, de soutien et d'encouragement** de la part de leurs universités.
2. Les faibles pourcentages d'étudiants qui ont déjà vécu des études à l'étranger (le pourcentage le plus élevé était de 2% en Albanie) semblent confirmer la nécessité d'une campagne d'information sérieuse parmi les universitaires sur les possibilités d'études à l'étranger.
3. L'étude montre qu'un manque général d'intérêt pour les voyages en dehors du pays d'origine ne constitue pas un problème puisque plus de 70% de tous les étudiants possèdent un passeport et ont voyagé à l'étranger. Il s'avère en effet que plus des deux tiers d'entre eux avaient visité des pays de l'UE (sauf en Albanie, où c'était le cas pour un tiers seulement).
4. Ce qui motive des étudiants à étudier à l'étranger, c'est avant tout l'espoir de développer leurs opportunités de carrière et de se spécialiser dans leur domaine d'étude.
5. Assez naturellement, étudier à l'étranger suscite quelques appréhensions, dont la principale est de s'éloigner de la famille et des amis. Les craintes de ne pas posséder un niveau académique suffisamment élevé et de connaître des difficultés d'intégration sociale ont été mentionnées par un nombre important d'étudiants, de même que la peur que des qualifications obtenues à l'étranger ne soient pas reconnues dans le pays d'origine.
6. La difficulté d'obtenir un visa est souvent citée dans le débat politique comme une raison de ne pas étudier à l'étranger, mais l'étude montre qu'il ne s'agit là que d'un des facteurs inhibiteurs (et certainement pas le plus important, sauf en Albanie). En plus de la méconnaissance des bourses et des programmes d'échange, les procédures administratives longues et frustrantes, l'insécurité financière et le manque général d'information et de soutien sont autant de problèmes qu'il faut s'employer à résoudre si l'on veut encourager les étudiants des Balkans occidentaux à étudier à l'étranger.
7. La génération estudiantine actuelle s'informe essentiellement par le biais d'Internet; il en va de même pour les étudiants des Balkans occidentaux. Le 'fossé en matière d'information' pourrait et devrait être comblé en fournissant davantage d'informations sur les sites internet des universités et autres sites, informations qui pourraient utilement être complétées par des témoignages d'étudiants (sur des sites internet ou lors de séances informelles sur le campus par des jeunes qui ont étudié à l'étranger): il s'avère en effet que 'le bouche à oreille' par les condisciples qui ont fait l'expérience des processus de candidature et ont effectivement étudié à l'étranger est considéré comme le mode d'information le plus rassurant.
8. Enfin, et c'est quelque peu préoccupant, bien que plus d'un tiers des étudiants disaient vouloir travailler dans leur propre pays, une minorité significative disait avoir l'intention de travailler ailleurs (jusqu'à un quart en B&H et en Serbie).

# PART I EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN STUDY

## 1. Student profile

A comparison between the countries (Chart I.1) shows that only a **very small percentage of students in each country had any experience of studying abroad**. In Albania, there is much more interest in studying abroad than in other countries. Whilst more than one in every two students in Montenegro are considering studying abroad, the vast majority of students from B&H and Serbia have not considered studying abroad.

**Chart I.1 Experience or interest in studying abroad**



Given the importance of understanding the factors that influence a student's interest in studying abroad or not, we conducted a logical regression analysis (see A1)<sup>1</sup>. It was found that students were more likely **not to be considering study abroad** if they were:

- Studying natural sciences
- Had low average marks
- Older
- Male
- Not living in a town
- Not studying in their home town<sup>2</sup>
- Living alone
- Uninformed about European scholarships and mobility schemes

We also looked at the factors that influenced students to consider studying abroad (Appendices, Chart A2). Students were **more likely to consider studying abroad** if they were:

- Studying social sciences
- Had better average marks
- Were younger
- Female
- Living in a town
- Living with parents

1) Charts and tables marked 'A' can be found in the Appendices to this report.

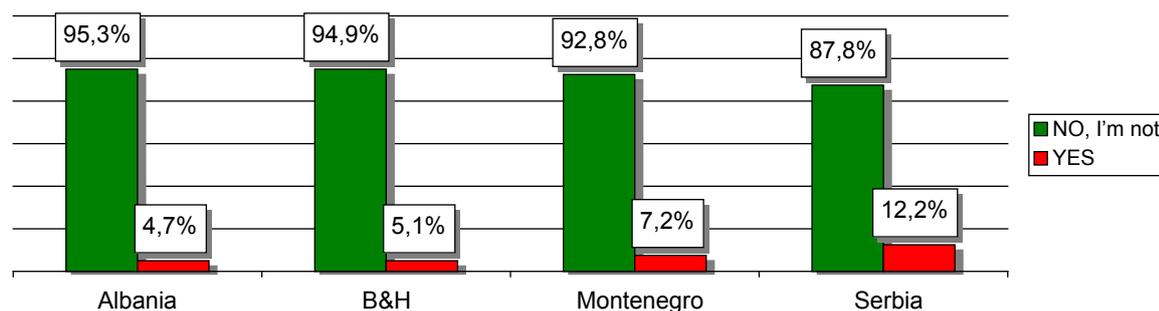
2) This is a difficult issue for those not acquainted with multivariate analysis, because this factor (not studying in home town) is a predictor both for studying and not studying abroad. However, in the multivariate space the item contributes to prediction for both studying and not studying abroad, but in relation to different variables in the model.

- Living in a student residence
- Not studying in their hometown<sup>3</sup>
- Of lower social status
- Were informed about European scholarships and mobility schemes
- Had never travelled outside the country

## 2. Awareness of support schemes

Being informed about European scholarships and mobility schemes is, as we showed in the regression analysis, an important reason to consider studying abroad. Unfortunately, this research shows (Chart I.2 below) that **students in the Western Balkans are very poorly informed about scholarships and mobility schemes**. In each of the four countries, about 9 out of 10 students said that they were not informed about scholarships. Students were slightly better informed in Serbia, with 12% saying they were aware of programmes, but even here, the majority (88%) were not aware of any specific schemes. It is nevertheless important to say here that students may simply not be informed because they are not interested in studying abroad. This would mean that not being informed about scholarships and mobility schemes is not the 'antecedent' but rather the consequence.

**Chart I.2 Awareness of any specific European scholarship and mobility scheme?**



**Table I.2. Awareness of the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programmes (%)**

	No, I know nothing about the programme %		I have heard something about the programme but I am not sure what it is %		Yes, I have all the information about the Erasmus programme %	
	Erasmus	Erasmus mundus	Erasmus	Erasmus mundus	Erasmus	Erasmus mundus
Albania	74.9	75.6	22.4	21.1	2.7	3.3
B&H	79.6	85.4	19.1	13.3	1.3	1.3
Montenegro	68.5	73.8	29.6	24.4	1.9	1.7
Serbia	69.2	73.9	27.3	22.8	3.5	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>73.1</b>	<b>77.2</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.4</b>

3) As explained in footnote 2

With regard specifically to the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus programmes (Table I.1 above), it is clear that a **huge majority of students are not informed about these programmes**, although students from Serbia are marginally more informed than their peers in other WB countries.

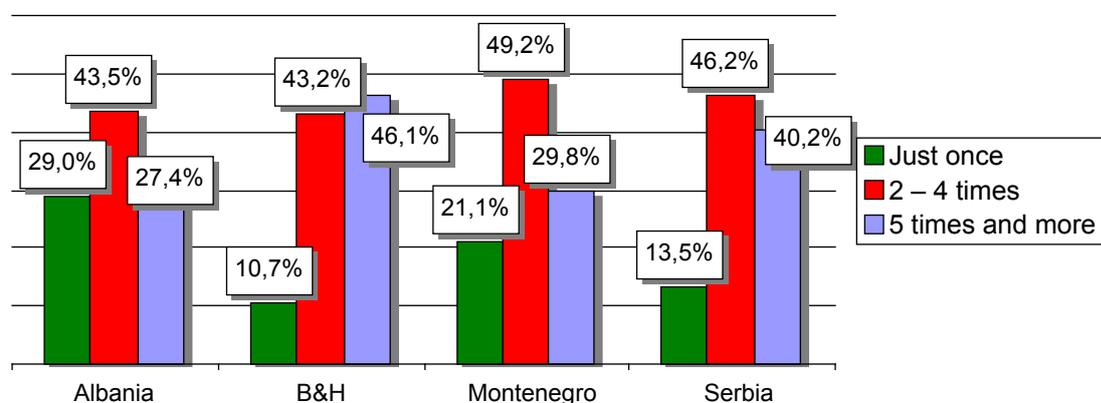
### 3. Passport ownership and foreign travel

Since students' experience of travelling abroad may influence their motivations for studying abroad, we asked questions about passport ownership and previous travel abroad. We found that **most students have a valid passport** (Table I.3.1). More students in Serbia own a passport than elsewhere, whilst significantly fewer students in Montenegro<sup>4</sup> own a passport. There is wide variation in travelling experience, with **students from Albania having travelled much less outside their country than students in other countries**. Students from Serbia and B&H had travelled outside their country more than students from Montenegro and they had also travelled more often (Chart I.3).

**Table I.3.1 Passport ownership and travel outside the home country**

	% possessing a valid passport	% who have travelled outside home country
Albania	77.8	56.6
B&H	76.1	88.7
Montenegro	68.6	79.2
Serbia	89.3	90.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>77.9</b>	<b>78.3</b>

**Chart I.3 Number of times students had travelled outside their countries** (Base: those who had travelled)



4) It should be noted that Montenegro has only recently become an independent state and passports have only begun to be issued to their citizens in 2008.

Finally, by analyzing where the students travelled to (Table I.3.2 below), we can see that **in most cases, travel was to neighbouring countries**. Relatively few students had travelled to the USA, although a significant number had travelled to EU countries, particularly students from Serbia and B&H.

**Table I.3.2 Where students had travelled to (Base: those who had travelled)**

	<b>Albania</b>	<b>B&amp;H</b>	<b>MNE</b>	<b>Serbia</b>
	<b>YES %</b>	<b>YES %</b>	<b>YES %</b>	<b>YES %</b>
Ex YU <sup>5</sup>	92.9	99.5	83.6	79.9
EU	35.7	<b>82.1</b>	66.5	83.2
USA	4.2	13.9	5.8	10.0

5) In the case of Albania, ex YU refers to Albania's neighbouring countries

## PART II STUDENTS CONSIDERING STUDYING ABROAD

### 1. Profiles by country

Students thinking about studying abroad were our special interest. In this research, we wanted to find out about their experience, opinions, attitudes and motivations regarding the possibility of studying abroad. The greatest degree of interest expressed in studying abroad (70%) was in Albania. Just over half of the students in Montenegro were considering studying abroad, whilst less than a third of those in B&H and Serbia were considering studying abroad. As already indicated, the regression analysis (Appendices, Chart A2) shows there are a number of reasons for this.

*Table II.1 Students considering studying abroad*

	Number considering study abroad (= 100%)	% considering study abroad
Albania	390	70.9
B&H	170	32.4
Montenegro	283	53.4
Serbia	153	28.7

### 2. Reasons for studying abroad

The issue of motivation among students thinking about studying abroad was of special importance in our research. The main finding here is that **for those who intend to study abroad, every reason to justify their decision seems to be important** (Table II.2.1). We can, nevertheless, identify some differences in the relative importance of these reasons. At the level of the overall sample, **career development in general and professional specialization seem to be the most important reasons**, followed by improved job opportunities, new experience and making professional and social contacts.

**Table II.2.1 Motivations of students who intend to study abroad.**

<b>MOTIVE:</b>	<b>Very important reason %</b>	<b>Fairly important reason %</b>	<b>Not a the reason %</b>
Gaining new experience	66.4	29.2	4.4
Career development in general	<b>79.1</b>	18.1	2.7
More opportunities on the job market after my studies	70.5	24.8	4.7
Learning language	55.2	28.5	16.3
Becoming independent as a person	40.5	31.9	27.6
Making social and professional contacts	60.5	33.7	5.8
Having fun, making friends	25.9	35.1	39.0
Getting a better education	63.8	25.6	10.6
Improving CV	63.2	29.7	7.1
Being able to leave home country after studies to work abroad	41.6	34.0	24.3
Learning about other cultures and languages	46.7	41.9	11.4
To specialize in my field of study	<b>79.3</b>	17.3	3.4

**Table II.2.2 Motivations of students who intend to study abroad - by country**

MOTIVE:	Very important reason %				Fairly important reason %				Not a reason %			
	Albania	B&H	Montenegro	Serbia	Albania	B&H	Montenegro	Serbia	Albania	B&H	Montenegro	Serbia
Gaining new experience	61.3	72.4	67.5	72.7	31.3	25.0	31.0	24.0	7.4	2.6	1.4	3.3
Career development in general	76.1	<b>80.6</b>	<b>80.2</b>	<b>85.9</b>	20.2	16.9	18.0	12.5	3.7	2.5	1.8	1.6
Having more opportunities on the job market after my studies	75.6	66.0	62.7	76.4	21.2	25.5	33.7	16.9	3.1	8.5	3.6	6.8
Learning language	28.5	71.8	75.3	67.3	40.8	18.6	19.6	24.5	30.7	9.6	5.1	8.2
Becoming independent as a person	31.9	47.3	44.5	48.3	34.0	36.3	30.0	25.2	34.0	16.4	25.5	26.6
Making social and professional contacts	58.4	63.2	59.0	67.1	35.2	31.6	35.4	27.5	6.4	5.3	5.6	5.4
Having fun, making friends	8.7	39.7	35.7	35.4	21.0	34.2	48.5	46.9	70.2	26.0	15.8	17.7
Getting a better education	44.9	76.8	74.4	79.1	35.1	20.0	20.5	16.2	19.9	3.2	5.1	4.7
Improving CV	65.8	61.2	58.1	70.1	29.2	29.9	34.1	22.0	5.0	8.8	7.8	7.9
Being able to leave home country after studies to work abroad	36.8	47.3	40.5	50.0	30.9	31.5	38.3	36.1	32.3	21.2	21.2	13.9
Learning about other cultures and languages	37.9	51.3	54.7	51.0	45.6	38.8	37.4	42.2	16.5	9.9	7.9	6.8
To specialize in my field of study	<b>89.4</b>	72.3	70.8	76.2	9.0	18.7	26.6	20.4	1.6	9.0	2.6	3.4

When we compare the four countries (Table II.2.2 above), we can see that there are some differences regarding the importance of reasons for studying abroad. In Albania, for example, the most important reasons for studying abroad are gaining professional specialization, followed by career development in general and improved job opportunities. In B&H, career development is the main reason, followed by getting a better education, gaining new experience and study specialization. In Montenegro, career development and language learning, followed by getting a better education and study specialization were cited as being important reasons. Finally, in Serbia, career development is the main reason for studying abroad, followed by getting a better education and having improved job opportunities.

In reality, motives are almost never separated from one another, but rather mutually related psychologically. By conducting a factor analysis on the motivational data above (see Appendices, Table A1), we found that there are three main factors underlying the reasons for wanting to study abroad, namely:

- **personal development**
- **career development**
- and **gaining new experience.**

This means that, structurally, all students who wish to study abroad are influenced to a greater or lesser extent by one or more of these three factors. From an analytical perspective, the main task was to measure the extent of the motivational structures in each country, so as to be able to compare motivational differences between the countries. The factor analysis (Appendices, Chart A3) showed that:

- In Albania the main motivational factor is career development, while personal development is marginal and gaining experience is not so important either.
- In B&H and Montenegro, studying abroad is primarily important for personal development, followed by gaining experience, while career development is less important.
- Serbia is interesting since all three motives are important, although, as in B&H and Montenegro, personal development and gaining experiences are relatively more important.

### 3. Expectations of studying abroad

One of the popular motivation theories is the so-called theory of equalization defined by J. S. Adams. This theory states that, at the level of motivation, an individual tries to make a balance between input and output. In other words, when we make an investment in a given direction (input) we expect an adequate output, which is in accordance with our effort. This is the reason we were interested in learning about the perceived benefits among students intending to study abroad. Here again, we found that students have big expectations (Table II. 3.1), meaning that they see almost everything as a benefit. The **greatest expected benefit is providing motivation for a future career, followed by improved language skills**. Improving the chances of finding a job abroad and gaining professional and social contacts are also considered important benefits. More than half of the students rated expecting to learn more than in their own country as a very important benefit, whilst just under half felt that study abroad provided a different perspective on their home country.

**Table II.3.1 Expected benefits of studying abroad**

<b>EXPECTED BENEFITS:</b>	<b>Very important benefit %</b>	<b>Fairly important benefit %</b>	<b>No benefit expected %</b>
Will provide an external perspective on my country	42.4	39.9	17.7
Will learn more than in my home country	50.2	36.6	13.2
Will improve my chances to work abroad	56.1	31.5	12.4
Will improve my language skills	<b>64.1</b>	28.5	7.3
Will gain friends and professional contacts	54.2	38.5	7.3
Will be more motivated for my future career	<b>70.8</b>	23.1	6.1

There were some differences between the countries regarding the expected benefits of studying abroad (Table II.3.2 below), notably between Albania and the other countries. In Albania, motivation for a future career is the most important expected benefit, followed by gaining a better education and acquiring an external perspective on one's own country. In Serbia, Montenegro and B&H on the other hand, the greatest expected benefit is improved language skills, followed by, with small differences, motivation for a future career, gaining professional contacts and improving the chances of working abroad.

**Table II.3.2 Expected benefits of studying abroad, by country**<sup>6</sup>

<b>EXPECTED BENEFITS:</b>	<b>Albania</b>	<b>B&amp;H</b>	<b>MNE</b>	<b>Serbia</b>
Will provide an external perspective on my country	<b>1.43</b>	1.95	1.91	2.14
Will learn more than in my home country	<b>1.47</b>	1.74	1.70	1.77
Will improve my chances to work abroad	1.61	1.57	<b>1.55</b>	<b>1.44</b>
Will improve my language skills	1.67	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.29</b>
Will gain friends and professional contacts	1.54	<b>1.56</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>1.51</b>
Will be more motivated for my future career	<b>1.24</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>1.35</b>	<b>1.49</b>

Studying abroad may be considered to have some negative effects and one of the research objectives was to identify any expected negative effects among the students planning to study abroad (Table II.3.3). The results we obtained are very clear and culturally grounded. **The biggest negative effect of studying abroad is expected alienation from friends and families.** Cultural self-stigmatization is also seen in the case of Albania, where students fear depression after seeing how much they have to develop and an expectation of feeling like second-class citizens in a foreign country.

**Table II.3.3 Negative effects of studying abroad (% YES answers)**

<b>NEGATIVE EFFECTS:</b>	<b>Albania %</b>	<b>B&amp;H %</b>	<b>MNE %</b>	<b>Serbia %</b>
Will alienate me from my friends/family at home	<b>78.7</b>	<b>68.3</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>58.3</b>
Will feel more like a second class citizen	34.6	20.9	13.2	13.9
Will be depressed to see how much we have to develop	40.0	27.6	19.9	19.9
Will have a more negative view on the world outside my country	19.5	7.8	5.0	2.6
Will be frustrated by an incapacity to adjust to new environment	23.8	7.2	7.9	3.3

6) Note: Estimation based on mean value, where the smaller the value, the higher the benefit expected.

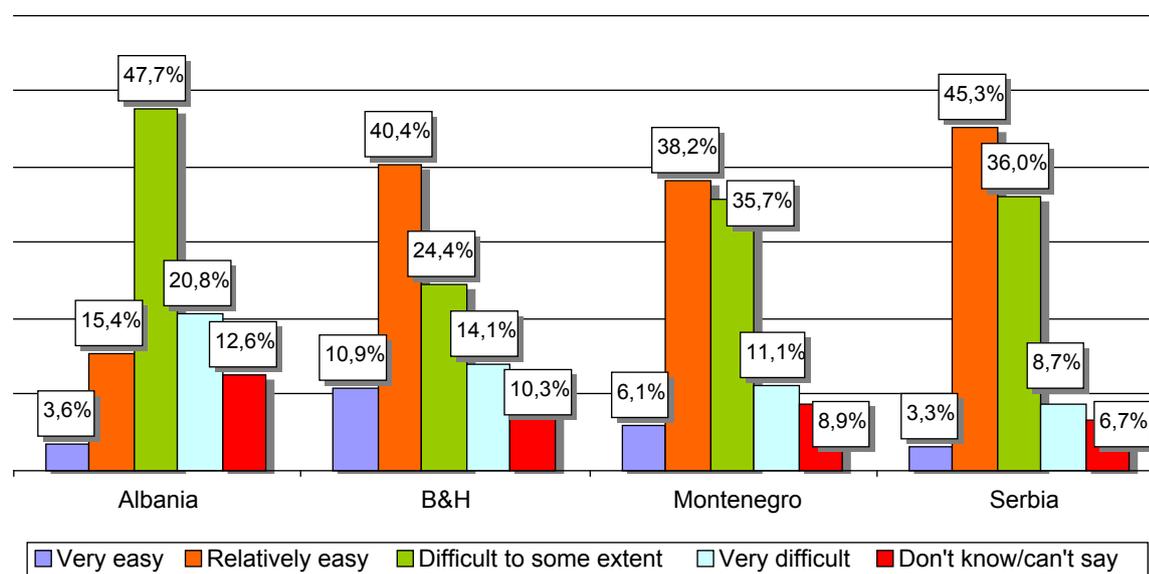
#### 4. Obtaining information about studying abroad

We have already seen that students are not well informed about scholarship opportunities and mobility schemes. Studying abroad necessarily goes with obtaining important information about many aspects of study, so we asked students where they looked for this (Table II. 4.1 below). According to the research findings, there are three main sources for this kind of information. Not surprisingly, the first port of call is **information from students who have already been abroad**. Then, most students inform themselves via a **general Internet search**. If we add to this figure the number of students who use their own university websites, we can see that the **Internet is the most important medium for obtaining information about study opportunities**. Thirdly, an extremely important source of information is that obtained from **friends and family**. Although other sources are also important, it is the triangle of **students who have already studied abroad – friends & family – Internet** that is of greatest importance and this can be interpreted as a **need to get information via reliable sources**. Students are less confident about information from 'unknown' individuals and institutions. In this perspective, the Internet is probably used more for obtaining further specifications and details about information already provided by students who have already studied abroad and friends. This means that **one of the best ways to inform students about study opportunities would be by using informal channels and students who have already studied abroad as resources**.

**Table II.4.1 Sources used for information on study abroad (% of YES answers)**

<b>Information source:</b>	<b>Albania %</b>	<b>B&amp;H %</b>	<b>MNE %</b>	<b>Serbia %</b>
General Internet search	<b>77.4</b>	<b>88.8</b>	<b>83.2</b>	<b>88.7</b>
Homepage of current university	47.7	32.9	28.3	36.5
International student office in current university	29.0	20.5	18.8	28.7
Friends, family	<b>71.3</b>	<b>73.9</b>	<b>69.3</b>	<b>71.5</b>
Students who have already been abroad	<b>80.5</b>	<b>81.9</b>	<b>83.7</b>	<b>83.4</b>
Ministry of Education	36.7	17.9	18.2	19.2
Student organization	48.7	46.6	44.4	60.3
Embassies of foreign countries	38.5	33.6	17.1	27.8
Offices of foreign information providers (e.g. DAAD)	37.7	14.1	10.7	19.9

According to the students we interviewed, **it is not at all easy to acquire information about opportunities for studying abroad** (Chart II.4). This problem is greatest in Albania, although the situation is similar in Montenegro and Serbia. It seems to be relatively easier to obtain this kind of information in B&H compared to other countries, but even there it is not as easy as it should be.

**Chart II.4 Do you find it easy to obtain information about opportunities for studying abroad?**

Asked about what should be improved regarding information availability, students mentioned **just about everything** (Table II.4.2). Nevertheless, they felt that the greatest improvement needed was regarding **brochures and the help provided by the international office of their own university**.

**Table II.4.2 Areas needing improvement regarding information availability**

AREAS THAT NEED TO BE IMPROVED:	Needs lots of improvement %	Needs some improvement %	Does not need to be improved %	Don't know/Refused %
Central website with all information	<b>58.0</b>	32.6	3.6	5.8
More help from international office at home university	<b>70.5</b>	22.9	1.7	4.9
More help from other organizations (student organizations, DAAD, embassies)	<b>60.2</b>	28.7	4.6	6.4
Brochures with all information	<b>70.4</b>	21.0	3.7	4.9

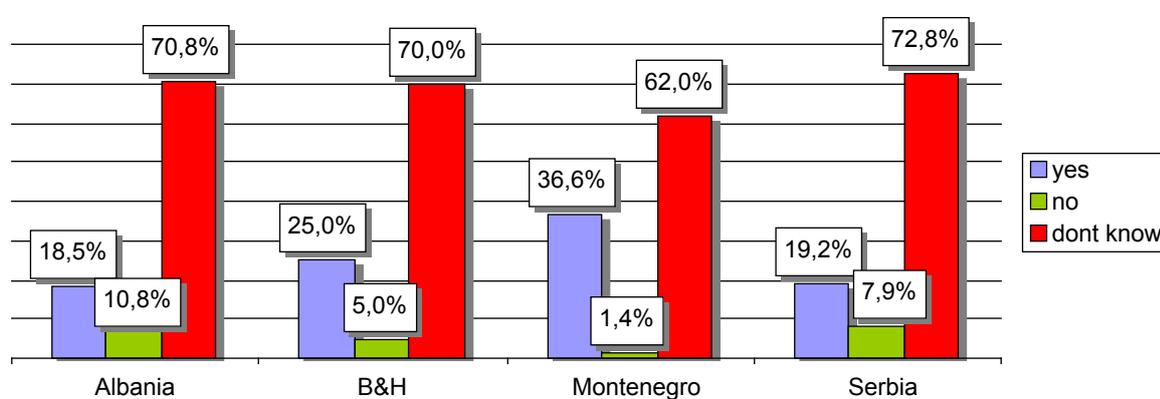
Finally, in this part of the research, students were asked about the encouragement they received from the relevant institutions and individuals (Table II.4.3). Once more we see that greatest support comes from **students who have already studied abroad, friends and family**; in other words the triangle mentioned above. A comparison of the results across the four countries shows that administrative staff within the university appear to be more helpful in Albania than in other countries, whilst student organizations in Serbia seem to be doing a better job compared to those in other countries.

**Table II.4.3 Sources of encouragement (% YES answers)**

Students encouraged by:	Albania %	B&H %	Mne %	Serbia %
Lecturers	35.1	29.1	24.1	26.5
Teaching assistants	18.7	27.9	24.5	25.2
Administrative staff at the university	21.5	9.6	7.6	4.6
Student organizations	39.5	36.5	34.2	44.4
Students who have been abroad	<b>80.8</b>	<b>71.5</b>	<b>77.3</b>	<b>80.1</b>
Family	<b>81.0</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>68.3</b>	<b>61.6</b>
Friends	<b>77.7</b>	<b>70.3</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>74.2</b>
Employees in international offices	19.5	13.8	24.7	17.2

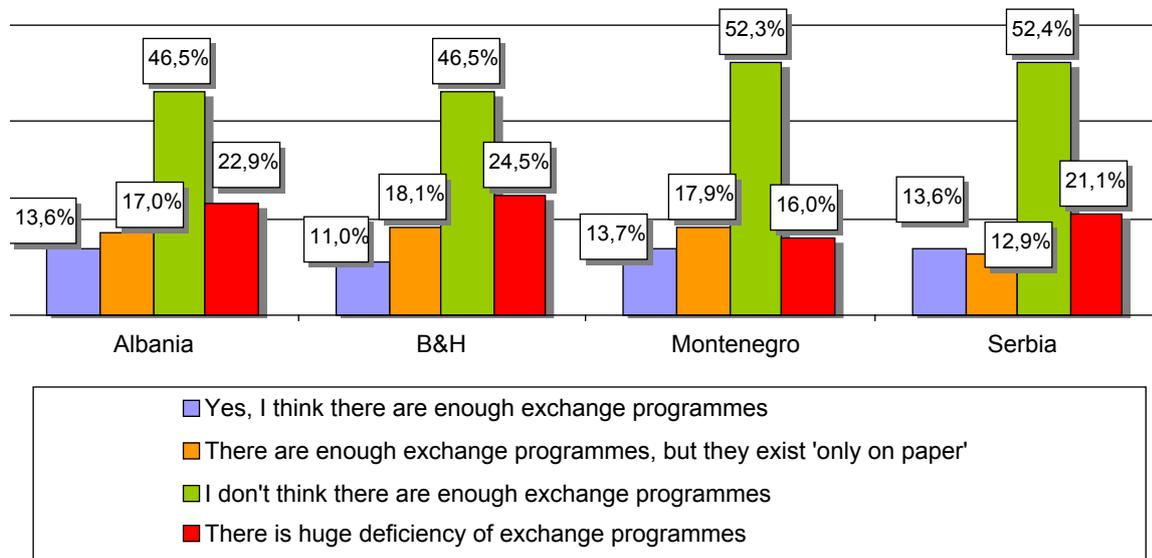
## 5. Student support schemes and application procedures

University partnerships provide an important framework and resource for students who wish to study abroad. It is vital that such resources exist, but students must also be aware of them. In this research, we found out that **most students simply do not know about the existence of university networks** (Chart II.5.1). Even those who said they knew about a university partnership network were unable to name the partner universities and some students named countries instead. We should stress that we are not referring here to all the students interviewed, but only those who claimed to be considering studying abroad, so the awareness problem is overall much greater. If we compare the countries, we can see some differences. In Montenegro, students are relatively more aware of partnership networks than elsewhere.

**Chart II.5.1 Is your university a member of an international university network?**

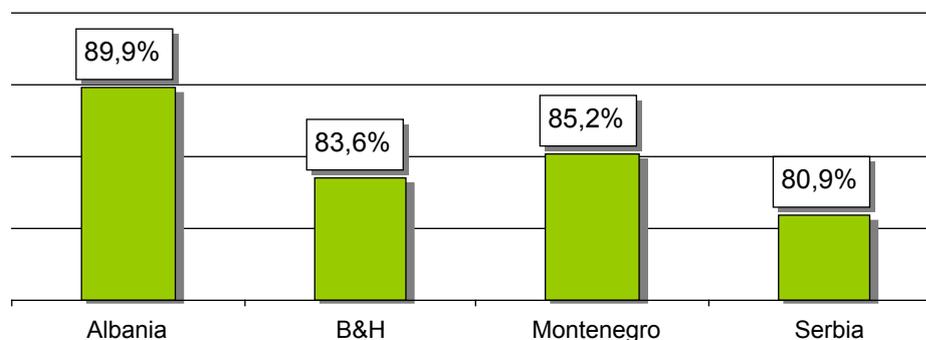
Furthermore, even though they do not know if their university is a member of an international university network, students in all four countries claim that there are not enough exchange programmes with other universities (Chart II.5.2 below).

**Chart II.5.2 Are enough partner universities/exchange programmes with other universities?**

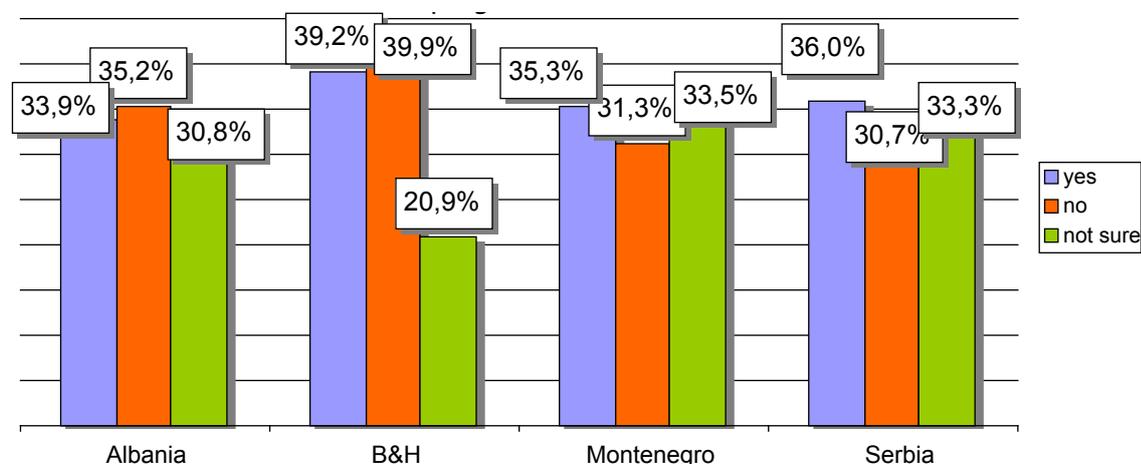


Finally, when asked about the possibility of using an existing university partnership network, the vast majority of students expressed an interest to do so (Chart II.5.3).

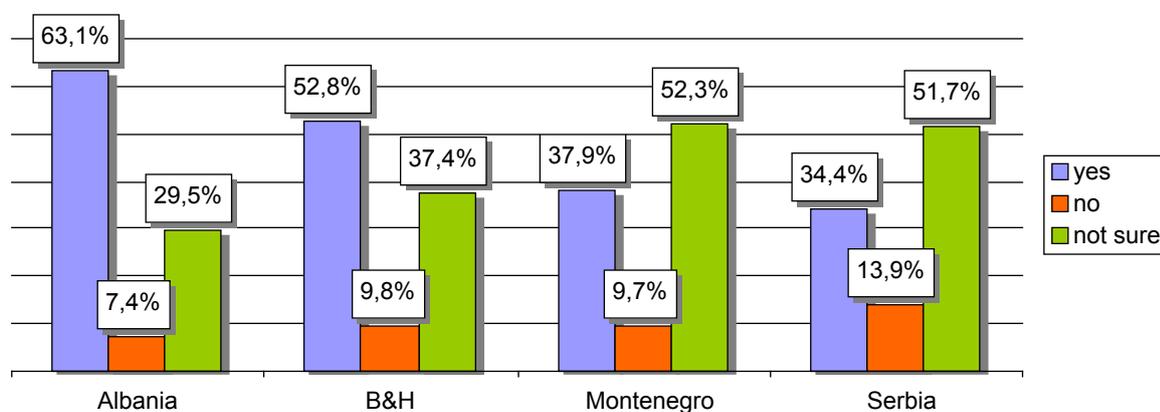
**Chart II.5.3 Will you make use of the existing partner university network? (% of YES answers)**



**Students are similarly partially informed about scholarship programmes** in each country (Chart II.5.4 below). Approximately one third of students (each) know, don't know or are not sure about scholarship programmes in each country. When asked to name the programmes, the most frequently mentioned were: DAAD, Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus, although in many cases, countries were cited instead of scholarships.

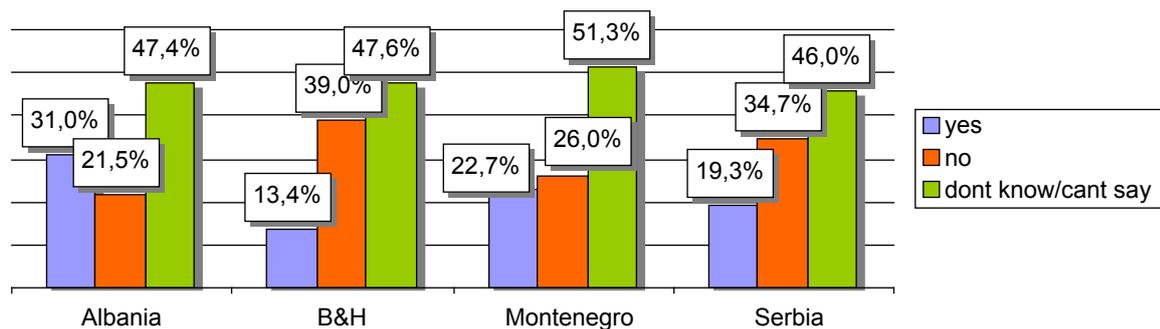
**Chart II.5.4 Do you know that there are scholarship programmes?**

However, many students said that they would apply for a scholarship (Chart II.5.5), particularly in Albania, where almost two-thirds of those who intend to study abroad say they will apply for a scholarship. In B&H more than half of all students will apply, while in Serbia and Montenegro more a third said they would apply for the scholarship.

**Chart II.5.5 Will you apply for a scholarship?**

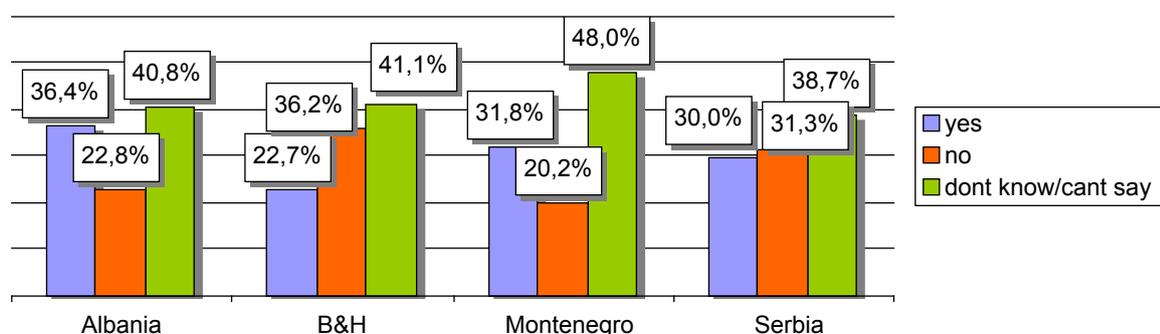
Recognition of exams is considered as a potential problem regarding studying abroad and this could obviously be a serious obstacle to any decision to study abroad, as seen in Chart II.5.6 below. Almost a third of the students from Albania and a quarter of those from Montenegro think that it would not be easy to obtain recognition for exams taken abroad. The situation is somewhat better in Serbia and B&H. However, in each country, **most of the students were unable to say whether recognition of their exams would be a problem**, which confirms our previous conclusion that in general students do not have adequate and accurate information when considering studying abroad.

**Chart II.5.6 Do you think it will be easy to obtain recognition of your exams from abroad?**



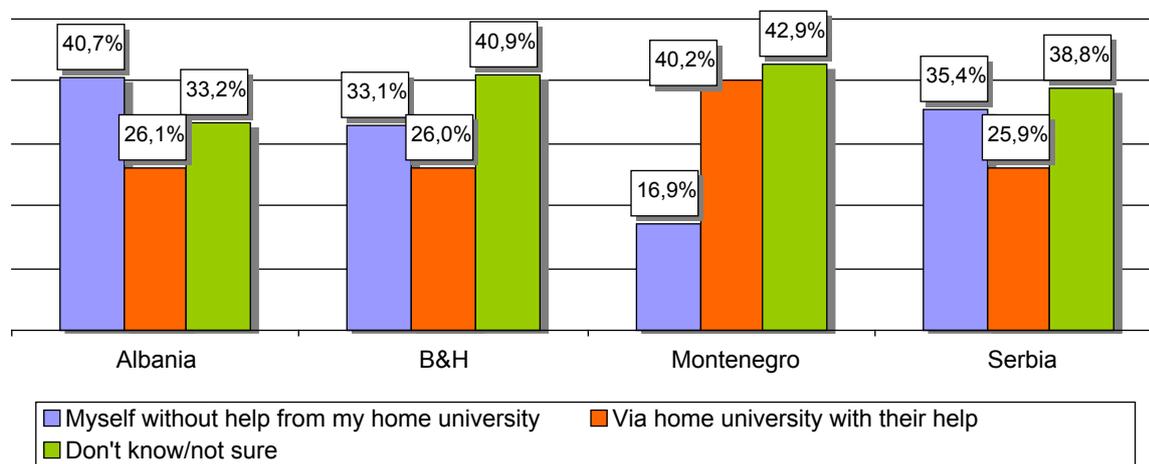
A potential problem for students wishing to study abroad is certainly that of obtaining a visa or residence permit, but around 40% of those questioned were unable to judge whether it would be a problem (Chart II.5.7 below). Students from Albania expect to have more visa problems than those from Serbia and Montenegro.

**Chart II.5.7 Do you think it will be easy to get a visa/residence permit while studying abroad?**



When applying to study abroad **some students plan to use help at their home university, but others will apply directly to the foreign university** (Chart II. 5.8). Almost twice as many students from Albania will apply directly as those who will do it via their home university. In B&H and Serbia, about one third of students will apply on their own whilst a quarter will rely on their home university during the application process. In this particular aspect it looks as if the situation is better in Montenegro where more than 40% of the students who intend to study abroad will do it via their home university. However, it must be noted that **there is still a huge number of students in each country who do not know if they are going to make use of their home university or apply on they own**. This finding shows that students seriously intending to study abroad need much more information.

**Chart II.5.8 Will you apply directly to a foreign university or via your home university?**



## 6. Problems regarding studying abroad

There is a range of potential problems facing students who intend to study abroad. In this research, we have tried to quantify the extent of such problems (Table II.6.1). According to our analysis, **the biggest problems are long and frustrating procedures, money problems and paperwork**. These are followed by problems regarding obtaining a visa, lack of available information, the absence of a functioning university partnership network and the lack of or little help received from the home university. Fear of a new social and academic environment and language problems appear to be considered as relatively less important.

**Table II.6.1 Problems students face regarding studying abroad**

<b>PROBLEMS:</b>	<b>Big problem %</b>	<b>Small problem %</b>	<b>No problem %</b>
Lack of available information – difficult to get information about new social and university environment	58.5	35.4	6.1
Long and frustrating procedure in general	<b>67.9</b>	28.5	3.6
Paperwork (bureaucracy in general)	<b>62.1</b>	32.3	5.5
Exams being recognized	45.2	41.8	12.9
Providing lecturer recommendation	31.9	45.1	23.0
Providing invitation letter	48.5	38.1	13.3
Fear of new social and academic environment	22.6	42.7	34.7
No/little help from my university regarding the expectations of studying abroad	55.6	35.8	8.6
No functioning university partner network	57.1	32.1	10.8
No exchange programmes	54.9	33.4	11.7
Getting a visa	<b>59.6</b>	31.6	8.8
Can't provide enough money	<b>62.4</b>	29.5	8.0
Language problem	20.1	44.0	35.8

If we examine the problems in each country (Table II.6.2 below), we can say that:

- The two main problems in Albania are long and frustrating procedures as well as the problems of getting a visa
- In B&H the main problems are long and frustrating procedures and paperwork
- In Montenegro, long and frustrating procedures is also the main problem, followed by lack of available information
- In Serbia, long and frustrating procedures is the biggest problem, followed by money problems and paperwork.

**Table II.6.2 Problems students face regarding studying abroad, by country**

PROBLEMS:	Big problem %				Small problem %				No problem %			
	Albania	B&H	Montenegro	Serbia	Albania	B&H	Montenegro	Serbia	Albania	B&H	Montenegro	Serbia
Lack of available information	63.7	57.0	58.2	47.1	27.5	38.9	37.1	49.3	8.8	4.0	4.8	3.6
Long and frustrating procedures	74.9	68.9	58.1	65.5	22.2	29.1	37.6	29.5	2.9	2.0	4.3	5.0
Paperwork	66.1	66.2	52.6	62.3	28.0	30.4	42.2	30.4	5.9	3.4	5.2	7.2
Recognition of exams	35.1	62.3	49.5	50.8	46.8	32.6	38.6	40.3	18.1	5.1	11.9	8.9
Providing lecturer recommendations	33.8	36.0	27.1	30.6	41.8	50.7	49.3	41.8	24.4	13.2	23.5	27.6
Providing an invitation letter	49.0	50.0	49.3	46.8	37.5	43.6	35.9	35.5	13.5	6.4	14.8	17.7
Fear of new social and academic environment	30.7	21.8	17.4	8.2	42.2	43.7	43.6	42.5	27.0	34.5	39.0	49.3
No/little help from my university regarding expectations of studying abroad	60.4	58.6	52.4	43.7	33.1	32.0	40.5	39.5	6.5	9.4	7.1	16.8
No functioning university partner network	60.5	56.5	55.9	50.4	30.1	29.6	37.6	31.3	9.4	13.9	6.5	18.3
No exchange programmes	65.2	54.4	45.3	43.2	27.9	29.6	43.3	35.2	6.8	16.0	11.3	21.6
Getting a visa	75.7	58.9	40.1	48.6	17.9	31.9	51.8	35.2	6.3	9.2	8.1	16.2
Can't provide enough money	64.3	64.6	57.7	64.8	28.1	26.5	33.5	28.3	7.6	8.8	8.9	6.9
Language problem	21.5	26.1	16.4	15.0	42.1	38.7	50.8	43.3	36.4	35.2	32.8	41.7

Even though there are a number of problems regarding specific issues, it is rather rare that the problems function individually at psychological level. On the contrary, it is more likely that in students' heads, problems are mixed up with each other and lead to specific 'syndromes'. It is for this reason that we again used multivariate analysis to discover the structure of student problems. We found four factors or patterns of problems when examining the possibility of studying abroad (Appendices, Table A 2), which can be identified as problems related to:

- **lack of support**
- **procedures**
- **paperwork**
- and **resources**.

Thinking about the problems in this way fits with our other findings about the possibility of studying abroad. By comparing the countries in this structural perspective (Appendices, Chart A4), we can see that there are important differences, which can be summarized as follows<sup>7</sup>:

- In Albania, lack of support is the biggest problem, followed by paperwork problems.
- Students from B&H have one main problem, that of procedures.
- In Montenegro, procedures are the biggest problem, but other factors are relatively less acute compared to other countries.
- In Serbia, students mostly face problems of paperwork and procedures.

## 7. Suggested improvements

Finally, in this part of the research, we asked students intending to study abroad what needed to be improved regarding the overall application process (Table II.7.1). It was important here that students indicated not only **that everything should be improved**, but that **it should be improved greatly**. This may indicate either that the application process is currently very bad, or that there is a general lack of information, as seen earlier. Furthermore, since students feel that everything should be greatly improved, comparisons between countries are difficult. Although some slight differences in priorities can be identified between the countries, the fact that students believed that everything should be improved has priority over any kind of comparison.

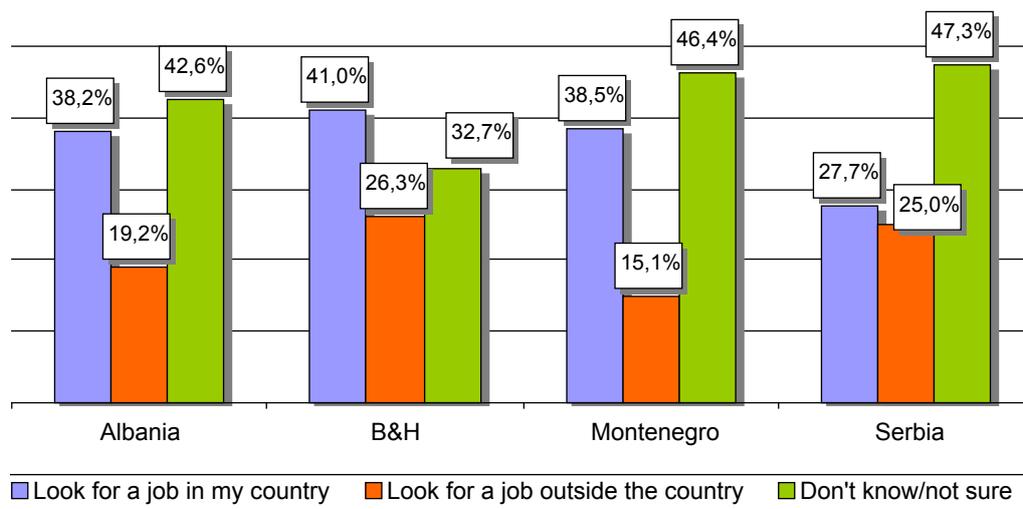
**Table II.7.1 Aspects that students would like to see improved**

ASPECTS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:	To a great extent %	To some extent %	No need to improve %
Availability of information	72.0	26.8	1.2
Making bilateral agreements between universities	68.8	29.2	1.9
Implementation of Bologna Agreement (EU educational reforms)	63.8	30.1	6.1
Enabling grade compatibility	58.5	36.4	5.1
Provision of administrative help	62.9	33.1	4.1
Support in getting a visa	74.9	22.1	3.0
More scholarships	81.4	16.6	2.0
Improving procedures to study abroad.	76.0	21.7	2.3
Provision of more exchange programmes	73.4	23.7	2.9
Easier recognition of exams	61.7	32.2	6.1

7) NOTE: Comparisons are in a relative sense and not in absolute figures. This does not mean for example that paperwork is not a problem in Montenegro: instead, it means that it is a much bigger problem in other countries. Also, this does not mean that procedures are not a problem in Albania: it means it is a smaller problem compared to other problems.

Our last question in this part of the research concerned post university student plans (Chart II.7). **Most students are not sure what they are going to do after their studies**, but of those who had decided, **more planned to search for a job in their home country than find a job outside**. However, there are significant differences between countries in this regard. Proportionately more students from B&H and Serbia intended to look for a job abroad compared to Albania and Montenegro, although in B&H, it could be that students there are less in doubt about what to do after their studies.

**Chart II.7 Plans after finishing studies**



## PART III FINDINGS ON STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT CONSIDERING TO STUDY ABROAD

### 1. Profile

As already indicated, we had a separate questionnaire for those who did not express any interest in studying abroad. There were two main things we wanted to find out about this group: firstly, the reasons for not considering study abroad and secondly the conditions that might help them change their minds.

Across the four countries, we interviewed a total of 1121 students in this group, but **the number per country was significantly different** (Table III.1). In Serbia, almost three quarters of students did not intend to study abroad, whilst two-thirds of those in B&H fell into this group. Just under half of the students in Montenegro said that they were not considering studying abroad but only just over a quarter of Albanian students were not considering study abroad.

**Table III.1 Proportion of students who do not intend to study abroad, by country**

	<b>Number of students not considering studying abroad (= 100%)</b>	<b>% of students per country not considering studying abroad</b>
Albania	148	26.9
B&H	344	65.6
Montenegro	246	46.4
Serbia	377	70.7

### 2. Reasons for not studying abroad

Table III.2 (below) shows that although there are a number of reasons for not thinking about study abroad, the **two main reasons given are the expected difficulties in applying for a place to study and lack of money.**

**Table III.2 Why students do not intend to study abroad**

<b>REASONS:</b>	<b>Very important reason %</b>	<b>Quite important reason %</b>	<b>Not important reason %</b>	<b>No reason at all %</b>
Insufficient money	<b>51.0</b>	<b>32.2</b>	10.4	6.4
Too difficult to get a visa	39.7	35.0	17.2	8.1
Procedures too complicated	36.4	38.7	18.2	6.7
Do not want to leave friends and family	33.2	35.7	20.7	10.5
Fear that exams will not be recognized	20.1	36.2	25.1	18.6
No information available	31.9	36.1	20.3	11.7
Feel uncomfortable to go abroad	20.6	26.6	30.8	22.0
Too much effort to find a place to study	26.3	39.1	22.4	12.2
Fear that I'd be treated like a second class citizen	15.4	25.0	33.6	25.9
I see no benefits for my future career	11.5	18.8	31.9	37.8
Will not be accepted by any university abroad	14.1	22.2	32.9	30.8
I do not have good grades	10.2	24.5	36.7	28.6
No exchange programme in place	27.0	30.9	24.3	17.8
No support from my university	31.0	30.9	22.3	15.9
Never thought about it	26.9	22.8	21.4	28.9
Have no language knowledge	17.7	25.6	26.9	29.8
Too difficult to apply for a place abroad	<b>40.3</b>	<b>35.9</b>	16.0	7.8

If we analyze the differences between countries, in Albania the most important reasons are financial and visa problems and the lack of support at the home university. In B&H, besides the lack of money, the most important reasons are complicated procedures, alienation, visa problems and the difficulties of finding a place abroad. In Montenegro, money and finding a place are the main reasons, whilst in Serbia, the main reasons are money and visa problems, complicated procedures and the difficulties of applying to study abroad.

Since there are many reasons for not studying abroad, here too we tried to identify certain structures or patterns of mutually interrelated reasons for not wishing to study abroad. According to the items gathered around each factor (Appendices, Table A.3) we can identify four main areas to target in order to increase student interest in studying abroad:

- lack of **conditions**
- **fear** in general
- **insufficient skills**
- **support deficit** (information, exchange programmes and university support)

The extent to which these factors occur in each of the four countries can be summarized as follows (see also Appendices, Chart A5):

- In Albania the main reason is support deficit. Fear is not a problem and the two other factors are significantly less present.
- Insufficient skills are the biggest problem in B&H; support deficit and fear are less important reasons.
- In Montenegro, the main reasons are support deficit and insufficient skills: fear and conditions could not be considered as reasons.
- In Serbia, the main reasons are lack of conditions followed by fear, to some extent. Lack of skills and support deficit are not important reasons.

### 3. Suggested improvements

It was important to find out what could be done so that those not currently planning to study abroad might change their mind. Overall, the three main improvements wanted in this regard (see Table III.3 below) are: **firstly, the provision of good and sufficient scholarship, secondly a guarantee that exams will be recognized, and thirdly the provision of clear career opportunities after returning to the home country.** These three conditions were present in each of the countries covered.

In addition to these reasons, students from Serbia also required an easy application procedure, more and more easily available information via a central website, and more information via an advisory talk with an expert.

**Table III.3 What conditions could change opinions about studying abroad**

<b>CONDITIONS THAT WOULD CHANGE OPINION:</b>	<b>One of the main conditions %</b>	<b>An important condition %</b>	<b>Not such an important condition %</b>	<b>Not a condition at all %</b>
More and more easily available information via central website	35.9	40.6	16.2	7.4
More and easily available information through advisory talk with an expert	36.1	41.7	14.9	7.3
More and easily available information via experience exchange with others	32.6	43.9	17.2	6.3
Clear support from my university	40.9	38.6	12.9	7.6
Easy application procedures	42.1	39.1	12.7	6.0
Network of partner universities with easily available study places	32.0	44.5	16.0	7.5
Existing and efficient exchange programme	41.1	42.7	10.6	5.5
Good and sufficient scholarships	<b>58.6</b>	<b>28.4</b>	9.5	3.5
Guarantee that exams will be recognized when I come back	<b>53.7</b>	<b>29.9</b>	11.0	5.3
More accessible visa requirements	41.8	37.8	13.8	6.7
Language classes available	31.5	31.4	25.2	11.8
Clear career opportunities after coming back	<b>46.9</b>	<b>34.6</b>	11.4	7.1

A factor analysis of these data showed that, among those not currently thinking about studying abroad, two conditions are likely to change their opinions:

- **simplifying procedures**
- **making information more accessible**

For each factor, referent items can be seen in Table A4 of the Appendices. This means that we can change the opinion of the students who are not willing to study abroad by influencing one of these two factors, although we also need to ask what the priority should be in each country. By comparing factor scores in each country (Appendices, Chart A5), we can conclude:

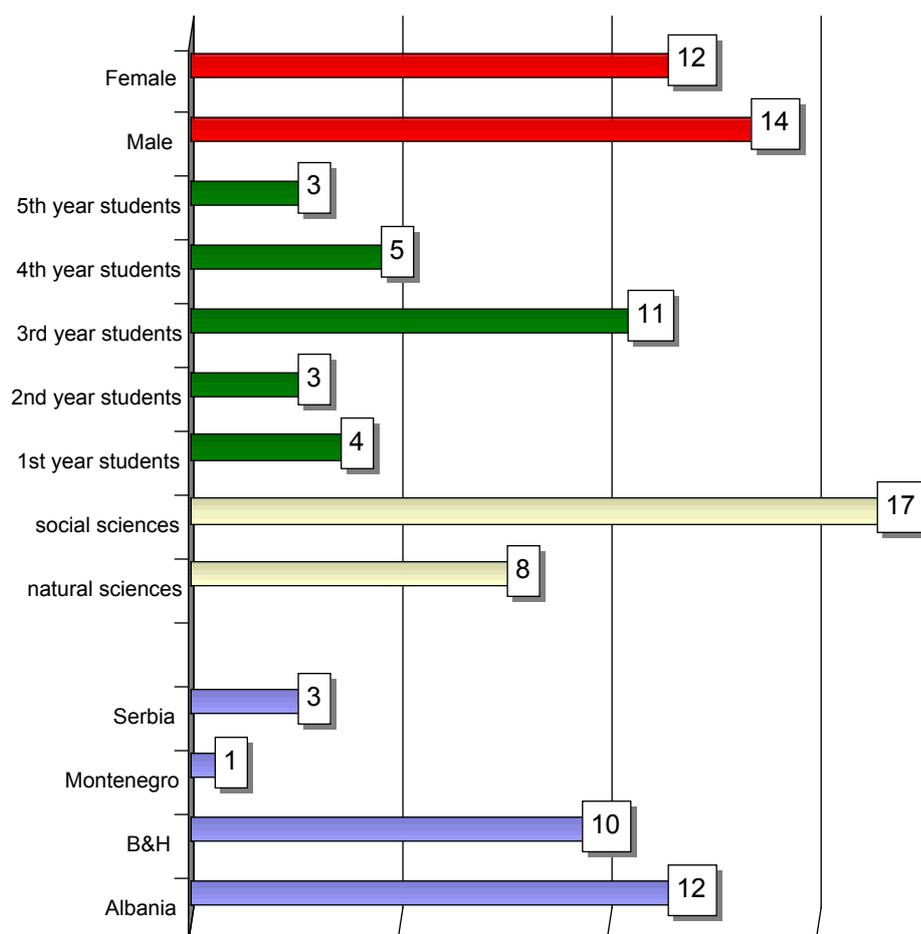
- In Albania, procedures are the biggest problem.
- In B&H procedures are a problem, whilst lack of information is a much smaller problem.
- In Serbia, the lack of information is a much bigger problem.
- In Montenegro both procedures and information are much smaller problems compared to other countries.

## PART IV STUDENTS WHO HAVE ALREADY STUDIED ABROAD

### 1. Profile of students who have studied abroad

Of the total of 2154 students interviewed in the four countries, **only 26 of them had studied abroad**. This means that it is impossible to make any kind of estimations based on relative frequencies (percentages) by comparing the countries. The data in this part of the report are therefore all absolute numbers and for the total 26 students. The basic characteristics of these students are shown in Chart IV.1.1 below.

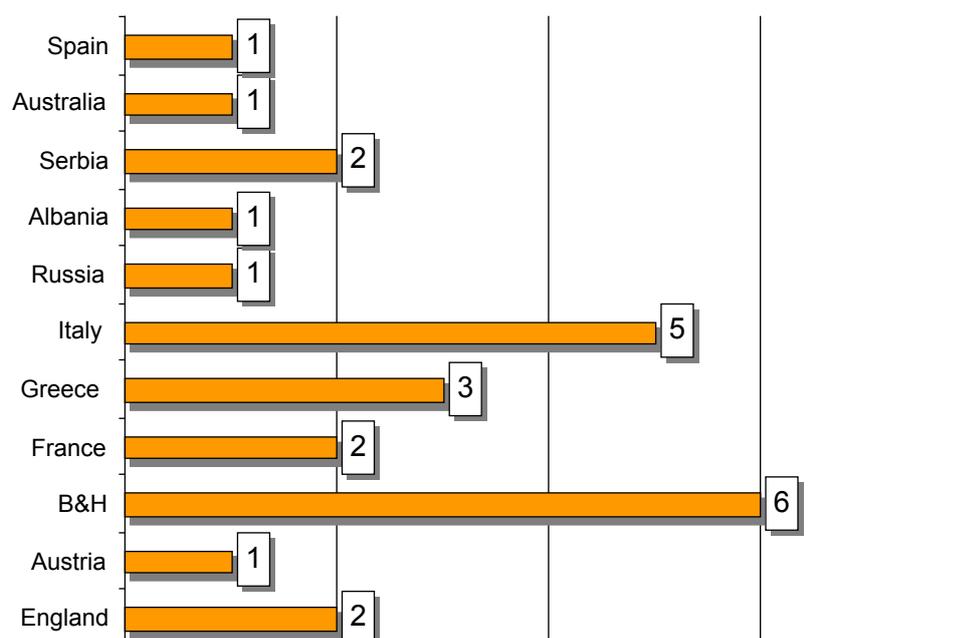
**Chart IV.1.1 Basic characteristics of the students who studied abroad**  
(Absolute numbers)



**Table IV.1.1 Frequency and period of study abroad**

Frequency and period of study		N
How many times did you study abroad?	Once	24
	2-3 times	2
How long did you study abroad?	1 semester	3
	2 semesters	6
	3 semesters	1
	4 semesters	3
	More	8
	No data	5

If, however, we look at the countries where they have studied, we can see that in more than a few cases there was a different understanding of the meaning of 'studying abroad' (Chart IV.1.2). For six of the Bosnian students 'studying abroad' meant studying in another part of the same country (Bosnia & Herzegovina). Similarly, we had one student from Montenegro and one from B&H who reported that they had studied in Serbia. They understood Serbia as a place 'abroad' (which in reality is the truth). This means that any conclusions we draw about those who studied abroad are rather tenuous.

**Chart IV.1.2 The countries where they studied**

**Most of the students who had studied abroad were self-financed** (Table IV.1.2). Of the 9 students who applied for a scholarship, only four were awarded one. Five of those students who had studied abroad had done so within the framework of a partnership/exchange programme.

**Table IV.1.2 Support and application for a scholarship**

<b>Support and scholarship</b>		<b>N</b>
For those specific studies abroad, how did you support yourself?	I got a scholarship	4
	I was self-financed	13
	I worked while studying	3
	Other	4
	No data	2
Have you ever applied for a scholarship?	No	16
	Yes, once	8
	Yes, more than once	1
	No data	1

## 2. Reasons for having studied abroad

Considering the initial motivations of students who studied abroad (Table IV.2 below), it can be seen that most items were considered as reasons for studying abroad. However, gaining new experience, getting a better education, improving their chances in the job market, developing their career in general and improving their CVs seemed to be the most important motives.

**Table IV.2. What was your initial motivation to go abroad (N = 26)**

<b>MOTIVE:</b>	<b>Very important reason</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not a reason</b>	<b>Don't know/ Refuse</b>
To gain new experience	16	4	2	4
To develop my career in general	14	4	1	7
To have more chances on the job market after my studies	15	4	2	5
To learn a language	8	7	5	6
To become independent as a person	13	2	7	4
To make social and professional contacts	11	8	1	6
To have fun, make friends	9	6	7	4
To get a better education	14	6	1	5
To improve my CV	13	2	3	8
To enable myself to leave my home country after my studies to work abroad	12	5	4	5
To learn about other cultures and languages	7	9	3	7
To specialize in my field of study	12	5	3	6

### 3. Support in applying to study abroad

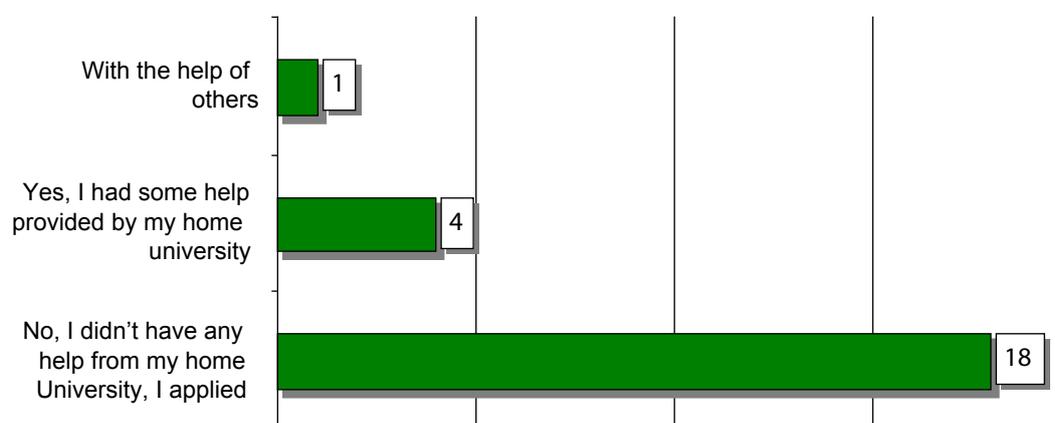
Once more, we see that **students use informal rather than official channels of information and support, since most of those who had studied abroad had been informed about study opportunities via friends, family and/or by students who had in turn already studied abroad** (Table IV.3 below). Speaking about Internet sites, only three were mentioned: [www.in.gr](http://www.in.gr); [www.infostud.com](http://www.infostud.com); and [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com)

**Table IV.3 Who encouraged students to study abroad**

Encouraged by:	No.
Lecturers	10
Teaching assistants	6
Administrative staff at your university	6
Student organization	2
Students who had been abroad	<b>15</b>
Family	<b>18</b>
Friends	<b>17</b>
Employees in international offices	4

**Most students received no help from their home university** (Chart IV.3). Among those who reported some help, it was not specified what kind of help this was. However, two students reported having received help from the family and high school.

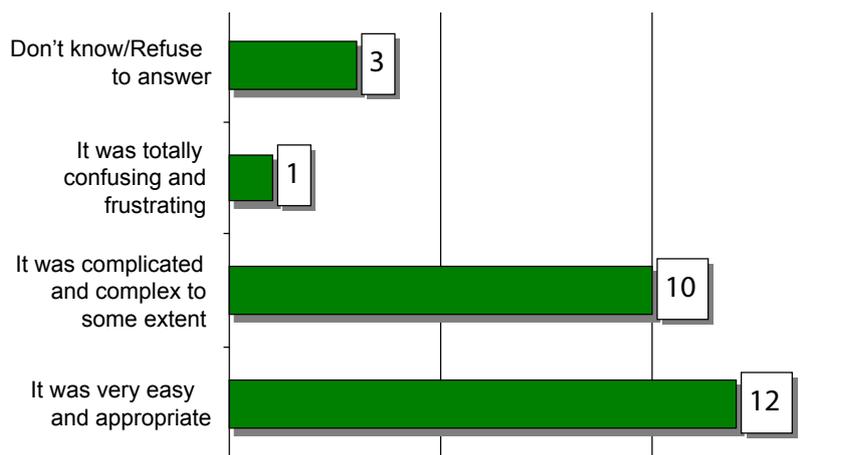
**Chart IV.3 When applying, did you have any help from your home university?**



#### 4. Problems encountered

Application procedures are considered as one of the main obstacles for studying abroad and so we were interested to learn from those who had experienced them. Chart IV.4.1 below shows that in fact just under half (12) of the 26 students in our total sample who had studied abroad found **the application procedure easy**, whilst a further 10 experienced a few problems. There may thus be more complexity imagined for the procedures of applying to study abroad among the other groups.

**Chart IV.4.1 In general, how would you estimate the application procedure?**



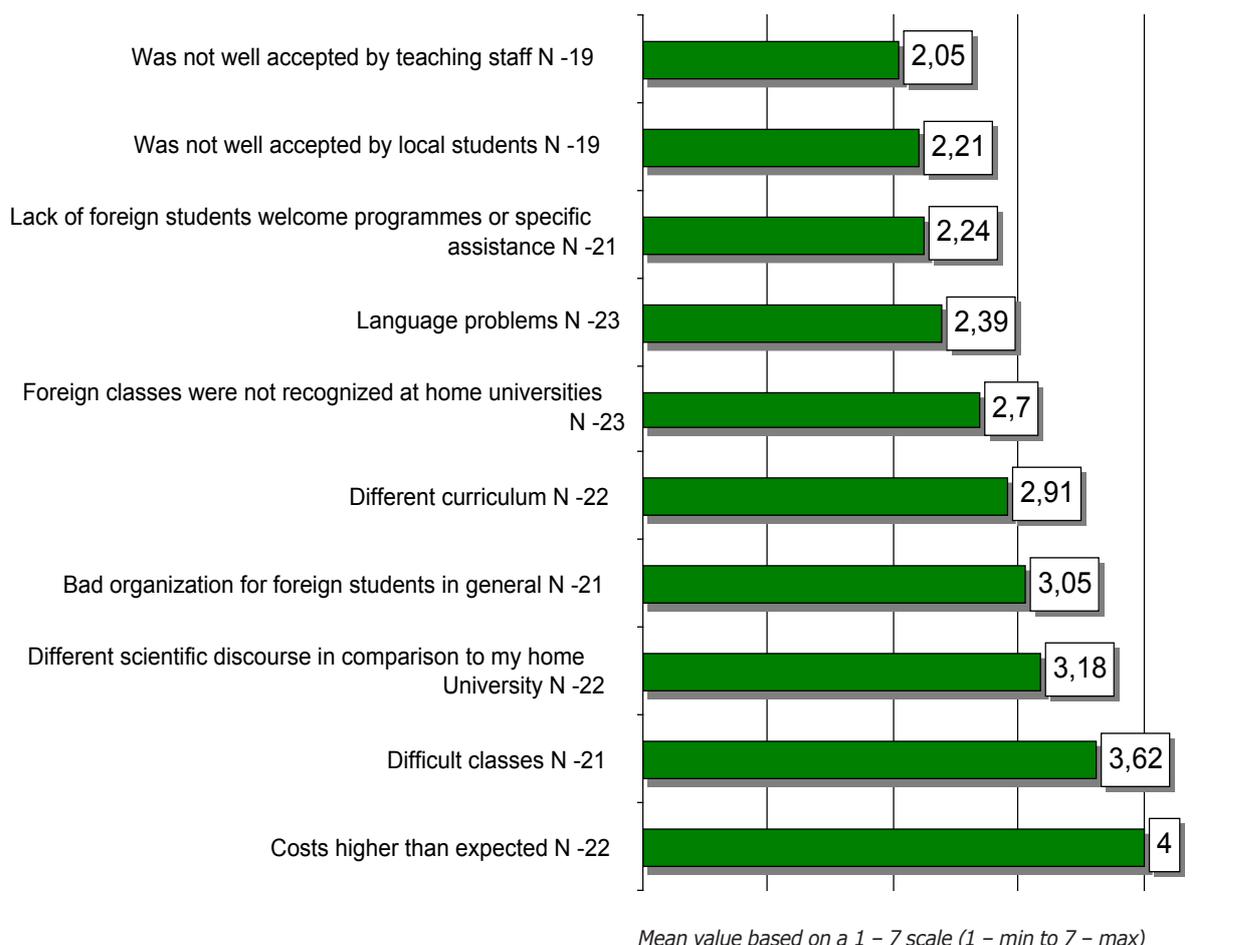
Regarding the actual problems faced by students during their studies abroad (Table IV.4), the **biggest problems are the absence of exchange programmes, the lack of information, and money and visa problems before they left to study abroad.**

**Table IV.4 What were the main problems you faced before you left regarding studying abroad**

PROBLEMS:	Big problem	Small problem	No problem	Don't know/Refuse
Lack of available information – difficult to get information about new social and university environment	9	9	5	3
Long and frustrating procedure in general	8	8	5	5
Paper work (bureaucracy in general)	8	8	6	4
Providing recognition of the exams	8	10	3	5
Providing lecturer recommendations	5	8	7	6
Providing an invitation letter	5	6	9	6
Fear of new social and academic environment	5	6	9	6
No/little help from my university regarding the expectations of studying abroad	3	7	11	5
No functioning university partner network	7	6	5	8
No exchange programmes	10	5	4	7
Getting a visa	9	6	7	4
Didn't have enough money	9	7	6	4
Language problem	2	4	9	11

The experience students have during their studies abroad is important: firstly because it forms part of their own overall impressions and achievement, and secondly because these students will share their experience with other students and thus influence their decisions regarding studying abroad. For the 26 students who studied abroad (Chart IV.4.2), **the biggest problems are high costs, difficult classes, a different scientific discourse, bad organization for foreign students, different curricula and the problem of recognition of their exams.**

**Chart IV.4.2 Problems that students faced whilst studying abroad**



## 5. Problem solutions

We asked students to explain, through an open-ended question, how they overcame their problems. The results (Table IV.5) provide no suggested strategy for overcoming the problems in question. Rather, it seems that the **only way to deal with the problems is to be proactive, and solve the problems through individual effort.**

**Table IV.5 Problems students faced during study abroad and ways of dealing with them**

<b>PROBLEMS:</b>	<b>Reported as a problem N</b>	<b>How the problem can be overcome</b>
Foreign classes recognition at home universities	3	> Discussion with lecturers
Different curricula	2	> Adaptation
Not being accepted well by local students	3	> Learning language > Establishing good human relationships
Not being accepted well by teaching staff	3	> Establishing good human relationships
Lack of welcome programmes/specific assistance for foreign students	4	> It was not overcome
Bad organization of foreign students in general	4	> It was not overcome
Costs can be higher than expected	11	> Additional support from the family > Savings > Working > They are not overcome at all
Language problem	4	> Working on language > Taking language courses
Difficult classes	5	> More effort > Did not overcome
Different scientific discourse in comparison to that at your home university	5	> Working hard > Referral to specific literature

## 6. Suggested improvements

Since they had had some experience of studying abroad, it was reasonable to ask students what could be improved regarding studying opportunities (Table IV.6 below). Students would like to see everything improved in general, but the **provision of more scholarships and more exchange programmes** should be priorities according to them.

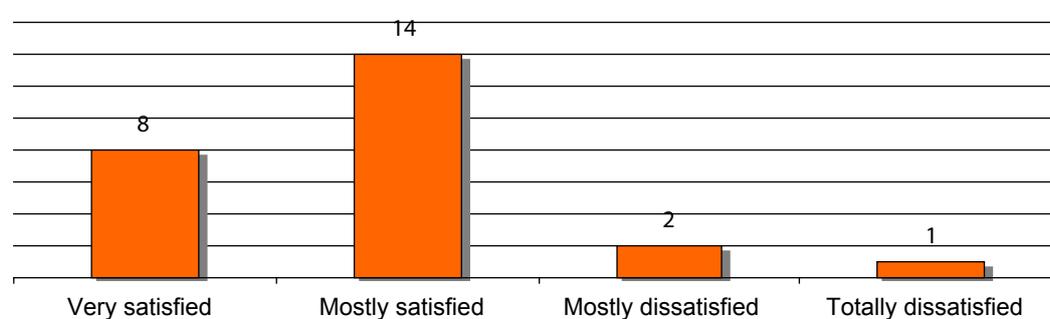
**Table IV.6 Things that should be improved for studying abroad (Absolute numbers)**

<b>IMPROVEMENTS:</b>	<b>To a great extent</b>	<b>To some extent</b>	<b>No need to improve</b>	<b>Don't know/ Refuse</b>
Availability of information	13	9	3	1
Making bilateral agreement between universities	12	10	1	3
Implementing the Bologna Agreement (EU reform of higher education)	9	11	4	2
Enabling grade compatibility	12	10	2	2
Providing administrative help	12	9	3	2
Support in getting a visa	14	7	2	3
More scholarships	17	3	3	3
Making it easier to apply for a place abroad, improving procedures	14	9	1	2
Providing more exchange programmes	15	8	1	2
Easier recognition of exams	9	11	4	2

## 7. Impressions of studying abroad

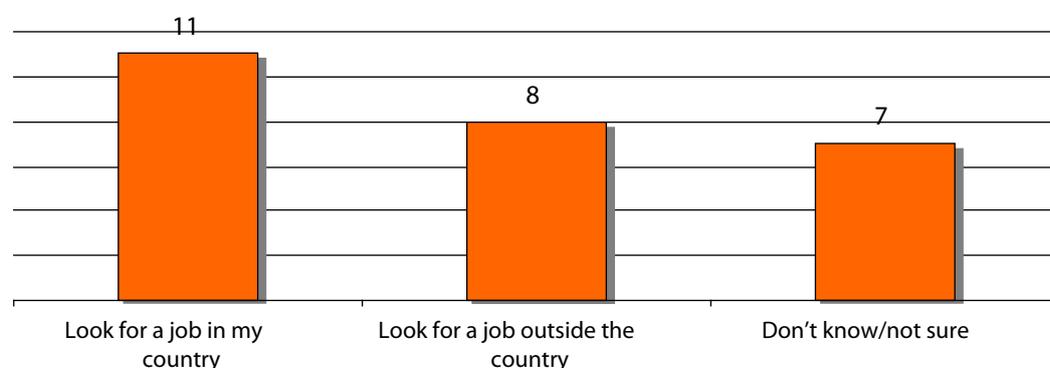
One of the elements of the overall impression of studying abroad is the satisfaction that students feel (Chart IV.7.1). This small group of students was **mostly satisfied with their studies abroad**. Moreover, 19 of the 26 students said that they are willing to study abroad again and 18 of the 26 would like to share their experiences with other students.

**Chart IV.7.1 Satisfaction with studying abroad**



**Students who have studied abroad are relatively more likely to have plans to find a job outside their home country than those studying at home.** In this research, we see (Chart IV.7.2) that most of the students who have studied abroad intend to look for a job in the home country, but 8 of the 26 interviewed will search outside their country. Asked specifically about job search and job opportunities, most of the students claimed that they are considering working abroad, but in reality they think it would be rather difficult.

**Chart IV.7.2 Plans for the future (Absolute numbers)**



## FINAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- While for many years policy-makers at European and national level were concerned about the isolation of the Western Balkans marked by a very low travel rate of students of the region to the EU the survey shows a different picture: between 66,5% and 83,2% of students from Serbia, B&H and Montenegro have travelled to the EU. Only Albanian students are much less mobile (with 35,7% who travelled to the EU).
- With only 26 out of 2137 questioned students the survey shows that very few students study abroad and come back to their home country. As the survey only captured students who currently study at universities in the Western Balkans, it is unclear how many students in total study abroad. The survey does neither cover students who study abroad without ever having studied at a university in their home country nor students who are currently studying abroad and intend to come back to their home university. However, the figures in this survey are in line with another study commissioned by the King Baudouin Foundations which indicates that students from the Western Balkans represent only 3% of all foreign students studying in the EU.<sup>8</sup>
- Surprisingly many students are interested in studying abroad with a high variety within the Western Balkans. The range varies between 28,7% of Serbian students and 70,9% of Albanian students who consider to study abroad. It is particularly interesting that Albanian students being the most interested in studying abroad are those who have travelled least to a destination outside their country and show the lowest knowledge on scholarships, partner university networks etc.
- The huge difference between the number of people who are interested in studying abroad and those who finally manage to study abroad is striking and should lead to action. It seems that the challenges of studying abroad are too high to realise the wish to study abroad.
- There are multiple reasons why students don't study abroad. While in the political debate the difficulties in obtaining visas are often named as the key reasons for the presumed low mobility rate of students of the Western Balkans, the survey shows that visa problems are only one of many problems which students from the region are facing when preparing to study abroad and can be even considered as a secondary problem (exception: Albania where the visa issue is problem number one).
- One of the key problems is the low level of knowledge about studying abroad among students from the Western Balkans. Key scholarship schemes such as Erasmus mundus are only known by 2,4% of the all students. Even of those students who are interested in studying abroad only 18,5-36,6% know about exchange programmes in general. It is therefore not surprising

8) See 'Students from the Western Balkans: the experience of EU countries regarding admission and misuse of procedures' by ICMPD and the King Baudouin Foundation. The figure is based on responses of 11 EU Member States.

that even though many students are interested in studying abroad only very few students actually do study abroad.

- Further challenges for students to study abroad are long and frustrating procedures and the linked paperwork, little help from universities to get through the procedures, lack of money to live abroad and no functioning university partnerships. It is worthwhile mentioning that the survey can only capture student perceptions of problems but not the real degree of problems.
- There are various leverages to improve the situation in the students' point of view. More scholarships, easier procedures to study abroad, more and better functioning exchange programmes, easier visa procedures, recognition of exams and information availability are on top of the list of points students would like to see improved. Even though the international community, the governments of the Western Balkan countries and the university administrations have undertaken many efforts in the previous years to improve the situation, students still see the situation as non-satisfactory.
- Regarding the information availability, the survey shows that the key for improvement is to 'customize' the information: information through personal information channels are most effective to activate students. Therefore, former exchange students should be better used by universities to help students to realise their wish to study abroad.
- Finally, the risk of brain drain of those who intend to study abroad should not be underestimated. Even though 'only' between 15,1 and 26,3% of students who study abroad intend to work abroad after having finished their studies, this should be of concern to policy-makers in the Western Balkans.

## APPENDICES

### 1. Methodology and sample

Survey research was conducted to provide quantitative findings for the research objectives and to enable comparisons to be made between countries and sub-groups. The research can be described as being:

- **explorative**
- **comparative**
- **quantitative**
- and **instrumental** (practical).

The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire. Before the fieldwork was conducted, we identified three groups of respondents in relation to their experience of studying abroad and so we created a separate questionnaire for each group, namely:

- students who had already studied abroad;
- those who were considering studying abroad;
- and those who were not considering studying abroad.

The questionnaire was rather extensive with a total of 576 items.

Since the research was comparative in nature, the same sample design was applied in each of the four Western Balkan countries. The sampling frame was university faculties and departments in each country. For each selected sampling point (department), the circle census was between 5 and 8. This design was projected to give a multistage random sample of 550 respondents per country, yielding a total sample as follows:

Country	No. of respondents
Albania	550
B&H	524
Montenegro	530
Serbia	533

**The standard sampling error for the sample in each country is +/- 4.18%, within a 95% confidence interval.**

The multistage sampling procedure was as follows:

- The same sampling procedure was identical in each country
- The sampling frame was the list of faculties and referent departments listed by academic year and the number of students
- Random sampling was conducted to choose departments from where students were selected
- In each case, on the basis of the number of students in the selected department, a random sampling procedure was established in order to choose respondents
- This procedure included using random digit number tables and the physical distribution of students during lectures
- In each interview the empirical evidence obtained was therefore based on the department, class, lecture and selected respondent
- Each interview was conducted using the questionnaire developed for the survey and all the questionnaires were kept for verification

The field research was conducted by student organizations, namely:

Country	Organization
Serbia	The Serbian Student Union
Montenegro	The University of Montenegro Student Parliament
Albania	The Albanian Student Government
Bosnia & Herzegovina	The Republic of Srpska Student Union

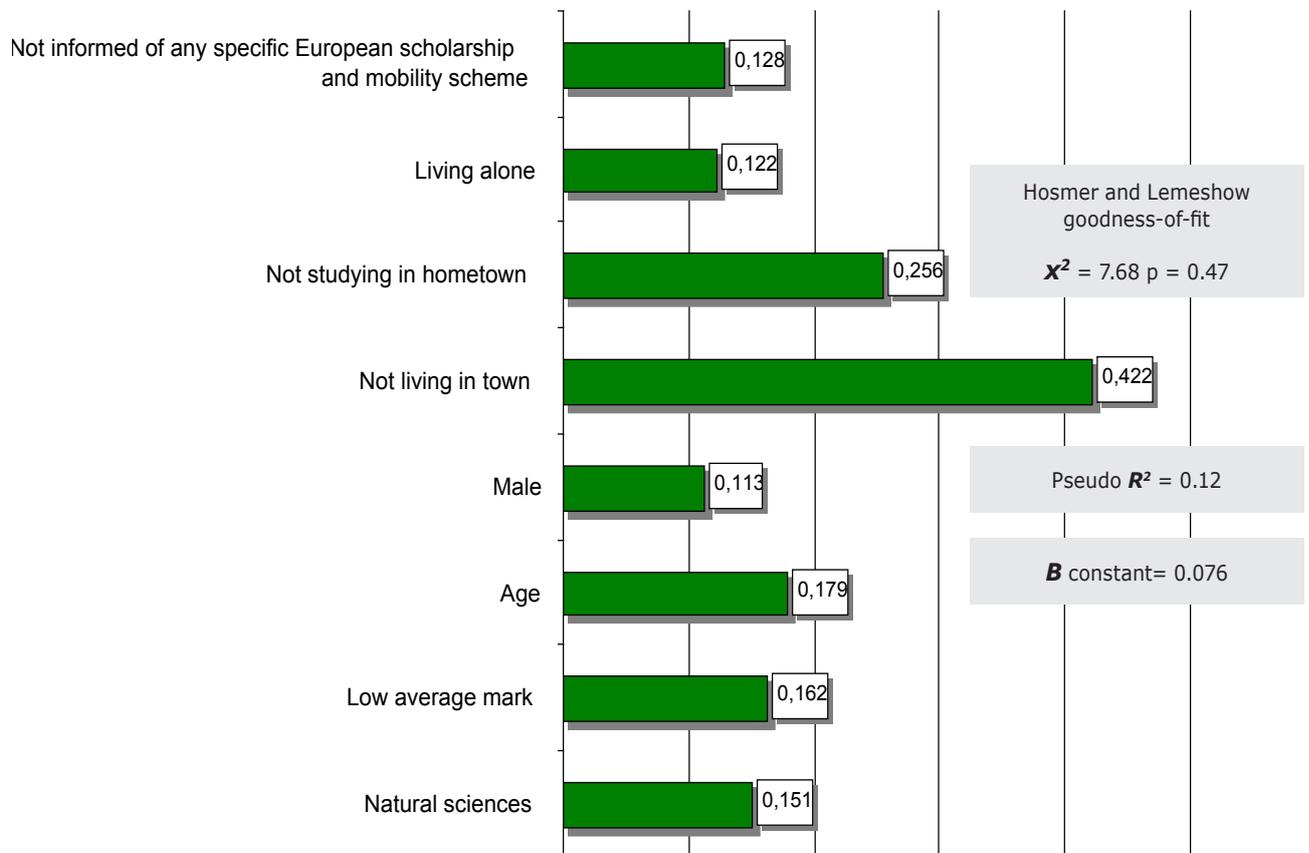
In each country, there was also one student organization representative who was responsible for collecting the data in his/her country. Monitoring and verifying procedures were established by the main researcher, including:

- Checking the list of selected departments in each country
- Monitoring the data collection process (following interviewer instructions)
- Monitoring procedures for selecting the respondents
- Insight into the paper questionnaires
- Monitoring the procedure of data input into the data file
- Logical data control

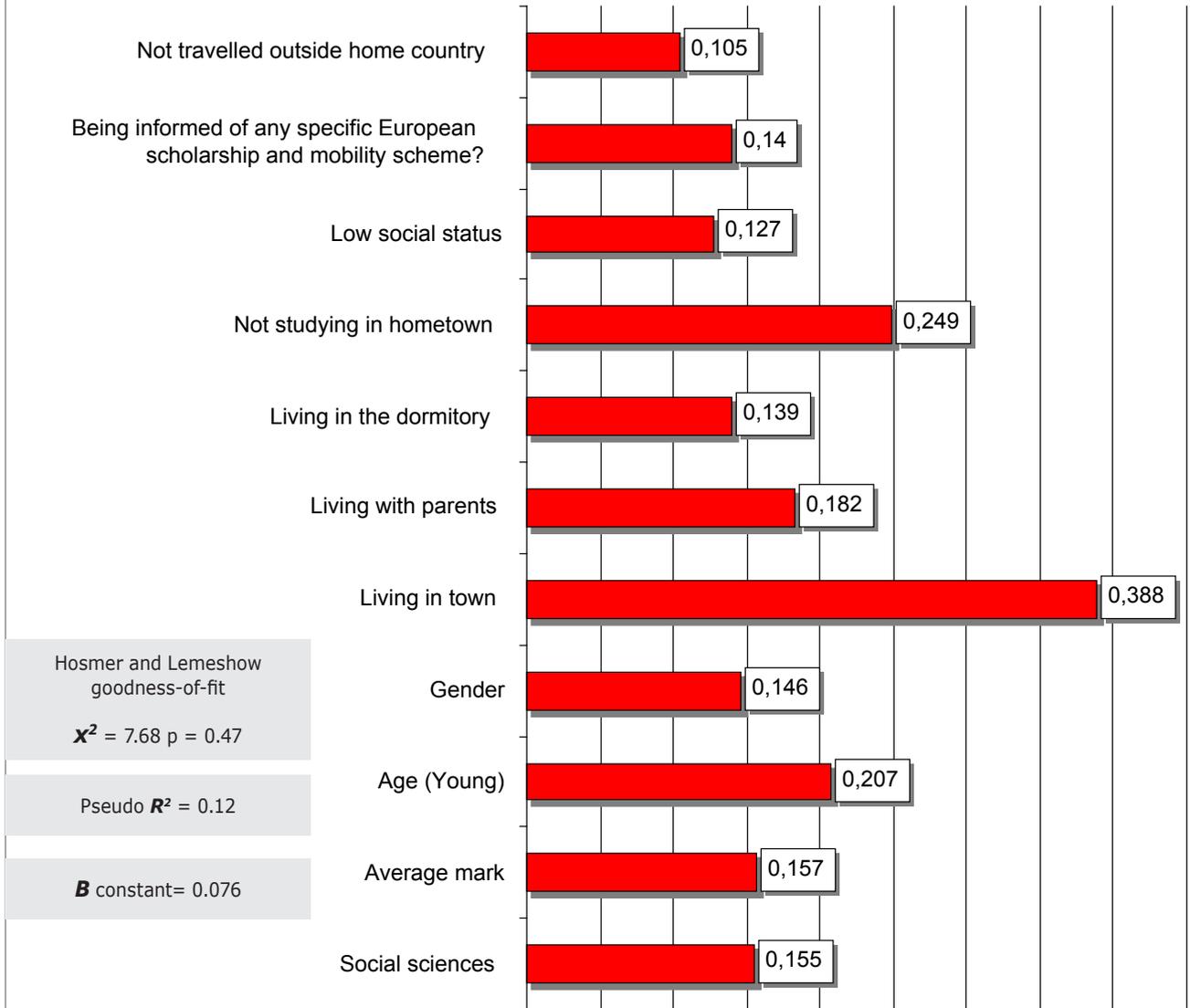
The research was conducted between May 15th and June 25th 2008 in each country.

## 2. Tables and charts

**Chart A1 Standardized logistic regression coefficients: factors of not considering studying abroad**



**Chart A2 Standardized logistic regression coefficients: Factors of considering studying abroad**



### Factor analysis – Motives for study abroad

We used factor analysis with varimax rotation (Table A1) to search for patterns of **motives for studying abroad**. We found three factors:

- FACTOR 1 covers 20.78% of the variation - Personal development
- FACTOR 2 covers 16.07% of the variation - Career development
- FACTOR 3 covers 13.09% of the variation – Experiences development

A total of 49.9% of the variation is structured by these three factors.

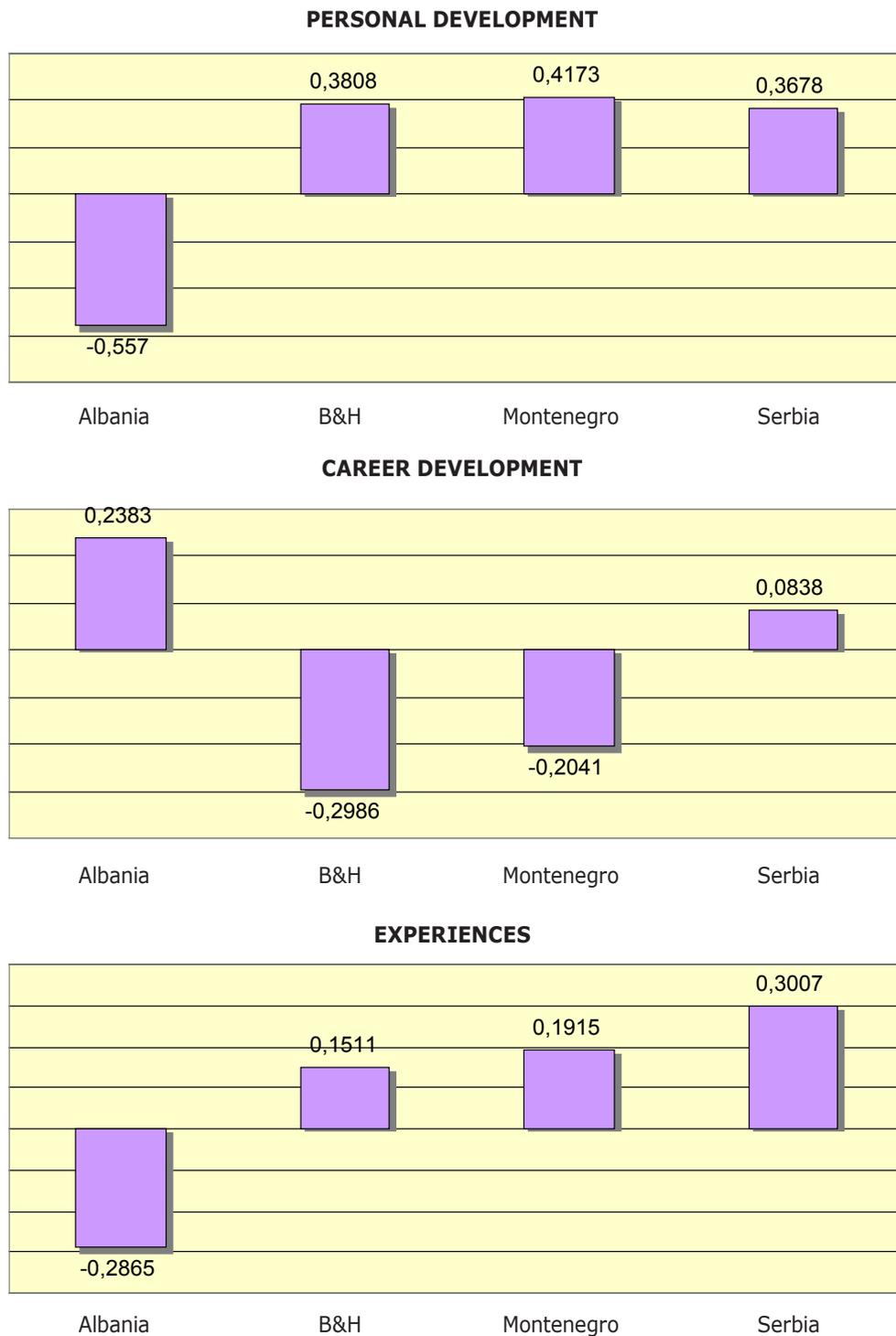
**Table A1 FACTOR MATRIX – MOTIVES FOR STUDYING ABROAD**

MOTIVES	MOTIVATION MATRIX		
	Personal development	Career development	Experiences
To gain new experience	.087	-.042	<b>.807</b>
To develop my career in general	-.003	<b>.504</b>	.428
To have more opportunities on the job market after my studies	.152	<b>.722</b>	-.258
To learn a language	<b>.764</b>	.056	.053
To become independent as a person	<b>.667</b>	.126	-.102
To have fun, make friends	<b>.708</b>	-.193	.235
To get a better education	.360	.220	<b>.474</b>
To improve my CV	.210	<b>.554</b>	.086
To learn about other cultures and languages	<b>.530</b>	.113	.268
To specialize in my field of study	-.249	<b>.638</b>	.191

It is important that this analysis is understood in its relative perspective. We have already shown that, at quantitative level, all the motives are important, so this is an analysis of the relative standing of the motivation structures in each country.

All differences are significant according to the F test, as is the case for the analyses on the following pages.

**Chart A3 Country perspective in structure of motives**



### Factor analysis – Problems of studying abroad

As before, to search for patterns among the problems of studying abroad, factor analysis with varimax rotation was used.

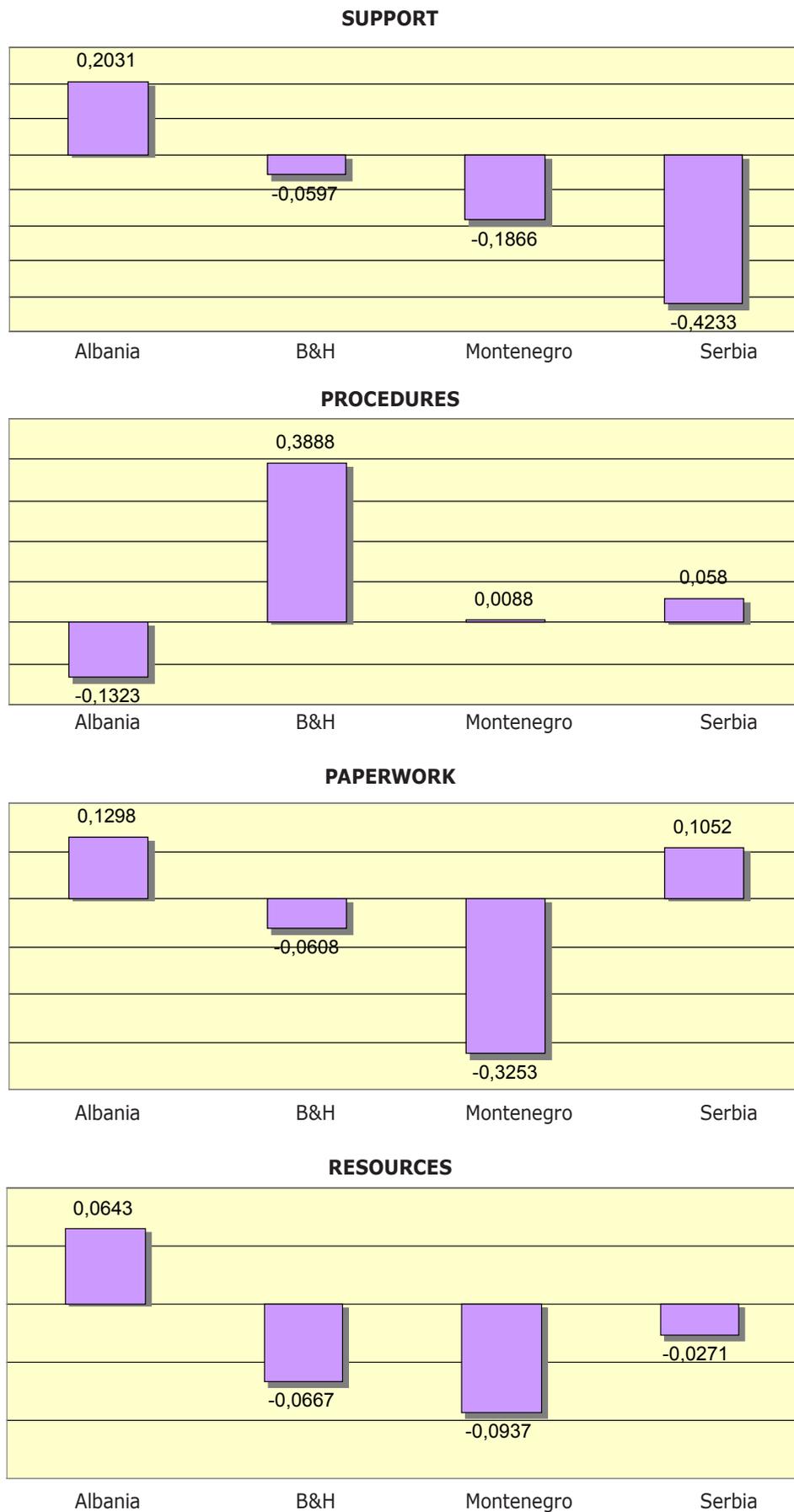
- FACTOR 1 covers 17.64% of the variation - Support
- FACTOR 2 covers 14.90% of variation - Procedures
- FACTOR 3 covers 14.01% of variation - Paperwork
- FACTOR 4 covers 12.23% of variation- Resources

A total of 58.77% of the variation is covered by these factors.

**Table A2 Problem matrix for students regarding the possibility of studying abroad - STRUCTURE**

PROBLEMS:	PROBLEM MATRIX:			
	Support	Procedures	Paperwork	Resources
Long and frustrating procedure in general	.152	-.094	<b>.796</b>	.045
Paperwork (bureaucracy in general)	.057	.195	<b>.783</b>	.004
Recognition of the exams	-.114	<b>.676</b>	.178	.124
Providing lecturer recommendations	.086	<b>.826</b>	-.071	.010
Providing an invitation letter	.236	<b>.633</b>	.016	.061
No/little help from my university regarding expectations of studying abroad	<b>.687</b>	.121	.049	.216
No functioning university partner network	<b>.818</b>	.053	.044	.026
No exchange programmes	<b>.770</b>	.025	.181	-.023
Getting a visa	.316	.066	.362	<b>.413</b>
Can't provide enough money	.042	-.006	.210	<b>.781</b>
Language problem	.061	.169	-.209	<b>.705</b>

**Chart A4 Country perspective in structure of problems**



### Factor analysis – Reasons for not wishing to study abroad

A factor analysis with varimax rotation provided four factors or patterns for students' **reasons for not wishing to study abroad**:

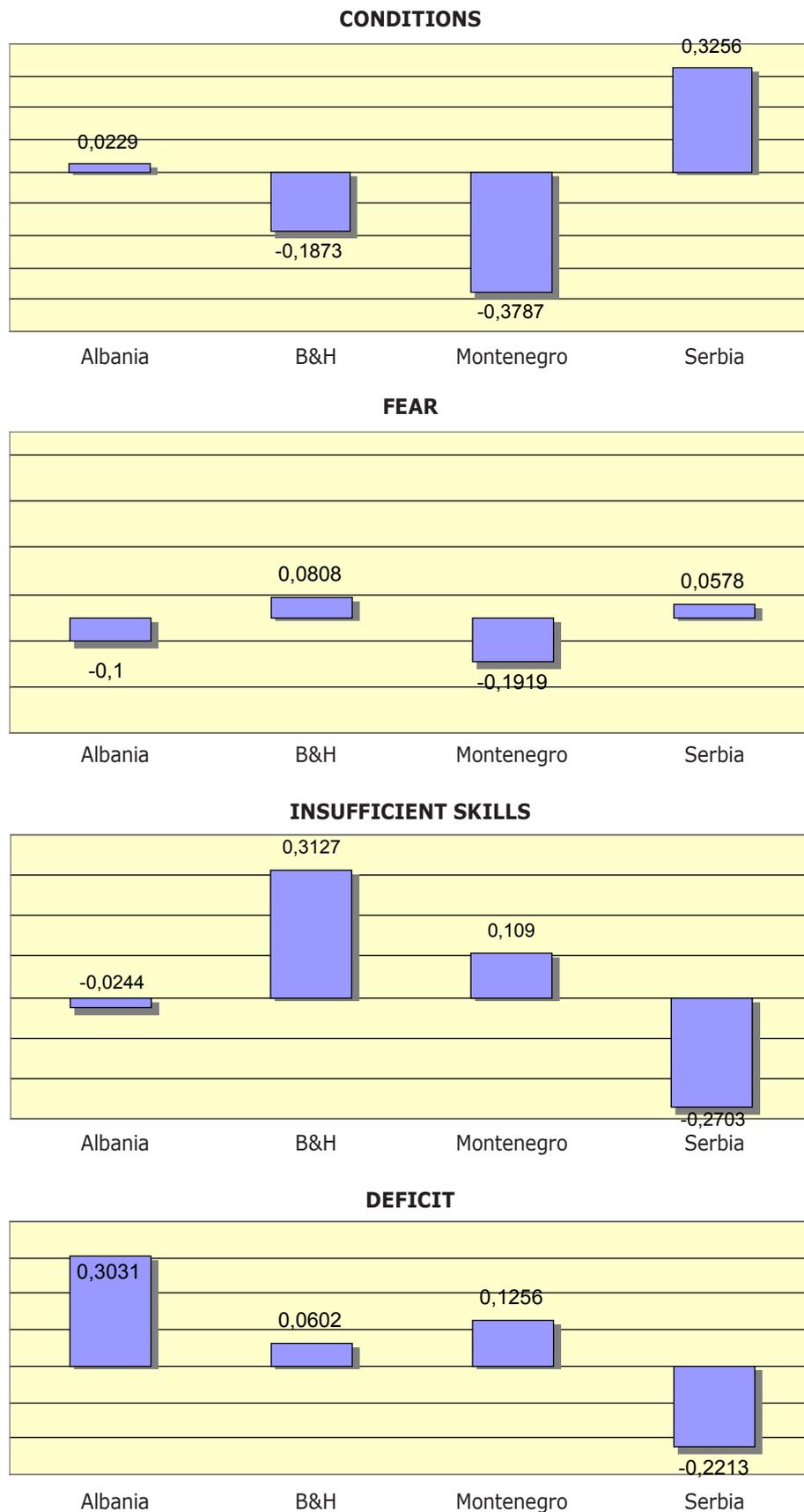
- FACTOR 1 covers 33.66% of variation - Conditions
- FACTOR 2 covers 11.14% of variation - Fear
- FACTOR 3 covers 7.7% of variation – Insufficient skills
- FACTOR 4 covers 7.2% of variation - Deficit

A total of 59.7% of the variation is structured on the reasons for not wishing to study abroad.

**Table A3 Structure of reasons for not studying abroad – Factor analysis**

REASONS:	REASONS MOTIVATION MATRIX			
	Conditions	Fear	Insufficient skills	Deficit
Don't have enough money	<b>.702</b>	-.053	.127	.162
Too difficult to get a visa	<b>.815</b>	.079	.086	.187
Too complicated procedure	<b>.741</b>	.149	.098	.128
Do not want to leave friends and family	-.033	<b>.755</b>	.016	-.013
Fear that exams will not be recognized	<b>.495</b>	<b>.495</b>	.149	.084
No information available	.442	.372	.031	<b>.491</b>
Feel uncomfortable to go abroad	.225	<b>.744</b>	.068	.220
Too much effort to find a study place abroad	<b>.452</b>	.402	.209	.078
Fear that I'd be treated like a second class citizen	.217	<b>.532</b>	.356	.141
I see no benefits for my future career	.030	<b>.584</b>	.438	.100
Will not be accepted by any university abroad	.369	.283	<b>.623</b>	.101
I do not have good grades	.245	.105	<b>.768</b>	.040
No exchange programme in place	.178	.146	.139	<b>.844</b>
No support from my university	.202	.056	.193	<b>.859</b>
Never thought about it	-.272	.391	<b>.510</b>	.197
Have no language knowledge	.074	.021	<b>.719</b>	.147

**Chart A5 Country perspective in structure of reasons**



### Factor analysis – Conditions which might change the opinions of those who are not intending to study abroad

In order to identify the structure of the **conditions which might change the opinions of those who are not intending to study abroad** a factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on these data (Table A.4 below).

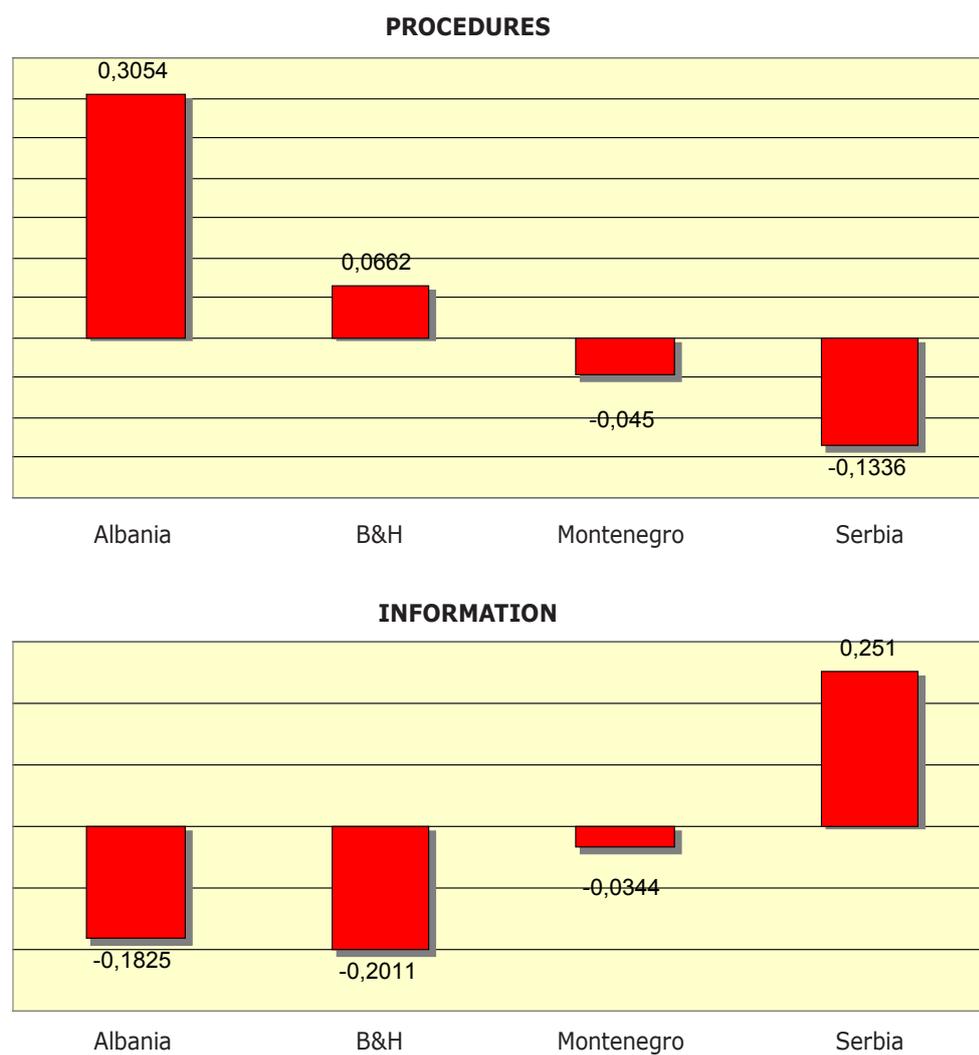
- FACTOR 1 covers 44.7% of the variation - Procedures
- FACTOR 2 covers 11.8% of the variation - Information

A total of 56.5% of the variation is structured enabling the conditions to be summarized as follows:

**Table A4 Conditions for students to start thinking about studying abroad – Factor analysis**

	CONDITIONS MATRIX	
	Procedures	Information
More and more easily available information via central website	.099	<b>.838</b>
More and more easily available information through advisory talk with an expert	.134	<b>.854</b>
More and easily available information via experience exchange with others	.265	<b>.731</b>
Clear support from my university	.407	<b>.578</b>
Easy application procedures	<b>.513</b>	.497
Network of partner universities with easily available study places	<b>.535</b>	.407
Existing and efficient exchange programme	<b>.574</b>	.402
Good and sufficient scholarships	<b>.770</b>	.130
Guarantee that exams will be recognized when I come back	<b>.767</b>	.179
More accessible visa requirements	<b>.591</b>	.341
Clear career opportunities after coming back	<b>.704</b>	.058

**Chart A6 Country perspective in structure of conditions**





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Please address any questions you may have to us at [info@kbs-frb.be](mailto:info@kbs-frb.be) or call us on +32 (0)70-233 728.

King Baudouin Foundation,  
Rue Brederodestraat 21,  
B-1000 Brussels  
+ 32 (0)2-511 18 40,  
fax + 32 (0)2-511 52 21

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Bank account 000-0000004-04  
IBAN BE10 0000 0000 0404  
BIC BPOTBEB1

The King Baudouin Foundation is an independent and pluralistic foundation whose aim is to serve society. Our objective is to make a lasting contribution to justice, democracy and respect for diversity. Each year, the Foundation provides financial support for some 2,000 organizations and individuals committed to building a better society. Our fields of activity for the coming years are poverty, democracy, heritage, philanthropy, health, leadership, local engagement, migration and development. The Foundation was created in 1976, to mark the 25th anniversary of King Baudouin's reign.

We operate with an annual budget of 48 million euros. As well as our own capital and the large donation we receive from the National Lottery, we manage Funds created by private individuals, associations and businesses. The King Baudouin Foundation also receives donations and bequests.

The King Baudouin Foundation's Board of Governors draws up broad lines of action and oversees the transparency of our management. Some 50 colleagues are responsible for implementing our actions. The Foundation operates out of Brussels, but we are active at Belgian, European and international level. In Belgium, we have projects at local, regional and federal level.

We combine various working methods to achieve our objectives. We support third-party projects, launch our own activities, provide a forum for debate and reflection, and foster philanthropy. The results of our projects are disseminated through a range of communication channels. The King Baudouin Foundation works with public services, associations, NGOs, research centres, businesses and other foundations. We have a strategic partnership with the European Policy Centre, a Brussels-based think tank.

Outside Belgium, the Foundation is particularly active in the Balkans in projects that promote EU integration, tackle human trafficking and defend minority rights. In Africa, we focus on projects involved in the fight against AIDS/HIV and in promoting local development. The King Baudouin Foundation is also a benchmark in international philanthropy thanks to, among others, the international Funds that we manage, the King Baudouin Foundation United States, and our role in the Transnational Giving Europe network.

