

# ATTRACTING AND RETAINING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE EU



**SPAIN 2018**



**GOBIERNO  
DE ESPAÑA**

MINISTERIO  
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES, UNIÓN EUROPEA  
Y COOPERACIÓN

MINISTERIO  
DE JUSTICIA

MINISTERIO  
DEL INTERIOR

MINISTERIO  
DE INCLUSIÓN, SEGURIDAD SOCIAL  
Y MIGRACIONES

The European Migration Network (EMN) is an initiative of the European Commission. The EMN has been established via Council Decision 2008/38/EC and is cofinancially supported by the European Union.

Its objective is to meet the information needs of EU institutions and of Member States' authorities and institutions by providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum, with a view to supporting policymaking in the European Union in these areas. The EMN also serves to provide the general public with such information.

To that end, the EMN has a network of National Contact Points (NCPs).

The Spanish NCP is composed by experts from the Ministry of Inclusion, Migration and Social Security, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, and Ministry of Justice and the General Prosecutor's Office, It is coordinated by the Deputy General Directorate for Legal Affairs of the Secretariat of State for Migration.

#### Contact

Deputy General Directorate for Legal Affairs

(Co-ordinator of the National Contact Point for the European Migration Network)

José Abascal, 39. 28071 Madrid

E-mail: [rem@inclusion.gob.es](mailto:rem@inclusion.gob.es)

Internet: <http://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/es/redeuropeamigracion/index.html>

**NIPO: 854-19-086-7**

# Attracting and retaining international students in the EU

## National contribution from Spain

### Top-line factsheet

This Study focuses on the policies adopted in Spain to attract and retain third-country national students.

Section 1 refers to what extent attracting and retaining international students has become a policy priority and a national strategy in Spain.

The attraction and retention of international students (as well as other categories such as researchers or universities professors) is a national priority. In 2015, a national Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities was adopted (2015-2010) with the aim to make Spanish universities more attractive to foreign talent. Besides that, many universities have increased their efforts to attract international students, for example by integrating an international, inter-cultural and/or global dimension into the aims, functions (teaching/learning, research, services) and provision of higher education and by organising international promotion campaigns.

In the area of promotion, the SEPIE plays a key role. This specific public organisation contributes to the international promotion of the Spanish universities system and manages scholarship and mobility programmes through collaboration agreements with foreign governments for the incorporation of students and teaching and non-teaching staff into the Spanish university system.

The mere existence of this national strategy and the key role played by SEPIE already show the attitude of Spanish authorities towards the internationalisation of universities, which is fostered as a mechanism to attract talent and diversity and, with it, to boost the implementation of a socio-economic model for the 21st century based on knowledge and innovation.

In order to make Spanish universities more attractive to foreign talent, the Strategy identifies a set of operational aims and actions, such as: improving the legal framework for internationalisation; providing the training and skills needed to work in an open international environment; promoting the international mobility of university administration and services and teaching and research personnel; increasing employment mobility; and facilitating the arrival of students, teachers and researchers from third countries through the removal of some migration barriers.

As far as facilitating the arrival of international students, collaboration of all public actors involved in the Strategy is one of the main strengths of the system designed and implemented in Spain for the attraction and retention of international students. In November 2015 an important agreement was signed between the main Ministry's involved as well as some institutions such as SEPIE and ICEX (Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade) in order to work together to facilitate the arrival of foreign students. This group meets regularly and was very useful for the transposition and implementation of the Students and Researcher Directive (fully transposed since August 2018).

Section 2 examines the measures and incentives to attract international students. After the transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive, the admission of international students has been simplified. From a migratory point of view, admission requirements have not been changed, while the procedure has been improved to make it easier for students and faster. Besides, the role of higher education institutions has been strengthened (as applicant of the permits for their students and in the intra EU mobility procedure).

Moreover, the promotion and dissemination activities are crucial. Not only regarding the academic offer or specific programs to attract students but also explaining in an easy way the migration requirements to get a student visa or permit.

Section 3 is related to the measures and incentives for the retention of international graduates. In our country the implementation of the Law 14/2013 of 27 September, on support for entrepreneurs and internationalisation, already allow graduated students to easily change their status to a high qualified professional or to an innovative entrepreneur. In addition to this, the new job searching residence permit

created by the transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive also allow students to stay after studies for 12 months to seek employment or to set up a business and is considered an incentive to retain talent.

Finally, section 4 refers to bilateral and multilateral cooperation with countries of origin concerning international students. Spanish priority areas are Latin American, Mediterranean and North African countries.

The Study also include an Annex 1 with national statistics.

## Section 1: National legal and policy framework in Spain

**Q1a.** What is the **transposition status** of Directive (EU) 2016/801 in your national law?

*[Possible visual element: map indicating transposition status in each Member State]*

- transposition completed.
- in process: completion of transposition expected by:
- other, please specify:

**Q1b.** Are **doctoral candidates** (PhD students) treated as students or researchers under national law?

*Please note that if doctoral candidates fall within the category of researchers, these should not be considered in the answers to the subsequent questions.*

- PhD students are treated as students
- PhD students are treated as researchers
- Other

*Please elaborate:*

Depending on the University they are enrolled in, migration authorities have identified that PhD students can either be considered as students or as researchers under national law.

- On the one hand, according to the General Secretariat for Universities (depending on the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities) PhD programmes are post-graduate studies, and thus, doctoral candidates are considered students. From this perspective, PhD students will not be considered as researchers until they pass their PhD programme and once they obtain their PhD certificate.
- On the other hand, though, the Law on Science, Technology and Innovation (2011) provides for the possibility of contracting doctoral candidates as researchers, through the so-called pre-doctoral contract. The purpose of this contract is to carry out research tasks, within the scope of a specific and innovative project, by those who are in possession of the Bachelor/Engineering/Architecture degree or equivalent, and have been admitted to a PhD program. These personnel will be considered pre-doctoral research personnel in training.

So, from a migratory perspective, currently there are two categories under which doctoral candidates could be admitted. Looking forward, this is an issue that might need to be reconsidered, to ensure that the coexistence of these two different possibilities doesn't undermine the attraction of talented students and researchers to Spain.

**Q1c.** What are the **main changes** to: (a) law, (b) policy and (c) practice since 2012 with regard to international students? Please specify whether these changes were made in response to Directive (EU) 2016/081 or other national policy priorities.

*Please describe briefly:*

Any analysis of Spanish regulation of international students has to start from the [Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities](#) (2015-2020), since its mere existence already shows the attitude of Spanish authorities towards the internationalisation of universities, which is fostered as a mechanism to attract talent and diversity and, with it, to generate knowledge and the implementation of a socio-economic model for the 21st century.

The internationalisation of higher education is defined as a process of integrating an international, intercultural and/or global dimension into the aims, functions (teaching/learning, research, services) and provision of higher education, which, as indicated by the aforementioned [Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities](#), is an essential factor in improving the quality and effectiveness of Spanish universities, promotes the pursuit of excellence as an element that should inspire Spanish education and enables progress towards a knowledge society and economy that nurture a more solid and stable model of implementation and growth.

In order to make Spanish universities more attractive to foreign talent, the Strategy identifies a set of operational aims and actions, such as: improving the legal framework for internationalisation; providing the training and skills needed to work in an open international environment; promoting the international

mobility of university administration and services and teaching and research personnel; increasing employment mobility; and facilitating the arrival of students, teachers and researchers from third countries.

As noted in the Annex, Spain has traditionally been a destination for international students. The quality of the academic programmes offered, perceived more intensely in nearby countries such as Morocco and in the European Union, as well as in Latin America, together with the attractiveness of the language, history and cultural heritage of the country and its high quality of life, meant that 114,300 foreign students enrolled for the 2015-2016 academic year (39,175 EU nationals and 75,125 third country nationals) in Spain, which is also the main Erasmus destination in Europe.

Within the framework of this Strategy, a working group has been established. In this working group, the main migration actors as well as the SEPIE are involved.

In November 2015, an agreement was signed between the former Ministry of Employment and Social Security, SEPIE (Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education, depending on the former Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport), Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Finance and Administration and the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) to bring together a set of good practices to facilitate the arrival of foreign students, researchers and teaching staff and seeks to extend them to all Spanish universities.

This agreement, which facilitates greater collaboration between immigration authorities and universities throughout the entire process of applying for and obtaining visas and residence permits for study and their renewals, continues to be implemented successfully, as is borne out by the statistics which show that the international student population in Spain is growing steadily.

Furthermore, the main legal changes were introduced in 2018, with the transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/801) through the Royal Decree-Law 22/2018 of 31 August, which entered into force the 4th of September.

This law has been completed with the adoption of four different documents with legal instructions on how to implement it, aimed at the migratory authorities:

- Instruction DGM 1/2018: on the residence permit to students for job search or for entrepreneurship.
- Instruction DGM 2/2018: on students.
- Instruction DGM 3/2018: on researchers.
- Instruction DGM 4/2018: on internships.

Significant efforts have been also made in the promotion and dissemination of programmes for international students since 2015. These efforts are directed in two directions: (i) towards Spanish universities in order to learn about legislation on foreigners, since Erasmus+ requires them to have a more detailed knowledge, given that the students are from outside the EU, and (ii) towards students to inform them about opportunities offered by Spanish universities.

In this regard, the information brochures produced by the Secretariat General for Immigration and Emigration aimed at international students were very useful. These brochures were distributed in 2016 at numerous international fairs and are available on the website of SEPIE, in the network of offices of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities abroad.

An instrument that continues to be in its process of preparation is the Plan for Communication and Promotion of Educational Action of the Spanish University System Abroad, as part of the Internationalisation Strategy. This Plan continues to be promoted as it is considered to be a key factor for the positioning of Spanish universities in the international educational context.

In addition, Spain continues to attach the utmost importance to international mobility programmes and the management and dissemination of existing programmes has certainly continued. Thus SEPIE continued to manage scholarship and mobility programmes through collaboration agreements with foreign governments for the incorporation of students and teaching and non-teaching staff into the Spanish university system.

The most important mobility programme today is known as Erasmus+ which includes various actions with partner countries with the aim of supporting the international mobility activities of students and staff of educational institutions from countries all over the world to Europe and from Europe to countries around the world.

**Q1d.** Are **any changes planned** to law/ policy/ practice regarding international students in your Member State? Such planned changes could relate both to the transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive or other changes not pertaining to the Directive.

- Yes, changes planned related to the transposition of the Directive.
- Yes, changes planned not pertaining to the Directive.
- No changes planned

*If you have answered yes, please provide details about the changes planned and the approximate timeframe, i.e. are these changes planned for the short- or long-term?:*

It is planned that the work regarding international students follows the current work streams.

**Q1e.** Is attracting and retaining international students a **national policy priority, either within the national migration policies or compared to other national policies?** Please explain why.

- Yes, this is a national policy priority.
- No, this is not a major national policy priority.
- Other, please explain:

*Please elaborate:*

The 2013 Spanish National Reform Programme identified already, among the most important aspects to promote the internationalisation of the Spanish economy, the creation of a new system for visas and residence permits to boost the attraction of talent and investment.

In this sense the internationalisation of universities is fostered as a mechanism to attract talent and diversity and, with it, to generate knowledge and the implementation of a socio-economic model for the 21st century.

Taking this into account, not only attracting but also retaining international talented students has become a national policy priority. Consequently, migration authorities work together with higher education authorities in order to make the internalization of Spanish Universities a reality, as it couldn't be otherwise.

**Q1f.** Does your Member State have a **national strategy**, or a **lower level (e.g. ministerial, regional) strategy**, for attracting and/or retaining international students?

- Yes, national strategy in place.
- Yes, lower level strategy in place.
- No, a national strategy is not in place.

*If you have answered yes, please indicate whether the strategy focuses on attraction, retention or both, and provide details about the main elements of the strategy (e.g. name, policy goals, year of adoption):*

As it has been explained in Q 1.c. in 2015 a national Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities was adopted.

The strategy focuses on both, attraction and retention of international students.

Thus, over the last years, attracting and retaining international students has become a policy priority and a national strategy. As mentioned above, the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Spanish Universities (2015-2020) aims to make Spanish universities more attractive to foreign talent.

Since retaining talent is as important as attracting it, in the last years Spain continued in its efforts to retain international students in order to incorporate them as talents into the Spanish labour market.

In this regard, the implementation of Law 14/2013 of 27 September on support for entrepreneurs and internationalisation, allowed them to easily change their status to that of highly qualified professional or innovative entrepreneur.

Moreover, the transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/80) has created two important new authorisations in our national legislation: a new residence permit for students searching for employment, which allows those students who have completed level 6 of studies to request a residence permit for up to 12 months (the Directive refers to a minimum period of time of nine months) in order to look for a job related to the studies undertaken or to set up a business. A new residence permit for internships has also been created.

On top of that, several amendments have been introduced to the migratory legislation with the aim of attracting talent:

- The intra-mobility scheme within the European Union has been regulated for students who participate in EU programs, or in other programs as well, including those coming under agreements between universities which include mobility options. These students just need to communicate their participation to the competent authorities, not being, therefore, necessary to apply for another permit in Spain. This way, Spain shows its commitment to recognize the EU as a whole by simplifying the migration formalities and to make EU mobility for international students easier.

- Admission formalities for international students have also been eased.

Since last summer 2018, students can fill the immigration forms from abroad (as it has been done up to this moment by applying for a visa at the consulate of their place of residence), with a novelty: the application can be submitted by a representative, eliminating the obligation of going in person twice to the consulate, generating costs for the student, especially when his/her place of residence was far from the consulate. They can also submit the immigration forms here in Spain, provided they are legally in the country (either with a long-term visa or permit, either as a tourist). In these cases, the procedures are carried out at the immigration office, without having to go abroad to obtain the visa.

In addition, permits for study stays in higher education institutions can now be submitted by the higher education institution itself. Therefore, universities are offered the possibility to participate in the process of admission of international students. Moreover, those higher education institutions who sign a Code of Good Practices will be offered the possibility of benefiting from an ultra-fast-track. However, this option, although foreseen in the law, is not yet operational.

- Lastly, a new permit has been created to allow international students who have already completed their studies at a higher institution to remain in Spain and search for a job or set up a business.

**Q1g.** Does your Member State target **specific fields of studies/subject areas** (outside bilateral/multilateral cooperation) as regards the attraction and/or retention of international students? If so, please briefly elaborate on the reasons why these fields of studies/subject areas are targeted. *Please select all boxes that apply.*

- Yes, specific fields of studies are targeted for the attraction of international students.
- Yes, specific fields of studies are targeted for the retention of international students.
- No specific fields of studies are targeted.

However, specific field of study can be targeted at regional and institutional level.

**Q2.** Is there a current or recent **public debate** (i.e. within the past year) with regard to international students in your Member State (e.g. in Parliament, media, etc.)?

- Yes, there is a public debate at national level.
- No, there is no significant public debate at national level.

**Q3.** What is the **structure and governance of the national higher education system** in your Member State? *Please answer by elaborating on the following aspects:*

**Q3a.** Is there a specific **public entity(ies)** at national level which is responsible for international students in regards to their studies and what are they competent for? What is its role in the application process/supervision of these students?

*Please explain:*

The collaboration of all public actors involved is one of the main strengths of the system designed and implemented in Spain for the attraction and retention of international students. Among these actors, the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (SEPIE), depending on the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities, stands out as the body responsible for promoting and enhancing the reach of the Spanish university system, in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities and universities.

Their main functions are:

1. - Guidance in Higher Education university system: SEPIE promotes educational and research programmes abroad that are offered in Spanish universities and research centres. In this regard, it takes part in the "Study in Spain" or "Study in Europe" fairs, organises information sessions on the Spanish University System and promotes the organisation of workshops between higher education institutions, among other activities.

It also disseminates the reasons to study in Spain before foreign authorities and educational institutions in Spain, and strengthens partnerships within the university sphere.

2. - Promotion and Communication: SEPIE promotes educational and research programmes offered in Spain by creating and/or disseminating advertising material. In this regard, it makes available to public multilingual leaflets on the internationalisation of Spanish universities on the procedures to follow to study in Spain.

As part of this communication action, SEPIE also publishes information about the internationalisation of the Spanish university system.

3. - Mobility Programme Management: SEPIE creates actions and procedures that facilitate the arrival of foreign students, researchers and lecturers to Spanish universities. In this sense, it manages mobility programmes with governments and institutions in other countries, thanks to which it improves the reception of students and professionals in the field of higher education.

**Q3b.** Do migration authorities cooperate with HEIs? If yes, in what ways do they cooperate? Is there an institutionalised cooperation mechanism?

Yes, migration authorities cooperate with HEIs.

No, migration authorities do not cooperate with HEIs.

*If you have answered yes, please explain the ways in which they cooperate:*

As mentioned above, in November 2015 an agreement was signed between former Ministry of Employment and Social Security, SEPIE (former Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport), Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Finance and Administration and the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) to bring together a set of good practices to facilitate the arrival of foreign students, researchers and teaching staff and seeks to extend them to all Spanish universities.

This agreement facilitates greater collaboration between immigration authorities and universities throughout the entire process of applying for and obtaining visas and residence permits for study.

The monitoring committee chaired by SEPIE and composed of representatives from the SGIE, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Finance, public authorities and ICEX, continued to meet and the results of their meetings were very useful for the transposition and implementation of the Students and Researchers Directive this year.

Besides, in promotion activities held by SEPIE, specific activities are included to explain the migration framework to universities.

**Q3c.** Is there an approval procedure<sup>1</sup> in place in your Member State for public/private HEIs for the purpose of hosting international students? If so, are international students only allowed to study in those HEIs?

Yes.

No.

*Please explain. If you have answered yes, please indicate whether international students are only allowed to those in those HEIs:*

In Spain, there is no approval procedure for HEIs for the purpose of hosting international students.

However, using the possibility regarded in article 15 of the Students and Researchers Directive, Spain has included, by transposing the Directive, a new paragraph eight in article 39 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April, approving the Regulation of the Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration.

This paragraph states the possibility for those higher education institutions who previously subscribe a Code of Good Practices, to apply for a collective process of applications, although this option has not been put in place yet. In those cases a decision will be adopted and notify in a maximum period of time of 15 days instead of one month.

Finally, permits for study stays in higher education institutions can now be submitted by the higher education institution itself. Therefore, universities are offered the possibility to participate in the process of admission of international students. They are, also, responsible for communicating mobilities. All in all, they play an important role in relation to attracting international students.

**Q3d.** Is higher education for third-country nationals funded by the state (i.e. state-sponsored) in your Member State?

Yes, higher education is state-sponsored for third-country nationals.

No, higher education is not state-sponsored for third-country nationals.

Other (e.g. state support depends on the student's country of origin):

*Please elaborate:*

In general terms Spain does not sponsor higher education only addressed for third-country nationals. For foreign non EU-citizens, the provisions of Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, as well as the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April approving its Regulation, shall be applied.

Anyway, the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (SEPIE) and other agencies can have some agreements with third countries that can include the sponsoring of a number of students from that country to study in a Spanish university.

---

<sup>1</sup> Article 15 of the Students and Researchers Directive

## Section 2: Measures and incentives to **attract** international students

*This section examines the measures and incentives to attract international students in place in the Member States in terms of admission conditions; hosting and welcoming international students; special incentives and measures; external factors; challenges and good practices in attracting international students.*

### 2.1 Admission conditions for international students

**Q4a.** Which are the common immigration **admission conditions** applicable for all international students determined by the immigration authorities for the purpose of residence in the territory of your Member State?

*Please elaborate:*

The common admission conditions applicable for all international students in Spain are established in article 38 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April, approving the Regulation of the Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, after the amendments made by the Royal Decree-Law 22/2018 of 31 August which transposed the Students and Researchers Directive. Some conditions are further explained in the [Instruction DGM 2/2018, on students](#).

In particular, regarding the admission of an international student, the applicant shall provide evidence of the following requirements:

1. - if the third-country national is a minor, present a parental authorisation or an equivalent document for the planned stay
2. - provide evidence that during the planned stay the third-country national will have sufficient resources to cover subsistence costs and return travel costs.
3. - provide evidence that the fee for handling the application has been paid.
4. - present evidence that the third-country national has applied for sickness insurance with an authorized insurance company in our country.
5. - if the length of stay exceeds six months, it will also be required not to suffer from any illnesses that may have serious public health consequences and to provide evidence of the lack of criminal records in their former countries of residence during the last five years, for offences under Spanish law.
6. - present evidence that the third-country national has been accepted by a higher education institution to follow a course of study.

Are the following **admission conditions** listed under Q4b-Q4i required in your Member State? *Please answer with Yes/No and shortly describe the admission condition.*

**Q4b.** Is a proof of **acceptance** by HEI required in your Member State in order to obtain the visa/residence permit?<sup>2</sup>

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate:*

Article 38 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April, approving the Regulation of the Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, states in paragraph 2 a), as a particular requirement for students, to provide evidence of having been admitted in an authorized education centre for a full time program in order to obtain a diploma or certificate of studies.

**Q4c.** How is the **academic recognition** of foreign academic degrees regulated in your Member State? Is this done in a centralised manner (e.g. by a specific organisation) or by each HEI?

---

<sup>2</sup> Article 11 (1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

- Recognition of degrees carried out centrally.
- Recognition of degrees carried out by each HEI.
- Other.

*Please explain:*

Deputy Directorate General of Degrees. General Secretariat of Universities. Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities.

**Q4d.** What are the **level of tuition fees for third-country nationals** in your Member State? <sup>3</sup> *If applicable, please distinguish between the different qualifications levels (ISCED levels 5-8).*

- If possible, please provide here a range of the level of tuition fees per academic year in euro/national currency:
  - (a) At Bachelor (Grado) level ISCED 6 the average tuition fee for Spanish and EU nationals is of 18,02 € per credit (1.081,2 €/academic year). For third-country nationals universities are allowed to charge up to 100% of the total costs and the tuition fees can be higher.
  - (b) At Master level ISCED 7 the average tuition fees for Spanish and EU nationals is of 25,45 €/credit (1.527 €/academic year). For third-country nationals universities are allowed to charge up to 100% of the total costs and the tuition fees can be higher
  - (c) At Doctoral level ISCED 8 there is not price per credit as Doctorate in Spain is not measured in credits.
- Is the level of fees for third-country nationals determined centrally (e.g. by the state) or by each HEI?

The Ministry of Education fixes every year an average amount per credit at Grado and Master level and each region is allowed to increase/decrease this amount plus minus 3%. It has been recently announced that this system is going to change.

*Please explain:*

- Is evidence of payment an admission condition?

Yes.

No.

Migratory authorities do not check the payment of tuition fees as an admission condition.

- Are the fees capped in your Member State (i.e. is there a higher/lower threshold limit imposed)?

Yes. *As explained above.*

No.

- Are the fees for international students the same as those for domestic students? If no, what is the difference (i.e. are they higher or lower)?

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered no, please elaborate:*

---

<sup>3</sup> See Article 11(1)(b) of the Students and Researchers Directive

The difference is that fees for domestic students are subsidized and it is estimated that domestic students only pay around 20% of the total costs while for international students universities are allowed to charge up to 100% of the total costs.

– Are specific groups of international students exempt from fees? Which ones and why?

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on which groups are exempted and why:*

Those coming from countries/institutions with bilateral agreements considering exemption of fees or those who are eligible to apply to Spanish grants.

**Q4e.** What is the level of **administrative fees** for third-country nationals in your Member State? Please elaborate also on other types of fees (e.g. administrative fees at universities)

*Please elaborate:*

When international students apply for a student visa in their country of origin, there is no fee for the initial residence permit itself but for the visa (60 euros).

In the next few weeks there will be a new fee for those students who apply for a student permit and are already in Spain, but the exact amount is still under discussion. This possibility was included by the Royal Decree-Law 22/2018 of 31 August, which transposed the Students and Researchers Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/801), and requires the applicant to be in a regular situation in Spain and to apply personally one month before the expiration of this regular situation.

This new provision is considered as a positive measure to attract international students because it makes it easier and faster to apply for a residence permit if they are already in our country, since they are not required to go back to their countries of origin for the application.

**Q4f.** Are international students required to provide a proof of sufficient **knowledge of the language** of the course?<sup>4</sup> If so, what is the required level? Does the student have to provide an attestation (e.g. TOEFL test)?

Yes, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is required in general.

A proof is required for specific courses.

No, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is not required.

Not as a migratory requirement.

*If proof is required (either in general or for specific courses), please elaborate and specify the required level, using the levels defined by the CEFR:<sup>5</sup>*

*Please elaborate:*

Notwithstanding the fact that a proof of sufficient knowledge of the language is not a migratory requirement, it can be so for studying purposes, so each university is free to specify a minimum level. In general B1 is required, while B2 is requested by some universities.

– The student has to provide an attestation.

Yes, an attestation is required for all courses.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Article 11(1)(c) of the Students and Researchers Directive

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

An attestation is required for specific courses.

No.

The attestation is part of the Universities admission formalities. For migratory purposes only proof of admission at a University is requested.

**Q4g.** Are international students automatically qualified for **health insurance**?<sup>6</sup>

Yes, students automatically qualify for health insurance.

No, students need to submit proof of health insurance.

*Please elaborate:*

Article 38 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April, approving the Regulation of the Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, states in paragraph 1 point 4 the requirement to provide evidence of having a public or private health insurance with an insurance company authorized to operate in Spain.

The insurance must offer the same coverage as Spanish citizens have (namely, the catalogue of benefits of the National Health System) and must be maintained during the entire stay. Even so, in those cases in which the student is enrolled in a program in which the institution subscribes a health insurance for all the participants, this insurance will suffice, as long as it matches the coverage of the National Health System.

**Q4h.** Is there a pre-determined level of **sufficient resources** for international students at national level?<sup>7</sup> If so, what is the level of sufficient resources and what type of resources are accepted?

Yes.

No.

– What is the level of sufficient resources and what documents are accepted as proof?

*Please explain:*

Article 38 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April, approving the Regulation of the Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, states in paragraph 1 point 2 the requirement to provide evidence that during the planned stay, the third-country national will have sufficient resources to cover their subsistence costs and, where appropriate, those of their relatives and return travel costs.

The necessary economic means are calculated in accordance with the following amounts: for their support, an amount that represents 100% of the minimum wage index, or 50 % of the index if evidence is provided that accommodation has been already paid for the entire period of stay.

If the student takes part in a program of mobility, the program should contain provisions in order to make sure that the support of the student is guaranteed.

For the support of the family members in charge during their stay in Spain: an amount representing 75% of the minimum wage index, for the first familiar, and 50% of the minimum wage index for the rest, unless it is duly accredited that accommodation has been already paid for the entire period of stay.

To calculate this amount, the quantity used to pay the costs of studies or the program of mobility will not be taken under consideration.

Beyond that, the international student is free to present any means of evidence he/she considers fit, e.g, own resources, family resources, grants, or scholarships, among others. Also an employment contract or a binding job offer will be considered an evidence, in those cases where the student is allowed to work (higher education).

– *What type of resource(s) are accepted by your Member State? Please check all applicable boxes.*

Bank statement.

Guarantee by a third person.

---

<sup>6</sup> See Articles 7(1)(c) and 11(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

<sup>7</sup> See Articles 7(1)(e), 7(3) and 11(1)(d) of the Students and Researchers Directive

Other, please specify:

As mentioned above, the evidence of the payment of the accommodation in advance for the whole stay period will be also taken into account, as will be own resources, family resources, grants, scholarships, employment contracts or binding job offers.

#### **Q4i. Other admission conditions**

If applicable, please describe any other admission conditions for the purpose of residence on the territory of your Member State:

*Please elaborate:*

As mentioned in Q4a, according to article 38 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 there are other admission requirements such as the following:

1. - if the third-country national is a minor, it is required to present a parental authorisation or an equivalent document for the planned stay
2. - if the length of stay exceeds six months, it will also be required not to suffer from any illnesses that may have serious public health consequences and to provide evidence of the lack of criminal records in their former countries of residence during the last five years, for offences under Spanish law.

### **2.2 Special incentives for attracting international students**

**Q5.** Please indicate which of the incentives listed below (Q5a-Q5i) are in place in your Member State *and please provide a brief description*. What are the incentives/measures carried out 'centrally' or by individual HEIs. *If measures are carried out by the state/regional authorities, individual HEIs and/or private entities (e.g. companies, research organisations, etc.), please provide examples.*

**Q5a.** Does your Member State carry out **promotional activities and dissemination of information in the countries of origin?** *Please select all boxes that apply and elaborate.*

- Yes, carried out centrally.
- Yes, carried out by HEIs.
- Yes, carried out by other (educational) organisations.
- No.

*If you have answered yes, please explain/elaborate by giving 1-2 examples.*

Significant efforts have been made in the promotion and dissemination of programmes for international students in the last three years.

In this regard, the information brochures produced by the Secretariat General for Immigration and Emigration aimed at international students were very useful. These brochures were distributed at numerous international fairs and are available on the website of SEPIE, in the network of offices of the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities abroad.

An instrument that continues to be in its process of preparation is the Plan for Communication and Promotion of Educational Action of the Spanish University System Abroad, as part of the Internationalisation Strategy. This Plan continues to be promoted as it is considered to be a key factor for the positioning of Spanish universities in the international educational context.

In addition to this, and as mentioned in Q3a), the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (SEPIE) promotes educational and research programmes offered in Spain by creating and/or disseminating advertising material.

**Q5b. Are scholarships and bursaries available?** *Please select all boxes that apply and elaborate by giving 1-2 examples (incl. the amount, type and length of the scholarship/bursary).*

- Yes, provided by the state/regional authorities. *Please elaborate by providing 1-2 examples:*
- Yes, provided by HEIs. *Please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:*
- Yes, provided by private entities. *Please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:*

No.

**Q5c. Are there any other financial incentives or financial support** (e.g. loans, tax benefits, etc.) in place?

Yes, provided by the state.

Yes, provided by HEIs.

Yes, provided by private entities.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:*

No public loans provided by the state or HEIs are available. Private entities offer private loans especially for Master studies.

**Q5d. Are any incentives with regard to family reunification in place?**

- Do family members of international students have access to family reunification in your Member State?

Yes.

No.

Spouse and children, but not ascendants.

- If yes, do family members have the right to work in your Member State?

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please explain:*

**Q5e.** Is any support targeted at **spouses and other family members of international students** offered in your Member State (e.g. counselling spouses to find employment, continue their education or engage in voluntary work, social and networking activities for spouses, help with enrolling children in kindergartens/schools)? *Please select all boxes that apply.*

Yes, support for spouses available.

Yes, support for children available.

Yes, support for other family members available (please specify which family members this includes when elaborating below).

No.

In cases where support for third-country nationals is available, support for family members can also be available.

**Q5f. Are courses offered in English/other languages than the national language(s)?**

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate:*

Every year the number of course taught in English or bilingual (50% Spanish, 50% English) increases. There is public information of the English taught courses.

**Q5g.** Are there any incentives from the state for HEIs providing **courses in other languages**?

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate:*

It is a measure of the Internationalization Strategy for Universities.

**Q5h. Is there a possibility for a fast-track application for visa/residence permits?**

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate:*

As mentioned in question Q3c, using the possibility regarded in article 15 of the Students and Researchers Directive, Spain has included, by transposing the Directive, a new paragraph eight in article 39 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April that states the possibility, for those higher education institutions who previously subscribe a Code of Good Practices, to apply for a collective process of the applications. In those cases a fast-track process is provided since the decision will be adopted and notify in a maximum period of time of 15 days instead of one month.

**Q5i. Are any other incentives not listed above in place?**

If applicable, please describe any other incentives in place not mentioned above.

*Answer:*

- Firstly, there is the possibility of submitting the immigration forms also from Spain, for those applicants who are already here.
- Secondly, visa applications only demands to go to the consulate in person once, where it used to be necessary to go twice. And the application can also be submitted by a representative.
- There is also the option of applying electronically (not for visas but for student's permits).

### **2.3 Hosting international students: preparation, arrival and housing**

**Q6a.** What is the nature of the document issued (long-stay visa or residence permit)? *Please indicate the type and length of the residence permit. Please select all relevant boxes.*

Long-stay visa issued in the third country:

Residence permit issued (please specify the type and length of the permit):

According to article 37 of the Royal Decree 557/2011, a permit for a study stay will be issued for those students that are going to stay in our country for a period longer than 90 days. Paragraph three states that the length of the residence permit will be in accordance with the period of studies with a maximum time limit of two years when the studies are going to take place in an authorized higher education institution to pursue a course of study leading to a higher education recognised qualification, which may cover a preparatory course prior to such education or compulsory training.

For shorter periods (less than 90 days) a visa will be required (if nationals from that country of origin need it to enter in Schengen area).

Other (please specify):

- If your Member State issues a residence permit, is this issued in the territory of your Member State or in the third country?

Residence permit issued in the third country:

Residence permit issued in the territory of the Member State. *If so, do you issue a long-stay visa in the third country first (yes/no)?:*

The residence permit can be issued not only in the third country but also in our territory if the person is in a regular situation in our country (option included through the Royal Decree-Law 22/2018 of 31 August transposing the Students and Researchers Directive), as a novelty.

If the residence permit is issued in our country, no visa is needed in those cases.

**Q6b.** What are **processing times for visa/residence permit applications** for third-country nationals in your Member State (minimum, maximum and average)?

*Please elaborate:*

For visa applications there is an average time of 15 days.

For permits for study stays the maximum time is one month. For renewals, the average is 81 days.

**Q6c.** What are the main requirements for the **renewal of a residence permit** for international students (e.g. does the student need to prove his/her attendance in HEI courses or is the study progress measured)?

*Please explain:*

Article 40 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 of 20 April, approving the Regulation of the Organic Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration, states that the residence permit can be renewed annually when the person concerned shows that it continues to meet the requirements laid down in article 38, both general and specific.

Regarding students, in order to renew their residence permit, they must provide evidence that they have passed the exams or that they have complied with the conditions required to continue their studies.

**Q7.** Please indicate if the **hosting initiatives and measures** listed below (Q7a-Q7e) are in place in your Member State. Please state which institution is responsible for these measures.

**Q7a. Is induction and orientation support provided in your Member State** (incl. opening a bank account, registering in the healthcare system, etc.)? *Please select all relevant boxes.*

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place.

Yes, support provided by HEIs.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the support measures provided:*

Induction and orientation support is normally provided at HEIs level. This type of support is one of the specific measures of the Spanish Internationalization Strategy for Universities, encouraging HEIs to organize this type of support.

**Q7b. Is support with finding housing and accommodation** provided in your Member State? Please select all boxes that apply.

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place.

Yes, support provided by HEIs.

Yes, support provided by other organisations.

No, support not available.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the type of support provided:*

For national and international students there are grants for housing and accommodation for families with incomes below a threshold. HEIs offer residences and dormitories.

**Q7c.** Are **preparatory courses (incl. language courses, orientation courses, multicultural sessions, intercultural awareness/diversity courses)** offered in your Member State?

Yes, state-organised measures for courses in place.

Yes, courses provided by HEIs.

Yes, support provided by other organisations.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the courses provided:*

Most universities have “zero courses” offering orientation on the specific subject. Welcome sessions are offered at the beginning of the course. During the course multicultural activities are organized.

**Q7d.** If applicable, please describe **any other hosting initiatives and measures not mentioned above.**

*Please elaborate:*

## 2.4 Rights of international students

### **Q8. Right to work**

**Q8a.** How many hours are international students allowed to work per week or months per year?<sup>8</sup>

*[Possible visual element to be included in Synthesis report: map indicating the number of hours in each Member State.]*

*Please elaborate:*

Our legislation does not regulate the number of hours that an international student is allowed to work but only establishes some duration limits in case of full-time work contracts or full-time self-activities, in which their duration cannot exceed three months or must coincide with the study periods. But in general, work contracts will be part-time.

**Q8b.** Are any restrictions in place in your Member State in terms of the **type/field of work international students** are allowed to work in?

Yes, restrictions in place.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the type of restrictions in place:*

**Q8c.** Do students need to obtain **prior authorisation** for the right to work in accordance with national law?

Yes, prior authorisation required.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the purpose of this prior authorisation and the entity responsible for granting it:*

Students need to be authorised to carry out work activities in public institutions or private entities. In this case the employer is the one entitled to submit the application to obtain the work permit.

Students may also be authorised to perform self-employed economic activities.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Article 24 of the Students and Researchers Directive.

Such activities must be compatible with the realization of the studies and the income received cannot be considered as a necessary resource for their stay and therefore it will not be considered in the renewal procedure.

**Q8d.** Are international students entitled to exercise **self-employed economic activity**?

Yes, self-employment possible.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the regulations in place:*

As mentioned above, article 42 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 provides that students may also be authorised to perform self-employed economic activities.

**Q9.** Do students have the right to **carry out in parallel to their studies or defer their studies for a training or a job** in the Member State?

Yes, deferral of studies possible.

Yes, carrying out a training/job in parallel to studies possible.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the regulations in place:*

As mentioned before, students can be authorised to carry out work activities or self-employed activities, but with some limits since it is required that those activities are compatible with their studies. Even so, for curricular internships (those included in the syllabus) there is no need for an extra permit, as the permit for a study stay is admitted as valid.

For non-curricular internships:

- not only a permit for a study stay, but also a residence permit for internships (both) is required when the internship becomes the main activity for the student.

- if the internship has an ancillary character, remaining the studies as the main activity, there will be no need of an extra permit.

**Q10a.** Do students have to **complete their studies within a maximum period of time**?

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please indicate the period:*

A maximum period of time to complete the studies is not regulated expressly, but according to article 37.3 of the Royal Decree 557/2011, the length of the residence permit will be in accordance with the period of studies with a maximum time limit of one year (or two years when the studies are going to take place in an authorized higher education institution to pursue a course of study leading to a higher education recognised qualification), and according to article 40 of the Royal Decree 557/2011, in order to renew the residence permit, the student must provide evidence that they have passed the exams or that they have complied with the conditions required to continue their studies, so that there is a limit to obtain and renew its student residence permit.

**Q10b.** In accordance with Directive 2016/801 Article 21(3),<sup>9</sup> Member states may withdraw a visa/residence permit in case of a lack of progress in the relevant studies. Has your Member State transposed this provision?

Yes.

No.

---

<sup>9</sup> See Article 21(2)(f) of the Students and Researchers Directive

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on how the lack of progress is assessed by your Member State:*

Instead of establishing the possibility of withdrawing the residence permit, our legislation refers to it as a requirement for its renewal. In particular article 40 of the Royal Decree 557/2011 states that in order to renew the residence permit, the student must provide evidence that they have passed the exams or that they have complied with the conditions required to continue their studies.

**Q11.** Do the **number of years** an international student possesses a residence permit for the purpose of studying count towards being granted access to long-term residence or citizenship?

Yes.

No

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the regulations in place:*

According to article 148 of the Royal Decree 557/2011, foreigners have the right to obtain a long-term residence permission if they have lived legally and continuously in Spain for five years.

In addition to this article 152, referred to EU long-term residence permit, provides that in case of students residence permits only 50% of their total duration will be taken into account to calculate that period of five years, provided that at the time of the application the applicant has a legal residence in Spain.

Regarding citizenship, students do NOT fulfil the requirement of having resided legally, continuously and immediately before applying for the citizenship the number of years stated in the law (can be from 2 to 10, depending on the country of origin), because they hold a stay permit, not a residence permit. So, they have not resided in Spain for the citizenship purposes.

### **External factors affecting attracting international students**

**Q12.** Based on existing national sources (evaluation reports, media reports, etc.), what are the **external factors** affecting the attraction of international students in your Member State? Please select all relevant boxes.

HEI rankings

Member State is a hub for specific fields

Language in which courses are taught

Culture

Socio-economic factors (e.g. living costs)

Other (please specify):

No information available.

*Please elaborate:*

Rankings are used by many countries to choose foreign universities. The Spanish language and its culture is crucial for Latin American students. Living costs are also important for many students from Asian countries.

### **2.5 Challenges and good practices in attracting international students**

**Q13.** What are the (a) **challenges** and (b) **good practices** that have been observed in your Member State on attracting international students and for whom is it considered a challenge/good practice (HEI, Member State, student, other)? For each challenge/good practice: why is this considered a challenge/good practice and is this based on input from experts (if so, which experts)/surveys/evaluation reports/interviews/other?

a) Challenges:

*Please elaborate:*

Challenges are identified and described in the Internationalization Strategy for universities and include: mobility of students and academic personnel, quality assurance, financial resources, participation in international networks of education, research and innovation, position in global rankings, etc.

b) Good practices:

*Please elaborate:*

Good practices are identified and described in the Internationalization Strategy for universities and include: setting up of International Campus of Excellence in Spain developing talent attraction and retention measures and specific programs for attraction of international talent at institutional, regional and state level. The close collaboration of all public actors involved, especially between immigration authorities and universities, is also considered as one of the main strengths of the Spanish system to attract talent.

## Section 3. Measures and incentives to **retain** international graduates

### 3.1. Measures and incentives for the retention of international graduates.

*This section examines the measures and incentives to retain international graduates after their studies in place in the Member States. Statistics provided in Annex 1.4 and Annex 1.5 will be used to contextualise the measures and incentives reported on by Member States.*

**Q14.** Measures and incentives to **retain** international graduates in Member States.

**Q14a.** What are the conditions for **access after study** to national labour market/ self-employment/ start up or spin-off activities/ research project?

*Please briefly outline the conditions:*

- a) Once completed their studies, international students can change their migration statuses to another type of residence permit including different types of work permits depending on the activity.

It should be noted that the flexibility to change status introduced in the international mobility section of Law 14/2013 of support to entrepreneurs and their internationalization, facilitate and enhance these changes. This law will be applied if the student wants to work as a researcher, as a high qualified professional (HQP) or wants to start up a business in Spain. Prior to that, students were asked to have stayed in Spain at least three years, which many Master Degree students didn't fulfil, because most of Master Degrees last only 1 or 2 years. This was a weakness, and was identified as such and removed in 2013.

The required conditions depends on the type of work permit requested. Anyway the new residence/work permit should be requested before the expiration of the permit for the study stay.

- b) Moreover, the new permit allows transit. Another weakness that was identified referred to the fact that many students found difficult to participate in job interviews during the last part of their stay, due to the exams. From now on, international students will be allowed to transit once they have ended their studies, for the purpose of looking for a job or setting up a business.

- For what period of time does your Member State allow students to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?<sup>10</sup> What happens after this period?

The transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/80) has created a new residence permit for students in order to stay for the purpose of job-searching or entrepreneurship. This residence permit can be requested by students that have finished their studies and allows them to stay in our country for a non-extendable maximum period of 12-months (the Directive refers to a minimum period of time of nine months).

After 12 months if the student has not find a job or set up a business, it is required to apply for a new residence permit in order to stay legally in our country.

*Please elaborate:*

- Does your Member State have any restrictions in place regarding the job field in which the international student can seek employment or set up a business?

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the restrictions in place:*

The only limit is that they have to look for a job related to the studies undertaken. There is no limit to set up a business.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Article 25(1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

- Does the international student require a minimum level of degree in order to be allowed to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?<sup>11</sup>

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please indicate the minimum level required:*

It is required to have finished at least level 6 of studies of the European Qualifications Framework.

**Q14b.** Are there any other particular **policy measures** or incentives to retain international students in place? *Please select all relevant boxes:*

Lowered salary requirement for a work/residence permit.

Unrestricted access to the labour market.

Other incentive(s).

No.

*If you have answered yes, please briefly elaborate on the measures or incentives in place.*

As mentioned in Q14a, if the student has the profile and fulfil the requirements to apply for a residence permit included in Law 14/2013 (HQP, entrepreneur, researcher, etc.) he/she will benefit from the advantages of this law.

Law 14/2013 also offers the possibility of hiring international recent graduates, in which case the international student are exempt of fulfilling the general requirements for hiring third country employees (such as labour market constraints that can sometimes complicate recruiting foreign labour force), and that sponsoring companies usually have to prove. So, international students can be (more) easily hired.

All the same, the advantages related to residence permits are, among others, that the student only has a to apply for a single permit (work and residence) which is valid throughout Spain (and not only for one sector or for a specific region), is valid for two years (instead of the general one year, and renewable for an additional two years period of time as long as the requirements have been fulfilled), allows the family member to apply simultaneously or successively for the residence permit and they are allowed to work, is faster (20 working days), is cheaper, and no labour market test is applied in its assessment.

In short, this law aims to attract talent by simplifying and reducing the administrative burden related to residence permits and immigrations requirement and can be useful for retaining international students after completion of studies.

**Q15.** Are there **initiatives of HEIs or the private sector** whereby support is provided to students following the completion of their studies? (e.g. in specialised or niche areas, in the form of counselling, contract with students to commence work with a company after the completion of their studies). Please also consider initiatives at a regional level. *Please select all relevant boxes and if applicable, please provide best practice examples of the initiatives of universities/HEIs, private sector, local governments, etc. in the retention of international graduates (e.g. in specialised and niche areas, in the form of scholarships, apprenticeship contracts, counselling, etc.).*

Yes, initiatives implemented by HEIs.

Yes, initiatives implemented by the private sector.

Other initiatives.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate and provide 1-2 examples of best practices:*

---

<sup>11</sup> See Article 25(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

Initiatives of HEIs in collaboration with the private sector on Entrepreneurship, star-up incubation, employability, etc.

For example the Program "Rising Startup Spain" for foreign entrepreneurs to establish their Startups in Spain, is promoted by ICEX-Invest in Spain in collaboration with the public and private sector to complement the offer of services to foreign entrepreneurs and startups interested in developing their projects in Spain. Since it was launched in 2016, the three editions of Rising Startup Spain so far have been extremely successful in terms of both the number of foreign entrepreneurs who applied for the program and the quality of its projects.

The program has a duration of up to 9 months, and offers the following support services to the participating startups:

- Free workspace in Madrid and Barcelona, two hotspots for startups
- Prize money of €10,000 to cover initial Startup expenses
- Easier access to Visa and Residence permits
- Instrumental mentoring to help you connect with potential investors
- Media visibility
- Free entry to high profile events and meetings with Spanish multinationals

**Q16.** Does your government and/or HEIs implement any strategies in your Member State to **encourage former international graduates** (i.e. international alumni who have already left the Member State) to establish and/or maintain a connection to the national labour market)? *Please select all relevant boxes.*

- Yes, strategy implemented by HEIs.
- Yes, strategy implemented by the government.
- No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the main elements of the strategy:*

The Strategy for the Internationalization of universities was approved by the government and is implemented by all the actors. There are measures to increase the international competitiveness of universities and their territorial environments.

### 3.2 Challenges and good practices in retaining international students

**Q17.** What are the (a) **challenges** and (b) **good practices** that have been observed in your Member State on retaining international students and for whom is it considered a challenge/good practice (HEIs, Member State, student, other)? For each challenge/good practice: why is this considered a challenge/good practice and is this based on input from experts (if so, which experts)/studies/evaluation reports/surveys/interviews/other? Please briefly summarise the input and findings of these experts/studies/evaluation reports/interviews/other.

A) Challenges:

*Please elaborate:*

Spain has traditionally been a destination for international students. The quality of the academic programmes offered together with the attractiveness of the language, history and cultural heritage of the country and its high quality of life, meant that the number of foreign students in our country is increasing every academic year. Spain is also the main Erasmus destination in Europe. We are very attractive to those international students but the main challenge is to retain them.

Taken this into account, the main challenges on retaining international students are the following:

- encourage entrepreneurship: the rate of entrepreneur's residence permits requested by former students is still very low in comparison with other countries.
- Research, innovation and financial resources.

- international mobility of talent: it will be interesting to analyse the new framework that the Blue Card Directive will provide after its renewal, since it can be an incentive to attract and retain talent.

- Promotion of the different work options offered to students to stay in our country after the completion of studies: we already work together with some prestigious business schools (IE, IESE, etc) through training programmes that make it possible to publicise the international mobility section among international students.

B) Good practices:

*Please elaborate:*

- [Strategy for the Internationalisation of the Spanish Universities \(2015-2020\)](#) in order to make Spanish universities more attractive to foreign talent.

- Implementation of [Law 14/2013](#) of 27 September on support for entrepreneurs and internationalisation, allow students to easily change their status to that of highly qualified professional or innovative entrepreneur. This law has been quite successful according to the figures published by the Permanent Observatory for Immigration, since the number of applications among students, especially those submitted by foreign students of business schools, is increasing steadily every year.

- The [transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive](#) (Directive (EU) 2016/80) this summer has created two important new authorisations in our national legislation: a new residence permit for students searching for an employment and a new residence permit for internships. In the next few months we will see the results. It also include significant measures to make our country an attractive location for researchers.

- As mentioned above, the close collaboration of all public actors involved, especially between immigration authorities and universities, is also considered as one of the main strengths of the Spanish system to attract and retain international students.

## Section 4: Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with third countries

**Q18.** Has your Member State concluded and/or intends to conclude any **bilateral and/or multilateral agreements** with countries of origin concerning international students? Please distinguish between agreements in place with countries with developed economies and those with developing economies<sup>12</sup> as classified by the United Nations<sup>13</sup> and summarise and provide an overview of the type of agreements – without listing all the agreements and detailed provisions.

*[Possible visual element to be included in the Synthesis report: map indicating the regions/countries of origin with which agreements are in place.]*

Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with industrialised countries.

Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with developing countries.

No bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned.

The Internationalization Strategy defines a geo-strategy on how to cooperate with the different regions of the world as well as priority areas such as Latin America, Mediterranean Countries and North of Africa.

**Q19.** Are there any measures or incentives in place to avoid **brain drain** in the country of origin when attracting and retaining international students?

Yes, measures related to brain drain in place.

---

<sup>12</sup> This distinction is relevant as the objectives and purpose of such agreements could differ significantly between these two categories.

<sup>13</sup> [http://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries\\_DevelopmentStatus\\_Hierarchy.pdf](http://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_DevelopmentStatus_Hierarchy.pdf)

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the measures in place:*

Some of the available grants and specific projects can include reintegration to the country of origin at the end of the study/research period as a selection condition.

**Q20.** Do HEIs in your Member States have **initiatives and cooperation agreements with HEIs** in third countries in place? If so, what types of agreements and for which purpose (e.g. student exchange programmes)? *If there are many different agreements in place, please only provide 1-2 examples of agreements in place.*

Yes.

No.

*If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the initiatives/cooperation agreements in place and provide 1-2 examples:*

HEIs participate in Joint Programs and Degrees, research and innovation projects with HEIs in third countries.

Starting in 2019, a short-term mobility scheme between Morocco and Spain for studying purposes is going to be implemented, letting Moroccan post-graduates to enhance and strengthen their skills through a master degree in Spain. The launching of specific projects upon their return to Morocco will contribute to the development of specific key sectors for the social and economic Moroccan sectors. A specific award scheme to the best Master thesis is created to support the launch of the best projects in Morocco after reintegration. HEIs will participate in the project selecting the participants, in the first place, and of course during their stay.

**Q21.** What are the (a) **challenges** and (b) **good practices** that have been observed in your Member State with regard to bilateral and multilateral agreements and for whom is this considered a challenge/good practice (HEIs, Member State, student, other)? For each challenge/good practice, why is it considered a challenge/good practice and is this based on input from experts (if so, which experts)/studies/evaluation reports/surveys/interviews/other? Please briefly summarise the input and findings of these experts/studies/evaluation reports/interviews/other

A) Challenges:

*Please elaborate:*

The challenges have been described above as identified in the Internationalization Strategy for Universities.

B) Good practices:

*Please elaborate:*

The good practices have been described above as identified in the Internationalization Strategy for Universities.

## Annex 1 National statistics

Please fill in the attached excel sheet with the respective statistics for your Member State. The Statistical Annex consists of the following:

- Annex 1.1.: Contextual statistics on the types of HEIs
- Annex 1.2.: Number of students per field of study
- Annex 1.3.: Number of international students enrolled in universities by top 5 nationality and gender
- Annex 1.4.: International students who have graduated, interrupted or terminated their studies
- Annex 1.5.: International students who have remained in the Member State **at least two years** after graduation per reason



**GOBIERNO  
DE ESPAÑA**

MINISTERIO  
DE ASUNTOS EXTERIORES, UNIÓN EUROPEA  
Y COOPERACIÓN

MINISTERIO  
DE JUSTICIA

MINISTERIO  
DEL INTERIOR

MINISTERIO  
DE INCLUSIÓN, SEGURIDAD SOCIAL  
Y MIGRACIONES