

Mobility periods abroad during the coronavirus crisis: What has happened to students from Swiss universities?

At the outbreak of the health crisis caused by COVID-19, some 2,000 Swiss students were taking advantage of mobility periods around Europe and approximately 1,600 European students were studying in Switzerland. Movetia, in collaboration with the universities participating in the Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP), conducted a survey. The results showed that more than half of the students had returned home by the end of March 2020. To enable them to continue their education, Movetia authorised a series of flexible solutions, in particular including the possibility of following online classes. International mobility is a key factor of cohesion while contributing to the quality of our education and the attractiveness of Switzerland abroad.

Solothurn, 8 April 2020

Taking part in an academic or training exchange programme is an experience which enables the participant to acquire new skills while discovering and learning about a different culture, a different language and a different way of living.

Many students and teaching staff take advantage of this opportunity, travelling to Europe or to Switzerland for a period of one or two semesters with financial support provided by Movetia programmes, and in particular the Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP) intended for the tertiary education sector. The SEMP is an integral part of the Solution Suisse Programme for Erasmus+.

However, the emergence of COVID-19 has brought the entire world almost to a standstill in recent weeks. Governments have unanimously asked citizens to remain at home and limit their movements. As a precautionary measure or due to necessity, a number of everyday activities have been suspended. Exchange and mobility are no exception.

What is the situation for anyone currently taking advantage of a mobility period? What is the current picture in light of this health crisis? How can they continue their education?

Movetia decided to conduct a survey of 40 Swiss institutions participating in the Swiss-European Mobility Programme with a view to determining the mobility situation of Swiss universities. Some 34 institutions participated in this survey between 23 March and 31 March 2020.

Many students opted to spend a semester abroad

The high rate of participation of the institutions enabled us to obtain significant results. These figures are nevertheless an initial estimation. Not all students answered and the situation of the crisis is constantly changing.

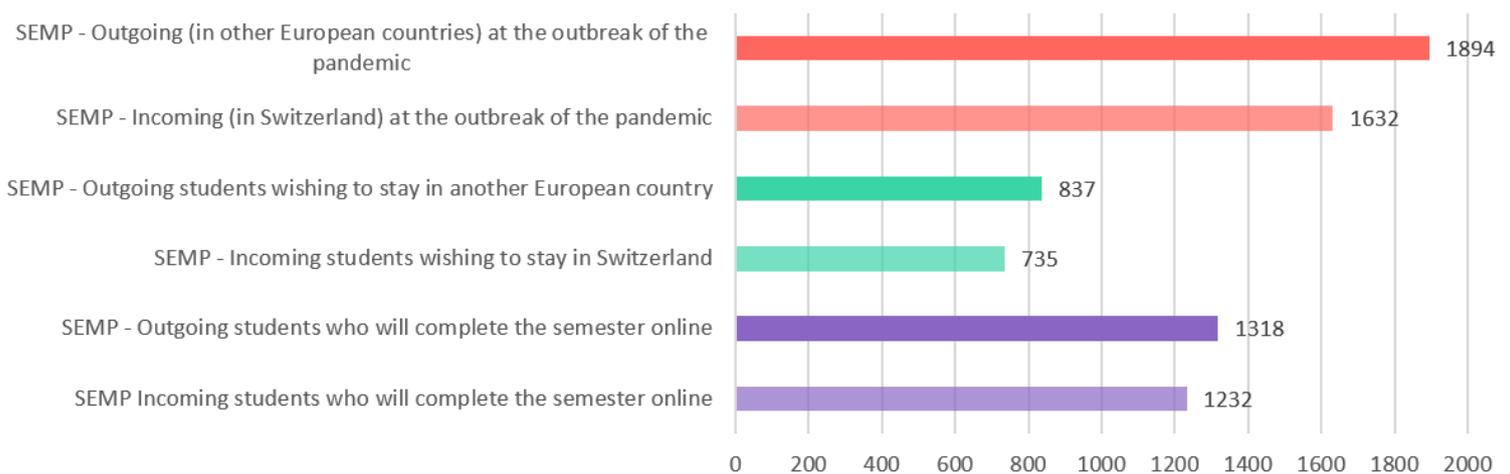
Of 1,894 Swiss students staying in European countries, 1,057 (56%) have returned to Switzerland since the beginning of the pandemic while 837 students have decided to remain abroad.

Furthermore, of the 1,632 foreign students studying in Switzerland, 897 (55%) have decided to return home while 735 have decided to stay.

But how can students pursue their studies when all the institutions have been forced to close their doors? In light of the confinement measures in place, most European universities, including those in Switzerland, are enabling students to complete their semester via online classes either from the host country or once they return home.

Movetia has also authorised Swiss universities to provide and recognise the mobility experience by following an online course. Accordingly, 1,318 Swiss students (70%) and 1,232 foreign students (75%) will at present be in a position to continue and complete their semester.

Number of students in SEMP



Source: Movetia

More information about the programme

movetia.ch/sempr

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