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Executive Summary:

This report summarises the work completed by partners under Work package n°2 of the MODES Baseline Study Exploitation Pack for International Learning Environments, specifically Action 2.2: conducting field research with international students. It acts as a foundation for acquiring qualitative and quantitative information on the current situation of the delivery of international learning experiences.

Online questionnaires were distributed to international students attending the participating HEIs. The questionnaires aimed to identify their expectations, needs and aspirations when entering a global learning environment. Our survey spans students from Greece (Metropolitan College), the Netherlands (Universiteit Leiden), and Italy (Link Campus University) and provides comprehensive insights into the experiences, motivations, and challenges of international students. The survey findings are instrumental in guiding future initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of international education programmes. The key findings from the combined survey can be summarised as follows:

- **Diverse student demographics:**
The survey of the representative student population in all three regions is diverse in age, gender, country of origin, academic level, and field of study, reflecting a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.
- **Motivations for studying abroad:**
The students' strong motivation for international education is a common thread across all survey findings. Key drivers include the desire for high-quality education, exposure to diverse cultures, personal growth, and access to specific academic programmes.
- **Challenges faced by international students:**
Students surveyed across all regions share challenges such as language barriers, accommodation issues, and the need for psychological support. These challenges highlight the necessity for comprehensive support services focused specifically on international students.
- **Aspirations and career goals:**
Students aspire to leverage their international experience for career advancement. There is a strong emphasis on gaining global perspectives, enhancing employability, and becoming leaders in their respective fields.
- **The importance of support services and community integration:**
The need for holistic support services, including language assistance, academic guidance, and mental health services, is evident. Integrating students into the academic and the wider local community is also seen as vital for a successful international experience.
- **Opportunities for personal and professional development:**



The survey findings underline international education's opportunities for personal growth, cultural immersion, and developing a global network.

1. Introduction and Methodology

Under Work Package n°2 of the MODES Baseline Study Exploitation Pack for International Learning Environments, specifically Action 2.2: conducting field research with international students, online questionnaires were distributed to international students attending the participating HEIs. The questionnaires aimed to identify their expectations, needs and aspirations when entering a global learning environment. While the target was to get the feedback our 40 students, we surpassed this with 65 total student responses, spanning students from Greece (19 students from Metropolitan College), the Netherlands (17 respondents from Universiteit Leiden), and Italy (29 respondents from Link Campus University), and provides comprehensive insights into the experiences, motivations, and challenges of international students. The survey findings are instrumental in guiding future initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of international education programmes.

LINK TO SURVEY [MODES Project - Google Forms](#)

2. Student Demographics and Background

Our comprehensive analysis of student demographics and background across the three surveys (Greece, the Netherlands, and Italy) highlights the diverse characteristics of international students participating in our MODES partner universities. This section delves deeper into each demographic aspect to understand the nuances of these international student profiles. It assesses key demographic data, including age profiling, gender distribution, country of origin, academic level, field of study, duration of study abroad and previous experience abroad. Let us share the main findings:-

Age Groups:	<p>Most participants across three surveys are between 18 and 24 years old, indicating a predominance of younger students in international education programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greece: The age distribution of our survey respondents shows a balance across different age groups, with a slight leaning towards the 21-30 age bracket. This suggests a mature student body, indicating postgraduate or mature undergraduate students. ● Netherlands: A younger demographic predominates, with 65% of student respondents falling within the 18-20 age range. This indicates a cohort primarily at the early stage of their higher education journey. ● Italy: Like the Netherlands, most student respondents are in the 18-24 age bracket, aligning with typical undergraduate age groups.
Gender Distribution:	<p>There is a varied gender distribution among the student respondents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greece: Gender distribution in this survey is nearly equal, showing a balanced representation of male and female students. ● Netherlands: A notable male majority (71%) is observed. This skew could be influenced by specific fields of study like data science and AI, which traditionally have seen higher male enrollment.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy: The survey findings don't specify the exact gender distribution.
Country of Origin:	<p>Students contributing to our survey come from a diverse array of countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greece: A significant Kenyan representation is noted, suggesting strong educational ties or preferences between Kenya and Greece. Other countries like Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Spain contribute to the student body, highlighting a European-African student mix. Netherlands: Here, the diversity is broader, with students from across the globe including China (17%), France (12%), India (11%), and the USA (6%). This broad geographical representation reflects the Netherlands' appeal as a global study destination, especially in the technical field. Italy: Predominantly American students (69%) and Mexican (12%), with 4% each for Australia, micro Indonesia, India, Norway, and China, were involved in the survey.
Academic Level:	<p>The academic levels of students involved in our survey vary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greece: The majority are at the graduate/master's level, studying diverse fields from engineering to business. Netherlands: The emphasis on the undergraduate level (88%), particularly in Data Science and AI, points towards a strong technical and future-oriented education focus. Italy: A concentration on Sport Management (48%), International Business Management (24%) and Business Administration (14%) at the undergraduate level.
Field of Study:	<p>Our respondent's fields of study are diverse but show some concentration in certain areas. In Greece, students are spread across fields like engineering, computer science, health, and business administration. The Netherlands survey findings strongly emphasise computer science, particularly data science and artificial intelligence. In contrast, the Italian survey findings highlight Sport Management and International Business Administration as the most popular fields.</p>
Duration of Study Abroad:	<p>The study duration varies, with most students in the Greek survey planning to study for varying periods, some up to 4 years. In the Netherlands, the majority are expected to study for more than two years, while in the Italian survey, the average study duration is approximately one year.</p>
Previous Experience Abroad:	<p>A notable number of students surveyed across all countries did not have previous study abroad experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Greek survey, 95% of student respondents had not studied abroad before, and the 5% that did included Denmark and the UK. In the Netherlands survey, 76% of student respondents had not studied abroad before, and 24% varied from 2 years of study in UK and USA to 8 years in France. In the Italian survey, 75.9% of student respondents had not studied abroad before, and the respondents that spanned the United States, Italy, Spain, and the UK were mentioned. <p>For many of those surveyed, studying abroad is a totally new path that could generate forms of insecurity and many difficulties.</p>



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The demographic analysis of our MODES 2.2 questionnaire results reflects a diverse international student body in age, gender, country of origin, academic level, and field of study. These students bring a wide range of experiences and backgrounds to their international education, enriching the learning environment. The variation in the duration of their studies abroad and their previous international experiences offer valuable insights into the dynamics of student mobility in higher education.

3. Motivations for Studying Abroad

The student motivations for studying abroad shared in our three survey reports (Greece, the Netherlands, and Italy) are multifaceted, encompassing the desire for cultural exposure, academic excellence, personal development, and specific educational opportunities. These factors collectively contribute to the student's decision to pursue education in a foreign country. The surveys indicate that international students seek academic qualifications and opportunities and are keen on personal and holistic growth, immersion in diverse cultures, and the development of a global perspective. This insight is crucial for educational institutions to tailor their offerings and support services to meet international students' diverse needs and aspirations. We now assess each motivation individually:-

3.1 Exposure to Diverse Cultures and Perspectives

- Greece: Students expressed a strong interest in exposure to diverse cultures as a key motivation for studying abroad. This aligns with their aspirations for intercultural experiences and learning about the host country's customs and traditions.
- Netherlands: Similarly, exposure to different cultures and perspectives was highlighted as a primary reason for studying abroad. This desire for cultural immersion underscores the value placed on global education experiences.
- Italy: The desire to learn new cultures and gain more perspectives was also evident among students. This motivation points to the significant role that cultural exchange plays in the decision to study abroad.

3.2 High-Quality Education and Academic Opportunities

- Greece: The pursuit of high-quality education was a significant factor. Students were motivated by the academic reputation and the educational opportunities available abroad.
- Netherlands: The emphasis on high-quality education and academic reputation was also prominent. This was particularly relevant in fields like Data Science and AI, where academic excellence is highly sought after.
- Italy: Students were attracted to specific academic programmes and themes not available in their home countries, indicating a quest for specialised and quality education that can enhance their career prospects.

3.3 Personal Growth and Self-Discovery

- Greece: Personal growth was a recurring theme, with students looking forward to developing personal and professional skills through their international experience.



- Netherlands: The opportunity for personal growth, alongside academic pursuits, was equally important. Students were keen on developing a broadened worldview and understanding different cultures.
- Italy: Personal growth and self-discovery were major motivations, aligning with aspirations for increased self-confidence, independence, and adaptability skills.

3.4 Specific Academic Programmememes and Language Proficiency

- Greece: Some students were motivated by the opportunity to pursue specific fields of study not available in their home countries. The chance to improve language proficiency also played a role.
- Netherlands: While not the primary focus, the chance to improve language skills was part of the broader educational objective for some students.
- Italy: The chance to improve language proficiency was also a motivating factor for students. This aligns with their needs for language support and resources during their studies abroad.

4. Expectations, Needs, and Aspirations of International Students

The combined analysis of the survey reports from Greece, the Netherlands, and Italy provides valuable insights into international students' expectations, needs, and aspirations. These components are critical in understanding the holistic experience of students in an international learning environment.

4.1 Expectations

Greece: Students expected to gain more learning experience and aspired to work in foreign countries to achieve more experience. They also hoped to learn about the host's culture and educational system, mainly how students are linked to the job market after their studies.	Netherlands: Students expected a high-quality education, academic reputation, and exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives. They aimed for personal growth, enhanced employability - career prospects, and broadening their worldview.	Italy: The focus was on gaining cross-cultural communication and adaptability skills, expanding global networks and connections, and enhancing employability. Students aimed to increase their self-confidence and independence and to broaden their understanding of different cultures.
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4.2 Needs

Greece: The need for language support and resources was highlighted. Support services like academic tutoring and mental health	Netherlands: Students emphasised the importance of language support and resources. They also identified a need for assistance finding suitable	Italy: Students expressed the need for language support. Accommodation assistance was a significant concern, especially in countries with
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counselling were deemed necessary.	accommodation and various support services, including mental health counselling and career guidance.	high rents. Psychological and medical support were also identified as essential needs.
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4.3 Aspirations

Greece: Aspirations ranged from becoming leading figures in their fields to acquiring specialised skills. Students envisioned leveraging their international experience to advance their careers.	Netherlands: Students aspired to become leaders in their fields and to use their international experience for career advancement. They were also interested in participating in extracurricular activities for personal growth.	Italy: A large percentage of students aspired to become leaders in their field or find economic stability. They saw the international experience as a way to improve skills, open startups, and make informed career decisions.
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International students' expectations, needs, and aspirations are interconnected, forming a complex picture of their overall experience. While they expect to gain new skills, cultural insights, and academic knowledge, they also need practical support like language assistance, accommodation help, and mental health services. Their aspirations are ambitious, ranging from professional leadership to personal growth. These findings indicate that international education is not just about academics; it's a personal and professional transformation journey requiring comprehensive support systems to ensure a fulfilling experience. Institutions offering international education should consider these aspects to create an environment that educates, supports, and nurtures the diverse needs of international students.

5. Challenges and Opportunities in International Learning Environments

The survey reports from Greece, the Netherlands, and Italy provide insights into the challenges faced by students in international learning environments and the opportunities they perceive.

Challenges

- Greece: A significant challenge was the lack of prior opportunities, particularly in extracurricular activities. This indicates a gap in available resources or platforms for students to engage beyond academics.
- Netherlands: The survey findings do not explicitly mention specific challenges students face. However, based on the emphasis on language support and academic guidance, it can be inferred that students might face language barriers and require assistance in navigating the educational environment.
- Italy: The primary challenges identified were the need for language support and assistance finding suitable accommodation, especially in high-rent areas. Psychological and medical support needs were also significant, indicating challenges related to mental health and well-being in a foreign environment.



Opportunities

- Greece: The opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities and student organisations was seen as valuable for personal growth and skill development. Learning about the host country's customs and traditions was also a significant opportunity for students seeking a holistic educational experience.
- Netherlands: Opportunities were identified in building connections with other students, access to language support, and academic guidance. Students also saw opportunities for exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives and personal growth through their international experience.
- Italy: Students recognised the opportunity to expand their global networks and connections, increase confidence, and become independent. The aspiration to become leaders in their field of study and find economic stability were significant opportunities that students expected from their international experience.

The survey findings collectively highlight that while international students face challenges such as language barriers, accommodation issues, and the need for psychological support, they also perceive significant opportunities. These opportunities include personal and professional growth, cultural immersion, skill development through extracurricular activities, and the potential to become leaders in their respective fields. The insights from these survey findings can guide higher education institutions in designing support systems and programmes that address the challenges and enhance the opportunities available to international students.

6. Comparison and Contrast of Findings from Greece, the Netherlands, and Italy Surveys

To compare and contrast the findings from the Greek, Dutch and Italian surveys, we can extract insightful findings:

6.1 Comparison Findings

Regarding **Motivation for International Education**, all three surveys highlight a strong motivation for international education, emphasising personal growth, exposure to diverse cultures, and high-quality education. The Greek and Italian survey results specifically note the desire to learn about new cultures and the high reputation of HEIs abroad as key motivations. At the same time, the Dutch survey also underscores the importance of academic reputation, particularly in technical fields like Data Science and AI.

From the Aspirations and Career Goals perspective, students in all three regions aspire to leverage their international experience for career advancement. The Greek and Italian survey results reflect aspirations to become leaders in their fields and to gain global perspectives. In the Netherlands, similar aspirations are noted, focusing on acquiring specialised skills and leading roles in their fields.

There is a unanimous emphasis across all three surveys on the importance of **Language Support and Academic Guidance**. The Italian survey findings specifically highlight the need for psychological and medical support, indicating a broader range of support services international students need.



6.2 Significant Differences

Field of Study represents a significant difference in survey findings. In Greece, students are spread across various fields, from engineering to computer science. The Netherlands survey findings show a strong emphasis on Computer Science, particularly in Data Science and AI. In Italy, the focus is on Sport Management and Business Administration, suggesting a unique niche in Italian institutions.

From the Cultural and Intercultural Experience perspective, the Greek survey findings mention a notable interest in learning about the host country's customs and traditions. In contrast, while acknowledging the importance of diverse cultures, the Netherlands survey findings do not specifically mention intercultural experiences. The Italian survey findings strongly emphasise the aspiration for intercultural experiences and learning about the host country's culture.

Regarding **Extracurricular Activities and Personal Growth**, a substantial proportion of students expressed eagerness to participate in extracurricular activities in Greece. Still, some cited a lack of opportunities, while the Netherlands survey finding also reflects a keen interest in extracurricular activities for personal growth and skill enhancement.

The survey findings from Greece, the Netherlands, and Italy reveal several common themes, such as solid motivations for international education, career aspirations, and the need for support services. However, significant differences emerge in the fields of study, the emphasis on cultural experiences, and opportunities for extracurricular activities. These differences highlight international students' diverse expectations and experiences in different European educational contexts. Understanding these nuances is vital for educational institutions to tailor their offerings and support services to their international student body's specific needs and aspirations.

7. Conclusion: Key Insights from the Combined Field Research Report for the MODES Work package n°2 Baseline Study Exploitation Pack for International Learning Environments,

The combined analysis of the survey reports from Greece, the Netherlands, and Italy under Work Package n°2 of the MODES Baseline Study Exploitation Pack for International Learning Environments, and specifically Action 2.2: conducting field research with international students has yielded several crucial insights:

- **Diverse Motivations and Aspirations:** International students are driven by various motivations, including pursuing high-quality education, exposure to diverse cultures, personal growth, and specific academic opportunities. Their aspirations are ambitious, from becoming leaders in their fields to leveraging international exposure for significant career advancement.
- **Varied Challenges and Needs:** Students face several challenges, including language barriers, the need for suitable accommodation, and the requirement for comprehensive



psychological and medical support. The importance of language support, academic guidance, and integration into the local community is consistently highlighted.

- **Opportunities Beyond Academic Learning:** The international study experience offers opportunities beyond academic learning, such as cultural immersion, personal development, and expanding global networks. Participation in extracurricular activities and engagement with local traditions and customs are valuable aspects of the international education experience.
- **Necessity for Enhanced Support Systems:** There is a clear need for educational institutions to provide robust support systems encompassing language assistance, accommodation help, mental health services, and academic guidance. These support services are pivotal in ensuring a positive and enriching experience for international students.

In conclusion, our survey findings and insights are invaluable for the MODES project's objectives, which aim to enhance the quality and efficacy of international education programmes. Understanding international students' diverse backgrounds, needs, and aspirations is critical for designing programmes that are academically enriching and supportive of students' holistic development. The findings highlight the need for educational institutions to adopt a student-centric approach, tailoring services and opportunities to the unique challenges and opportunities that international education presents.

Moreover, these insights reinforce the importance of cultural sensitivity and promoting intercultural understanding in the academic community. By addressing these aspects, the MODES project can significantly prepare students for the globalised world, foster inclusive environments, and enrich the HEI educational experience for both international and domestic students.

In conclusion, the combined report underlines the necessity for continuous improvement in international education programmes, ensuring they are responsive to the evolving needs of a diverse student body. By integrating these insights, the MODES project is a step forward in shaping more effective, inclusive, and holistic international education models.