



Erasmus at BOKU

Evaluation of Incoming student questionnaires, winter semester 2011/2012

This report comments on the results of the survey conducted among the exchange students who spent the 2011/2012 winter semester at BOKU. At the end of their stay the students were given a questionnaire asking them what they liked/disliked about their stay and what could be improved upon. 40 questionnaires were returned.

1. The things most appreciated at BOKU

The most appreciated things about BOKU were university staff (mentioned by 35 students out of the total 40), the wide variety of quality courses (mentioned by 15 students) and events at BOKU (mentioned by 11 students). Students were also very satisfied with the beautiful and interesting city of Vienna, language courses and meeting new people (each mentioned by 6 students). Good equipment (especially laboratories) and the buddy system were very popular. Other appreciated things mentioned by students were the multicultural surroundings, the BOKUonline system, the library, the internet access, eating at BOKU, teamwork and sport opportunities.

Table 1 List of answers about the most appreciated things at BOKU

| | Answers | Mentioned by students |
|----|--|------------------------------|
| 1 | University staff (hospitality, polite behaviour, ZIB staff were particularly helpful) | 35 |
| 2 | Great variety of good courses | 15 |
| 3 | Events at BOKU | 11 |
| 4 | Beautiful and interesting city Vienna | 6 |
| 5 | Language courses | 6 |
| 6 | Meeting new people | 6 |
| 7 | Good equipment | 5 |
| 8 | Buddy | 4 |
| 9 | Multicultural surrounding | 3 |
| 10 | BOKU online system | 3 |

2. Things that BOKU could do better for international students

18 out of 40 students would welcome more and better organised events (meetings, trips outside Vienna...). Dissatisfaction with the bureaucracy was mentioned by 11 students and with university staff by 10 students (poor English knowledge, long wait to get grades). 9 students would appreciate more help with finding accommodation. Some students would welcome more courses (more lectures in English, some interesting courses were full so more spots for incomings would be appreciated as well as an overall larger variety) and 7 students would like BOKUonline to be structured more clearly (too confusing for students, hard to register for courses). Students also suggested improvements in language courses (more courses, more levels – 6 students).

Other suggestions mentioned in the survey were higher scholarships (3), a better Mensa (2), a better selection of buddies (select only people who really have time to help – 1 student) and better university equipment (1). One student also mentioned that the opening hours of the ZIB are inconvenient and should be extended.



Table 2 List of answers about what BOKU could do better

| | Answers | Mentioned by students |
|----|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | More and better organized events | 18 |
| 2 | Bureaucracy | 11 |
| 3 | University staff | 10 |
| 4 | More and better accommodation | 9 |
| 5 | More courses | 8 |
| 6 | BOKU online | 7 |
| 7 | Language courses: greater choice, more places and lower price | 6 |
| 8 | More courses in English | 3 |
| 9 | Higher scholarships | 3 |
| 10 | Prices in general | 2 |
| 11 | Facilities of mensa | 2 |
| 12 | Better selection of buddies | 1 |
| 13 | Better equipment at University | 1 |

3. Motivation and information

3.1 Activities at BOKU

80% of the students who filled out this survey participated in a regular course programme, and 17.5% worked on their thesis/research project. The host institutes for the projects were the Department for Agrobiotechnology IFA-Tulln, the Department of Nanobiotechnology and the Institute of Hydraulics and Rural Water Management. 1 student did an internship at BOKU.

3.2 Factors of motivation

The main reasons for studying at BOKU were to experience a different environment, academic reasons, and to improve their language proficiency. Cultural reasons and career plans were also very much considered. For exact results, see figure 1.

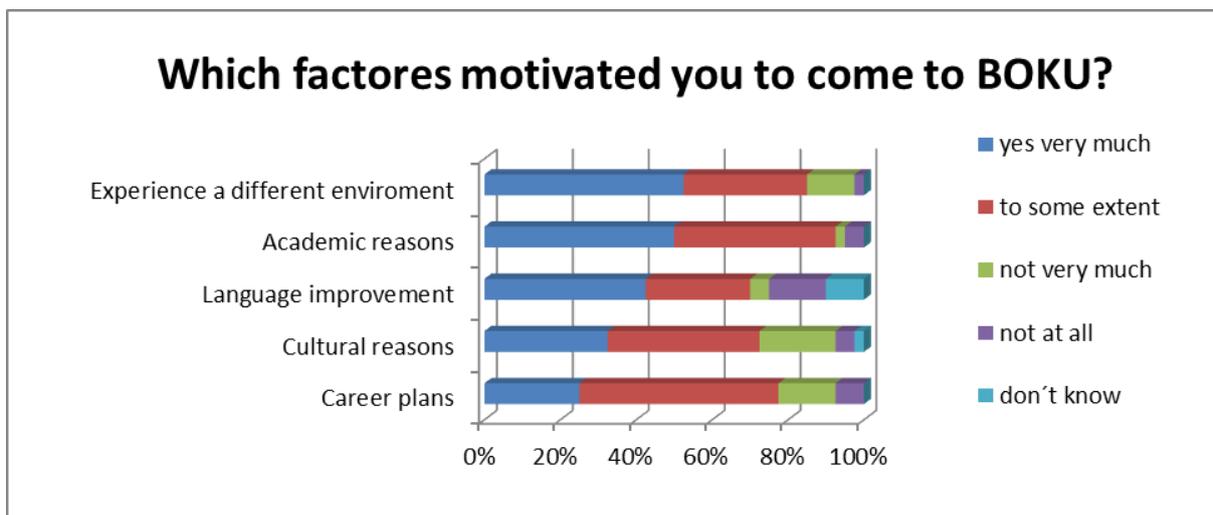


Figure 1 Importance of given factors to come to BOKU



3.3 Information before your stay

All the necessary information about BOKU was mainly obtained from Exchange coordinators at home universities and on the BOKU website. Other sources of information, which were used by the students a lot before their stay, were fellow students, Exchange coordinators at BOKU and the International office at home universities. Students did not obtain much information from Austrian exchange students or Departmental coordinators at BOKU (see figure 2).

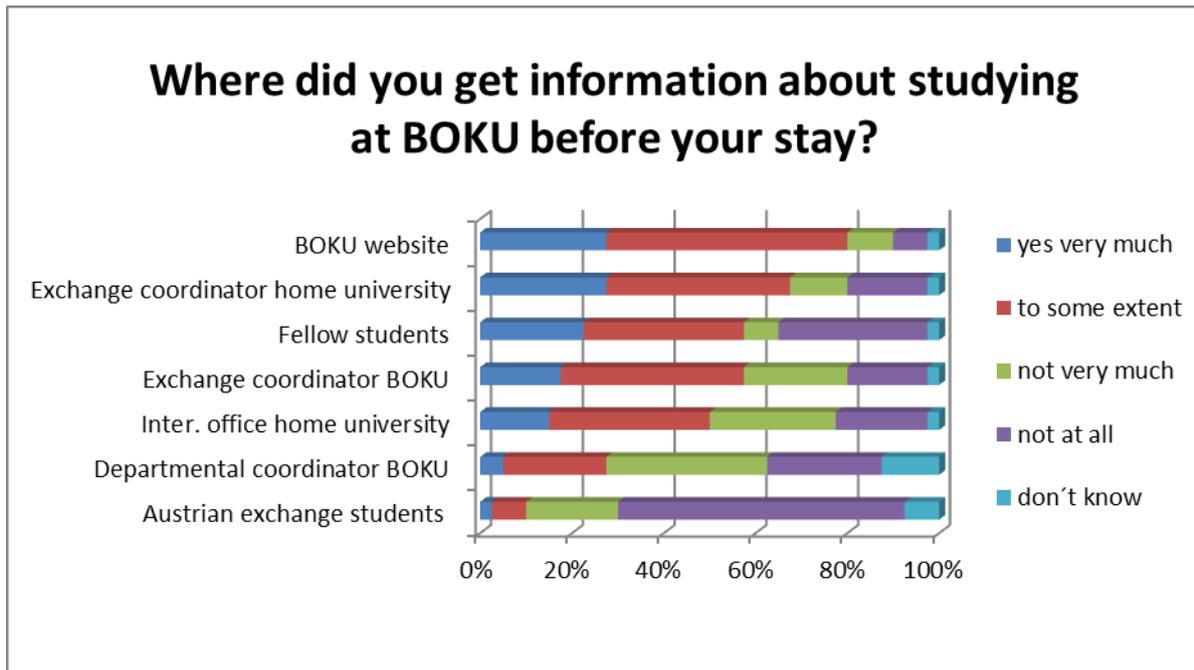


Figure 2 Ways of gaining information used by students

3.4 Information from BOKU

ZIB had provided information before the stay and then during the stay - the majority of the information was very good according to the opinion of the respondents. Departments/institutes and other service departments were helpful too; the majority of information was rated as good (Figure 3).

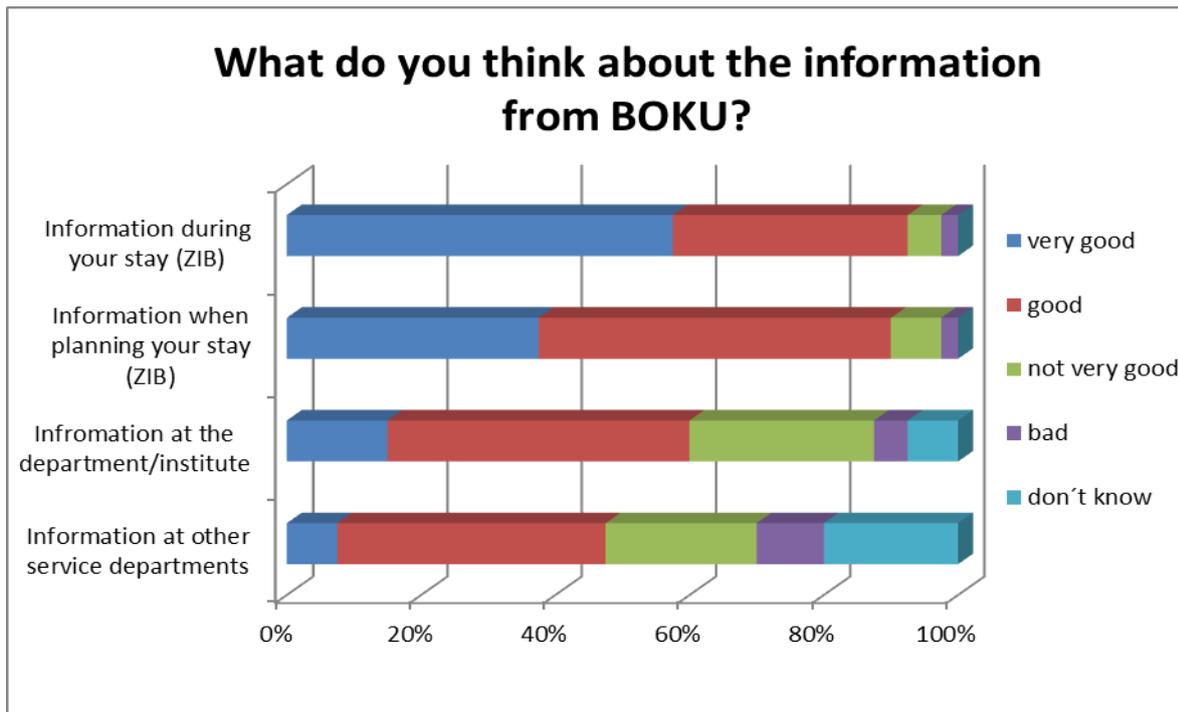


Figure 3 Evaluation of providers of information

3.5 Welcome Days

62.5% of respondents participated in the Welcome Days, 76% of the participants marked the event as very good or good. Students liked the hospitality, meeting new people and getting crucial information for studying and living. Students suggested that it would be better to have the Welcome days in smaller groups (as there was not enough space for example at the Heurigen). Some students would appreciate additional date for Welcome days for those who cannot participate.

3.6 Information session about BOKUonline

30 students (75%) attended the information session about BOKUonline and 83% of them responded that it was very helpful or helpful to some extent.

3.7 Buddy

67.5% of respondents had a buddy and 32.5% did not. The reasons for not having a buddy were: “it was not necessary” or “I did not get in contact with him”.

The buddies were considered as very useful within the first steps after the arrival like getting used to academic life at BOKU.

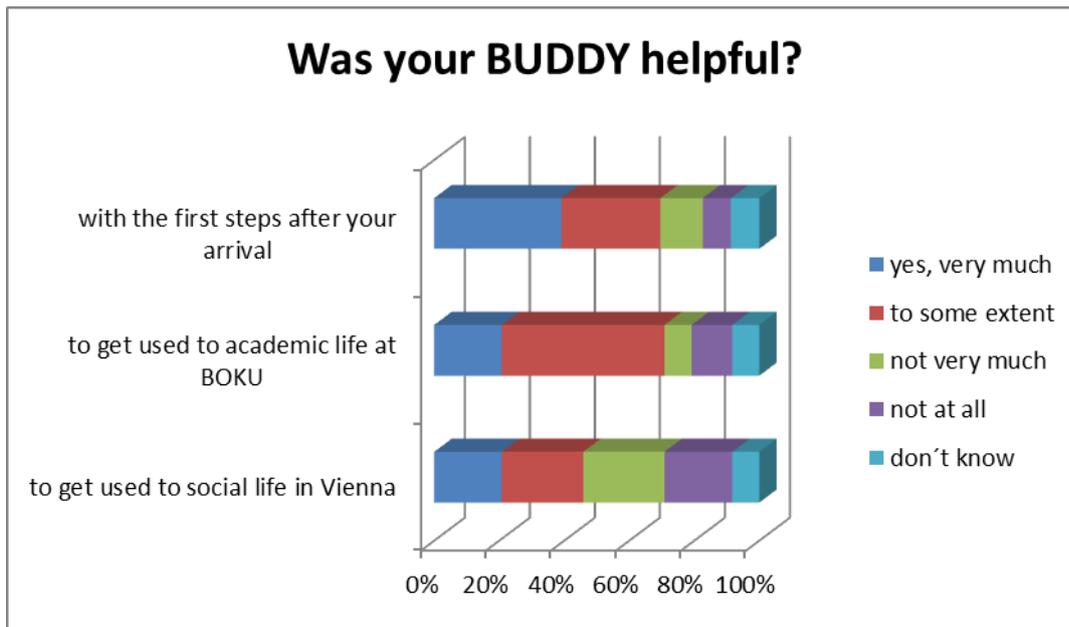


Figure 4 Helpfulness of Buddy

3.8 Newsletter

57.5% of the respondents read the newsletter regularly, 40% read it occasionally and 2.5% never read it. 87% of the respondents thought the information in the newsletter to be the least useful. Some students think there could be more information about Austrian culture.

3.9 “Stammtisch”

The “Stammtisch” was regularly visited only by 7.5% of respondents, 30% attended it once in a while. 62.5% of the students in the survey never visited the “Stammtisch”. Suggestions for improvement were to invite Austrian students too, to change the location to a place where the acoustics is better and to offer a special deal on food and drinks.

3.10 Heuriger and the Advent party

47.5% of the respondents attended the Heuriger party. Most of them enjoyed the event. The Advent party was attended by 37.5% of the students and again, most of the participants liked the event.

3.11 Suggestions for improvements at BOKU

Students were very satisfied with the information provided; they especially appreciated the checklists on what to do after their arrival. Only a few requests were made, such as:

- More information about the BOKU accommodation before the stay,
- Guided tour around the campus: copy machine, mensa, ...,
- To better inform people working in the departments on what to do when a student arrives,
- To improve the buddy network,
- To give priority to incoming students in assigning dormitories/accommodation,
- To find a better way to transmit information than long e-mails,
- Better communication and cooperation between the university services.

4. Infrastructure at BOKU

Students were asked about their satisfaction with the access to libraries, access to computers and media, the facilities (e.g. classrooms) at BOKU in general, the study environment in general (e.g. social events, student clubs, sport facilities) and the food supply at BOKU. The results are shown in figure 5.

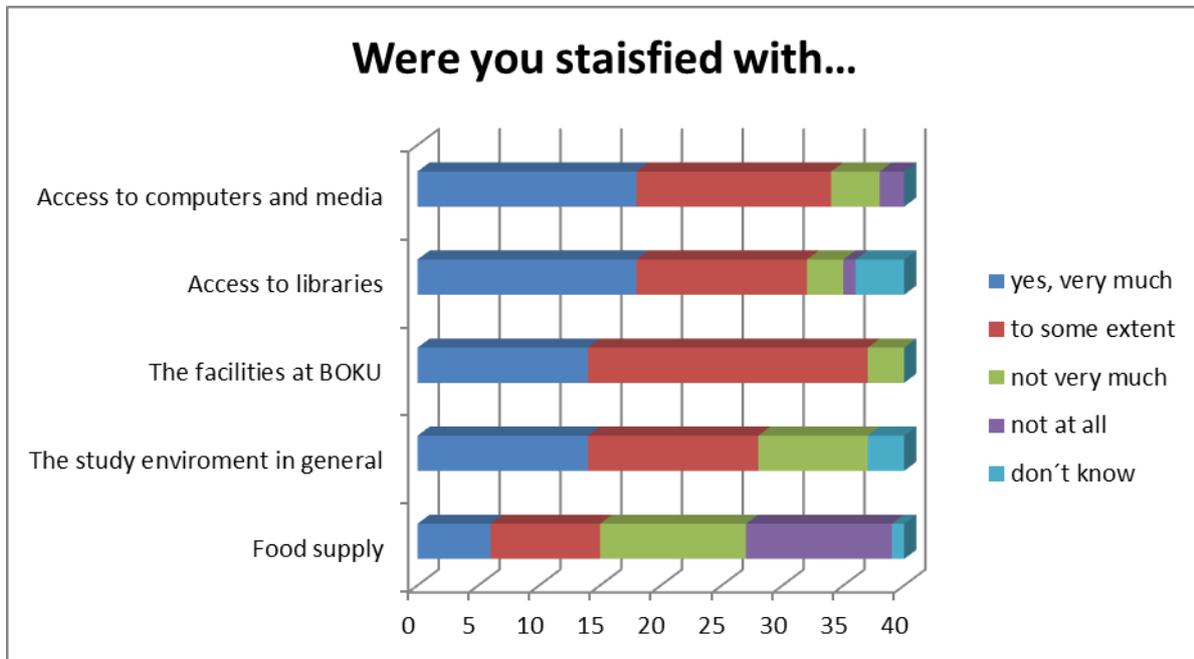


Figure 5 Satisfaction with infrastructure

Students were mostly satisfied or highly satisfied with all the mentioned facilities except for the food supply. In the majority of cases the food supply was ranked as not very good or not good at all.

People would like the information on the sport activities website to be displayed in English too (currently it is only available in German) and have BOKU organise a big sports event in which anyone reported that printing and copying were too complicated. They would have liked to be able to pay in cash (and not only with a quick card). Students also suggested having a bigger cafeteria at BOKU.

5. Language

5.1 Experiences language problems

52.5% of respondents never experienced language problems. Sometimes there were difficulties within the classes. Only some students had minor language problems in their private life.

5.2 German language course

7 out of 40 respondents attended the Intensive German course before the beginning of the semester (57% of them were satisfied with it). 12 of the respondents took part in the German course during the semester and 10 of them found it either very good or good. 9 people participated in the Tandem learning and 5 people attended other German courses.

6. Accommodation

6.1 Kinds of accommodation

40% of the respondents stayed in a student residence managed by the OeAD, and 12.5% of the students lived in a student residence that they planned themselves. 47.5% had a private accommodation (e.g. a shared flat).

The majority of students (72.5%) were very much satisfied or satisfied with their accommodation. 15% were not satisfied at all. They mainly complained about high prices, additional fees and deposits (in regards to accommodation managed by the OeAD). Other complains targeted the equipment which was said to be too small, too old, defective or simply missing in the dormitories (especially in kitchens – fridges). The unfriendliness of the staff and the long distance to BOKU were also mentioned. Students also wanted more opportunities to find a shared flat before their arrival.

6.2 Most important things about accommodation

To the respondents, the most important characteristic of accommodation was its price. Other very important aspects were its proximity to BOKU, to the city centre and its condition. The option to live with Austrian or foreign students was also taken into account but did not play a critical part in the respondents' decision.

7. Academic and personal outcome

7.1 General outcome of the stay at BOKU

The majority of the students (80%) assess the academic outcome of their stay as either very good or good. An even bigger percentage of respondents (90%) see their personal outcome as either very good or good.

7.2 Extension of stay at BOKU

More than half of respondents would like to extend their stay at BOKU (58%), return to BOKU for further study (58%) or return to Austria for work or an internship (63%). On the other hand, a small share of respondents (38%) want to return to other Austrian institutions for further study (figure 6).

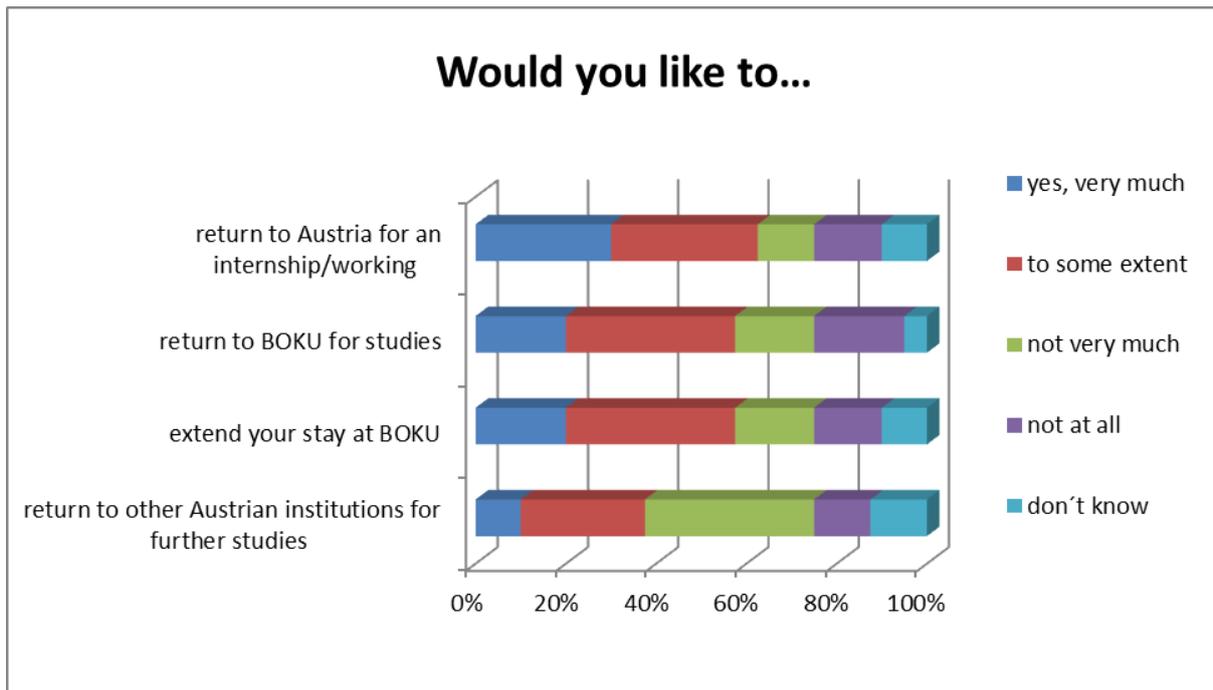


Figure 6 Future Plans

7.3 Situations that needed special attention

Almost no one had any special issues during their stay. One student had a bad experience with his dormitory in the Molkereistrasse which he got through OeAD: he mentioned that it was not situated in a safe area and that he dreaded walking home alone at night from the U-station. He also complained about noise in the dormitory. Consequently, he decided to move out.

7.4 Recommendation for ZIB or BOKU in general to support future exchange students coming to BOKU

A lot of people considered that the ZIB did a good job and that they would not change it in any way. The suggested improvements were to provide students with more information on sports activities, to make a video and send it to partner universities or to introduce possible destinations for academic exchanges (every week a different country would be introduced). One person also mentioned that the communication and arrangements between ZIB and home universities could be better.

One student mentioned his bad experience with the organisation at BOKU: not enough spots in courses (some were already fully booked, some could not be attended by exchange students), not enough spots for the exams, and cancellations of exam sessions.

8. Background information

65% of the respondents were female and 35% were male.

75% of the respondents stayed at BOKU for the winter semester 2011/2012 (from 1st October to 4th February), 12.5% spent the whole academic year at BOKU (from 1st October to 2nd July), 12.5% (5 students) were at BOKU for a different period of time (usually one or two months longer than a semester, e.g. from September to March).

Table 3 Country of origin

| Nationality | Numer of respondents |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Germany | 10 |
| Turky | 5 |
| Frence | 5 |
| Croatia | 4 |
| Czech Republic | 4 |
| Belgium | 3 |
| Italy | 2 |
| The Netherlands | 1 |
| Sweden | 1 |
| Hungaria | 1 |
| Greece | 1 |
| Switzerland | 1 |
| Poland | 1 |
| Lithuania | 1 |