

**Poznań University of Economics**

**THE FUTURE OF ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS EDUCATION IN  
EUROPE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE YEAR 2026**

**A research report**

Piotr Banaszyk

Sylwester Białowąs

Milda Burzała

Ilona Kijek

Ewa Mińska-Struzik

Iwona Olejnik

Katarzyna Szarzec

Poznań 2011

# CONTENTS

Introduction

Survey methodology

## 1. TEACHING

1.1 Students' university selection criteria

1.2 Changes in teaching

1.3 Student numbers

1.4 Sources of finance for student education

1.5 New technologies and education

## 2. STAFF AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

2.1 Changes in employment patterns

2.2 Academic research – cooperation with other institutions; initiators; financial support

## 3. ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Changes in the micro-environment

3.2 Mobility and teaching-process standardisation

3.3 Changes in the basic higher-education indicators

3.4 Barriers to the development of universities of economics/business

3.5 Models of universities' activity

## 4. UNIVERSITY

4.1 University autonomy

4.2 Tools to support a university's activity

4.3 Fields of economic education

## 5. CONCLUSION

## **Introduction**

In 2011, the Poznań University of Economics (PUE) is celebrating its eighty-fifth anniversary. The year is special also for another reason. First, October 2011 sees the introduction of a new higher-education law, which increases universities' autonomy and responsibility for the quality of their education and research activity. The whole of Europe is faced with a deepening economic crisis which affects not just business but also the finances of whole countries and the European Union in general. This unusual situation makes one ask about the place and role of higher economic education today and in the future as part of the European Higher Education Area.

The situation prompted the PUE to initiate research aimed at learning the views held by representatives of European economic universities on the state of and on the prospects for higher economic education. The state concerns the present time. We have adopted the perspective of 2026, the year the PUE will celebrate its hundredth anniversary and the time we intend to return to today's questions and answer them to check the accuracy of our diagnoses and projections.

Generally speaking, this report presents the views held by representatives of 13 schools on such issues as teaching and research processes, academic staff characteristics, models of activity and external determinants of universities' activity.

We would like to express our gratitude to all those who responded to our request and developed or replied to the questionnaires. Naturally, responsibility for the final content and interpretations rests exclusively with us.

## **Survey methodology**

To determine the development prospects for Europe's higher economic and business education in the 2026 perspective, a questionnaire survey was conducted by means of the expert method at the beginning of 2011.

The questions were asked of just over 120 representatives of tertiary-level schools across the whole of Europe and Poland which cooperate with the Poznań University of Economics as part of the Erasmus programme and as part of student exchange between public economic universities in Poland.

The research project was conducted in two stages:

1. sending the questionnaires to experts – representatives of tertiary-level school authorities,
2. sending survey results obtained in the first stage, with a request for comments

With this aim in mind, we prepared a questionnaire form containing 19 basic questions and nine **demographics** questions (see Appendix). Most of them were closed. The content scope of the research was reflected in four groups of questions included in the form:

1. teaching,
2. academic staff and research,
3. the economic/business environment of higher education,
4. the university.

The research involved tertiary-level schools representing 13 countries, namely, Belgium (2), the Czech Republic (1), Denmark (1), Finland (1), France (2), Spain (1), Ireland (1), Lithuania (1), Germany (6), Sweden (1), Turkey (1), Hungary (1) and Poland (5).

Half of the schools participating in the research are independent tertiary-level business or economic schools; the others are economic/business faculties (departments) of universities.

On the whole, the average number of people studying at the schools under research (or, in the case of universities, at the economic/business departments) was 4,245. The smallest school has 300 and the largest one 16,000 students. The institutions participating in the research employed, on average, 338 people (the

smallest school/department 20 and the largest 1,350). The average number of employees constituting academic staff was 167 (the lowest 18; the highest 777). The oldest school taking part in the research was founded in 1575; the newest one in 2004. Among the universities under research, the oldest faculty of economics/business was established in 1940; the newest one in 2005).

As for a university's area of activity (measured by most of its students' background), it could be noted that 54% of the universities (N=13) have a regional range, 38% a national one (N=9) and 8% (N=2) have a European character.

To analyse the results, we have used measures of descriptive statistics and a dispersion coefficient of relative classification.

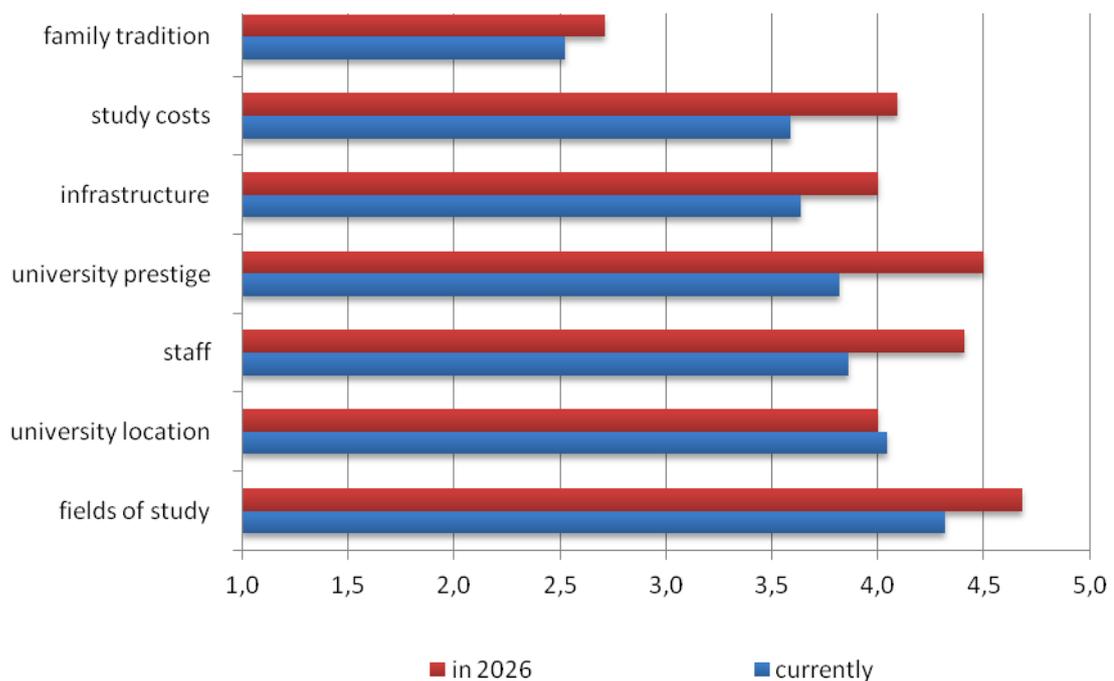
## **1. TEACHING**

### **1.1. Students' university selection criteria**

At present, students' most important university selection criterion is the fields of study offered (an average of 4.32 on a 1-5 scale, where 1 means definitely unimportant and 5 definitely important) and the university's location (averaging 4.05). Slightly less significant were staff (3.86), university prestige (3.82), infrastructure (3.64) and study costs (3.59). Family tradition proved to be the least important factor (2.52).

The next fifteen years are expected to see some changes in this hierarchy. Even though the fields of study offered continue to be the most important selection criterion (4.68), this is followed by school prestige (4.50), staff (4.41), study costs (4.09) and the university's location (4.00). Invariably, the least significant of the criteria investigated will be continuing one's family tradition (2.71).

Figure 1. University selection criteria (average)



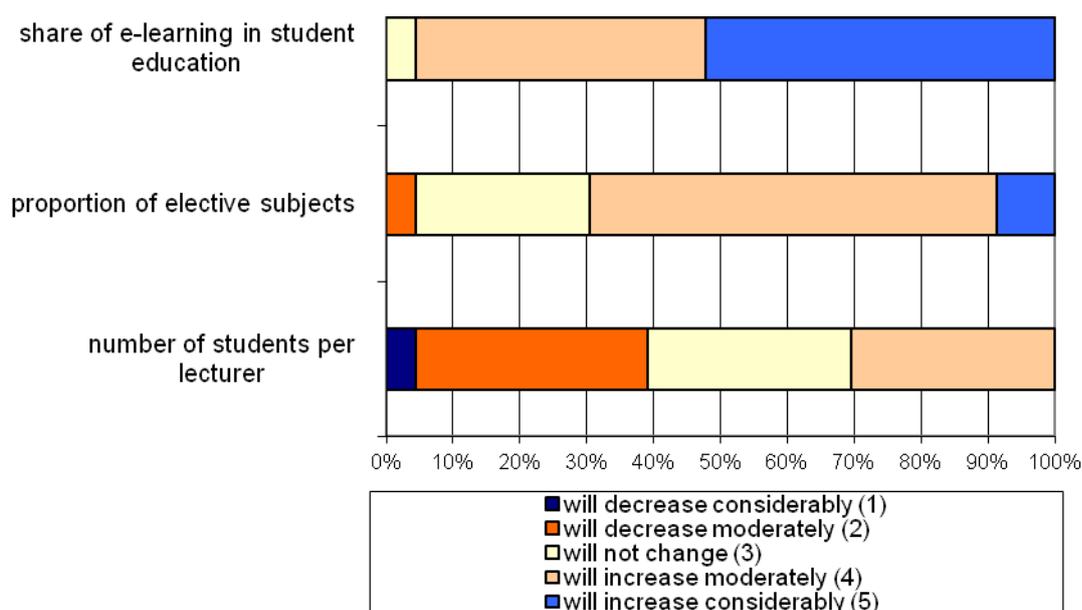
## 1.2 Changes in teaching

Within the next fifteen years we can also expect changes in the number of students per lecturer, the degree of student independence in determining one's educational pathway, and the significance of e-learning.

Half of the schools are forecast to substantially increase the share of e-learning in teaching, with none of them expecting this share to decrease.

Forecasts concerning the proportion of elective subjects are also relatively homogeneous, because student independence in this respect is expected to rise in as many as 70% of universities. There is less unanimity in terms of the ratio of students to lecturers, since 40% anticipate that the indicator will decrease, and 30% that it will increase.

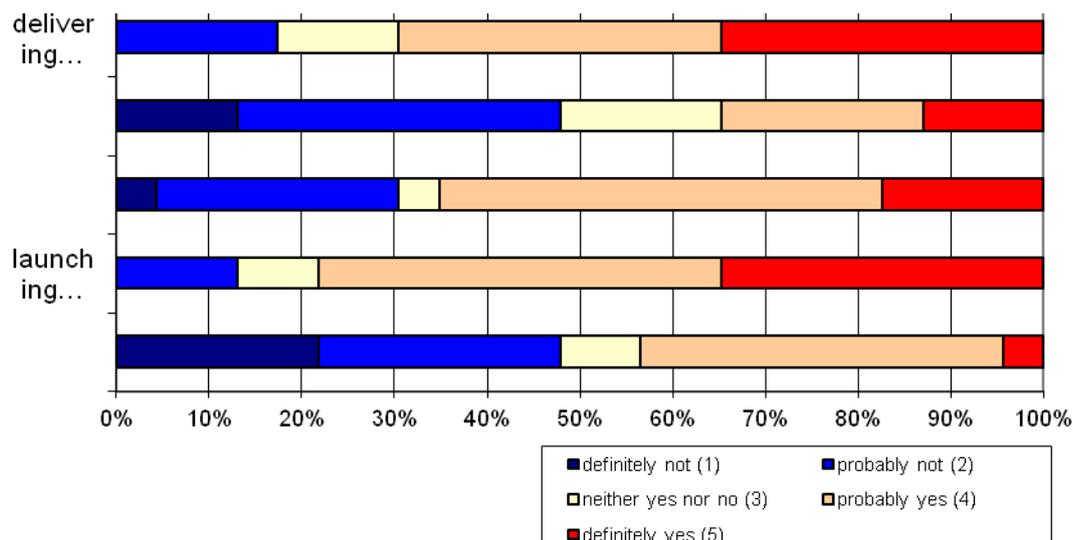
Figure 2. Changes expected at business/economic universities in the 2026 perspective.



Changes in teaching will also be made to organisation of studies. Nearly 80% of universities expect to be able to launch courses of study requested by companies. Two thirds of schools forecast that study content will be offered mainly in English and the whole educational process will be available in the distance-learning mode.

There is less agreement among experts concerning the student's freedom to determine the duration of studies (one university in two considers this impossible, and one in three believes this will be possible). As for the idea of students studying only elective subjects, forecasts accepting such an option and those rejecting it are distributed almost equally.

Figure 3. Forecast changes to organisation of studies.

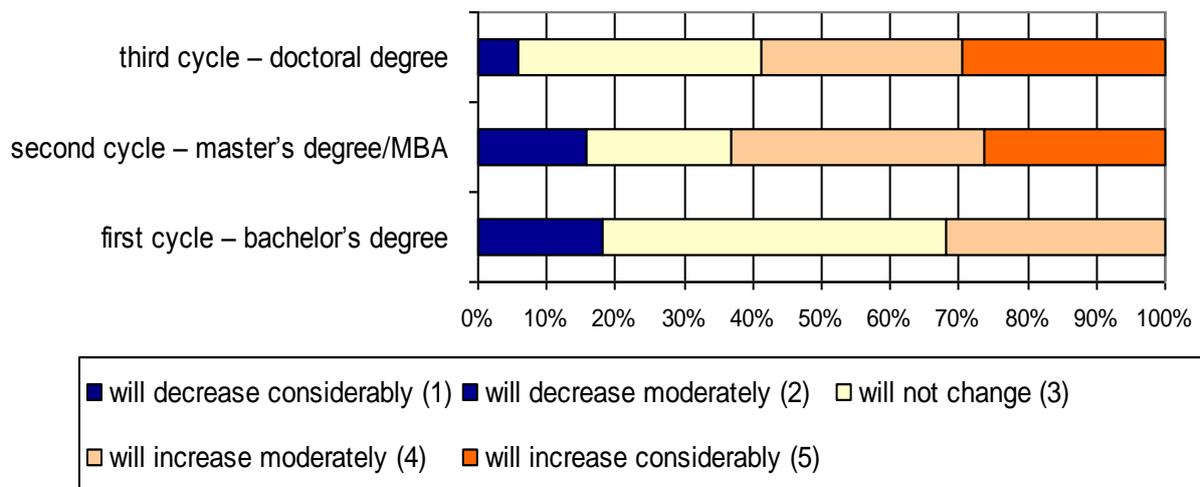


### 1.3 Student numbers

The universities surveyed do not anticipate radical changes in the number of their students. In the case of first-cycle studies, half of the universities believe student numbers will not change, while 32% expect a moderate increase. There are also universities which anticipate a moderate decline in student numbers (of about 18%). This may result from their awareness of a progressive population decline and a growing number of schools teaching at bachelor's degree level or higher. While the same student numbers are forecast by experts from the "old" European Union (60%), experts from Central Eastern Europe tend to expect student numbers to fall in first-cycle studies (43%).

In the case of second-cycle studies, there is much less agreement among respondents. Their most frequent answer is that student numbers will grow (37%). Twenty-one per cent of universities expect the number of students to stay at the current level, and 16% believe it will fall moderately. However, there are schools which anticipate a considerable increase in the number of second-cycle students (26%).

Figure 4. Changes in student numbers at successive levels of higher education



Even more varied are predictions about changing student numbers in third-cycle studies. Thirty-five per cent of experts expect the numbers to remain at the present level, while 29% think the number of third-cycle students will grow, and the same percentage of experts forecast a considerable increase.

Such diverse responses may result from an ability to adjust the teaching offer to changing demographic conditions, the economy's needs, and promotion of successive levels of study. Maintaining or increasing the number of students will be possible thanks to creating very flexible curricula and implementing the idea of life-long learning on a large scale. We should also take into consideration "older" and part-time students. Despite the ageing of the population, the widespread popularity of higher education is a chance to increase student numbers in second- and third-cycle studies. However, third-cycle studies involve overcoming numerous barriers related to financing methods and specifying admission requirements and conditions.

Reorganising the higher-education system as part of the Bologna Process has considerably increased student mobility. The level of mobility has come to be seen as a distinguishing feature of a modern education system. This has become

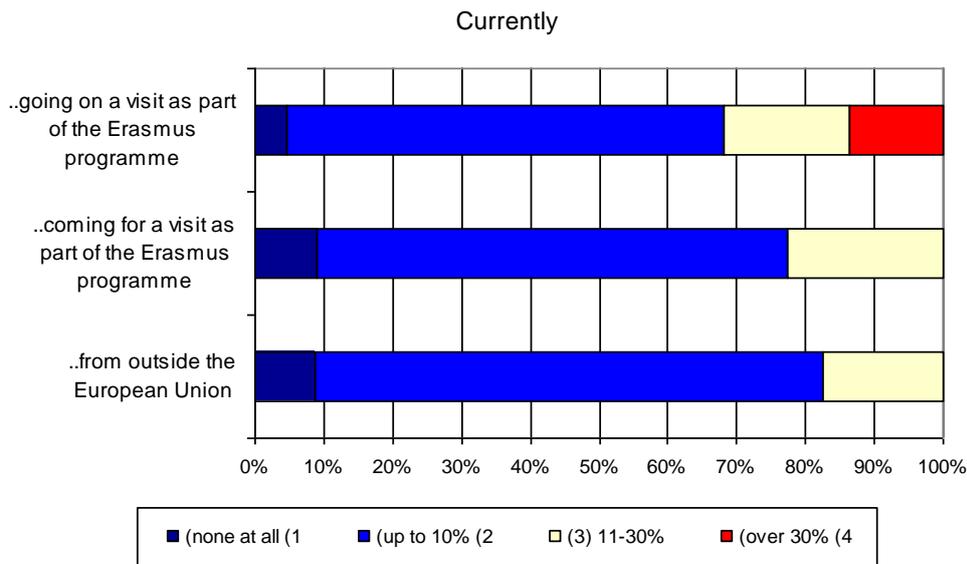
possible thanks to the growing popularity of the two-level study model and measuring student achievements by means of ECTS points.

Universities' international cooperation can be strengthened thanks to various programmes such as Erasmus, under which students have a chance to complete some subjects during several months' study visits to a foreign school. This kind of mobility is horizontal. Recently, we have seen an increasing popularity of vertical migration, which means changing the university (by going abroad) after gaining a bachelor's degree. Vertical migration may be preferred both by schools and by students because a homogeneous education system is better able to prepare students for a job.

Over 90% of the universities surveyed actively participate in the Erasmus programme. The survey has demonstrated that in most universities less than 10% of students gain international experience during their period of study. Only about 20% of universities said 10%-30% of their students participate in the programme. However, there are universities (14%) where the percentage of students with international experience exceeds 30%. An analysis of the results shows that in "old" EU countries student mobility is greater than in Central Eastern Europe.

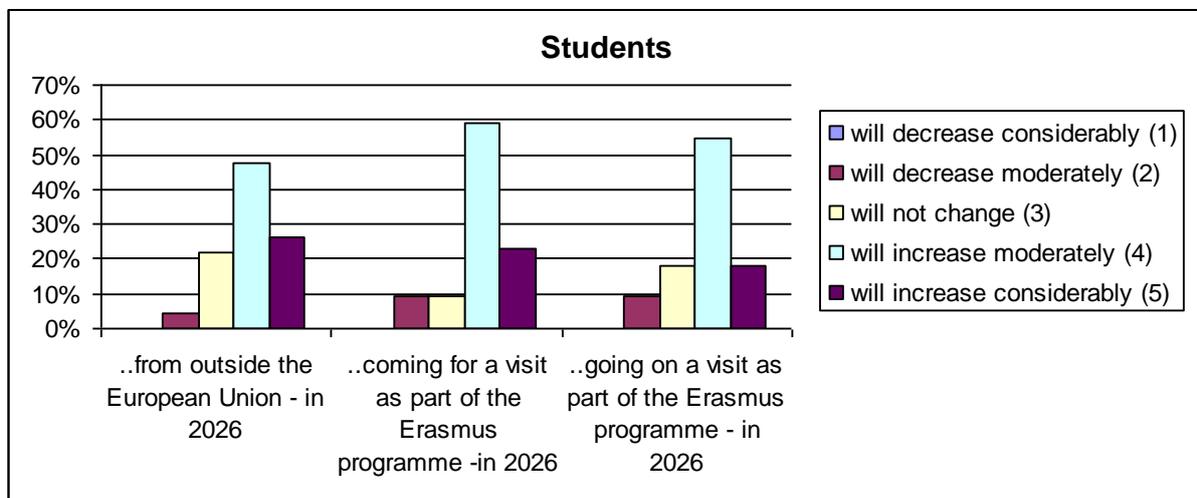
The Erasmus programme applies to European universities, which account for the majority of foreign students (see Figure 5). This does not mean, however, that these universities restrict exchange to each other only. As part of various programmes, they also admit students from Asia and North Africa.

Figure 5. Current structure of international student exchange.



In the 2026 perspective, universities do not expect a radical decline in international exchange. A considerable majority of university experts (over 80%) anticipate an increase in international exchange, and about 20% expect it to grow markedly. The response-agreement coefficient in the case of predictions about EU-student mobility is higher than in the case of predictions about the mobility of students from outside the EU (the relative dispersion coefficient H is 0.72 and 0.83, respectively). This demonstrates a greater predictability of international exchange as part of the EU.

Figure 6. Forecast structure of international student exchange in 2026



A communiqué issued at a conference attended by European higher-education ministers (Leuven and Leuven-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009) assumes that in 2020 at least 20% of students should complete parts of their studies abroad. In this context, the universities' declarations are very conservative. Combining education in the home country and abroad should be encouraged by both governments and particular universities. Overcoming barriers to studying abroad concerns chiefly tuition fees and joint scholarship programmes. It is vital to build mutual trust among universities and increase curriculum flexibility, which would make it possible to recognise granted credits and ECTS points. Changing the structure of studies should entail changes in curricula and a considerable increase in their flexibility towards the university's incoming and outgoing students. Whereas changes to the system can be introduced on the basis of applicable laws and government directives, changing and adapting the curricula is the responsibility of a given university. Curriculum internationalisation is, in large part, dependent on multilateral cooperation of governments and all the universities constituting the European Higher Education Area.

#### **1.4 Sources of finance for student education**

A debate is still taking place in Europe about insufficient university financing. In the US, not only more government funds are allocated for higher education; finance provided by individuals and foundations is of great significance, too. In Europe there is talk of introducing tuition fees for all students and creating a system of low-interest loans guaranteed by the government. In the case of second- and third-cycle studies, suggestions include grants and scholarships awarded by companies.

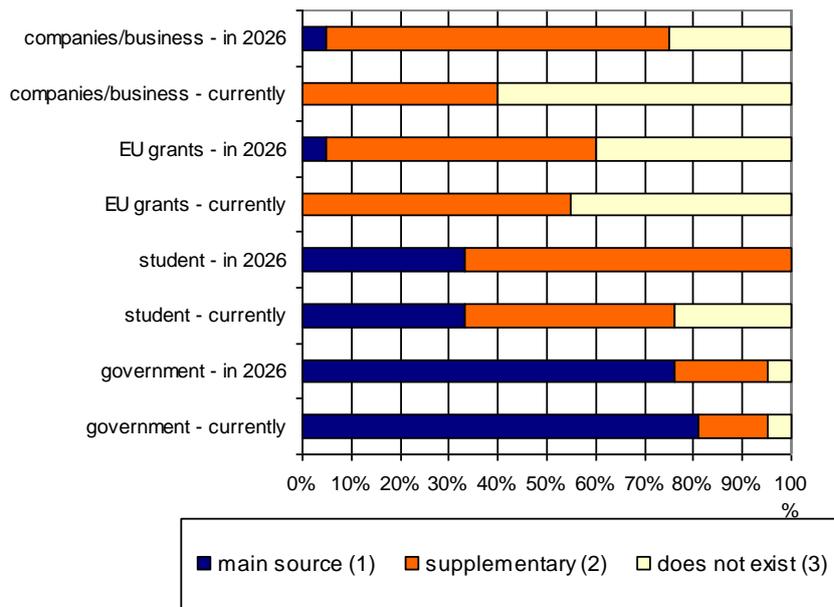
Our survey asked experts to indicate main and supplementary sources of finance for student education. Suggested answers to choose from were: government, students, European Union grants and entrepreneurs. The respondents did not

choose the answer “other”, which might suggest that universities are not interested in funds obtained directly from graduates or relevant foundations.

At present, 81% of experts point to the government as the main source of finance for student education; 14% would see it as a supplementary source. Universities expect these proportions to change only slightly in 2026 (76% and 19%, respectively). Such declarations might be proof of the schools’ view that the state is responsible for education financing; or they might suggest university authorities’ lack of belief in the effectiveness of the government’s action to change the law. In consequence, by 2026, the proportion of universities where the cost of education is covered mainly by students (33%) will not change, but their participation in education will increase. The percentage of universities which point to students as a supplementary source of finance will increase from 43% (today) to 67% (in 2026). Presently, 55% of the universities surveyed see EU grants as a supplementary source of finance, and the percentage will not change in the 2026 perspective. Experts anticipate an increased significance of entrepreneurs as a supplementary source of education financing. Today 40% of universities declare that education is supported by business; in the 2026 perspective, the percentage will increase to 70%. However, 25% believe this kind of university financing will not be possible at all in 2026.

Experts’ predictions about the role of external financing agree the most in the case of government ( $H=0.57$ ) and the least in the case of EU grants ( $H=0.80$ ).

Figure 7. Sources of finance for student education (respondents were allowed to select more than one main or supplementary source)



Seeking and indicating new sources of finance is essential because providing an adequate level of funds per student results in maintaining a high quality of education.

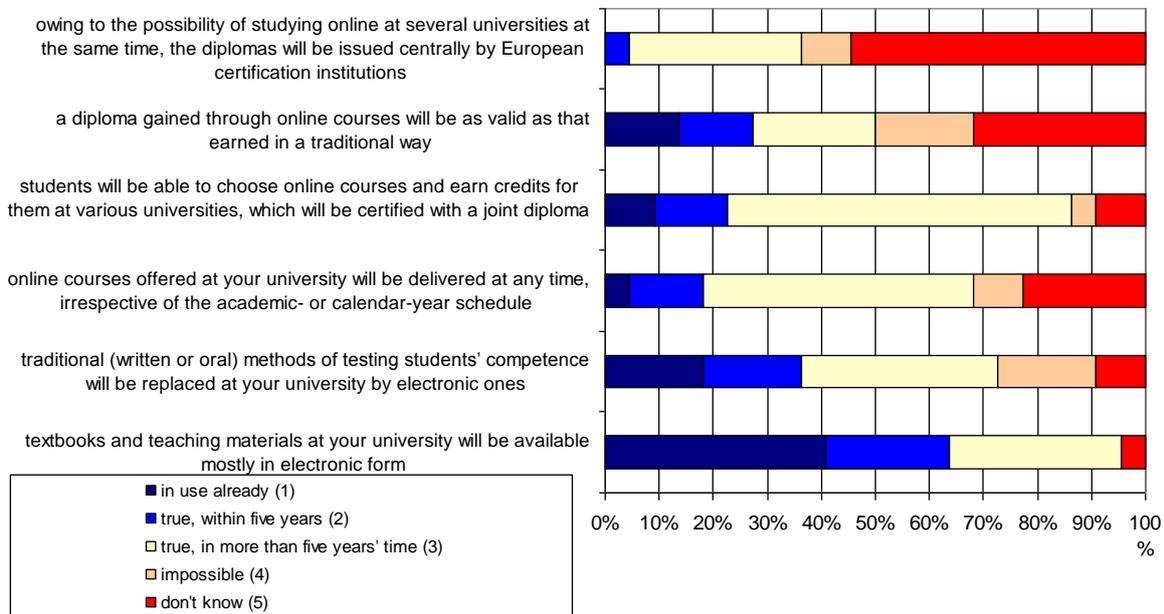
### 1.5 New technologies and education

Anticipating the development of new technologies in the 2026 perspective is a difficult task. The options suggested in the survey are, above all, a consequence of the increasing use of e-learning. The questionnaire featured the following possible answers:

- a) availability of textbooks and teaching materials mostly in electronic form,
- b) replacing traditional (written or oral) methods of testing students' competence with electronic ones,
- c) delivering online courses at any time, regardless of the academic- or calendar-year schedule,
- d) students' ability to choose online courses at various universities, which will be certified with a joint diploma,
- e) a diploma gained through online courses will be as valid as that earned in a traditional way,

f) issuing diplomas centrally by European certification institutions to people studying online at several universities.

Figure 8. New technologies in the perspective of 2026



School representatives' predictions about the development of new technologies are extremely varied. Values of the response-agreement coefficient H range from 0.7 for option d) to 0.97 for option e). The greatest agreement is on the ability to choose and complete online courses at various schools, which will be certified with a joint diploma. According to 64% of experts, this will take over five years. The most diverse answers concerned the value of a diploma gained through online courses in comparison with one obtained in a traditional way. Today 14% of the universities surveyed declare recognising both diplomas as equally valid, 14% allow for such recognition within five years, 23% believe this will require more than five years, and 18% think this is impossible.

Textbooks and teaching materials chiefly in electronic form are available today at 41% of the universities examined; 23% believe this will happen within the next five years, and 32% think that this will take more than five years. The greatest availability of these materials can be seen at universities with a national

range (68%), whereas schools with a regional range most often allow for such a possibility within the next five years (23%) or even later (39%).

Answers are considerably diverse about traditional methods of testing students' competence being replaced by electronic ones. The largest percentage of universities (36%) are of the opinion that more than five years are needed for this, and 18% believe that this will become possible within the next five years, but the same percentage of them think that this is simply impossible. At 18% of universities such a solution is already in use.

Interesting results can be observed thanks to segmentation. About 43% of universities from Central-Eastern Europe are already using electronic testing methods, while the same percentage of "old" EU schools anticipate using these methods within the next five years (at present, only 6.7% of them are using electronic methods of testing).

According to 50% of those surveyed, for online courses to be delivered at any time regardless of the academic- or calendar-year schedule, more than five years are needed.

The option that experts found most problematic was the last one, i.e., about diplomas being issued by central certification institutions. As many as 50% of them selected the "don't know" answer, with 32% allowing for such a possibility in more than five years' time.

An analysis of answers concerning the impact of new technologies suggests that, at present, the level of e-learning is not very high and that new technologies do not lead to considerable changes in traditional teaching methods.

## **2 STAFF AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

### **2.1 Changes in employment patterns**

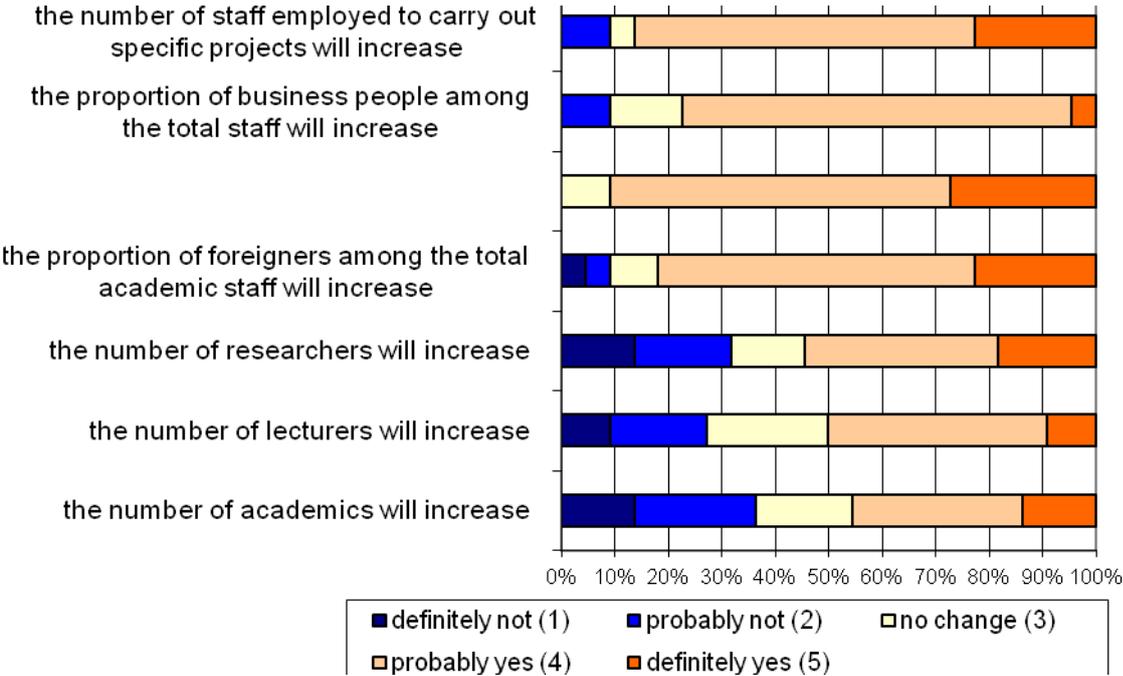
The majority of experts anticipate that, in the 2026 perspective, schools' structure of employment will change owing to a greater share of foreigners and

business practitioners in the total number of employees. This is consistent with the forecast (90% of experts' answers) that the proportion of foreigners (on assistantships, academic exchanges, etc.) among the total academic staff employed will increase. The number of people staying abroad as part of assistantships and scholarships will increase as a result of the EU's continued policy which stresses the need to increase academic staff mobility.

Additionally, about 86% of experts anticipated an increase in the number of employees hired to carry out specific research projects. Employing staff to carry out projects financed by the EU or business is becoming increasingly popular in the academic community.

As for changes in the number of research jobs, teaching jobs as well as research-and-teaching jobs in the 2026 perspective, school representatives were divided in their views. Half of them commented that employment in these positions will probably or definitely rise; the other half said that it will not, or probably will not.

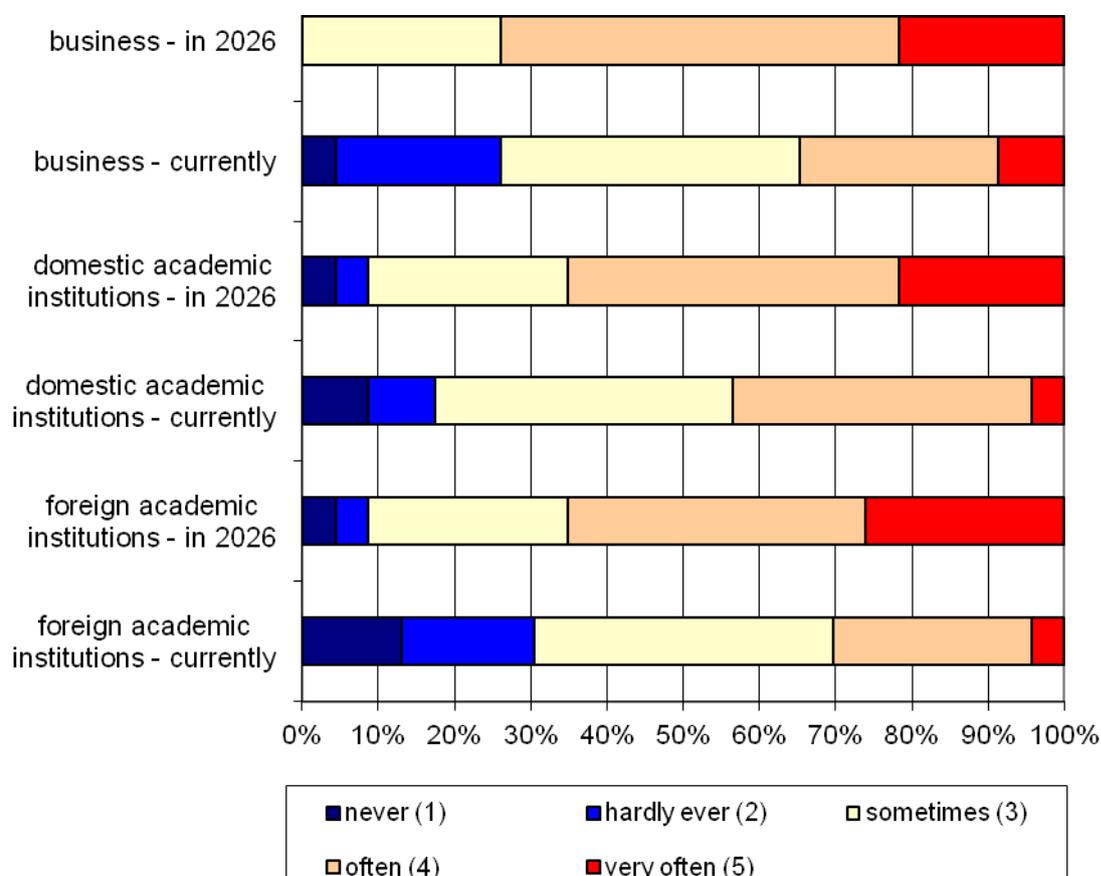
Figure 9. Forecast changes in university employment in the perspective of 2026.



## 2.2 Academic research – collaboration with other institutions; initiators; financial support

At present, about 26% of experts admit that their universities never or hardly ever cooperate with business in academic research. In the 2026 perspective, all of them indicate that the scale of universities' collaboration with foreign and domestic academic institutions as well as with business will be greater than presently. As for business, everyone observes that collaboration will take place sometimes, often or very often. According to experts, in 2026 collaboration with foreign schools will take place often and very often (65% of answers), whereas now this is true of only 30% of the universities surveyed.

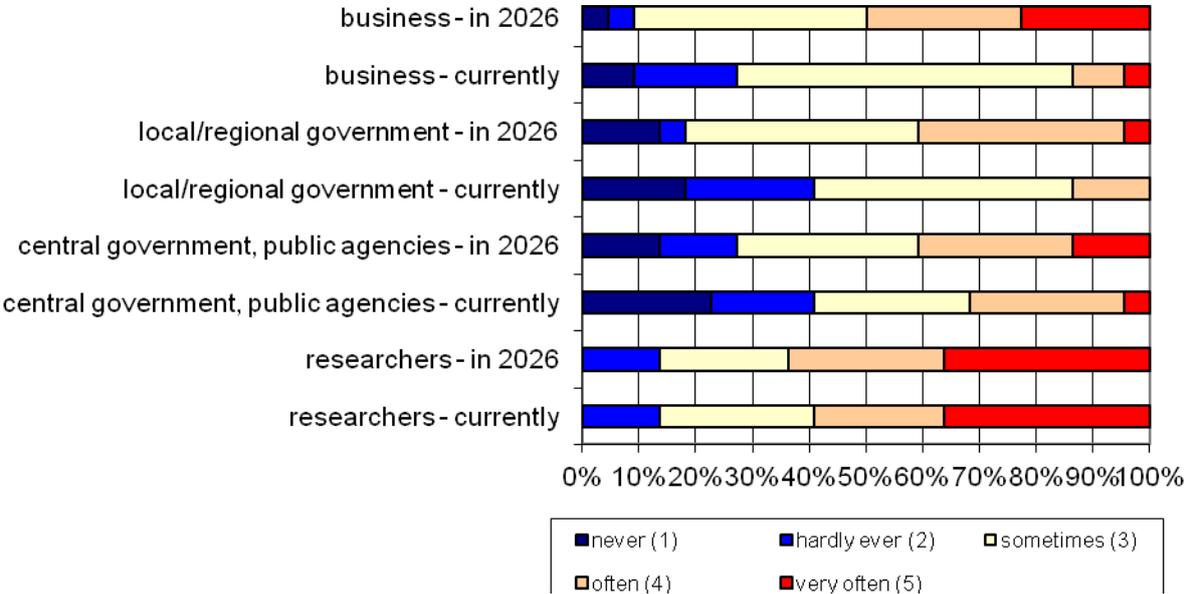
Figure 10. Academic research conducted at the university in collaboration with other entities (currently and in the 2026 perspective)



As with collaborative research, experts indicate that the participation of business as well as central and local/regional government in initiating academic research will grow in the 2026 perspective. Today, 40% of the universities surveyed never or hardly ever conduct research initiated by local or central authorities. Over 40% of experts forecast that in 2026 local, regional and central government will often or very often initiate research. That central government will very often initiate research in the 2026 perspective was believed by 13% of experts, whereas local and regional authorities were selected only by 5% of them.

In experts' opinion, the structure of research initiated by academics in 2026 will not differ considerably from today's pattern.

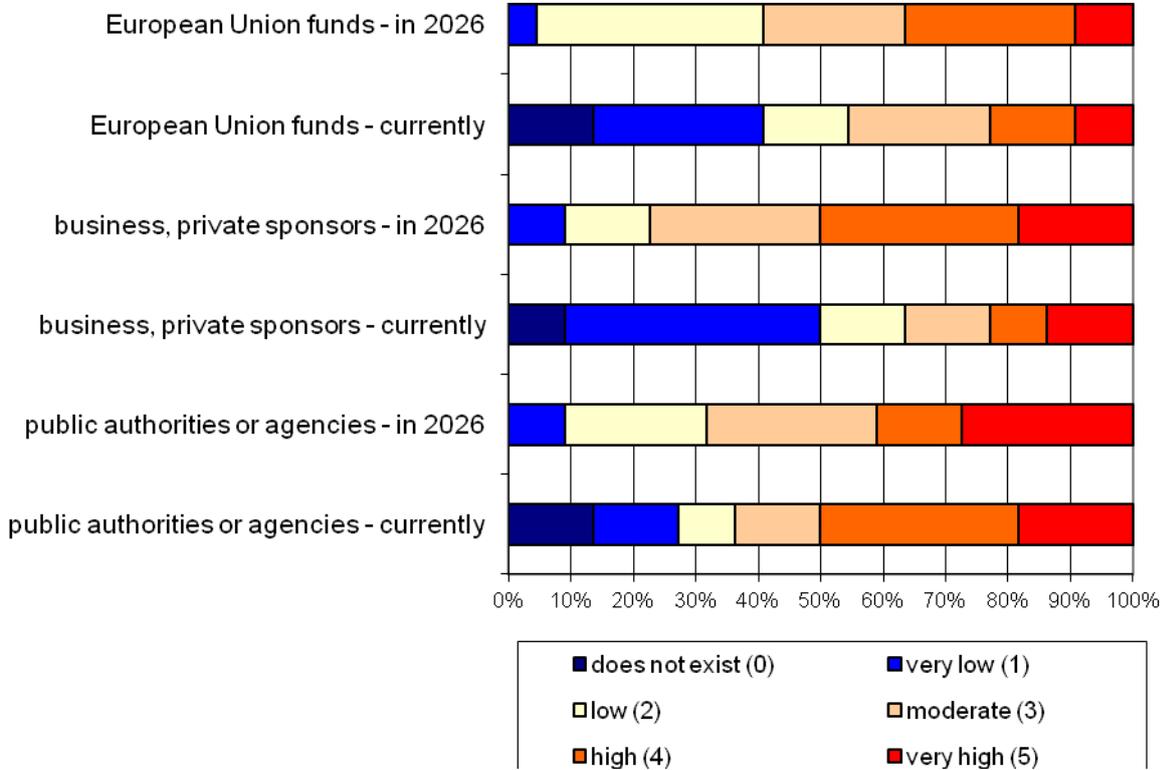
Figure 11. Entities initiating academic research (currently and in the 2026 perspective)



As many as half of the experts said that support from [...] is currently insufficient or nonexistent. University representatives forecast that the situation

will improve by 2026 and that their financial engagement will increase in 2026. This probably results from wishful thinking and looking at the American university model, which is closely linked to business and sponsors. Today only 41% of the universities surveyed never or hardly ever use EU funds. One of the reasons may be that research funds are chiefly channelled to universities of natural sciences or technology, and to a lesser extent to universities focused on social sciences. However, everyone expects this proportion to increase by 2026.

Figure 12. Financial support for academic research (currently and in the 2026 perspective)



### 3. ENVIRONMENT

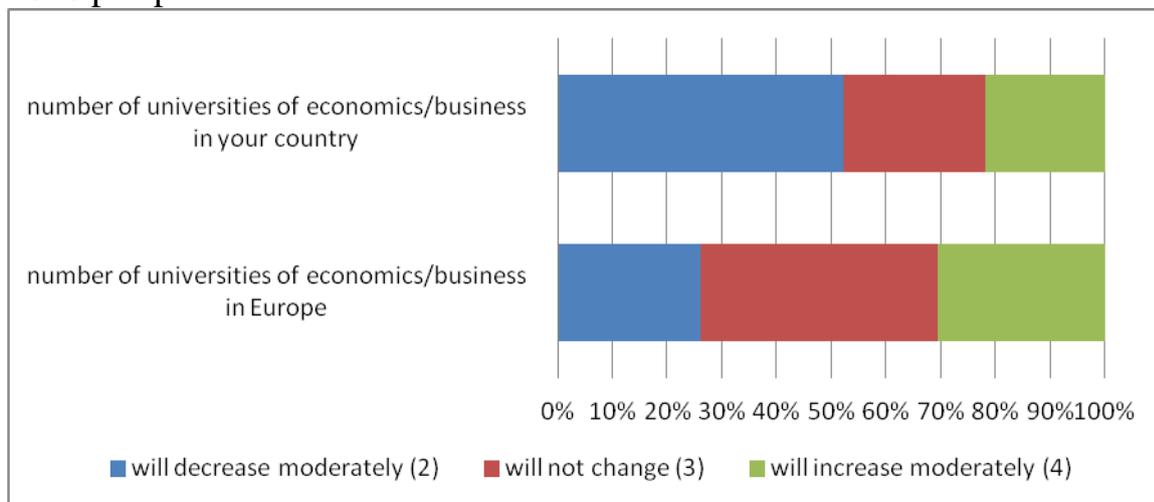
#### 3.1 Changes in the micro-environment

An interesting issue is the forecast change in the number of economic/business universities in Europe in the 2026 perspective. The majority (40%) of experts believe that the number of this type of schools will remain unchanged. One in

three said that the number is likely to increase, and one in four that it is likely to fall.

There is more agreement among experts about changes in the number of business schools in their own countries. Over half of them said that the number is more likely to decrease. The others (the same number) believe that it will not change or will probably increase.

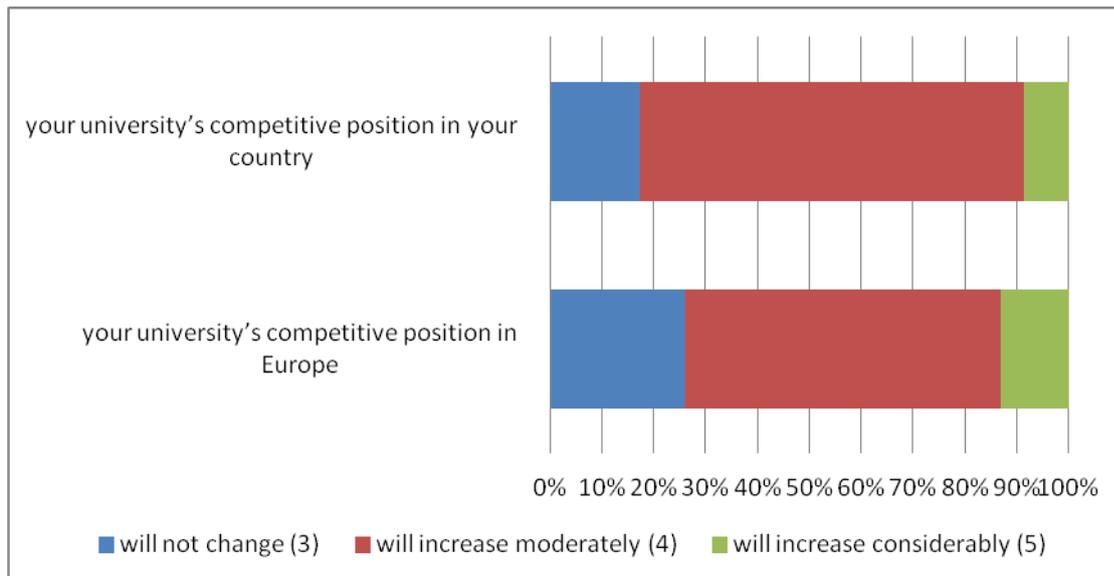
Figure 13. The number of universities of economics/business in Europe in the 2026 perspective



Representatives of the universities surveyed are optimistic about the future. None of them said that their university's competitive position in Europe or in the home country will decrease. Over 80% of them declared that their university's market position will increase (including 10% of them who said it will increase considerably), and the others – that it will not change.

Only 25% of those questioned assume that their university's position in Europe will not change. The others, mainly experts from EU member states, stated that their reputation will increase or increase considerably.

Figure 14. The competitive position of universities of economics/business in the 2026 perspective



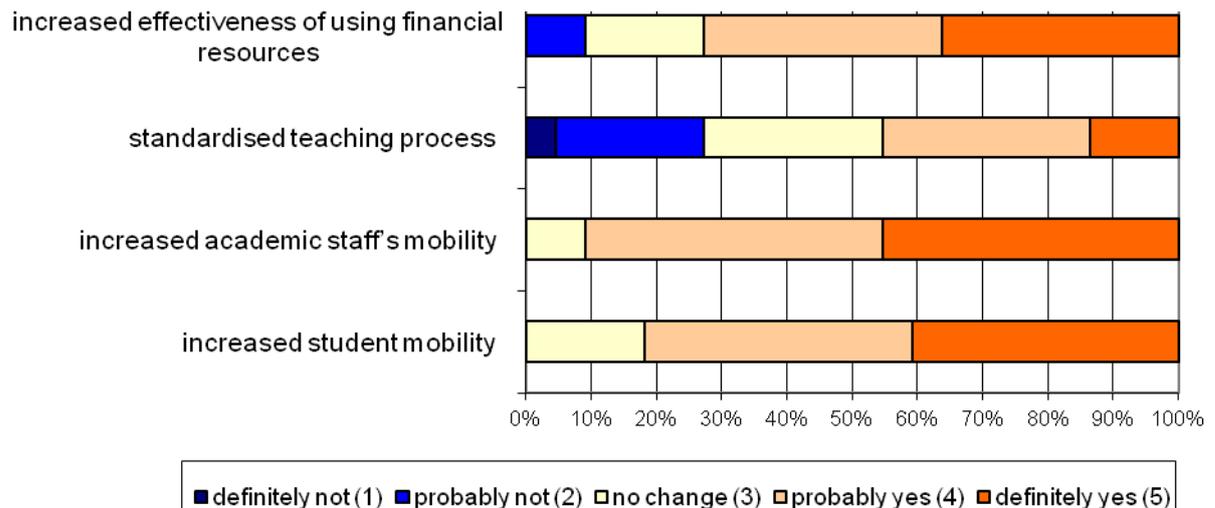
### 3.2 Mobility and teaching-process standardisation

Experts predict that in the 2026 perspective all-European activities (e.g. EU education policy) will put emphasis on increased mobility among both academics and students. It should be noted that these processes will be conducive to academic staff mobility – only 10% of experts said that in the 2026 perspective academic staff mobility will not change, and as many as 45% of them definitely stated that it will increase. A considerable majority of experts (over 80%) assume that student mobility will increase; 40% of them expect a considerable growth of the phenomenon.

Experts also agree that the EU's activities will increase the effectiveness of using financial resources. Only one in ten stated that a situation like this will not take place.

Experts agree much less about the influence EU policy will have on teaching-process standardisation. Only 40% of them said that the EU's activity was aimed at standardising the teaching process. About 30% believe that the EU's higher-education policy will have no effect on teaching-process standardisation; 5% of them strongly believe so.

Figure 15. Mobility and teaching-process standardisation in the 2026 perspective



### 3.3 Changes in the basic higher-education indicators

The majority of experts (60%) are of the opinion that in the 2026 perspective the public sector's involvement in higher-education financing will increase moderately. Only 10% of them expect a considerable decrease. The others believe that it will remain at today's level.

University representatives point to business as the main source of finance for academic research. Over 80% of them stated that business's participation in research financing will grow moderately (about 60% of those surveyed) or considerably (20%). The others think it will remain at the same level as today.

The majority of those questioned (eight out of ten) state that in the 2026 perspective the average cost of education per student will grow. Only 5% of experts are of the opinion that education spending per student will fall, and just under 10% believe that it will remain unchanged.

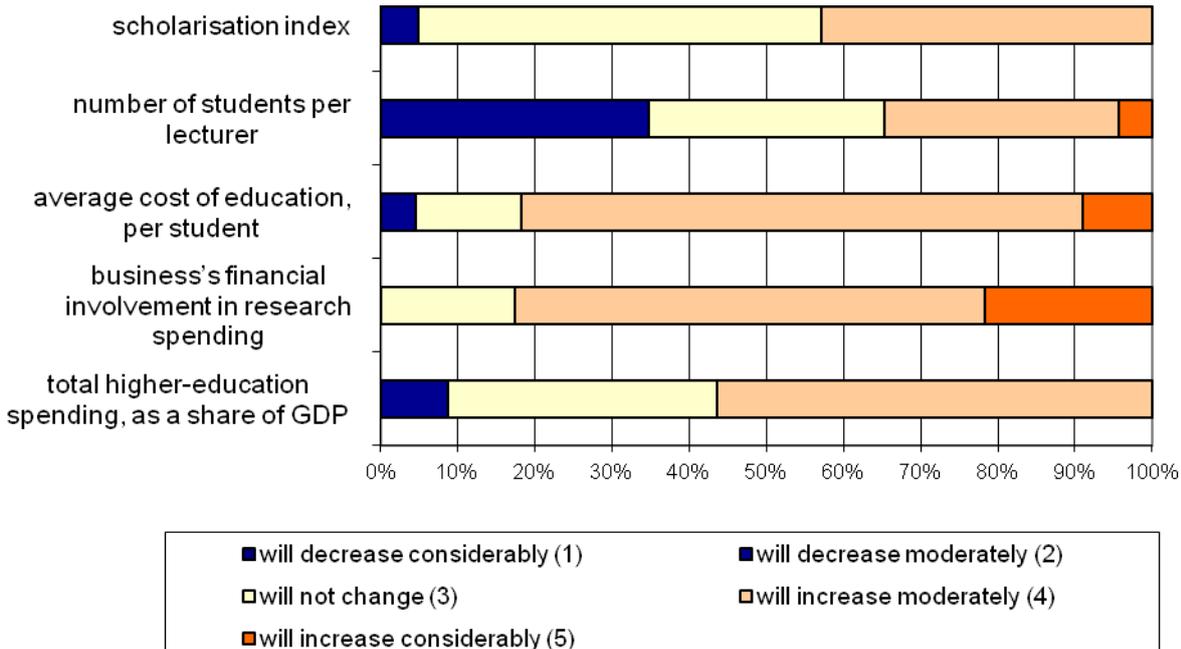
Experts disagree considerably as to the number of students per lecturer. According to 35% of them, increasing education costs per capita will result in a lower number of students per teacher. The same number of respondents believe that the number of students per teacher will rise. One in three experts thinks that the indicator will not change.

About 40% of EU universities assume increasing the number of students per lecturer. The same percentage of universities from Central Eastern Europe expect the number to decline. This may result from the fact that, at present, there are far more students per lecturer in this part of Europe.

Independent universities most often anticipate that in the 2026 perspective the number of students per lecturer will not change, although departments and faculties tended to indicate a decreased number of students per lecturer.

More than 50% of respondents state that in the 2026 perspective the scholarisation index will remain at the same level. One in four of them believes that the index will increase, and only 5% think that it will decrease.

Table 16. Changes in basic higher-education indicators in the 2026 perspective



### 3.4 Barriers to the development of universities of economics/business

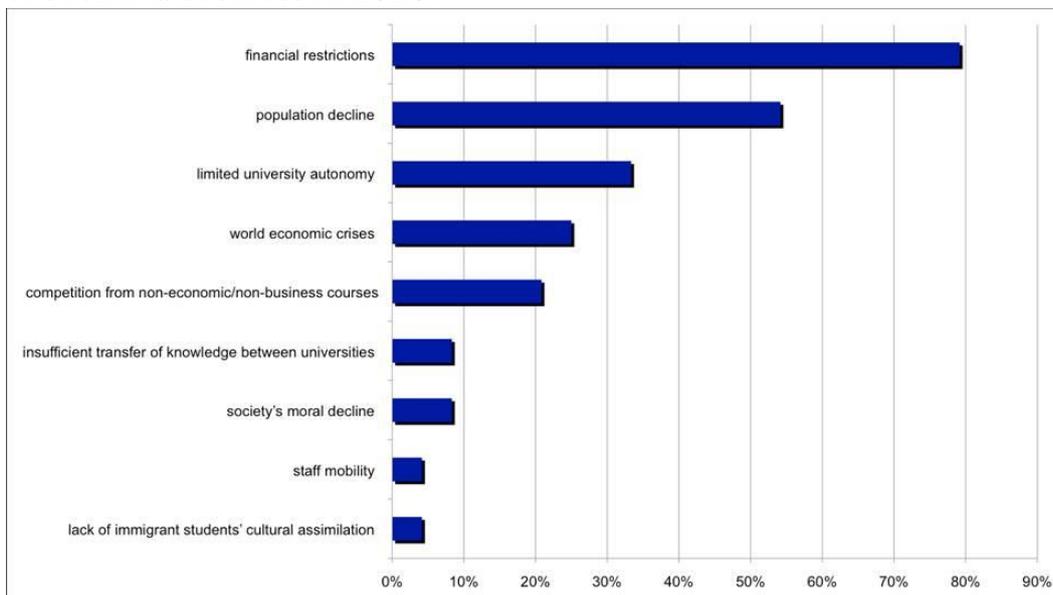
In the 2026 perspective tertiary-level schools of economics and business may face a number of obstacles to their development. These include:

- world economic crises,

- lack of immigrant students' cultural assimilation,
- society's moral decline,
- financial restrictions,
- insufficient transfer of knowledge between universities,
- limited university autonomy,
- staff mobility,
- population decline,
- competition from non-economic/non-business courses.

Representatives of universities believe that the main barrier to their development is financial constraints (79% of answers). Population decline ranks second (54%) and limited university autonomy – third (33%).

Figure 17. Potential barriers to the development of universities of economics/business in 2026.



Note: the responses do not sum up to 100% because experts were allowed to select up to three basic barriers.

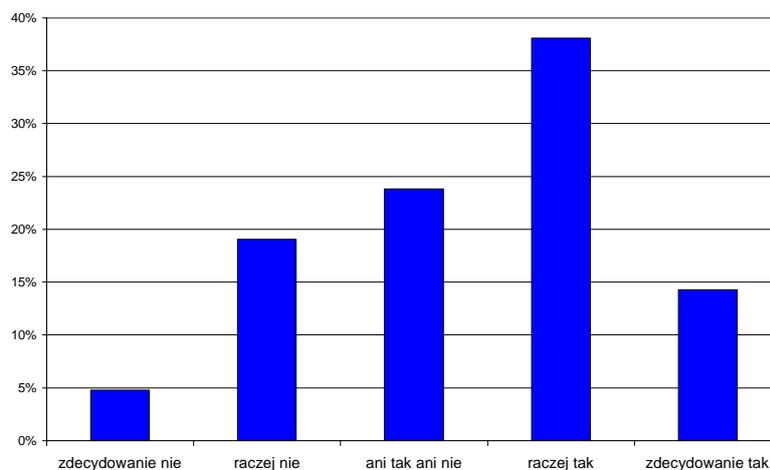
On the other hand, factors that will limit universities' activity the least in the future include: lack of immigrant students' cultural assimilation (selected by one person), staff mobility (also selected by one expert) and society's moral decline (two answers).

### 3.5 Models of universities' activity

Another important issue in predicting the development of universities of economics and business is determining the models and methods of their activity. Will they be organised on the basis of the Anglo-Saxon or the Humboldt model? In the 2026 perspective, will they operate first of all as independent entities or in groups under one brand?

Experts do not agree that in the 2026 perspective a group of elite European universities will be established to compete with the top 20 universities in the Shanghai list (coefficient  $h_r=0.94$ ). One in two experts is of the opinion that it is quite likely that such a group will be created, but one in four thinks the opposite.

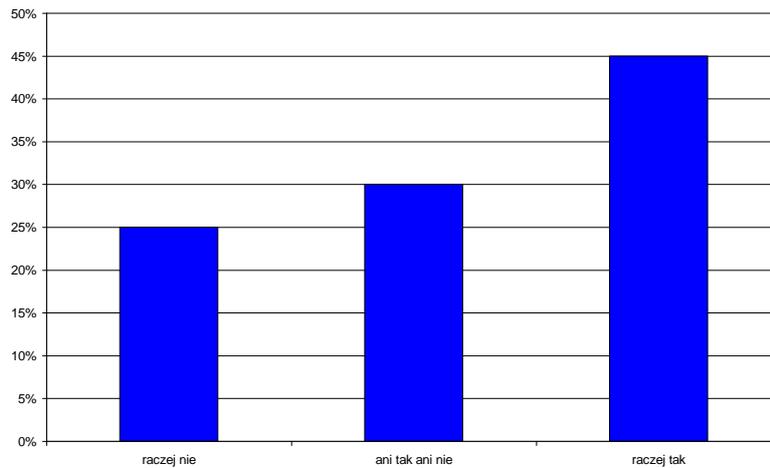
Figure 18. A group of elite European universities will be established – experts' opinions



definitely not    probably not    neither yes nor no    probably yes    definitely yes

Experts agreed a little more (coefficient  $h_r=0.82$ ) that in the 2026 perspective the managerial (Anglo-Saxon) university model will become popular. Forty-five per cent of them believe that this model of a university's activity will probably become popular, although one in four is of the opinion that such a situation should not take place.

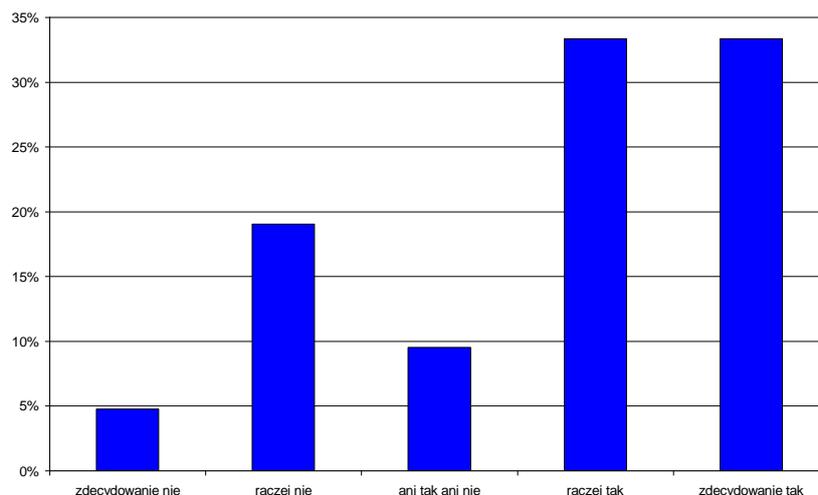
Figure 19. The Anglo-Saxon model of universities' activity will become popular – experts' opinions



probably not      neither yes nor no      probably yes

Experts also expressed very diverse opinions about the statement that in the 2026 perspective universities will work in groups; in other words, there will be networks of interconnected universities working under one brand (coefficient  $h_r=0.92$ ). Two thirds of experts are inclined to accept such a development of higher education, but one in four respondents believes the opposite.

Figure 20. Universities will work in groups/networks – experts' opinions



definitely not      probably not      neither yes nor no      probably yes      definitely yes

#### 4. UNIVERSITY

## **4.1 University autonomy**

The level of a tertiary-level school's autonomy manifests itself as the ability to freely take action and make decisions concerning both teaching and academic research. In the area of teaching, the following measures of university autonomy were used:

- launching new courses/specialisations,
- creating curricula,
- establishing rules for student enrolment (admission limits and procedures),
- setting tuition fees,
- evaluating education quality.

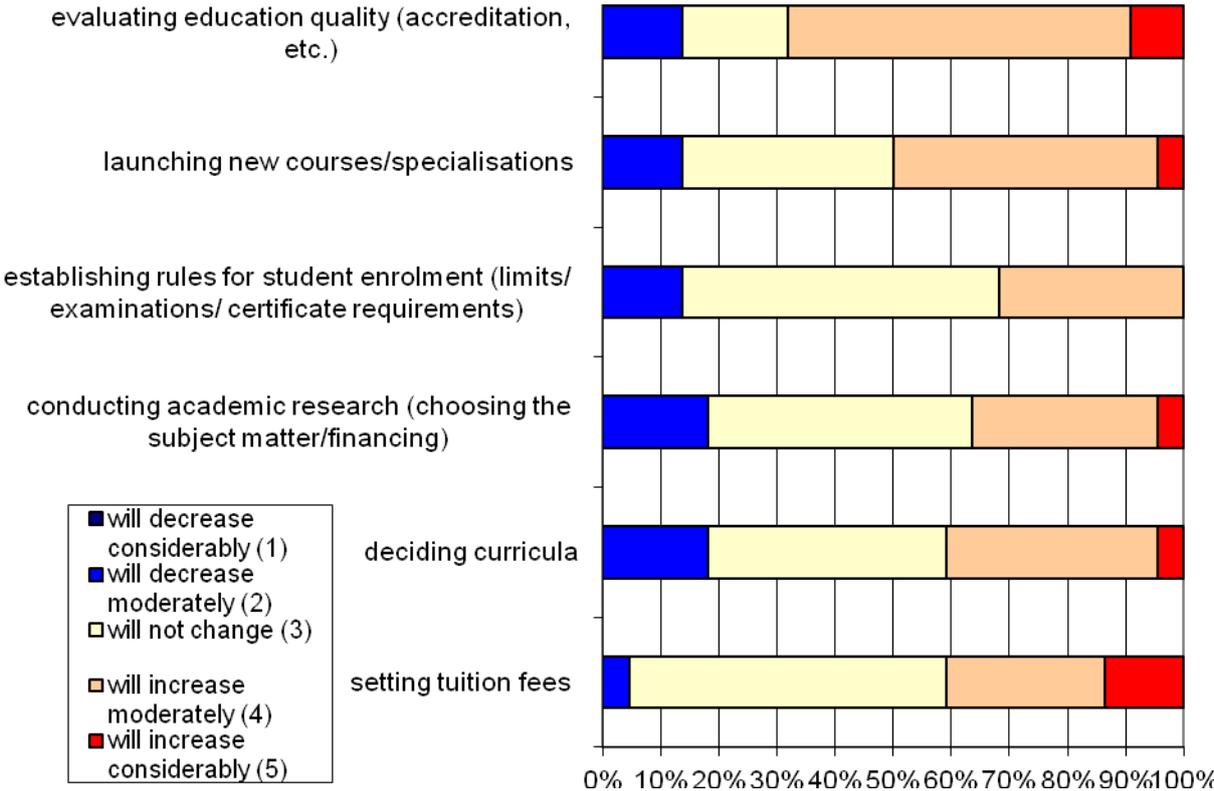
The highest level of agreement was found among responses about establishing procedures for evaluating education quality. Sixty-eight per cent of experts decided that, in the 2026 perspective, their universities' impact on evaluating education quality will increase, with 9% of them stating that the impact will be considerable. As for launching new courses and specialisations, opinions were divided: half of the experts decided that, in the period investigated, their university's level of autonomy will increase, 14% expect their rights to be limited, and 36% anticipate no changes. The respondents were more conservative about deciding the curriculum: 41% of them forecast greater freedom to decide curricula, but the same percentage expect no changes in this respect. Eighteen per cent anticipate that their university's freedom to develop curricula will decrease. The most conservative opinions concerned establishing rules for student enrolment and setting tuition fees. In both cases, nearly 55% of those surveyed stated that the level of their university's autonomy will not change.

In the area of academic research, the measure of an entity's autonomy was its ability to select research areas and decide ways of financing research projects. Nearly half of the experts believe that in the 2026 perspective the level of their

university’s autonomy in conducting academic research will not change. Eighteen per cent anticipate a decline in independence.

To recapitulate, in the 2026 perspective experts’ most sceptical views concerned universities’ freedom to carry out academic research and develop curricula.

Figure 21. Changes in the level of university autonomy in the 2026 perspective



**4.2 Tools to support a university’s activity**

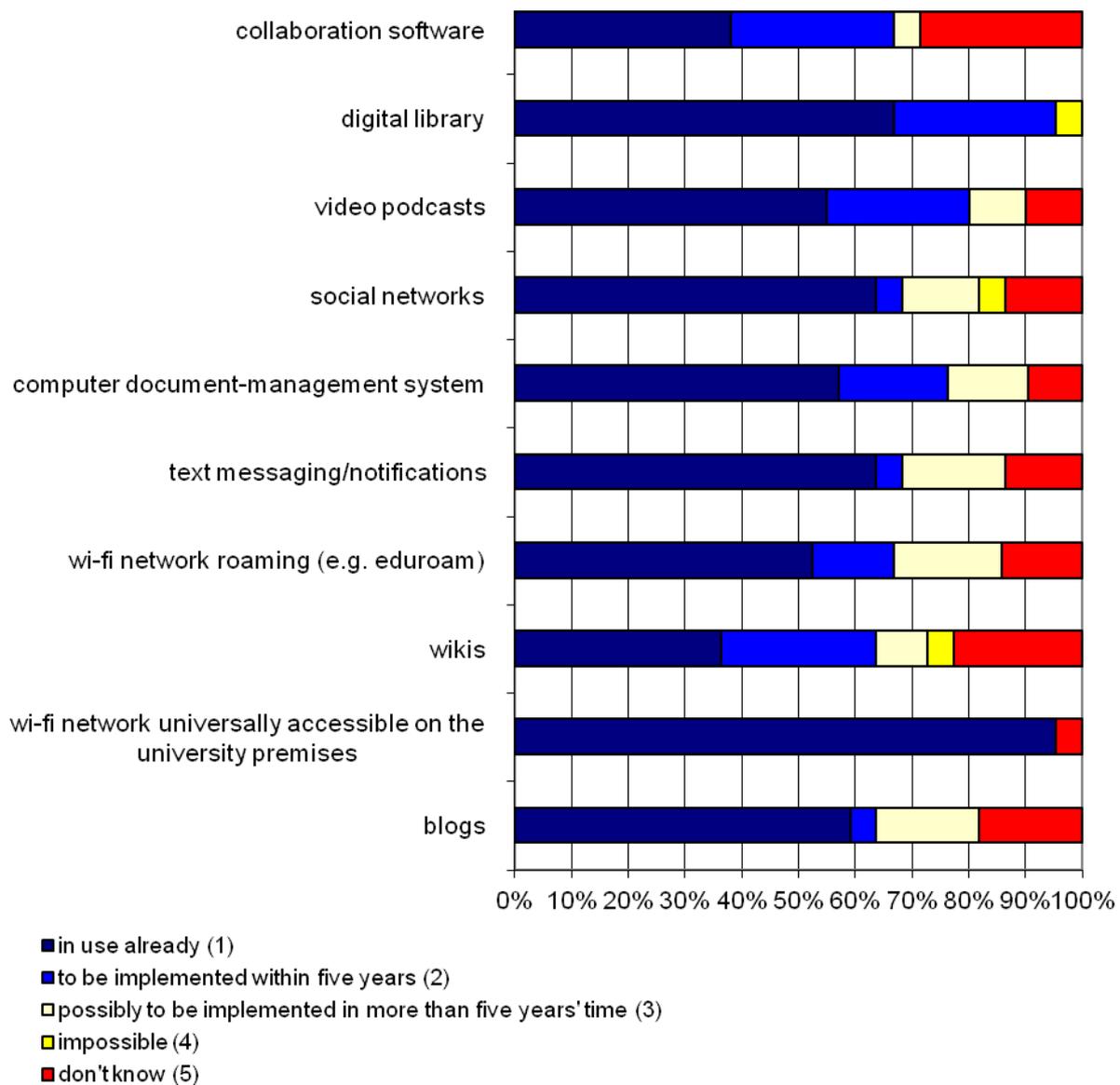
Among the tools supporting a university’s work, a wi-fi network is the most popular. Ninety-five per cent of the universities surveyed have such networks in their buildings already. About 64% of them use text messaging and social networks in every-day communication. The other university representatives declare implementing such tools by 2026, although most of them are inclined to state that this will not happen within the next five years. Two thirds of the universities surveyed have digital libraries, and most of the others intend to

digitalise their library collections within the next five years. However, one university does not anticipate such an option at all.

Fifty-seven per cent of the universities under study use computer document-management systems, and a third of them expect such systems to be implemented by 2026. As with video podcasts, wi-fi network roaming is used by just over a half of the universities surveyed; the other responses suggest that the tools will become popular by 2026. In the case of each of these tools, two or three respondents who could not make binding declarations chose the answer “don’t know”.

As for the other tools such as blogs, wikis or collaboration software, the percentage of “don’t know” answers ranged from 18% to 28%. Indecision might have resulted from scepticism about the effectiveness of specific tools in supporting a university’s activity or simply from unfamiliarity with them. The latter two are the least popular today (just over a third of responses) but, according to respondents, their use will probably increase twofold over the next five years. Blogs are used by 59% of the respondents; another 23% are planning to implement the tool.

Figure 22. Tools to support a university’ activity: current use and expected use in 2026



### 4.3 Fields of economic education

University representatives' responses suggest that the most popular course at universities of economics and business is "finance and accounting" (45% of responses). Those surveyed anticipate that, in the 2026 perspective, the course will continue to be most often selected by future students, though its advantage over the others will decline markedly. Marketing and economics, broadly understood, were indicated by 25% of experts, who forecast, however, a small decline in the popularity of these courses in the 2026 perspective. Future students' interest in "logistics" and "tourism" courses will decrease, too.

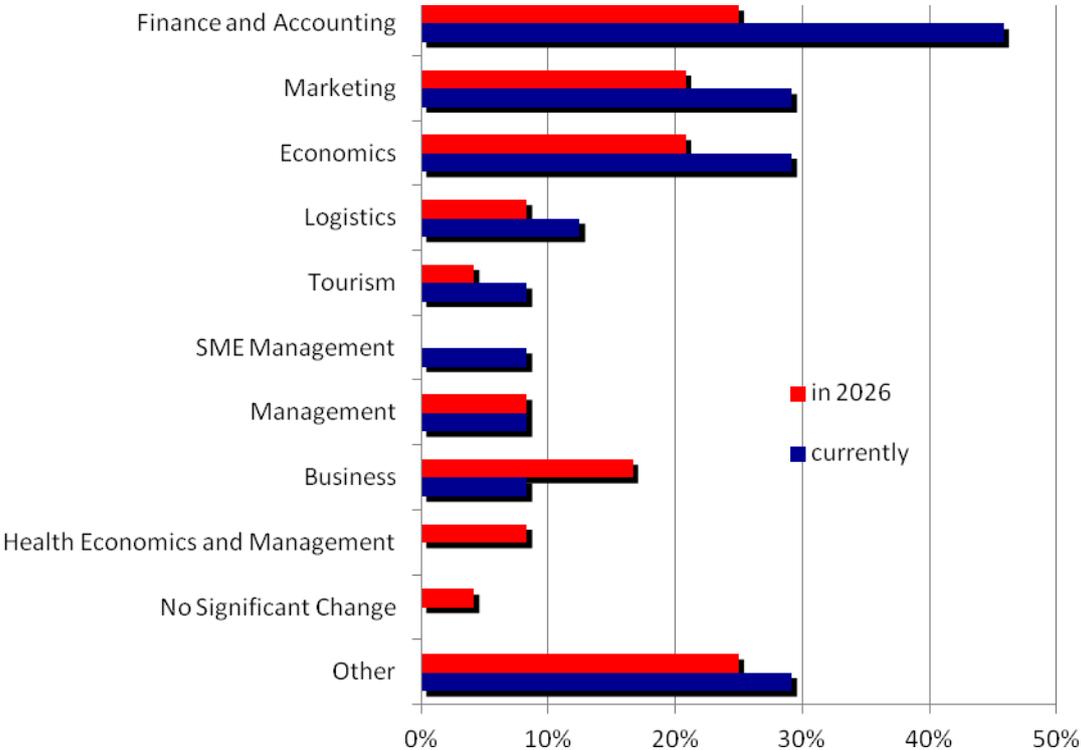
“Business”, which received 9% of responses today among the most popular courses, has a real growth potential.

According to the respondents, we will see a considerably greater interest in “health economics and management”, which corresponds with demographic forecasts about the progressive ageing of society in Europe.

The group of “other” courses, whose popularity, expressed as the total number of students, will slightly fall, includes “small and medium-sized enterprise management”, “international business”, “innovativeness” and “resource management”.

Five per cent of those surveyed do not anticipate any significant changes in the popularity ranking of particular academic courses.

Figure 23. Popular fields of economic education today and in 2026



## 5. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the present report, one can draw an obvious conclusion, namely, that the next few years will be a period of serious challenges for higher education in general and economic education in particular. Their roots can be found in demographic, technological, integration and financial processes. The first three are common to universities of all types. The fourth one is, to some extent, peculiar to universities of economics. This results from the fact that teaching and research in the field of economic sciences are not among the priorities of EU countries' science policy.

Demographic problems include, first of all, population decline, i.e. a decreasing number of young people who complete secondary schools, but also the relatively growing cohorts of older people. Combined with employment instability and impermanence of formal competence acquired in the course of secondary education, this generates pressure to change universities' target client groups. European universities should focus more on specialised and internationalised education, which involves internationalising their staff more.

Taking into account technological progress and the factor mentioned above, it will be necessary to take advantage of the opportunities offered by e-learning. This changes the requirements concerning academic teacher qualifications and methods of economic education programming. An advantage of this may be increasing the geographic range of a university's influence.

Internationalisation is obviously an element of socio-cultural integration in Europe. Integration, however, has a broader significance. Given an expected increase in the level of EU countries' economic, political and even military integration, a future homogeneous socio-economic system will require curricular integration in economic education. This integration will be additionally strengthened by an expected growth in students' and staff's horizontal and vertical mobility.

However, a key factor may be financing economic universities' activity. Research suggests that their employees throughout Europe feel excluded from

scientific research programmes, which clearly favour natural and technical sciences. After all, there is no doubt that every country's economy needs well-qualified economists. If the European Union is to become one of the world's most competitive economic groupings, it needs creative and well-educated economic politicians and managers, who should have degrees from European economic universities.