

HOW DO EU MEMBER STATES ATTRACT AND RETAIN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS?

EMN FLASH #7 - 2019

Introduction to the EMN Study on the Attraction and Retention of International Students in the EU

Background

Attracting students from third countries is important for the EU both as an alternative to irregular migration and as a contribution to a more competitive EU economy. Promoting their mobility has been part of the EU's policy as early as 1994. Since then, the need for intensified efforts to provide opportunities for students has been reiterated by the European Commission regularly.

But what concrete policies and practices have Member States put in place to attract international students? Are there any special incentives to retain them following graduation? What are the main

challenges? What bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with third countries have been adopted by Member States covering international students?

By exploring the national policies and practices in Member States to attract and retain international students, this EMN Study provides a concise overview of recent trends, challenges and good practices from 25 Member States. At a glance, the main research findings are introduced below.



Key trends and findings



Almost half of all Member States consider attracting and retaining international students a policy priority, although the degree of priority significantly differ across Member States.



The **main policy drivers** for attracting and retaining international students include the internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and increasing financial revenue for the higher education sector, increasing the national pool of qualified labour as well as addressing specific (skilled) labour shortages plus tackling demographic change.



Retention measures for international graduates were found to be in place in the majority of Member States, seeking to facilitate access to the labour market by eliminating certain restrictions.



Some factors which significantly contribute to student attraction do not necessarily benefit student retention. Programmes taught in English have had positive impacts on attracting international students, but can hamper their long-term integration into the labour market, unless language learning and other integration measures are started during the period of study.



Bilateral and multilateral agreements with third countries have created important frameworks for cooperation, including in relation to student mobility. Most of them aim at exchanging experiences and practices, teachers, students and researchers, as well as the establishment of fellowships.

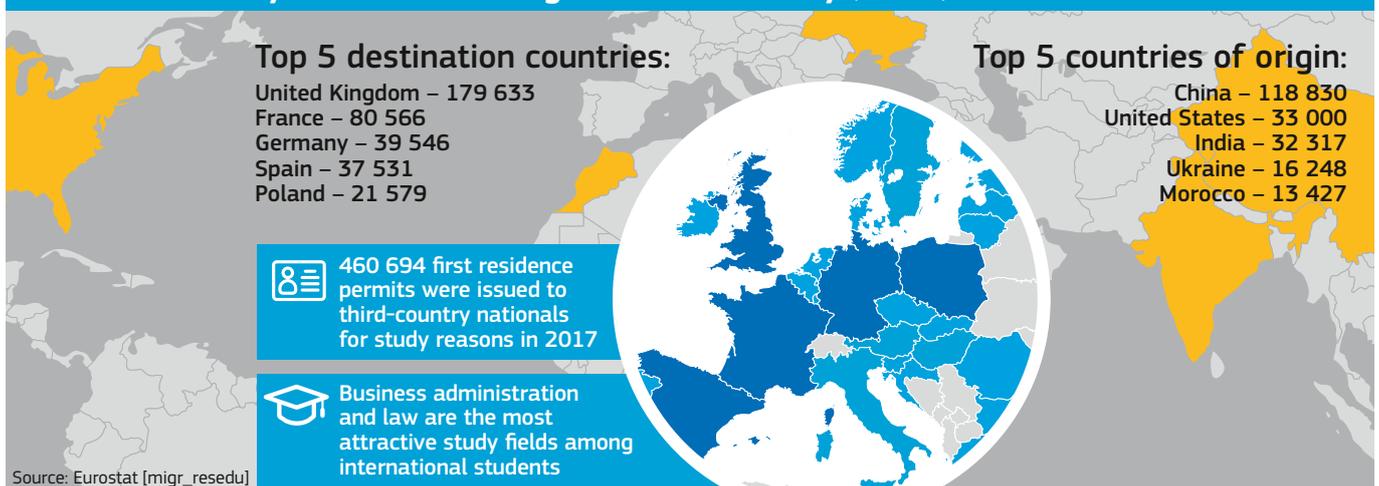


The common challenges identified in attracting international students:

- Limited availability of courses taught in foreign languages
- Lengthy processing times of applications for visas and residence permits
- Insufficient promotional activities and scholarships opportunities
- Shortages in (affordable) housing.



Third-country nationals arriving in the EU to study (2017)



Source: Eurostat [imigr_resedu]

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About the Study: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/content/attracting-and-retaining-international-students-eu_en

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