

## Attracting and retaining international students in Germany: Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)

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Federal Office  
for Migration  
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# Attracting and retaining international students in Germany

Study by the German National Contact Point  
for the European Migration Network (EMN)

Working Paper 85

Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik / Janne Grote



Forschung

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# Attracting and retaining international students in Germany

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for the European Migration Network (EMN)

Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik / Janne Grote

# Summary

In Germany, international student mobility is promoted largely by the individual higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves but also by the Federal and Land level. A plethora of strategies and measures exists. At the level of HEIs in particular, the focus is more on attracting and supporting international students than on retaining them.

In the winter semester 2017/18, 74% out of a total of 282,002 foreign students, who received their entrance qualification for a HEI outside of Germany and who were enrolled in a HEI in Germany (so-called Bildungsausländer or mobile foreign students) came from third countries. The five most important countries of origin were China, India, Russia, Syria and Turkey. Students from these countries represented almost 29% of all mobile foreign students, who have not obtained their school leaving qualification from a German school, in the winter semester 2017/18.

Engineering sciences are the most popular subject with international students, followed by social sciences, law, and economics. Students' decision to attend a HEI in Germany hinges on numerous factors, such as the situation in their country of origin, their personal situation, the question of whether the course of study offers a chance of higher return on education, the classroom language or the reputation of the HEI or faculty.

International students will usually need to provide their higher education entrance qualification, proof of knowledge of the classroom language and proof of sufficient financial means for the course of study (including healthcare insurance) to obtain a residence permit for study purposes in Germany. HEIs themselves take care of admissions, and the admission requirements and deadlines may vary. As a rule, students have to apply for a visa in their country of origin, and this visa is then replaced by a residence permit issued by the responsible local foreigners authority. Some HEIs cooperate actively with the local foreigners authorities in order to achieve local agreements, reduce the administrative burden for students and improve transparency about the residence status. The draft for a Skilled Labour Immigration Act adopted by the Federal government on 19 December 2018 might lead to changes in the legal stipulations for international students, too.

Several institutions are providing information and undertaking marketing efforts to promote studying in Germany. The German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD) plays a key role in these efforts. It not only provides extensive online information, but also runs a network of regional offices and information centres in the countries of origin of potential international students and offers marketing services to HEIs within the framework of GATE Germany, a consortium for international higher education marketing. The German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz, HRK) and the German National Association for Student Affairs (Deutsches Studentenwerk) are two other important information providers.

Over the last few years, the number of courses and lessons held in English has risen considerably. This helps to make Germany a more attractive destination for international students. According to the Higher Education Compass offered by the German Rectors' Conference, HEIs in Germany currently offer 1,438 courses of study in English or 7% of the total courses of study offered.

Challenges in attracting international students mainly stem from long lead times and complex rules concerning HEIs admission and visa and residence procedures. Moreover, while the number of English-language courses has risen significantly, it is still small in comparison to other major destination countries. This is another challenge for attracting students. One of the measures taken is to provide uniform information on the national level to make the range of study offers more transparent, to allow for more target-group-specific information and to ensure that residence law provisions are better understandable for potential international students. Preparatory courses (Studienkolleg) and preparatory language and subject courses aim to make Germany a more attractive destination and ease access to the HEIs in Germany.

Local support and assistance at the place of study is offered by the international offices and local student services organisations (Studierendenwerke) of the HEIs. The main challenges for international students in Germany are finding accommodation, financing their chosen course of study, language barriers, a lack of (knowledge about) support and counselling offers and

their residence status. These challenges can be met by targeted preparation, for example at Studienkollegs or by language courses, and by tailor-made, extensive information and counselling offers during the course of study.

International students may remain in Germany for up to 18 months after their graduation in order to find a job commensurate with their qualification. A degree from a German HEI and subsequent employment enables them to obtain a settlement permit (i.e. a permanent residence title) already after two years of an employment commensurate with their qualification and therewith more quickly than other third-country nationals living in Germany.

International students will be faced with a number of challenges during their job search, too, for example the time limit for the job search, insufficient language skills, a lack of practical experience, insufficient knowledge about labour-market opportunities or reservations and lack of knowledge among employers. Supporting institutions often have to deal with insufficient staff and financial resources and sometimes with a lack of specific measures and networks for the time after graduation. Enabling students to gain practical experience and to create private and professional networks during their studies, offering information events, specific training opportunities and tandem learning as well as language courses which form part and parcel of the course of study are measures which have helped students in the past to find a job. Supporting institutions need sustainable financial and personnel resources as well as cooperation between various actors to support international graduates during their job search.

The Federal government and the Länder support HEIs in the process of internationalisation by signing separate contracts and agreements on scientific cooperation with other countries. These cooperations focus amongst others on the mutual recognition of higher education and vocational degrees or the promotion of transnational educational cooperations and partnerships between HEIs. At the end of 2018, the German Rectors' Conference counted roughly 33,000 international higher education cooperations. Some cooperations include a specific development-policy component.

# The European Migration Network

The European Migration Network (EMN) was launched by the European Commission in 2003 due to an initiative of the European Council in order to satisfy the need of a regular exchange of reliable information in the field of migration and asylum at the European level. Since 2008, Council Decision 2008/381/EC forms the permanent legal basis of the EMN and National Contact Points have been established in the EU Member States (with the exception of Denmark, which has observer status) plus Norway.

The EMN's role is to meet the information needs of European Union institutions, Member States' authorities and institutions as well as the wider public by providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum, with a view to supporting policymaking in these areas. The National Contact Point for Germany is located at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Nuremberg. Its main task is to implement the annual work programme of the EMN. This includes the drafting of the annual policy report "Migration, Integration, Asylum" and of up to four topic specific studies, as well as answering Ad-Hoc Queries launched by other National Contact Points or the European Commission. The German National Contact Point also carries out visibility activities and networking in several forums, e.g. through the organisation of conferences or the participation in conferences in Germany and abroad. Furthermore, the National Contact Points in each country set up national networks consisting of organisations, institutions and individuals working in the field of migration and asylum.

In general, the National Contact Points do not conduct primary research but collect, analyse and present existing data. Exceptions might occur when existing data and information are not sufficient. EMN studies are elaborated in accordance with uniform specifications valid for all EU Member States plus Norway in order to achieve comparable EU-wide results. Furthermore, the EMN has produced a Glossary, which ensures the application of comparable terms and definitions in all national reports and is available on the national and international EMN websites.

Upon completion of national reports, the European Commission drafts a synthesis report with the support of a service provider. This report summarises the most significant results of the individual national reports. In addition, topic-based policy briefs, so-called EMN Informs, are produced in order to present and compare selected topics in a concise manner. The EMN Bulletin, which is published quarterly, informs about current developments in the EU and the Member States. With the work programme of 2014, the Return Expert Group (REG) was created to address issues around voluntary return, reintegration and forced return.

All EMN publications are available on the website of the European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. The national studies of the German National Contact Point as well as the synthesis reports, Informs and the Glossary are also available on the national website: [www.emn-germany.de](http://www.emn-germany.de)



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 International students as a topic in the political and public debate

International students are less often a topic of public discussions about migration policy than refugees or migrants who enter the country for work purposes. During the past decade, however, the professional public has begun to focus on international students as a potential source of qualified labour (see SVR 2015; Geis 2018: 84 et seq.; Mayer et al. 2012: 23).

Political discussions focus on attracting and retaining international students in order to put German higher education institutions (HEIs) and the German academic system on the global map and in order to secure a sufficient supply of qualified workers. The Immigration Act of 2005 was the first step towards making the residence regulations and provisions to stay for international students more liberal. This trend continued in the following years, driven, among others, by the first EU Student Directive of 2004<sup>1</sup>, which was transposed into German law in 2007, and by the implementation of the Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment<sup>2</sup> in 2012. The transposition of the so-called Students and Researchers Directive in 2017 ((EU) 2016/801)<sup>3</sup> again brought further advantages for international students, particularly in the area of EU-wide mobility (see Chapter 4.3).

The Federal coalition agreement of 2013 contained two targets in this field. The first aim was to get 350,000 international students enrolled in German HEIs by 2020, the second to increase the share of German students who spend at least part of their time of

study abroad (CDU/CSU/SPD 2013: 29). The target of 350,000 international students was first exceeded in the winter semester 2016/17 (see Chapter 3.1). The coalition agreement of 2018, which covers the current legislative period, says that the internationalisation of research and higher education is an overarching target on the basis of the internationalisation strategy of 2017 (see Chapter 2.2). With regard to students, the agreement sets two targets: first, supporting refugee students and researchers in danger, and second, retaining foreign graduates to the “Research location Germany” (CDU/CSU/SPD 2018: 37). In addition, the coalition parties plan to strengthen international mobility in “schools, in vocational training and in higher education”, not least by promoting the Erasmus+ programme (CDU/CSU/SPD 2018: 37).<sup>4</sup> “[I]nternational research and innovation partnerships” are to be expanded and “international cooperation, in particular with African countries, in the areas of education, science and research” is to be intensified (CDU/CSU/SPD 2018: 37; see also Chapter 8.2.2).

The draft for a ‘Skilled Labour Immigration Act’ (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz; BMI 2018) by the Federal government foresees a harmonisation of the preconditions under residence law for academic and non-academic skilled workers and for international students and participants in vocational training (see Chapter 4.6).

In addition to political and legal framework conditions, many other aspects are regarded as reasons for the general acceptance and strengthening of the immigration of international students. Several HEIs see international students as a resource to tackle the demographic change in their region and their shrinking higher education location (SVR 2019). Further positive effects are seen in the creation of transnational networks, the additional language skills and the contribution to extended intercultural and diversity competence of the general student body (see Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 49; Hanganu/Heß 2014: 146; SVR 2012: 6).

1 Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service.

2 Council Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment.

3 Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing (recast).

4 Erasmus+ is the “EU programme for education, training, youth and sport” (Erasmus+, n.d.). In the field of higher education, the programme mainly supports the individual mobility of students and teachers and organisational partnerships (Erasmus+, n.d.).

## 1.2 Definition of the term ‘international students’

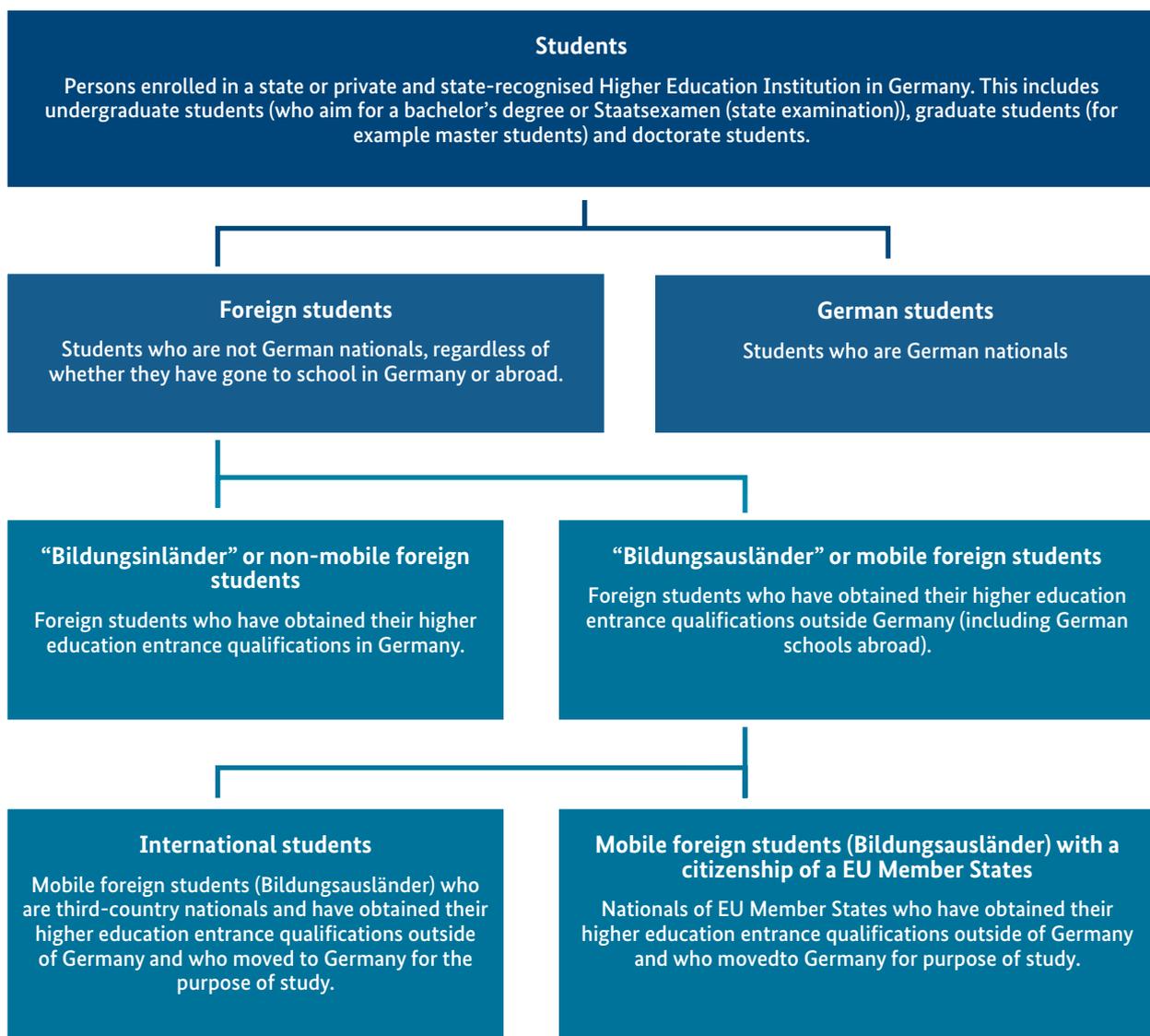
For the purpose of this study, the term ‘international students’ refers to third-country nationals<sup>5</sup> who enter Germany for a complete course of study or for parts of it (see Figure 1). As a rule, international students hold a residence title for study purposes (Section 16

<sup>5</sup> Pursuant to Article 2 of the Schengen Borders Code, ‘third-country national’ means any person who is not a citizen of an EU Member State and who is not covered by Article 2 no. 5 of the Schengen Borders Code, i.e. who is not a “person enjoying the Community right of free movement” (Regulation EC no. 562/2006). According to this definition, and in this study, citizens of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland are not regarded as third-country nationals.

subs. 1 first sentence of the Residence Act; see Chapter 4.2). However, third-country nationals who reside in Germany for family or humanitarian reasons may also enter upon a course of study. In this study, the description of the legal framework conditions in particular only refers to those international students residing in Germany who hold a residence title for study purposes.

In scientific and public discussions, besides the term “international students” the terms “foreign students” and “Bildungsausländer” or “mobile foreign students” are sometimes used as synonyms. Figure 1 provides an overview of the different terms and their meaning and use in this study.

**Figure 1: Terms and definitions concerning students used in this study**



Doctorate students are only taken into account in this study if they hold a residence title for study purposes. Under residence law, doctorate students may be treated either as students or as researchers or workers. Their residence title usually depends on whether they also hold a job, for example as a research assistant at the HEI. If their contractual working hours exceed 50% of the regular working hours, they cannot hold a residence title for study purposes (see Chapter 4.5). In these cases, they may hold a residence permit for research purposes (Section 20 of the Residence Act) or an EU Blue Card (Section 19a of the Residence Act).

### 1.3 Methodology, structure and sources of this study

Like all other studies prepared in the framework of the European Migration Network (EMN), this study follows uniform specifications in order to ensure comparable results from all EU Member States and Norway. These specifications have been released on the EMN website (EMN 2018).

The structure of this study is as follows: Chapter 2 describes the political framework for attracting and retaining international students as well as the structure of the German higher education system, the main actors and strategies at the Federal, Land and higher education level.

Chapter 3 summarises figures on international students drawn from the ‘Statistics of higher education’ and from surveys and explains the most important reasons for studying in Germany.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of the legal framework conditions for third-country nationals who want to study in Germany, from the higher education application and admission procedure to the visa procedure and the granting of the relevant residence title and the rights and obligations it confers. This includes a description of the implementation of the Students and Researchers Directive ((EU) 2016/801) and the resultant changes to improve the mobility of international students within the EU.

Chapter 5 contains a review of concrete measures to attract international students at the Federal, Land and higher education level, such as information services, marketing measures, the range of English-language courses and opportunities for language and subject

preparation for studying in Germany. Challenges and good practices are described as well.

Chapter 6 focuses on support measures for international students in Germany and challenges and good practices in this field.

Chapter 7 explains the legal preconditions and measures for the retention of international students. It gives an overview of the measures taken by HEIs, local authorities, companies and other actors who support international students during the transition from HEI to employment and describes the related challenges and good practices.

Chapter 8 deals with international cooperations between HEIs and the relevant actors at the Federal, Land and higher education level and with measures to prevent a brain drain.

Publicly available information and relevant literature in this field were used to prepare this study. In addition, questionnaires were sent to important actors at the Federal level, and in some cases, additional background interviews were held.<sup>6</sup> The statistics are largely based on the Statistics of higher education by the Federal Statistical Office. Analyses of these statistics in the publication series “Wissenschaft Weltoffen” by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung, DZHW) were taken into account as well, as were the profile data on internationalisation at German HEIs collected on behalf of the German Academic Exchange Service, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) (DAAD/DZHW 2018a; DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018). The social statistics of the German National Association for Student Affairs are another important source of quantitative data. In fact, the Association published a separate report on the situation of mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) at German HEIs in 2018 (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018).

<sup>6</sup> We would like to thank the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the German Academic Exchange Service, the German National Association for Student Affairs, the German Rectors’ Conference and the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration for their written answers and their willingness to meet with us for background talks. In addition, we would like to thank Nicolas Bodenschatz, Isoline Rossi and Paula Lingscheid for their research and editorial work for this study during their internships at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

## 2 Political framework for the attraction and retention of international students in Germany

### 2.1 Structure of the German higher education system

International students' migration to Germany is determined by two factors: first, the residence law provisions (in particular, Section 16 of the Residence Act), and second, the structure of the German higher education system, which is federal and puts considerable importance on the HEIs' autonomy. The "general principles of the higher education system [...] are uniformly set out in Article 5 para. 3 of the Basic Law, which guarantees the freedom of art and science as well as research and teaching. [...] Educational policy competences, as granted by the constitution, rest mostly and to a substantial extent with the Länder" (Mayer et al. 2012: 17). At the same time, amendments to the Basic Law have been made in recent years to intensify the cooperation between the Federal Government and the Länder in the fields of science, research and teaching. An amendment to Article 91b of the Basic Law came into force on 1 January 2015, for example, which provides that the Federal Government and the Länder may cooperate on the basis of agreements in cases of supraregional importance in the promotion of science, research and teaching, whereby corresponding agreements concerning the priority area of higher education require the approval of all Länder (Article 91b para. 1 of the Basic Law). In July 2017, Article 104c was again introduced into the Basic Law, enabling the Federal Government to "grant the Länder financial assistance for nationally significant investments by financially weak municipalities (associations of municipalities) in the field of municipal education infrastructure" (Article 104c sentence 1 of the Basic Law).

HEIs receive funding from the Federal and the Land governments. This also applies to courses taken by international students<sup>7</sup>, who may basically apply to all state or private and state-recognised HEIs (see Section 16 subs. 1 first sentence of the Residence Act).

The following sub-chapters will describe the most important organisations and structures at the Federal, Land and higher education level, in particular those institutions and organisations which play a role for the internationalisation of research and the international mobility of students.

#### 2.1.1 Federal level

At the Federal level, the responsibility rests mainly with the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Its tasks include the development and promotion of research in Germany. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research runs several initiatives and programmes which contribute to higher education, research projects and research infrastructure funding and is responsible for the Federal Training Assistance Act (BAFöG). In addition, it is responsible for international and European cooperation in the areas of education and research (BMBF, n.d.a).

With regard to international students, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) is the most important organisation at the Federal level. It is organised as an association of German higher education and student bodies (DAAD 2018a: 10). "In 2017, 241 HEIs and 104 student representative bodies were members" (DAAD 2018a: 13). The Board of Trustees also includes representatives of the Federal and the Länder governments (DAAD 2017a: 2). Among other things, the German Academic Exchange Service grants scholarships to German students who want to spend part of their studies abroad and to international students in Germany (see Chapter 6.2.1) and provides information about studying in Germany (see Chapter 5.1.1). The German Academic Exchange Service runs a global network of regional offices and information centres and funds jobs for German lecturers at HEIs abroad (DAAD 2018a: 11; see Chapter 5.1.1).

In addition, the German Academic Exchange Service acts as National Agency for EU Higher Educa-

<sup>7</sup> Baden-Württemberg is currently the only Land which levies tuition fees from international students, see Chapter 4.1.

tion Cooperation in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme and works in the fields of foreign cultural policy, education and research policy and development cooperation (DAAD 2018a: 10). The German Academic Exchange Service is funded by the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt, AA), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Union (in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme; DAAD 2018a: 16). Each year, the Service receives more than EUR 500 million in funds. In 2016, the Federal Foreign Office shouldered the largest share of this total (EUR 186.7 million or 37% of the total). In addition, the German Academic Exchange Service received money from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (EUR 126.9 million or 25% of the total), EU funding (EUR 102 million/21%) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (EUR 50.7 million/10%). EUR 34 million were provided by foreign governments, companies, foundations and the Donors' Association for the Promotion of Humanities and Sciences in Germany (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft) (DAAD 2017a: 4)

Expenses for places in study courses taken up by foreign students who benefit from a scholarship under a programme by the German Academic Exchange Service are borne by the Länder (DAAD 2017a: 4). Scholarships are granted to both German students who move abroad and to foreign students who come to Germany (see Chapter 6.2.1). In some cases, scholarship programmes are also available for regular foreign students enrolled at a German higher education institution to spend time abroad (e.g. within the framework of the 'Go East' initiative<sup>8</sup> of the German Academic Exchange Service).

### 2.1.2 Land level

The Länder are “responsible for higher education legislation, administration and funding” and thus the “key actors in terms of German education and higher education policy” (Mayer et al. 2012: 17). In addition, they supervise the HEIs (Mayer et al. 2012: 17).

The ‘Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs’ (Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK) is the most important body for coordination among the Länder. Its task include ensuring the “uniformity and comparability of certificates and exam

results” across the Länder, “setting quality standards” and promoting the “cooperation of educational, scientific and cultural institutions” (KMK, n. d.). In addition, its Secretariat runs the Central Office for Foreign Education (Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen, ZAB), which provides advice and support to the bodies responsible for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications.<sup>9</sup>

The ‘Joint Science Conference’ (GWK), which consists of the Ministers and Senators of the Federal Government and the Länder responsible for science and research as well as for finance, is another important body. It was established in 2008 (GWK, n. d.). Its task is to deal with “all questions of research funding, science and research policy strategies and the science system which jointly affect the Federal Government and the Länder” (GWK, n. d.). This includes, for example, promotional programmes and projects and institutional support for scientific and research institutions. Moreover, the Joint Science Conference adopted a strategy for the internationalisation of HEIs in 2013 (see Chapter 2.2.2).

### 2.1.3 Higher education level

In 2017, the Federal Statistical Office counted 476 Higher Education Institutions in Germany. Ten of them were funded by the Federal government, 266 by the Länder, 163 by private-sector bodies and 37 by the churches.<sup>10</sup> The total number of HEIs includes universities, technical universities, universities of applied sciences, universities of education, theological universities, music and fine arts colleges and universities of administrative sciences (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018: 11).

As the Basic Law guarantees the freedom of teaching and research (Article 5 para. 3 of the Basic Law), the HEIs enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy. “The limits to this autonomy depend solely on the fiscal means of the Länder and the public-sector employment policy, which also covers the law on civil servants” (Mayer et al. 2012: 18). As a rule, the HEIs decide for themselves which applicants they accept. However, this does not apply to medical or dental studies, veterinary studies and pharmacology. In these fields, 40% of

8 Website of the ‘Go East’ initiative of the German Academic Exchange Service <https://goeast.daad.de/de/> (03.12.2018).

9 Among other things, the Central Office for Foreign Education runs the anabin database ([www.anabin.kmk.org](http://www.anabin.kmk.org)), which provides information on foreign school and university diplomas and their comparability with German diplomas.

10 Source: Supply of the Statistics of higher education (Hochschulstatistik), Federal Statistical Office.

all places are handed out centrally by the Trust for admission to higher education (Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung) (Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung 2018).

At the higher education level, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) is the most important association on the federal level. As of November 2018, 268 state and state-recognised HEIs were members of the German Rectors' Conference, in which 94% of all students are enrolled (HRK 2018). The association represents the HEIs' interests versus policymakers, develops standards and provides services to HEIs and the public. This includes, for example, the internationalisation audit, which supports HEIs during the internationalisation process, or the Higher Education Compass database of study programmes (see Chapter 5.2).

At the level of practical cooperation, the working service point for international student applications 'uni-assist e.V.' also plays a decisive role. International students will apply either directly to the HEIs or to uni-assist e.V., the working service point for international student applications. Uni-assist is an association supported by roughly 180 HEIs which pre-evaluates international applications (see Chapter 4.1.4).

## 2.2 Strategies to attract and retain international students

Strategies to attract and retain international students have been prepared not only at the Federal and Land level, but also by the HEIs themselves. Strategies at the Federal and Land levels usually form part of more broad-based internationalisation strategies for science and research. The internationalisation strategy of the Federal government (see Chapter 2.2.1) is not explicitly and exclusively directed at international students, not least because higher education policy is largely the domain of the Länder (see Chapter 2.1). In addition, the Federal government believes that students' incoming and outgoing mobility is equally important, which is why Germany should not exclusively focus on attracting international students, but pursue a partnership approach, although the aim is pursued in parallel to further increase the number of international students in Germany (see Chapter 2.2.1). Similarly, international student retention in Germany is not the only goal of attracting them in the first place; rather, their stay in Germany as such and the resultant relationship with the country are regarded as an advantage.

As a rule, the Federal and Land strategies do not focus on specific subjects or regions, even though overarching internationalisation strategies have been adopted for some regions (see Chapter 2.2.1). Experts regard this as an advantage for the German higher education system, as a focus on a small number of countries of origin may harbour risks, for example if the economic or political situation in these countries changes (SVR 2015: 9).

Starting with a decree issued by the Federal Ministry of the Interior on 28 March 2013 converting the stay of Syrian students into a humanitarian residence permit pursuant to Section 23 subs. 1 of the Residence Act (Decree No. 04/2013)<sup>11</sup>, since 2015 however in particular, the Federal government, the Länder and the HEIs have increasingly included refugees in their (internationalisation) strategies and developed specific measures and programmes for refugees to allow them to attend HEIs (see BMBF 2016: 24).

### 2.2.1 The internationalisation strategy of the Federal government

The most recent internationalisation strategy of the Federal government dates from 2017; it updates a former strategy adopted in 2008.<sup>12</sup> The 'Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalization of Education, Science and Research' was developed under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF, n.d.b). It consists of five main target areas which cover different aspects, such as cooperation among HEIs, students' and researchers' mobility, cooperation in the areas of innovation and vocational training, cooperation with emerging and developing countries and the promotion of research dealing with global challenges (BMBF 2016: 5).

The first target area with the title "Strengthening excellence through global cooperation" aims at promoting global cooperation to consolidate Germany's position as an attractive location for study and research, to

11 Decree of the Interior Ministry No. 04/2013: Right of residence; order pursuant to Section 23 subs. 1 of the Residence Act to accept Syrian students who are in possession of a residence permit pursuant to Section 16 subs. 1 of the Residence Act and their family members who are staying in Germany with a residence permit pursuant to Section 6 of the Residence Act.

12 The Federal Government's strategy for the internationalisation of science and research of 2008 aimed to "increase the coherence of internationalisation activities in the German education and research community" and foresaw "targeted measures to promote and provide information abroad and make it easier for international students to study in Germany" (Mayer et al. 2012: 30; BMBF 2008).

remove barriers to the international mobility of German scientists and to deepen the European Research Area (BMBF 2016: 5). The Federal government wants to attract “more qualified foreign students and researchers” and to increase the number of foreign students to 350,000 by 2020. The latter figure was already included in the coalition agreement of 2013 (BMBF 2016: 31). At the same time, the number of German students who spend part of their course abroad is to be raised as well. The goal is to have “one out of two higher education graduates” spend some time abroad by 2020 (BMBF 2016: 31; see also GWK 2013: 7). In addition, German researchers who work abroad are to be encouraged to return in order to “meet the German economy’s demand for qualified labour” (BMBF 2016: 30). The strategy also intends to promote a “welcoming culture in academia”, for example in the framework of the scholarship and support programme of the German Academic Exchange Service or by “improving the framework conditions at German HEIs [...], for example by offering support and integration-oriented tutor programmes” (BMBF 2016: 31).

In addition to this overarching internationalisation strategy, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has also adopted regional strategies. These include the China strategy of 2015, which covers education, research and innovation (BMBF, n.d.c) or the Africa strategy with its five target areas (“knowledge transfer and innovation, higher education education and young researchers, employability of higher education graduates and practical vocational training, research cooperation to implement the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and use of potential synergies at the national, European and international levels”), which is geared towards cooperation with African partners and providing Federal Ministry of Education and Research support to certain projects (BMBF, n.d.d). The German Academic Exchange Service has developed a number of regional strategies, too (see Chapter 8.2).

### **2.2.2 Joint strategy of the Senators and Ministers of the Federal government and the Länder responsible for science and research for the internationalisation of HEIs in Germany**

The Joint Strategy of the Federal government and the Länder for the internationalisation of HEIs in Germany was adopted by the Joint Science Conference on 12 April 2013 (GWK 2013). In contrast to the Federal

government’s internationalisation strategy, it focuses exclusively on HEIs and consists of nine areas of action (GWK 2013: 2). It is regarded as a “quality development tool” in order to be “attractive and competitive in the global competition for high-quality offers in the areas of research and teaching and in the fields of hospitality and service orientation” (GWK 2013: 3). The areas of action include

- the strategic internationalisation of individual HEIs,
- the improvement of legal framework conditions, in particular for higher education cooperation,
- the establishment of a welcoming culture at the HEIs and beyond (for example at consulates or foreigners authorities),
- the establishment of an “international campus” by gearing the curricula towards an international audience, for example by raising the number of courses held in English,
- improving the international mobility of students,
- making Germany more attractive for international students,
- attracting excellent foreign scientists and researchers,
- expanding international research cooperations and
- establishing of offers of transnational higher education (GWK 2013).

The number of international students is to be increased by making HEIs in Germany more attractive for them. Concrete measures are the introduction of “easier [...] application and admission procedures”, which help to select candidates “who have a good chance of successfully completing their studies in Germany” (GWK 2013: 8) and measures to “improve the success and integration of foreign students” (GWK 2013: 8). Research and higher education marketing and providing information on courses and research opportunities as well as on residence and social security matters are regarded as important factors to increase the number of international students, too (GWK 2013: 9). The establishment of a welcoming culture will help to integrate international students into university life and is regarded as useful for “retaining them in Germany and thus increasing the pool of qualified labour” (GWK 2013: 5).

According to the strategy of the Joint Science Conference, the establishment of transnational educational offers of German HEIs abroad will help to “strengthen the international reputation and visibility of German higher education institutions” and “win highly qualified graduates for post-graduate courses” (GWK 2013: 10 et seq.; for more details see Chapter 8.3.4).

### 2.2.3 Strategies of the Länder

Several Länder have developed specific strategies for higher education internationalisation (see, for example, Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst (MWK) Baden-Württemberg, n.d.a) or regard higher education internationalisation as part of their regional higher education development plans (see, for example, Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, n.d.a; Land Brandenburg 2014: 24; Hessisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst 2015: 6 et seq.). In many cases, internationalisation is a topic of target agreements between the Länder and individual HEIs. Quite apart from overarching strategies or framework plans, some Länder have “developed measures which are not part of a major strategy” (Mayer et al. 2012: 31).

The targets and provisions of the Länder strategies or framework or target agreements may be more or less detailed and focus on different aspects of internationalisation of HEIs. In some cases, internationalisation in general is regarded as a major target, in others, the focus is more on individual issues such as improving students’ or researchers’ mobility, making curricula internationally compatible or increasing the number of courses held in English, establishing a welcoming culture or improving higher education marketing (see, for example, Land Brandenburg 2014: 24; Freie Hansestadt Bremen, n.d.; Hessisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst 2015: 6; Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2015: 26; concerning the issue of higher education marketing see also Chapter 5.1.2). Several Länder have signed science cooperation agreements with other countries or regions in other countries (see, for example, MWK Baden-Württemberg, n.d.a; Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz, n.d.; Hessisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, n.d.; see also Chapter 8.1.2).

### 2.2.4 Higher Education Institutions’ strategies

A survey among higher education administrations showed that, in 2014, roughly 80% of the participating HEIs pursued their own internationalisation strategies (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft 2014: 21). In some cases, these strategies form part of the relevant HEI’s general strategy, in others the HEIs have adopted separate internationalisation strategies (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 44). While strategies at the Federal level often treat international students only

as one of several areas, higher education-level internationalisation strategies tend to focus more on study and teaching and, in turn, on student mobility (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 44). Increasing the share of foreign students or the number of international courses often forms part of such strategies. An online survey of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration, SVR) among 116 HEIs revealed that roughly 25% of the HEIs regard supporting international students during the job search as part of their internationalisation strategy (SVR 2015: 30; see also Chapter 7.3). “For the HEIs, this form of internationalisation has become a prestige project, which is often directly run by the HEIs’ administration” (SVR 2017a: 11).

Among universities of applied sciences, a slightly smaller share pursues its own internationalisation strategy compared to universities (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 44). At the same time, the share of international students and scientists is lower at universities of applied sciences, too (see Chapter 3.1; Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 48). One reason for this is that “many international support tools focus on research and doctoral students” (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 49). In addition, universities of applied sciences tend to have fewer science management and non-professorial teaching staff at their disposal, and professors at universities of applied sciences have to give more lessons. This makes it more difficult to plan and implement long-term strategies for cooperation between different universities (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 49). Nevertheless, more and more universities of applied sciences are working on own internationalisation strategies (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 49; see also HRK 2014a).

While Federal and Länder strategies usually do not focus on specific subjects or regions, most higher education strategies do (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft 2014: 22). Asia was the region which was mentioned most frequently in the 2014 survey by the Donors’ Association (in many cases, the focus is explicitly on China), followed by Europe (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft 2014: 21). Economic and natural sciences were the subjects mentioned most frequently (apart from engineering sciences; Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft 2014: 21). In many cases, internationalisation efforts focus on the master and doctoral level and less on bachelor-level courses. One indication for this is the number of courses offered in English (see Chapter 5.2). The main thrust of the HEIs’ strategies depends on numerous factors, such as the individual HEI’s research profile or its location. Quite apart from their specific courses,

HEIs in metropolitan areas or large cities tend to be more attractive for international students, which is why they may see less of a need for specific strategies to attract students. In contrast, HEIs which do not benefit from these advantages may work particularly hard on their internationalisation strategies in order to compensate for their disadvantages and become visible and attractive for foreign and domestic students.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, several higher education locations consider the internationalization and attraction of international students as a strategy to tackle the demographic change and the shrinking of their higher education location (see SVR 2019).

### 2.2.5 Instruments of the German Rectors' Conference and other actors

The German Rector's Conference has developed the "Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions" audit, which provides advisory services for internationalisation strategies. The audit is co-financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and exists since 2009. By now, more than 90 HEIs have participated. The goal is to enable participating HEIs to "define and further develop their specific internationalisation profile on the basis of their institutional mandate and their available resources" (HRK 2014b: 2).

In addition, the German Rectors' Conference adopted a 'National Code of Conduct for German Higher Education Institutions Regarding International Students' in 2009, which was drawn up in the framework of GATE Germany, a consortium for international higher education marketing (see Chapter 5.1.1). "The Code of Conduct aims to establish a set of common minimum standards in the fields of 'Information and Marketing, Admissions, Supervision, Support and Advice, plus Follow-up Services'" (GATE Germany 2009: 1). The signatory HEIs commit themselves to provide comprehensive information, "preferably also in English, and, where appropriate, in other common foreign languages, too" (GATE Germany 2009: 1), on the studies they offer, on the admissions requirements and the admissions process and on the local study and living conditions, to offer orientation courses and to provide preparatory and accompanying German-language

courses and additional support during and after the studies (GATE Germany 2009). As of December 2018, 146 HEIs had signed the Code of Conduct (HRK, n.d.).

In addition to the German Rectors' Conference, there are numerous other relevant actors at the federal, state and local levels in the field of attracting and retaining international students, such as the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH) and the local Welcome Centres, whose work and orientation are described in more detail in the following chapters.

<sup>13</sup> Reutlingen University is a good example for this. Despite its location in a relatively small city and its comparatively small total number of students (about 5,700), the share of foreign students is considerably above the average, at 20%, and the university cooperates with more than 200 partner universities (Hochschule Reutlingen, n.d.).

# 3 Facts and figures concerning international students in Germany

## 3.1 Statistics

The Statistics of higher education by the Federal Statistical Office provide the most thorough statistical information on foreign and international students. They are based on the HEIs' administrative data (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018: 4) and do not include information on the students' residence status or the type of residence title they hold.

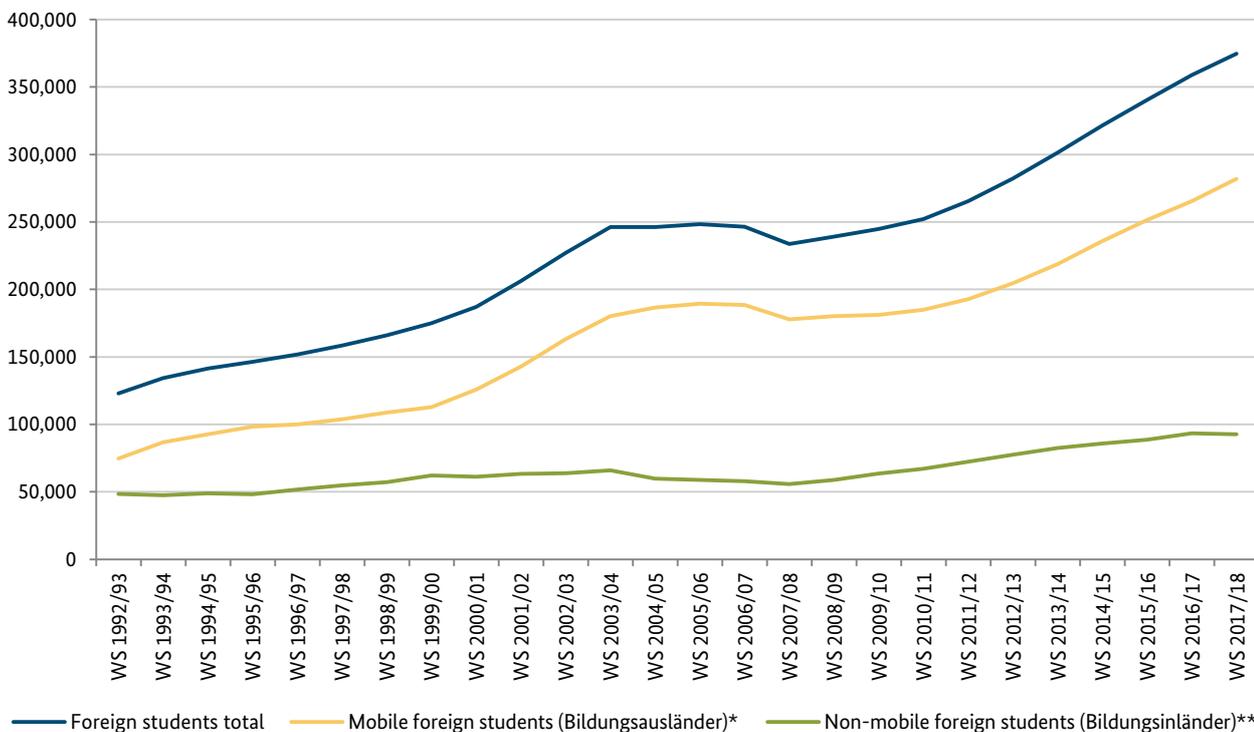
### 3.1.1 Number and share of international students

Figure 2 shows that the numbers of both foreign students and mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) have risen considerably since the winter semester

1992/93; in fact, both have more than tripled. During the same period, the total number of students has increased by about 1.5 times (DAAD/DZHW 2018b: Tab. 1.1). In 2013, the German Academic Exchange Service, the German Rectors' Conference and the Federal government had given out the goal of having 350,000 foreign students enrolled at German HEIs by 2020 (see Chapter 2.2; DAAD 2013; GWK 2013; CDU/CSU/SPD 2013). In fact, this goal was reached earlier than planned: 358,895 foreign students were enrolled in German HEIs in the winter semester 2016/17 (DAAD/DZHW 201b: Tab. 1.1). Out of this total of 358,895 foreign students, 265,484 were mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer; DAAD/DZHW 2018: Tab. 1.1).

The general trend towards a higher number of international students is also evident in other countries. The member states of the Organisation for Economic

**Figure 2: Foreign students in Germany, 1993–2018**



\* "Bildungsausländer" or "mobile foreign students" have not obtained their higher education entrance qualifications in Germany.

\*\* "Bildungsinländer" or "non-mobile foreign students" have obtained their higher education entrance qualifications in Germany.

Cooperation and Development (OECD) have seen the number of foreign students rise “from 2 million in 1999 to 5 million 17 years later” (OECD 2018: 281).

The share of mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) in the total number of students has been moving between 8 and 10% in the period from the winter semester 2002/03 to the winter semester 2017/18 (winter semester 2017/18: 10%; Statistisches Bundesamt 2018; DAAD/DZHW 2018b: Tab. 1.3). As a rule, it is slightly higher at universities than at universities of applied sciences. In the winter semester 2016/17, it amounted to 11% at universities and 7% at universities of applied sciences (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 53).

There are differences between the Länder as well: “[I]n Berlin (15%), Saxony (14%) and Brandenburg (13%), the shares of mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) in the total number of students [are] highest. They are smallest in Schleswig-Holstein (6%) and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (7%)” (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 54).

### 3.1.2 Countries of origin

Out of 374,583 foreign students enrolled in German HEIs in the winter semester 2017/18, 282,002 were mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). 208,752 of these were third-country nationals or “international students” in the sense in which the term is used in this study (see Chapter 1.2) and 73,250 were EU citizens. The share of third-country nationals in all mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) thus amounted to 74%.

In the winter semester 2017/18, the five most important countries of origin of international students were China, India, Russia, Syria and Turkey. Within the EU, Austria, Italy and France were the most important countries of origin of mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). The top 5 third countries have shifted slightly during the last few years, with China remaining the most important country of origin for both female and male students (see Table 1). The relationship between the sexes is less balanced for other countries of origin. For example, the number of women is considerably higher among students from the Russian Federation or Ukraine. In contrast, many more male than female students come from India, Turkey or Cameroon.

As the list of the most important countries of origin shows, there is no predominant country or region of origin. Roughly 29% of all mobile foreign students (Bil-

dungsausländer) came from the top five countries of origin in the winter semester 2017/18 (see Table 1). This makes for considerable diversity among international students in Germany, not least in comparison to other countries. “Traditional” destinations of international students, such as the US or Australia, saw more than 60% of the total number of international students hail from the top five countries of origin; in the UK, the share is about 41%. In France, it is slightly lower, at nearly 36% (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 23).

Table 1: Mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) from third countries, top five nationalities and sex

	Winter semester 2012/13			Winter semester 2013/14			Winter semester 2014/15			Winter semester 2015/16			Winter semester 2016/17			Winter semester 2017/18			
	total	m	f																
Top 1 nationality		China																	
	25,564	12,721	12,843	28,381	14,019	14,362	30,259	14,988	15,271	32,268	16,168	16,100	34,997	17,324	17,673	36,915	18,259	18,656	
Top 2 nationality		Russian Federation			Russian Federation			India			India			India			India		
	10,912	2,374	8,538	11,126	2,485	8,641	11,655	8,993	2,662	13,537	10,353	3,184	15,308	11,549	3,759	17,294	12,858	4,436	
Top 3 nationality		India			India			Russian Federation											
	7,255	5,618	1,637	9,372	7,271	2,101	11,534	2,644	8,890	11,413	2,732	8,681	11,295	2,803	8,492	10,795	2,711	8,084	
Top 4 nationality		Turkey			Turkey			Cameroon			Cameroon			Cameroon			Syria		
	6,666	4,024	2,642	6,701	3,988	2,713	6,785	4,014	2,771	7,106	4,328	2,778	7,425	4,508	2,917	8,618	7,079	1,539	
Top 5 nationality		Ukraine			Turkey														
	6,264	1,456	4,808	6,411	1,485	4,926	6,672	4,039	2,633	6,941	1,766	5,175	7,123	3,680	3,443	7,633	4,363	3,270	

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, Studierende an Hochschulen (Fachserie 11, series 4.1)

### 3.1.3 Types of degree

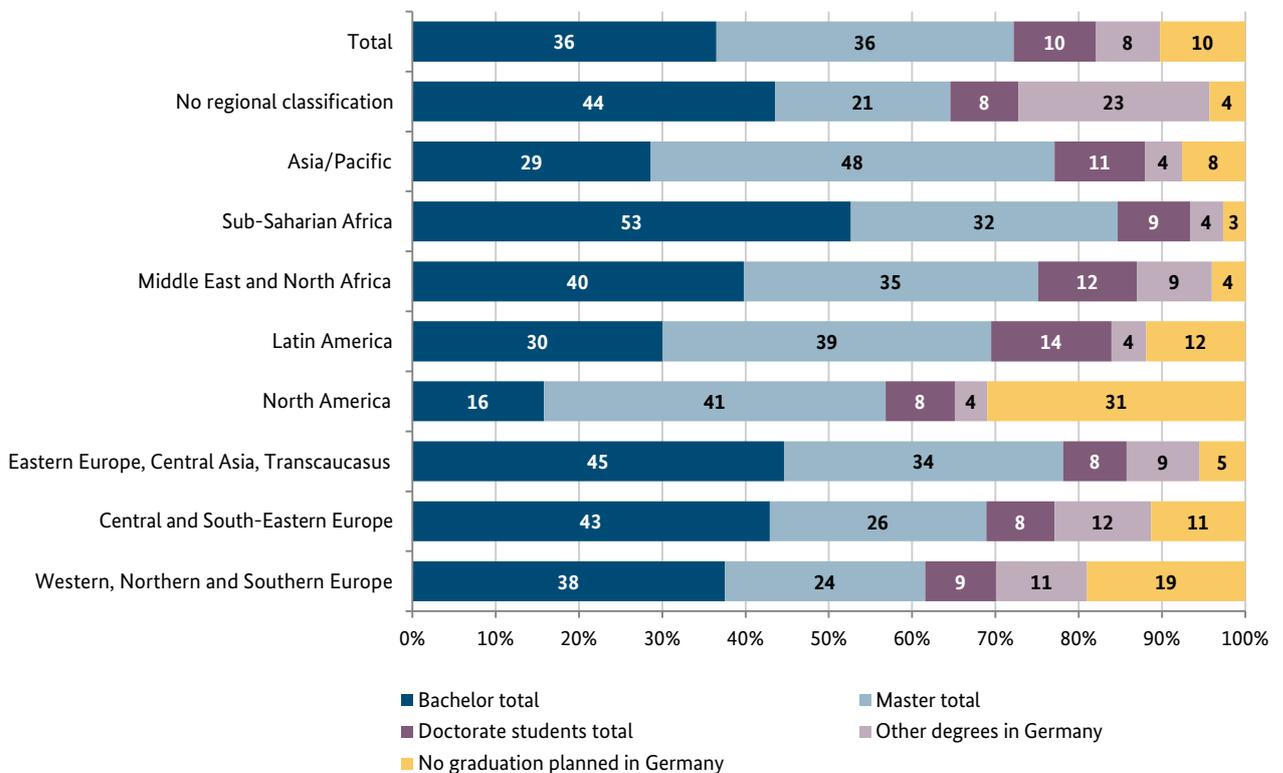
“The overwhelming majority, namely 90%, of all Bildungsausländer studying at German HEIs plan to get a degree in Germany. The share has remained constant over the past ten years. One-tenth of all Bildungsausländer spend only part of their studies in Germany and do not intend to graduate from the HEIs where they study” (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 56).

The numbers of all enrolled 265,484 mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) studying for a bachelor or a master degree in winter semester 2016/17 were roughly equal, with 37% aiming for a bachelor and 36% aiming for a master degree (see Figure 3). However, there are marked differences depending on the region of origin. An above-average number of mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) from North America, Latin America and Asia/Pacific are working towards a master degree, whereas the share of bachelor students is higher among those who come from central and south-eastern Europe, eastern Europe, central Asia, Transcaucasus and sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 3).

### 3.1.4 Subjects

Engineering sciences are the most popular subject with international students, followed by social sciences, law, and economics (Table 2). Including engineering sciences, almost 52% of the international students have chosen a STEM subject (science, technology, engineering, mathematics). A look at the top five nationalities of international students shows that the share of STEM subjects is highest among Indian students, at roughly 77% (see Figure 4). They are less important to students from the Russian Federation, who tend to prefer social sciences, law and economics or humanities and the arts. A relatively large share of Turkish nationals studies social sciences, law or economics, too.

**Figure 3: Mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) studying for a degree by regional origin and type of degree, winter semester 2016/17**



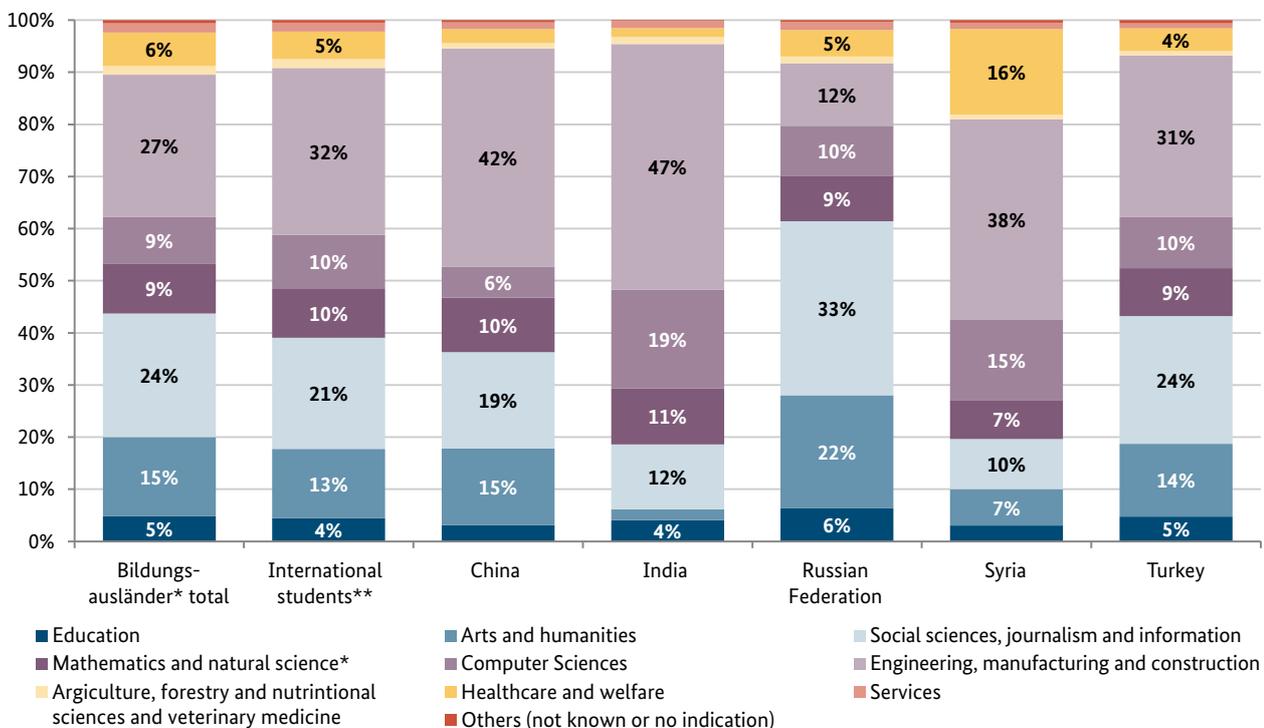
Source: DAAD/DZHW 2018: 63.

**Table 2: International students by subjects and top five countries of origin, winter semester 2017/18**

Nationality	Mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) total	International students	China	India	Russian Federation	Syria	Turkey
Pedagogy	13,599	9,224	1,141	705	692	262	361
Humanities and fine arts	42,909	27,783	5,420	360	2,334	601	1,070
Social sciences, law and economics	66,755	44,487	6,842	2,156	3,602	832	1,866
Natural sciences*	26,781	19,880	3,870	1,859	937	640	703
Informatics	25,637	21,296	2,177	3,260	1,042	1,328	749
Engineering, production and construction	76,814	66,879	15,455	8,160	1,297	3,314	2,364
Agricultural sciences	4,666	3,613	379	229	140	77	65
Healthcare and social sciences	18,073	10,968	998	302	550	1,419	333
Services	5,024	3,600	478	240	167	102	75
Not available or no answer	1,744	1,022	155	23	34	43	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>282,002</b>	<b>208,752</b>	<b>36,915</b>	<b>17,294</b>	<b>10,795</b>	<b>8,618</b>	<b>7,633</b>

\* Mathematics + statistics, physics, biological sciences.

Source: Federal Statistical Office, based on the ISCED fields of education. Top five countries of origin selected on the basis of the total number of mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) who are third-country nationals (= international students).

**Figure 4: Percentage of international students studying a certain subject, winter semester 2017/18**

\* "Bildungsausländer" or "mobile foreign students" have not obtained their higher education entrance qualifications in Germany.

\*\* "International students" are third-country nationals who have obtained their higher education entrance qualifications outside of Germany and who moved to Germany for the purpose of study.

Source: Federal Statistical Office; see Table 2 for more detailed explanations. Excluding "not available" or "no answer". Shares lower than 4% are not displayed in the figure.

### 3.1.5 Language skills of international students

According to the 21st Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs, which dates from 2016, 82% of the mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) claimed that they had already learned German before starting their studies in Germany. The percentage is considerably higher among bachelor than among master students. 57% said their German language skills were good or excellent, whereas 14% said they had only a basic knowledge of the language (Apolinarski/Brands 2018: 21). “In contrast, more than four-fifths said their English was ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ and only 2% claimed they had only a ‘basic knowledge’ of English” (Apolinarski/Brands 2018: 21).

An analysis of the data provided by applicants to uni-assist e.v., the working service point for international student applications, for application to a HEI (see Chapter 4.1.4) allows a breakdown by countries of origin. The German Academic Exchange Service and the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies engaged in such an analysis in their “Wissenschaft Weltoffen” publication. “Applicants are asked about their knowledge of German during the procedure. A look at the answers shows that there are considerable differences depending on the country of origin. In the academic year 2017, the share of applicants who are competent in German pursuant to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (level C1/C2) is highest among Poles (57%) and Bulgarians (52%). The share of applicants with medium-level knowledge (B1/B2) is highest among Vietnamese (91%), Moroccan (89%) and Indonesian (87%) nationals. And India (57) and Nigeria (47%) are the countries where the share of applicants who have only an elementary knowledge of German (level A1/A2) is highest” (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 68).

### 3.1.6 Working alongside studies

The 21st Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs found that 49% of all foreign students worked alongside their studies (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 44).<sup>14</sup> About half (48 %) of the working students claimed that “it was no problem to

work alongside their studies”, whereas 45% “would like to work less in order to allot more time to studying” (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 45).

“The largest share of students (40% [...]) work in temporary jobs; 6% work as tutors. About one-third (35%) of those who work alongside their studies have a job as a student research assistant. Another 17% work in a job which requires a higher education (9%) or vocational degree (8%). 11% each work as paid interns or in other jobs which were not specified any further” (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 46). “More than half of the Bildungsausländer say that their work is related to their studies (58%) or that they can use what they have learned in their courses for their work (56%). Nearly the same percentage (55%) claims that their work provides them with knowledge and experience that help them in their studies” (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 47).

### 3.1.7 Scholarships

According to the Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs, 22% of all mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) benefited from a scholarship in 2016, of which 43% are German scholarships, 39% scholarships from the country of origin, 23% European scholarships, 2% scholarships from international organisations and 5% other scholarships (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 32 et seq.)<sup>15</sup>. At 12%, the share of scholarship beneficiaries in undergraduate courses is considerably below the average (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 32). In contrast, it is considerably higher among international doctoral students, at 49%. For this group, scholarships are almost as important as a source of income as wages (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 32; 43). The percentage of exchange students, who only spend part of their studies in Germany and who are still enrolled at their HEI abroad (DZHW 2017: 5) and who benefit from a scholarship is considerably higher again, at 68% (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 43).<sup>16</sup>

On average, payments from the scholarship programme amounted to EUR 408 for bachelor students,

<sup>14</sup> However, the Social Survey covers other groups of students besides those holding a residence permit pursuant to Section 16 of the Residence Act. This means that many of those polled are subject to other rules concerning employment. In particular, the survey also covers EU citizens who do not need a residence title for study purposes (see DAAD/BMBF 2018a).

<sup>15</sup> Multiple answers were possible in the Social Survey.

<sup>16</sup> Scholarships include Erasmus scholarships, which are usually granted to exchange students within the EU and several other partner countries. 53% of all exchange students surveyed in the 21st Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs 2016 were Erasmus students (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 32; 34).

EUR 642 for master students and EUR 1,139 for doctoral students (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 32; 34).

All in all, financial support from their parents and their own wages are more important sources of money for international students than scholarships (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 40). At the same time, the percentage of scholarship beneficiaries is higher among foreign students than among Germans (Middendorff et al. 2017: 43).

## 3.2 Factors which make students choose Germany

Students who go abroad for their studies may have different, and sometimes very personal, reasons for this decision. Nevertheless, there are several factors which play an important role in the choice of destination. The situation in the country of origin is a major factor, too. The OECD writes that the availability and quality of educational courses in the country of origin plays an important role (OECD 2018: 286). One factor which influences the choice of destination is the expected additional return on education from a course of study in the country of destination (OECD 2018: 286 et seq.). Other economic factors such as “higher economic performance” and “more affordable expenses for mobility and education in the host country” play a role as well (OECD 2018: 286 et seq.). “Non-economic factors such as political and institutional stability in the country of destination and [...] cultural or religious links between the countries of origin and the destinations” may also have an impact on the decision for or against a destination (OECD 2018: 286 et seq.).

The course language is another key factor. Countries where English is spoken are among the most important destinations of international students, in particular the US, the UK and Australia (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 18). Other countries whose official or teaching languages are often used outside their national boundaries may be attractive for international students, too. These include not only German-speaking countries, but also French, Spanish or Russian-speaking countries (OECD 2018: 287).

Factors such as the reputation of certain courses or HEIs are just as important as economic, cultural or language considerations. “Around the world, students are increasingly aware of the quality differences in tertiary education, as university rankings and other international university comparisons are widespread”

(OECD 2018: 287). The so-called STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) attract an above-average percentage of international students, both in Germany and world-wide (see Chapter 3.1.4). According to the OECD, this is due to the fact that these subjects require a lower standard of language skills and due to their high innovative potential and the “better job opportunities associated with a degree in one of these disciplines” (OECD 2018: 283; see also Chapter 7).

Several studies list the following reasons why international students choose Germany as a destination:

- better job opportunities thanks to having studied in Germany (both in Germany and in the country of origin),
- getting specialist knowledge in the subject from studying in Germany,
- good reputation of German universities or specific faculties and degrees (above all in engineering), expectation of good learning conditions and quality of the university courses,
- improving German language skills,
- contacts to persons who already reside in Germany,
- moderate living expenses and high quality of living and social standards in Germany and
- low or non-existent tuition fees (see SVR 2015: 12; Hanganu/Heß 2014: 30; 219 et seq.; Apolinarski/Poskowsky 2013: 45 et seq.; Ripmeester/Pollock 2013: 26).

The classroom language tends to play a less important role, particularly in comparison with countries which offer a considerably larger range of English-language courses. Since a considerable number of international students have learned German before enrolling at a German HEI, a course in German may even be a factor in favour of choosing Germany, or at least not dissuade students from coming (see Chapter 3.1.5; Hanganu/Heß 2014: 220). The Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs in 2012 found that subject-specific and career reasons (obtaining specialist knowledge, better job opportunities) were much more important for the decision to study in Germany than financial reasons (Apolinarski/Poskowsky 2013: 45 – 46; SVR 2015: 12). According to a survey among potential students conducted in 2011, educational expenses in Germany were thought to be roughly the same as in France, Canada or Australia and higher than in Denmark or Singapore (Ripmeester/Pollock 2013: 30). 48% of the survey participants believed that it was difficult or very difficult to get a visa for studying in Germany (Ripmeester/Pollock 2013: 31).

# 4 Legal framework conditions for international students at German HEIs

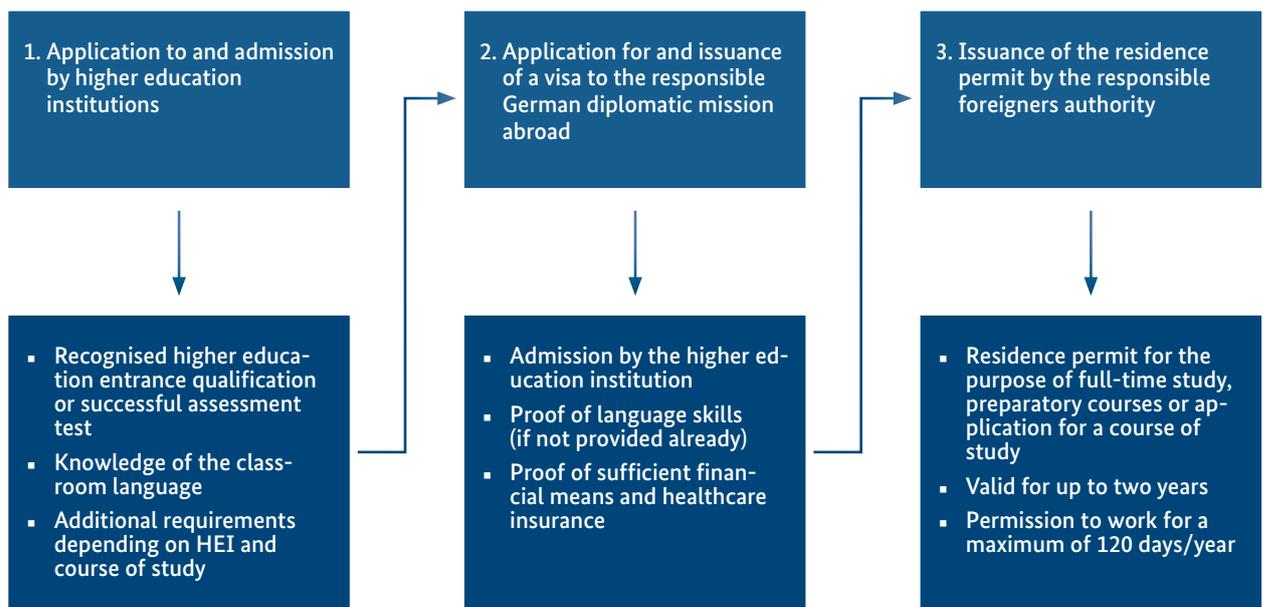
As a rule, international students have to go through a three-stage process to obtain a residence permit for study purposes (see Figure 5).

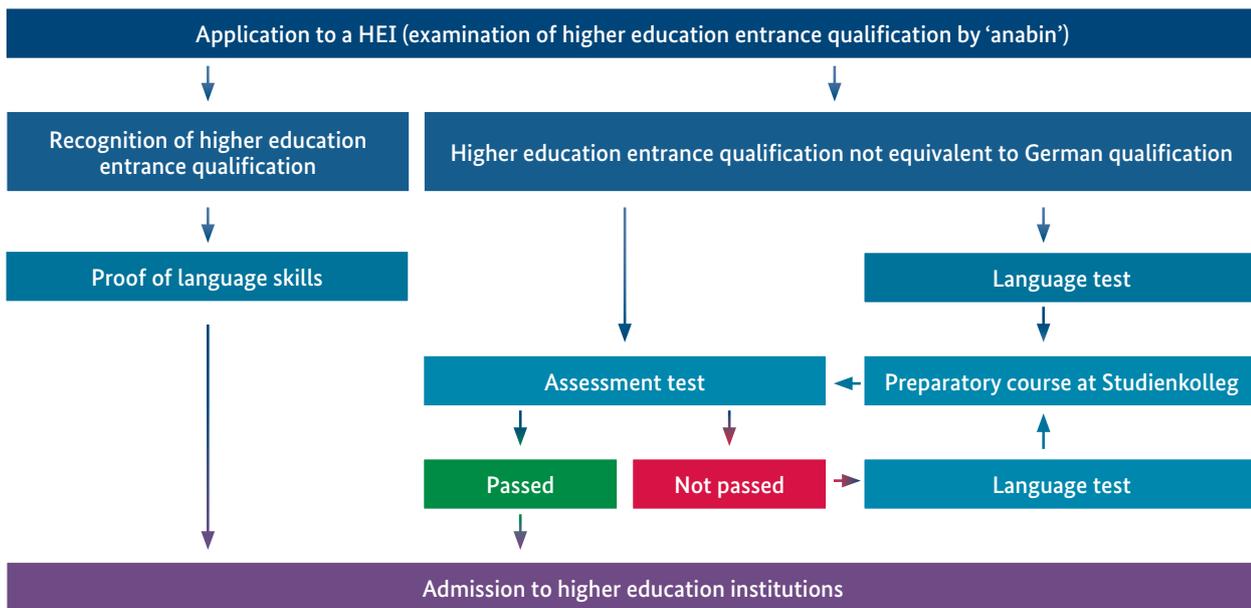
As a first step, students need to apply to and be admitted by the relevant HEI. In a second step, they use the admission certificate to apply for a visa to enter Germany, in case a visa is required to enter the country (Section 41 of the Ordinance Governing Residence). If no admission certificate is available or if the admission depends on the fulfillment of additional criteria, a visa for the purpose of application for a course of study or for preparatory courses may be granted. After having entered Germany, the visa is replaced by a residence permit for the purpose of full-time study, application for a course of study or preparatory measures. The following chapter contains a detailed overview of the steps and requirements.

## 4.1 Application to and admission by a HEI

The HEIs themselves decide on the applications by international students and their admission (DAAD 2017b: 20). However, two requirements need to be met in any case. First, applicants must have acquired a higher education entrance qualification to enroll in a bachelor or state examination course (usually an upper secondary education certificate) which is regarded as equivalent to the German higher education entrance qualification. For enrolment in a master degree course, they must have completed a recognised undergraduate course. Second, they need to prove that they have obtained sufficient knowledge of the classroom language (see Figure 6). The HEIs themselves may set additional admission requirements.

**Figure 5: Steps towards a residence permit for study purposes in Germany**



**Figure 6: Higher education admission for mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) from third countries**

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt; DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 37 (with slight changes).

#### 4.1.1 Higher education entrance qualification

School leaving certificates from EU member states, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland which allow their holders to attend a HEI are usually recognised as equivalent to German school leaving certificates. The same applies to school leaving certificates from German schools abroad (DAAD 2017b: 19). The recognition of school leaving certificates as a higher education entrance qualification from third countries depends on the country and on the type of school leaving certificate. Foreign school leaving certificates may be recognised as “generally” equivalent or as equivalent for specific subjects. Students from certain countries or holders of certain types of school leaving certificates may only be admitted to German HEIs after several semesters of study in their country of origin. There is an exception for several art subjects, where admission may be granted on the basis of work samples or ability tests and without a higher education entrance qualification (DAAD 2017b: 22).

The German Academic Exchange Services provides an online database<sup>17</sup> which contains information about whether the school leaving certificates from numerous countries are regarded as sufficient for admission to a

German HEI. Another database run by the Central Office for Foreign Education ‘anabin’<sup>18</sup> which is an institution by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, provides even more details. Potential students can use these public databases to find out whether their school or higher education degree is recognised for enrolment in Germany. If it is not, students must take an assessment test, which includes both a language test and a test of subject-specific knowledge (DAAD 2017b: 21). Students may attend a so-called Studienkolleg course in preparation for this assessment test; the course usually takes one year or two semesters (see Chapter 5.3). They will need to take a language test before enrolling in a Studienkolleg, as the classroom language is German. HEIs and Studienkollegs may set additional requirements for admission (uni-assist, n.d.).

#### 4.1.2 Required language skills

The HEIs themselves define the required proof of language skills. Students need to prove that they know the classroom language, which is usually German, but may be another language. Master courses in particular may be held in English or, in a very small number

<sup>17</sup> Website of the German Academic Exchange Services with an online database which contains information about whether the school leaving certificates from numerous countries are regarded as sufficient for admission to a German university: [www.daad.de/zulassungsdatenbank](http://www.daad.de/zulassungsdatenbank) (3 Dec. 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Website of the Central Office for Foreign Education which is an institution by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on recognition of educational qualifications specific to the country of origin: <https://anabin.kmk.org> (3 Dec. 2018).

of cases, even other languages (see Chapter 5.2). As a rule, the HEIs demand that students pass a standardised test to prove their language skills. For German, this may be the Test of German as a foreign language (TestDaF), which may be taken in about 100 countries, or the German language examination for higher education entrance (Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang, DSH), which can be taken only in Germany (DAAD 2017b: 22). Applicants who have already taken the Goethe-Zertifikat C2, the Telc Deutsch C1 exam or the German Language Certificate of the Education Ministers Conference (Deutsches Sprachdiplom Stufe II) are exempt. An Abitur (“A-level”) examination taken at a German school abroad also serves as proof of language skills (DAAD 2017b: 22). The website [www.sprachnachweis.de](http://www.sprachnachweis.de) contains an overview of the requirements and acceptable certificates by HEIs and courses. A HEI may also ask students to take preparatory language courses before admission.

#### 4.1.3 Additional requirements

The HEIs may set additional requirements for admission, such as a description of the reasons for the application or an internship. Some HEIs also take into account or rather make it an obligatory part of the examination of access requirements the ‘Test for Academic Studies’ (‘Test für Ausländische Studierende’, TestAS), a standardised aptitude test for foreign students which tests the cognitive abilities of the participants. It can be taken in German and English and consists of a core test and subject-specific test modules for four groups of subjects.<sup>19</sup> The test can be taken only at one of the 281 specific test centres in 76 countries (TestAS 2018). Aptitude tests can also be used by HEIs and Länder to remove formal barriers to admission on the basis of the individual examination of relevant previous knowledge (e.g. if there is no higher education entrance qualification or corresponding proof).

#### 4.1.4 Application procedure

International students will apply either directly to the HEI or to ‘uni-assist e.V.’, the working service point for international student applications. Uni-assist is an association supported by roughly 180 HEIs which pre-

evaluates international applications.<sup>20</sup> Potential students who want to apply to one of its member HEIs send their documents to uni-assist first. Uni-assist checks them for completeness and for compliance with the criteria of the HEI. If all admission requirements are met, the documents are sent on to the HEI, which takes the final decision (uni-assist 2018a). Applications via uni-assist currently cost a fee of EUR 75 for the first desired course of study and of EUR 30 for each additional desired course of study (uni-assist 2018b).

Application deadlines are set by the HEIs, with most HEIs accepting applications for the winter semester until 15 July and applications for the summer semester until 15 January. Deadlines for master and Studienkolleg courses often end at an earlier date (uni-assist 2018c).

#### 4.1.5 Tuition and semester fees

Private universities usually demand tuition fees, which vary, however, depending on the HEI and the course of study. Tuition fees at public HEIs are set by the Länder. Most Länder currently do not demand tuition fees either for bachelor or for most master courses (DAAD/BMBF 2018b).<sup>21</sup> Baden-Württemberg is currently the only Land to demand a tuition fee of EUR 1,500 per semester from international students from non-EU countries. The fee was introduced in the winter semester 2017/18 (EMN/BAMF 2018: 35). However, there are numerous exemptions, for example for students who take part in exchange or double/joint degree programmes, for refugees, for students who are entitled to training assistance (“BAFöG”) or for particularly gifted international students (at the HEI’s discretion; MWK Baden-Württemberg, n.d.b). The Land argues that the number of international students has risen significantly and that the need for advice has increased accordingly (MWK Baden-Württemberg 2017). The Land also argues that 60 % of the foreign students come from countries where tuition fees are comparable or considerably higher.

HEIs which do not levy tuition fees nevertheless levy semester fees from all students. These fees cover administrative expenses and a social contribution to fi-

<sup>19</sup> Humanities, Cultural Studies and Social Sciences, Engineering, Mathematics, Computer Science and Natural Science and Economics (TestAS 2018).

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.uni-assist.de/tools/uni-assist-hochschulen/#tablink-35395a393615112c5180111261> for a list of all member universities (3 Dec.2018).

<sup>21</sup> Some Länder levy tuition fees for a second course of study or for master programmes (DAAD/BMBF 2018b).

nance offers by student services organisations, such as canteens, student residences or sports courses. In some cases, the semester fees also include a public transport ticket. Semester fees vary from HEI to HEI, but usually hover around EUR 250 per semester (DAAD/BMBF 2018b).

## 4.2 Preconditions for obtaining a residence title for study purposes

International students (from non-EU Member States) usually hold a residence permit for the purpose of full-time studies (Section 1 subs. 1 first sentence of the Residence Act). They may also obtain a residence permit for the purpose of applying for a course of study (Section 16 subs. 7 of the Residence Act). A residence permit may also be granted for measures in preparation for studies, such as attendance of a Studienkolleg, a compulsory internship or a preparatory language course (Section 16 subs. 2 of the Residence Act).

Depending on how much they work, doctoral students may be issued with a residence permit for researchers (Section 20 of the Residence Act) or possibly a EU Blue Card (Section 19a of the Residence Act). A residence permit pursuant to Section 20 of the Residence Act is usually granted if the working hours (for example as a research assistant) exceed those permitted for students holding a residence permit pursuant to Section 16 of the Residence Act (see Chapter 4.5).

In addition, third-country nationals holding another type of German residence title may be allowed to study under certain circumstances. This applies, for example, to beneficiaries of international protection who hold a residence title for humanitarian reasons or third-country nationals who hold a residence title for family reasons.

The residence title is issued by the local foreigners authority once the student has come to Germany. As a rule, students have to apply for a visa to the German diplomatic mission in the country of origin before they enter Germany. If they spend less than twelve months in Germany (for example in the framework of a student exchange programme), they may be permitted to stay on the grounds of the visa alone (Hanganu/Heß 2014: 49).

### 4.2.1 Visa

Once students have been admitted to a course of study, they usually need to apply for a visa for education purposes. The preconditions for the issuance of a visa depend on the preconditions for the issuance of the relevant residence title (Parusel/Schneider 2012: 24). The visa can be regarded as a “transitory residence permit”. It is granted for three months at least and twelve months at most and entitles students to enter and stay in Germany. After having entered the country, international students usually apply for a residence title to the local foreigners authority.

#### Visa requirement

Students from countries whose nationals are exempt from the visa requirement for short stays of up to 90 days also need a visa if they want to exceed this length of stay (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik 2019: 17). However, there are some exemptions from this rule (see the box). As a rule, the responsible foreigners authority needs to approve the issuance of a visa (Section 31 subs. 1 no. 1 of the Ordinance Governing Residence).<sup>22</sup> In the case of visa for study purposes the approval is considered as given if the foreigners authority does not object within three weeks and two working days or notifies the diplomatic mission that the exam cannot take place within this period (Section 31 subs. 1 fifth sentence of the Ordinance Governing Residence). The visa fee is EUR 75 (Section 46 of the Ordinance Governing Residence).

#### Processing and waiting times

According to the Federal government, it takes the authorities roughly three to four weeks to process applications for visa for study purposes, “provided that all application documents are complete” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018a: 16). “Only in exceptional cases will applications for visa for study or research purposes be delayed, as the diplomatic missions abroad set appointments for the submission of visa applications and thus accept only the number of applications which they can process in the near future. Processing may take longer if documents are missing, if additional documents are necessary or if additional German au-

<sup>22</sup> Exemptions are granted to scholarship beneficiaries and students who have obtained their university entrance qualification at a German school abroad or a HEI supported by German funds, provided that they have obtained the German Language Certificate of the Education Ministers Conference (Deutsches Sprachdiplom) at the same time (Section 34 of the Ordinance Governing Residence).

### Info-Box: Exemptions from the visa requirement for entry

Nationals of the following countries do not need a visa to enter Germany and may apply directly for a residence permit to the responsible foreigners authority within 90 days (Section 41 subs. 1 of the Ordinance Governing Residence):

- Australia
- Israel
- Japan
- Canada
- Republic of Korea
- New Zealand
- United States of America

The same applies to nationals of the following countries, provided that they do not plan to work in Germany or plan to work only in addition to their studies and in jobs which do not require approval by the Federal Labour Office (Section 41 subs. 2 of the Ordinance Governing Residence; DAAD 2017c: 4).

- Andorra
- Brazil
- El Salvador
- Honduras
- Monaco
- San Marino

thorities need to be involved” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 8).

Depending on the diplomatic mission abroad, waiting times for an appointment for handing in a visa application may differ. Most diplomatic missions abroad run an online booking system, with the period for which appointments may be booked varying between a few days and 14 weeks (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 3). “Diplomatic missions abroad which experience extremely high demand for appointments have introduced an appointment list, which applicants may use to request an appointment. Appointments for the submission of a visa application are then handed out chronologically. This allows all parties involved to calculate rough waiting times for an appointment, which are then released on the internet sites of the diplomatic mission or provided by an automatic e-mail” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 3). As of September 2018, the waiting times exceeded 12 weeks at some diplomatic missions abroad, for example in New Delhi and Bangalore (India), Rabat (Morocco), Is-

lamabad (Pakistan), Manila (Philippines) or Belgrade (Serbia). The waiting period for the diplomatic mission to Teheran (Iran) was more than one year at the time (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 29).

According to the Federal government, the long waiting periods in Teheran and other locations are due to a significant increase in the number of visa applications and the resultant lack of staff and space, which it takes some time to resolve (Deutscher Bundestag 2018a: 15 et seq.; see also Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 4). The Federal Foreign Office is therefore expanding capacities at some locations; for example, a new visa department was completed in Mumbai (India) in May 2018, and a new visa department is currently being built in Teheran (Iran) (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 5).

### Academic test centres (Akademische Prüfstellen)

The German diplomatic missions to China, Vietnam and Mongolia have established academic test centres (Akademische Prüfstellen, APS), which conduct preliminary tests before the issuance of a visa. “The APS is a service offered by the culture department of the German embassy in cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service. It checks whether the documents provided are accurate [...] and conducts an interview with applicants. The German embassy will issue visa only to applicants who have obtained an APS certification” (HRK 2018a). The host HEIs may ask the APS for a streamlined procedure if the offer of a place in a course of study was made after a higher education selection procedure, if the course of study forms part of a partnership or exchange agreement or if the students have already attended a Studienkolleg (HRK 2018a).

The APS were established due to rising numbers of applications from China in particular in order to ensure a thorough examination of the applications and prevent abuse of the option to enter Germany for study purposes, for example by providing falsified school certificates (Mayer et al. 2012: 28). The Federal government is currently considering the establishment of APS in other countries (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 6).

### 4.2.2 Residence title for the purpose of full-time studies

A residence title for the purpose of full-time studies is granted if the following preconditions are met:

- Admission to a course of study at a state or state-recognised HEI or a comparable educational establishment<sup>23</sup> in Germany,
- Proof of sufficient financial means,
- Proof of healthcare insurance,
- Proof of sufficient knowledge of the course language (level A2 of the CEFR<sup>24</sup>) if the language skills were not tested during the admission procedure.

### Admission to a course of study

In this context, the term “course of study” covers undergraduate and graduate HEI studies (bachelor, state examination, master courses) as well as doctoral studies. “Summer and graduation courses at higher education level” are included as well (Hailbronner 2017: 152).

If visa applicants cannot provide a higher education admission certificate at the time of application, they can apply for a visa for the purpose of applying for a course of study (see Chapter 4.2.4). In case of a conditional admission, which is not dependent on the applicant’s attendance of a preparatory course, the authorities may grant a visa at their discretion. In all other cases, applicants have a legal right to be granted a visa (Section 16 subs. 6 first sentence no. 1 lit. a of the Residence Act).

### Sufficient financial means

Students have to prove that they have sufficient financial means at their disposal to meet their living expenses, including healthcare insurance. The actual amount depends on the amounts set out in the Federal Training Assistance Act (Section 2 subs. 3 fifth sentence of the Residence Act). In 2018, support under the Federal Training Assistance Act amounted to EUR 735 per month at most (BMBF 2018a). Since foreign students do not pay into the nursing care insurance, they do not have to prove this (Section 13a subs. 2 of the German Federal Training Assistance Act is explicitly excluded in Section 2 subs. 3 sentence 5 of the Residence Act), so that international students only have to prove EUR 720 per month (AA 2018: 13). The

relevant amount is published annually by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, for Building and Home Affairs in the Federal Gazette. Ultimately, the foreigners authority will decide whether the financial means are sufficient. In doing so, it will take into account the local conditions (for example, rents and other living expenses are often above the average in major cities and below in rural areas). As a rule, students have to prove that they have sufficient financial means for at least one year. There are several options to do so, such as:

- Proof of the parents’ incomes or wealth,
- Declaration of commitment by a person who is resident in Germany (see Section 68 of the Residence Act),
- Payment of a guarantee to a blocked bank account,
- Provision of a bank guarantee, or
- Presentation of a scholarship (DAAD/BMBF 2018c).

The German diplomatic mission abroad which grants the visa will decide on the necessary type of proof (DAAD/BMBF 2018c).

### Health insurance

Healthcare insurance may be taken out in Germany or in the country of origin, provided that Germany and the country of origin have signed a social security agreement<sup>25</sup> and the healthcare insurance provider from the country of origin is recognised under this agreement (DAAD 2017d). All students are obliged to take out healthcare insurance and to provide proof of this at the time of enrolment (Section 5 subs. 1 no. 9 of the Social Code Book V<sup>26</sup>; DAAD 2017d). “Statutory healthcare insurance providers in Germany are obliged to offer special tariffs to students up to 30 years of age or up to the end of the 14th semester of study. On average, these special tariffs amount to about EUR 80 [...]. Tariffs vary because every healthcare insurance provider may levy individual additional fees” (DAAD 2017d). Several student services organisations offer service packages for international students, which may include healthcare insurance or help with finding a statutory or private healthcare insurance provider (see Chapter 6.1).

23 There is no legal definition of the term “comparable educational establishment” (Hailbronner 2017: 153). It may cover, for example, private universities which have not yet been state-recognised or “establishments which offer certain accredited courses of study” (Marx 2017: 341; Hailbronner 2017: 153). “Before granting a residence permit for studies at a comparable educational establishment, the authorities shall get a statement by the top Land authority on higher education matters (no. 16.0.3. of the General Administrative Regulation to the Residence Act)” (Marx 2017: 341).

24 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

25 The website of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS 2018) provides a list of social security agreements concluded between the Federal Republic of Germany and other countries.

26 Social Code (SGB) Book Five (V) – Statutory healthcare insurance.

## Language skills

As a rule, students already have to provide proof of their knowledge of the course language when they apply to the HEI (see Chapter 4.1). If that is not the case, they will need to provide proof of “sufficient” language skills during the visa and residence title application procedures (Section 16 subs. 1 fourth sentence of the Residence Act), i.e. knowledge of the language at the level A2 of the CEFR.

## Information about the preconditions

As a rule, the German diplomatic missions abroad provide information about the preconditions for applying for a visa, leaflets and checklists on their internet sites. This information may list additional required documents, such as a curriculum vitae or a description of reasons for the application; see *Vertretungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Russischen Föderation 2018: 6*; *Vertretungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Volksrepublik China 2018: 3*).

### 4.2.3 Residence titles for measures in preparation for studies and language courses

Before starting on their proper course of study, students may participate in preparatory courses. In this case, too, they will be granted a residence title for the purpose of study (Section 16 subs. 1 second sentence of the Residence Act). The law defines measures in preparation of study as follows:

- Attendance of a preparatory language course if the applicant has been admitted to full-time studies and this admission depends on him or her attending a preparatory language course,
- Attendance of a Studienkolleg or comparable institution, provided that the student can prove that he or she has been accepted for the course (Section 16 subs. 1 third sentence of the Residence Act; see Chapter 5.3).

If these preconditions are met, students have a legal right to the residence title, just as in the case of a residence title for the purpose of full-time studies. The legal preconditions and provisions concerning the length of validity, extension, change and fees are the same as for the residence title for the purpose of full-time studies, with one exception: the higher education admission certificate must be conditional upon the attendance of a language course or the student must

have been accepted for a Studienkolleg course in place of a higher education course. In addition, students may only work during university holidays in the first year of stay (see Chapter 4.5). Moreover, students are not obliged to take out healthcare insurance during their participation in preparatory measures, which means that they cannot benefit from the student tariffs of the statutory healthcare providers (DAAD 2017d).<sup>27</sup> They will need to take out healthcare insurance in their country of origin, if this insurance is recognised in Germany (see Chapter 4.2.2), or private healthcare insurance. Once students have completed the preparatory course of study, they may switch to statutory healthcare insurance, provided they are still under the age of 30 (DSW 2018a). If students successfully complete the preparatory course, the residence title may be extended for the purpose of full-time study (Section 16 subs. 4 first sentence of the Residence Act; Marx 2017: 348).

### 4.2.4 Residence titles for the purpose of applying for a course of study

“Those still waiting for a letter of acceptance or having to take an entrance examination may apply for a student applicant visa” (EMN/BAMF 2018: 33). Instead of the higher education admission certificate, applicants have to provide their higher education entrance qualification and proof of their application to or contact with HEIs (see, for example, *Vertretungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Russischen Föderation 2018: 6*). Proof of sufficient healthcare insurance is necessary for this type of residence title, too (DAAD 2017c: 7). Moreover, the German diplomatic mission abroad may request visa applicants to provide proof of sufficient financial means for the subsequent course of study (DAAD 2017c: 8). “In most cases, it is the foreigners authorities in Germany which request proof of sufficient financial means when the student applicant visa is to be replaced by a residence title for the purpose of applying for a course of study or for full-time studies” (DAAD 2017c: 8).

Applicants have no legal right to be granted a residence title, even if they meet the requirements (see Section 16 subs. 7 first sentence of the Residence Act: “may ... be issued”). The visa for the purpose of applying for a course of study is usually granted for three months and may be extended by a maximum of six months by the foreigners authority once the applicant has entered Germany (DAAD 2017c: 9). This means

<sup>27</sup> Provisions for Studienkolleg attendance differ (DWS 2018).

that the maximum duration of stay is nine months (Section 16 subs. 7 second sentence of the Residence Act). The foreigners authority can replace the residence title for the purpose of applying for a course of study by a residence title for the purpose of preparatory measures or for the purpose of full-time studies (DAAD 2017c: 9).

The student applicant visa is relevant in practice because the processing of both the higher education and the visa application may take comparatively long. In many cases, students do not have enough time to get a visa after having received their acceptance letter. Potential students may therefore use this option to apply for a visa before they have been admitted to a HEI (see DSW 2018b).

#### 4.2.5 Validity, extension and revocation of and fees for the residence permit

##### Validity

A residence permit for study or preparatory measures is granted for at least one year; its validity should not exceed two years (Section 16 subs. 2 first sentence of the Residence Act). If the students take part in an EU or multilateral programme that comprises mobility measures (such as a semester of study abroad) or if their stay in Germany is based on an agreement between HEIs, the residence permit shall be issued for at least two years (Section 16 subs. 2 second sentence of the Residence Act). If the course of study takes less than two years, the residence permit shall be granted only for the duration of the course of study (Section 16 subs. 2 third sentence of the Residence Act). It is the foreigners authority which ultimately decides on the period of validity. In doing so, it may, for example, consider the period for which proof of sufficient financial means is provided. “The total residence period for studies (including further qualification by obtaining a Master’s and Doctorate degree), and any necessary preparation for studies and subsequent practical phases – but without applying for a study place [...] – may not be more than ten years as a rule (see No. 16.2.7 of the General Administrative Regulation to the Residence Act)” (Mayer et al. 2012: 24 et seq.).

##### Extension

The residence permit shall be extended if the course of study has not yet been completed, but may be completed within a reasonable period of time (Section 16 subs. 2 fourth sentence of the Residence Act). The

responsible foreigners authority will need to gauge whether this is the case (Marx 2017: 348). In doing so, it will “consider whether the student is studying properly. This is the case [for example, note from the authors] as long as the applicant does not exceed the average length of study for the relevant subject at the relevant HEI by more than three semesters” (Marx 2017: 348) and therefore the completion of the studies does not appear to be in jeopardy.

In this context, numerous HEIs and their International Offices cooperate closely with the local foreigners authorities and sometimes use case conferences to jointly work out solutions for individual cases if the foreigners authorities can only agree to a limited extension of the residence permit on the basis of the facts of the case. On the basis of jointly agreed conditions, extensions can sometimes be granted in such cases, which is at the discretion of the immigration authorities.

##### Change of the course of study

As a rule, students may change their course of study within their field during the first 18 months or three semesters (16.2.5 of the General Administrative Regulation to the Residence Act; for more details see Marx 2017: 350 et seq.). A change of the residence purpose, for example towards employment, is usually not possible, unless the foreigner is legally entitled to the new residence title (Section 16 subs. 4 third sentence of the Residence Act).<sup>28</sup>

The residence title may be revoked under certain circumstances, for example because the student does not make adequate progress with his or her studies, pursues an economic activity without having obtained the necessary permission or the conditions under which the residence title is to be granted (see above) are no longer met (Section 52 subs. 3 first sentence of the Residence Act). If a residence title is to be revoked on the grounds of insufficient progress with the studies, the authorities have to take into account the average length of studies in the relevant subject at the relevant HEI and the student’s personal situation (Section 52 subs. 3 first sentence of the Residence Act; see also Möller 2016: AufenthG § 52 margin no. 32).<sup>29</sup>

28 In case of a legal entitlement to a residence title this residence title must be granted if all conditions for its issuance are met. The authority has no discretion in this case. This may apply to residence titles granted for family reasons or to the Blue Card EU (Section 19a of the Residence Act).

29 If a residence title is to be revoked for reasons which lie within the responsibility of the HEI and are beyond the student’s control, the student must be given the opportunity to apply for

## Fees for the residence permit

The regular fee for the issuance of the residence permit is EUR 100 and the fee for its extension is EUR 93 (Section 45 of the Ordinance Governing Residence). Scholarship beneficiaries may be exempt from these fees (Section 52 subs. 5 no. 2 of the Ordinance Governing Residence). The processing and issuance time will depend on the situation at the relevant foreigners authority.

## 4.3 Mobility of international students within the EU: The Students and Researchers Directive and its implementation in Germany

The EU Students and Researchers Directive was transposed into German law on 1 August 2017 with the 'Act to Implement the EU Residence Directives on Labour Migration'. The Directive also includes provisions for third-country nationals who reside in the EU for the purposes of training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing. With regard to international students, the Directive contains general residence law provisions and a procedure to facilitate mobility within the EU.

The most important amendment to the Residence Act triggered by the Students and Researchers Directive is that students are now entitled to a residence permit for study purposes and the decision is no longer at the discretion of the authorities (Section 16 subs. 1 first sentence of the Residence Act, see EMN/BAMF 2018: 35). In addition, students are now entitled to a residence title for the purpose of seeking a job after graduation. Moreover, the law now allows students who drop out of a HEI to take up vocational training and obtain a residence permit for this purpose (see Chapter 7.1.2).

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admission to another HEI (Section 16 subs. 8 of the Residence Act). This may be the case if the HEI files for insolvency, if the HEI violates its legal obligations regarding social security, taxation, labour rights or working conditions or if it is found to have been established with the purpose of facilitating the entry of third-country nationals (see Article 21 para. 2 of the Students and Researchers Directive (Directive 2016/801/EU)).

The notification procedure introduced by the Directive makes it considerably easier for international students to move within the EU. Third-country nationals who study in another EU Member State who hold a residence permit for study purposes and plan to stay in Germany for a maximum of 360 days for part of their studies do not need to obtain a German residence title, provided that the stay in Germany is covered by an agreement between a German HEI and a HEI in the other Member State or by a Union or multilateral exchange programme (Section 16a subs. 1 first sentence of the Residence Act). Similar to the procedure for a residence permit for study purposes, the student must provide proof that his or her subsistence is secure (Section 16a subs. 1 first sentence no. 5 of the Residence Act).

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees acts as national contact point for the notification procedure. The host HEI shall provide all necessary documents (including information about the intended course of study and the residence permit issued by the Member State) to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, which will involve the foreigners authority at the location of the HEI. Unless the foreigners authority rejects the application within 30 days, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees shall issue the student with a certificate which confirms his or her right to enter and stay in Germany (Section 16a subs. 6 of the Residence Act). The Skilled Labour Immigration Act provides for the BAMF to carry out the notification procedure in future without the participation of the foreigners authority (see Chapter 4.6). Furthermore, the national contact point within the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is the central point of contact for authorities and HEIs from the EU Member States and from Germany on all issues concerning student mobility.

## 4.4 Cooperation between HEIs and foreigners authorities

While the HEIs are responsible for the admission of international students and for all study-related issues, the local foreigners authorities deal with residence and passport-law matters. Any cooperation between the HEIs and the foreigners authorities, either in an institutionalised framework or in individual cases, depends on the local institutions. Some HEIs and foreigners authorities have established cooperation frameworks which are also or explicitly directed at international students or researchers (see HRK 2015 for examples).

These cooperation frameworks may include mobile consultations by the foreigners authority at the premises of the HEI or special hours for students at the foreigners authority, mutual contact persons for the authorities or regular conferences to discuss individual cases and find joint solutions (see Memar/Wohlge-muth 2015: 8). Numerous foreigners authorities introduced such cooperation as part of the two-year pilot project "Foreigners Authorities - Welcome Authorities", which was carried out by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees with ten foreigners authorities starting in 2013 (BAMF 2015: 1). One example of this is the Weimar Foreigners Authority, which set up a mobile workplace at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, where international students could register in the civil register and also apply for a residence permit and for the extension of their residence title (Ausländerbe-hörde Weimar 2015: 1).

## 4.5 (Social) Rights of international students in Germany

### 4.5.1 Gainful employment

Persons who take part in preparatory measures for a course of study in Germany may only work during the holidays during their first year of stay in Germany (Section 16 subs. 3 second sentence of the Residence Act). International students who hold a residence permit for the purpose of full-time studies (Section 16 subs. 1 first sentence of the Residence Act) may work for 120 full or 240 half days per year.<sup>30</sup> Only actual working days will be counted towards this limit. It does not matter whether they work uninterruptedly, for example during the university break, or for a few hours a day over a longer period of time (Marx 2017: 355). There is no time limit on student employment at a HEI or other research institution (Section 16 subs. 3 first sentence of the Residence Act; Hailbronner 2017: 158). There are no restrictions or provisions concerning the work students may do. Since the residence permit allows them to work, neither the foreigners authority

nor the Federal Labour Office (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA) need to approve (see Hailbronner 2017: 158). However, this permission to work covers only employment, not self-employment, such as freelance work (Marx 2017: 356). While freelance work is possible in principle, approval by the foreigners authority is needed (Section 21 subs. 6 of the Residence Act; Marx 2017: 356).

Internships which are an obligatory part of the course of study or verifiably necessary to achieve the education purpose are covered by the purpose of stay for higher education studies and therefore also covered by the residence permit for educational purposes. As this applies for an employment without the need for consent of the Federal Labour Office, such internships are not counted towards the permitted working days (Section 15 no. 2 of the Employment Regulation). However, voluntary internships will be counted towards the permitted working days.

If an employment exceeds the number of permitted working days, the permission of the foreigners office and the approval of the Federal Labour Office is required (Section 4 subs. 2 sentence 3 of the Residence Act). This also applies to voluntary internships. If students work in a job which is unrelated to their studies these internships may be approved by the local foreigners office, if this does not imply a change of purpose of stay and the successful graduation is not endangered (see 16.3.7 of the General Administrative Regulation to the Residence Act). The provisions of Section 39 subs. 3 in conjunction with Section 4 of the Residence Act shall apply to the granting of BA approval. Internships are an important opportunity to get into contact with companies, i.e. potential employers after graduation (SVR 2015: 22; see also Chapter 3.1.6 and Chapter 7).

### 4.5.2 Family reunification

#### Family reunification

Family members may be allowed to join international students under certain circumstances. The general provisions concerning family reunification with third-country nationals apply.<sup>31</sup> As a rule, only spouses and

<sup>30</sup> A working day is counted as a half day if up to four hours are worked, assuming that regular working hours are eight hours per day. By this logic, a working day is counted as a full day if more than four hours are worked (Hailbronner 2017: 158). "If the regular working hours are ten hours, a working day will be counted as a full day if more than five hours are worked" (Fleuß 2018: AufenthG § 16 margin no. 38).

<sup>31</sup> This study only focuses on persons who hold a residence permit for study purposes (Section 16 of the Residence Act). In addition, it only considers a situation where the family members are third-country nationals, too. For detailed information on family reunification with third-country nationals see Grote (2017).

civil partners<sup>32</sup> and minor children of international students may join their spouses, civil partners or parents in Germany; other family members may only come to Germany in order to avoid particular hardship (Section 27 subs. 2 and Section 36 subs. 2 first sentence of the Residence Act; Grote 2017: 21). If family members are allowed to immigrate, their residence permit shall be valid for at least one year and at most for the period for which the residence permit of the student they join is valid (Section 27 subs. 4 of the Residence Act). Beyond joining a student from the country of origin, third-country nationals may also obtain a residence permit for the purpose of family reunification by “marrying a foreigner who resides in Germany” (Mayer et al. 2012: 29; see Section 30 of the Residence Act).

### Immigration of children

As a rule, minor, unmarried children of international students may join their parents in Germany if the children are below the age of 16, if the student in Germany has the sole right of care and custody or if both parents reside in Germany (Section 32 subs. 1 of the Residence Act). If the parents share the right of care and custody, the other parent needs to give his or her consent (Section 32 subs. 3 of the Residence Act). Children aged 16 or over who do not come to Germany together with their parent need to speak German or appear, on the basis of their education and way of life to date, to be able to integrate into the way of life in the Federal Republic of Germany (Section 32 subs. 2 first sentence of the Residence Act).

### Spouses and civil partners

If spouses or civil partners of students holding a residence permit pursuant to Section 16 of the Residence Act want to join their spouses or civil partners in Germany, the following conditions must be met:

- Sufficient living space must be available (Section 29 subs. 1 no. 2 of the Residence Act; for more details see Grote 2017: 26),

- Subsistence of both spouses or civil partners must be secure (Section 2 subs. 3 first sentence and Section 5 subs. 1 no. 1 of the Residence Act),
- Both spouses or civil partners must be above the age of 18 (Section 30 subs. 1 first sentence no. 1 of the Residence Act),
- The spouse or civil partner must have at least a basic knowledge of German (level A1 CEFR) (cf. Section 30 subs. 1 first sentence no. 2 of the Residence Act),
- The student must have held a residence permit for at least two years, which may be extended and which does not rule out the subsequent issuance of a permanent settlement permit (Section 30 subs. 1 first sentence no. 3 lit. d of the Residence Act) or
- The stay in Germany will probably extend beyond one year and the marriage or civil partnership already existed before their entry to Germany (Section 30 subs. 1 first sentence no. 3 lit. e of the Residence Act).

The requirement to prove a basic knowledge of German may be waived under certain circumstances. For example, nationals of those countries for which no visa is required even for longer-term stays do not need to prove their knowledge of German (cf. Section 30 subs. 1 third sentence no. 4 of the Residence Act; see Chapter 4.2.1). Another exemption applies for spouses and registered partners if the “need for integration is discernibly minimal” (Section 30 subs. 1 third sentence no. 3 of the Residence Act). As a rule, this provision covers higher education graduates who will probably be able to find a job in Germany without having to attend a language course and who are likely to be able to “integrate themselves into the economic, social and cultural life in the Federal Republic of Germany without state support measures” (cf. Section 4 subs. 2 sentence 2 no. 1 lit a and no. 2 of the Ordinance on Integration Courses). Spouses or civil partners who are “unable to provide evidence of basic German language skills on account of a physical or mental illness or disability” are exempt as well, as are cases in which it is impossible or unreasonable to expect the spouse to provide proof of his or her language skills before entry (cf. Section 30 subs. 1 second sentence nos. 3 and 6 of the Residence Act).

The probable length of stay of more than one year does not refer to the validity of the residence permit, but to the purpose of the stay (Marx 2017: 522). The course of study must therefore take one year at least (Mayer et al. 2012: 29). “Other provisions apply only if it is highly likely that the residence title of the foreigner to be joined will not be extended beyond one

32 “Same-sex civil partnerships concluded under foreign law are regarded as ‘civil partnerships’ if they are recognised by the state and are materially similar to German civil partnerships” (Marx 2017: 482). Since the entry into force of the ‘Act on the introduction of a right to same-sex marriage’ (of 20 July 2017, BGBl. I no. 52, p. 2787) on 10 October 2017, same-sex couples may marry in Germany. Existing civil partnerships under the Act on Registered Life Partnerships will remain in force, but can be converted into a marriage (Section 20a of the Act on Registered Life Partnerships). Since the entry into force of this law, it is no longer possible to enter into a civil partnership (Section 3 subs. 3 of the Act on the introduction of a right to same-sex marriage).

year or that the foreigner will permanently leave Germany before one year is over” (30.1.3.2 of the General Administrative Regulation to the Residence Act). The one-year period starts to run on the date on which the application for a visa for the purpose of family reunification is filed (30.1.3.2 of the General Administrative Regulation to the Residence Act).

Family members are entitled to seek gainful employment (Section 27 subs. 5 of the Residence Act) or to enrol in a course of study. As a rule, family members of international students are entitled to participation in an integration course if they stay permanently<sup>33</sup> in Germany (Section 44 subs. 1 first sentence no. 1 lit. b of the Residence Act). Persons with a discernibly minimal need for integration (see above) or sufficient knowledge of German are not entitled to a place in an integration course (Section 44 subs. 3 first sentence nos. 2 and 3 of the Residence Act). However, they may participate if a place is available (Section 44 subs. 4 first sentence of the Residence Act).

## 4.6 Planned amendments to the law under the Skilled Labour Immigration Act

The planned Skilled Labour Immigration Act will probably lead to amendments for international students, too. The following paragraphs describe only those amendments foreseen in the draft version of the bill adopted by the Federal government on 19 December 2018 (BMI 2018).

The draft contains a basic provision on stays for educational purposes:

“Foreigners’ access to educational opportunities will promote education and international understanding and help to meet Germany’s needs of qualified labour. Beyond strengthening international scientific relationships, it will also contribute to international development. It shall be provided in such a way that public security interests are safeguarded” (BMI 2018: 10).

Retaining international students, promoting international cooperation and supporting international development are explicitly mentioned as goals of having students and vocational trainees come to Germany (see BMI 2018: 102).

The new draft still does not contain concrete minimum language requirements for the issuance of a residence permit for study purposes. In their place, students will need to “prove that they have sufficient knowledge of the classroom language for the course of study”, similar to the current provisions for the case that students have not yet proved their language skills during the higher education admission procedure (BMI 2018: 11). According to the reasons for the law, this will require a “knowledge of the language at the level B2” CEFR at least (BMI 2018: 104). Moreover, the draft foresees a harmonisation and clarification of potential changes of residence status (BMI 2018: 12). Accordingly, it shall be possible during the course of study – i.e. before or without successful completion of the course of study – to move from a residence title for the purpose of study to another residence title “for the purpose of undergoing qualified professional training, of qualified employment, of employment on the basis of highly practical occupational knowledge pursuant to Section 19c subs. 2 or in cases of legal entitlement” (BMI 2018: 12).

In addition, there will be amendments to the notification procedure, which ensures the mobility of international students within the EU. In the future, the procedure is to be “conducted in full by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in order to ensure that it is completed within the short period allowed for refusal (30 days)” (BMI 2018: 106). Once the certificate has been issued or refused by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the responsibility for all residence-law provisions and measures shifts to the responsible foreigners authority (BMI 2018: 106).

<sup>33</sup> A stay is usually regarded as permanent if the residence permit is valid for at least one year or if the person has held a residence permit for more than 18 months, unless the stay is of a temporary nature (Section 44 subs. 1 second sentence of the Residence Act; BAMF 2018).

# 5 Measures to attract international students

## 5.1 Information provision and marketing

There are plenty of information services and marketing measures on studying in Germany. First, there are central platforms and associations, which act at a national level and represent HEIs in Germany as a whole. The German Academic Exchange Service is the most important institution in this area. Second, the Länder, which bear the main responsibility for education and research policies, run their own campaigns and provide their own information. And third, numerous HEIs themselves try to attract students. Their measures range from providing information on the relevant HEI's website to establishing international offices or transnational education projects.

### 5.1.1 Measures and initiatives by the German Academic Exchange Service

The German Academic Exchange Service “implements, on behalf of and with funds provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the global image campaign ‘Study in Germany – Land of Ideas’<sup>34</sup>, which informs international students about studying and living in Germany. The goal is to promote Germany as a place for study and research and get graduates and doctoral students in particular to consider studying for a course of study or doctorate in Germany” (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). At the same time, the campaign ‘Research in Germany’ addresses doctoral students and postdocs worldwide and promotes Germany as a research location.<sup>35</sup> It is run jointly by the German Academic Exchange Service, the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). The website of the German Academic

Exchange Service also provides comprehensive information about studying in Germany.

Moreover, the German Academic Exchange Service has built a large international network during the past few decades. In 2018, it consisted of 15 regional offices and 57 information centres (ICs) in 60 countries within and outside Europe (see Figure 7).

Staff at the 15 regional offices of the German Academic Exchange Service, eleven of which are located outside Europe,<sup>36</sup> and at the information centres advise students and researchers who are interested in coming to Germany for study or research purposes. The regional offices and information centres

“use targeted marketing measures, such as fairs or information events, to paint an accurate picture of life in Germany and help to make young talents perceive Germany as an attractive place for studying and research. Even after their return from Germany, scholarship beneficiaries can continue to rely on the network of the German Academic Exchange Service: the regional offices organise alumni meetings and seminars in order to keep in touch with former scholarship beneficiaries” (DAAD 2018b).

GATE Germany, a consortium for international higher education marketing, whose main office is run by the German Academic Exchange Service, is another key player (GATE Germany, n.d.). GATE Germany “supports the HEIs by providing marketing instruments (fairs, webinars, advertisements etc) and expertise (studies, publications, conferences, seminars and webinars etc) which help them to present their study and research offers at the international level and to position themselves. These services can be used by all state-recognised and non-profit higher education and research institutions” (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). The HEIs can avail themselves of target and region-specific offers. GATE Germany provides harmonised higher education marketing services

34 Website of the global image campaign ‘Study in Germany – Land of Ideas’: [www.study-in.de](http://www.study-in.de) (19 Nov. 2018).

35 Website of the campaign ‘Research in Germany’: [www.research-in-germany.org](http://www.research-in-germany.org) (19 Nov. 2018).

36 The regional offices outside Europe are located in Cairo (Egypt), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Beijing (China), New Delhi (India), Jakarta (Indonesia), Tokyo (Japan), Nairobi (Kenya), Mexico City (Mexico), Moscow (Russia), New York (US) and Hanoi (Vietnam) (DAAD 2018c).

**Figure 7: Regional offices and information centres of the German Academic Exchange Service**



Source: DAAD; as of January 2019

and thus helps to create a coherent image of German HEIs and thus of Germany as a higher education location as a whole (Background interview with the German Rectors' Conference).

There are several other information platforms for international students, such as <https://studienwahl.de/en><sup>37</sup>, an information website for international students run by the German National Association for Student Affairs<sup>38</sup> or the Higher Education Compass by the German Rectors' Conference<sup>39</sup>, a database which contains almost 20,000 courses of study and about 900 doctoral opportunities, which may be searched for international or English-language courses. The information platforms of the different official institutions have been increasingly interconnected during the last few years and often build on or refer to each other. From the point of view of the German Rectors' Conference, the network connections also improve the visibility of the different information options (Background interview with the German Rectors' Conference).

37 The website <https://studienwahl.de/en> (19 Nov. 2018) is run by the Trust for admission to higher education and the Federal Labour Office.

38 Information website for international students run by the German National Association for Student Affairs: <http://www.internationale-studierende.de/en> (19 Nov. 2018).

39 Website of the Higher Education Compass: [www.hochschulkompass.de](http://www.hochschulkompass.de) (8 Jan. 2019).

### 5.1.2 Land level

Education and research policy is largely the domain of the Länder (see Chapter 2.1), which are therefore responsible for the HEIs, too. While the HEIs enjoy a high degree of autonomy in the field of attracting and selecting students, the Länder also provide information with the goal of attracting international students.<sup>40</sup> Bavaria, for example, provides specific information for potential students from Brazil, Latin American countries, French-speaking countries and Russian-speaking countries on its website [www.study-in-bavaria.de](http://www.study-in-bavaria.de). Länder which do not run their own information or marketing websites often use the

40 Online information run by the single Länder for international students: Baden-Württemberg: <https://www.bw-studyguide.de/en/home.html>, Bavaria: <https://www.study-in-bavaria.de/en/>, Brandenburg: <https://www.brandenburg.de/cms/detail.php/bb1.c.365239.de>, Bremen/Bremerhaven: <https://www.bremer-wissen.de/en/study/bewerben/international-students-in-bremenbremerhaven/>, Hamburg: <https://www.hamburg.com/residents/study/>, Hesse: <http://www.study-in-hessen.de/>, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania: <https://www.studieren-mit-meerwert.de/see-your-future-in-mecklenburg-west-pomerania/>, Lower Saxony: <https://www.studieren-in-niedersachsen.de/en/international/>, Rhineland-Palatinate: <https://welcome-center.rlp.de/de/english/skilled-workers/education/university-studies/>, Saarland: <https://willkommen.saarland/en/education/academic-studies/>, Saxony: <http://www.studieren.sachsen.de/38.html> und Thuringia: <https://www.campus-thueringen.de/study-in-thuringia-germany/>.

internet sites of the Land government or the Land Association for Student Affairs to inform about study opportunities in the Land.

The Bavarian Ministry for Science and the Arts has established regional higher education centres for the Bavarian HEIs, which support “international contacts in the areas of research and teaching and student and academic exchange” (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, n.d.b) and aim to improve Bavaria’s reputation as a “technology and innovation hub and a centre of research and teaching” (BAYLAT, n.d.; see also Chapter 8.1.2).<sup>41</sup> Several Länder have signed bilateral agreements on higher education with other countries or regions, which aim to promote the exchange of students and researchers (see, for example, MWK Baden-Württemberg, n.d.a; Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung und Kultur des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz, n.d.; Hessisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, n.d.; see also Chapter 8.1.2), or participate in international universities in the framework of transnational education projects (see Chapter 8.2.4). Some Länder also offer Länder-based scholarships for international students (see Chapter 6.2.1). The Länder also try to attract international students by providing funds for higher education marketing abroad or for supporting international students and expanding the range of English-language courses, or by “the respective Land as a place to study on business trips by representatives of the regional industry, [...] attending trade fairs by a special marketing enterprise<sup>42</sup>, advertising at German schools abroad, as well as financial support for the higher education institutions at recruitment fairs, are among the relevant endeavours” (Mayer et al. 2012: 32; MWK Baden-Württemberg, n.d.c; Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2015: 26).

### 5.1.3 Higher education level

At the higher education level, the international offices are the main points of contact for international students, both during the information and application process and during their studies.

HEIs mainly use their internet sites to attract international students (see Chapter 5.1.4). In addition, offices of universities or university-related institutions abroad and transnational education offers by German HEIs abroad often help to attract international students, even though this may not be their primary goal (see Chapter 8.3).

### 5.1.4 Importance of information offers for the decision for a certain course and place of study

A survey among mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer), which was conducted in the framework of the 21st Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs, focused on the sources of information students had used to learn more about studying in Germany. For 50%, an internet search about Germany as a potential destination served as the first source of information. Family, friends and acquaintances came second (46%), with bachelor and state examination students relying more on this personal source of information (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 58). Information by HEIs in the country of origin (33%) or by former students in Germany (32%) were mentioned a little less often as a main information source. Exchange students are an exception in this context, as information provided by their HEIs in the country of origin was the main source of initial information (73%). 19% of those surveyed got the initial information from marketing campaigns. The same percentage considered Germany as a study destination because they had already spent time in the country (for example as an au pair or in the framework of an exchange programme). In this case, there is a marked difference between female and male students; 26% of the women, but only 13% of the men said they had spent time in Germany before. At the same time, the percentage is higher among bachelor and state examination students than among master or doctoral students (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 58). In addition, the share of those who claim that a former stay in Germany played a major role in their decision is larger among students from eastern Europe and America than among students from other regions (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 59). In contrast, information materials and marketing measures are more important for students from Africa, eastern Asia and other Asian regions than for students from Europe or America (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 59). Social media are relatively unimportant as a source of information overall (7% said they had become interested in studying in Germany via social media), even though their share has risen considerably since 2012 (back then, it was 1%).

41 Higher education centres have been established for China, India, France, the US Federal State of California and the regions Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and Latin America (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, n.d.b).

42 In particular Baden-Württemberg International, a service provider which supports companies, research institutions and universities in the field of internationalisation; see <https://www.bw-i.de/services/wir-ueber-uns.html> (19 Nov. 2018).

## 5.2 Courses in English

The number of courses held in English has risen considerably during the past decade in particular (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 88). Courses in English make it easier for international students to study in Germany, as the language barrier is removed, and “give German participants an additional opportunity to acquire intercultural and language skills” (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 88). Nevertheless, the number of courses offered in English is low in Germany compared to the Netherlands or the Nordic countries (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 45).

### 5.2.1 Breakdown by level and subjects

The Higher Education Compass by the German Rectors’ Conference<sup>43</sup> is a database which contains all courses of study offered at German HEIs (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 85). It contains 1,438 courses which are held mainly in English (as of 27 November 2018). As 19,424 bachelor, master and state examination courses are offered in total, the percentage of courses offered in English is about 7%.<sup>44</sup> The database contains 226 bachelor, 7 state examination and 1,205 master courses held in English. This means that master-level courses account for almost 84% of all courses in English.

Roughly 52% of the English-language master-level courses belong to the fields of mathematics, natural sciences and engineering sciences. Economics and law account for around 31% of these master-level courses, humanities and arts for about 13% and social sciences for about 10%.

Bachelor-level courses in English are much rarer. Still, the number of English-language modules within the courses has risen during the last few years. They are addressed to both domestic and exchange students.

The Higher Education Compass also includes a database for doctoral studies. Out of 901 courses, 763 offer the opportunity of obtaining a doctoral degree in English. This is equivalent to around 85%.

<sup>43</sup> Website of the Higher Education Compass: [www.hochschulkompass.de](http://www.hochschulkompass.de) (27 Nov. 2018).

<sup>44</sup> The share of courses held in English in the total number of courses does not permit conclusions about the percentage of students who take these courses. In particular, courses held in English tend to be more important at universities of applied sciences than at HEIs in general, as the latter tend to offer a broader range of courses (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 87).

The focus on higher-level courses is also evident from the share of foreign students who study in English. In 2016, the 21st Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs among mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) found that 71% of the master and 72% of the doctoral students were able to take courses in English, in contrast to 33% at the bachelor level (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 28). 38% of the participants said that English was the only classroom language; 43% said that classes were only held in German (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 28).

### 5.2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of courses in English

Experts are of two minds about the rising number of modules and courses in English. On the one hand, a large range of courses in English makes German HEIs more attractive for international students (SVR 2017a: 21). In addition, it facilitates international networking and familiarises students with technical terms in their field, seeing that English is often used as a lingua franca (Geis 2017: 97). On the other hand, a lack of German language skills makes it more difficult for international students “to integrate themselves into German society, organise their lives on their own and find internships or student jobs or, later on, a regular job in Germany” (SVR 2017a: 21). In addition, fewer students tend to participate in German language courses alongside their studies in English if German courses are not obligatory (any more) (SVR 2017a: 21). Moreover, these language courses often focus on day-to-day language, whereas an advanced knowledge of German is a “basic precondition” for finding a job that is “in line with the graduate’s qualifications” outside the universities (Geis 2017: 97).

The international students’ knowledge of English may differ just as much as their knowledge of German. “Students from eastern European countries, for example, often have an excellent command of German, but are less fluent in English. This may lead to adjustment problems in international programmes” (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference; see also Chapter 3.1).

“A long-term language strategy and transparent expectations management in relation to international applicants and students can help to improve the fit between supply and demand” (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference). However, only a few HEIs have “prepared and strategically embedded a clear language policy” so far

(Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 46). In many cases, individual faculties or institutions decide on offering courses in English, not the HEI as a whole (written answer from the German Rectors' Conference). As a result, the "range of languages offered is often not coordinated at the higher education level, and there is no real strategic approach in this field" (written answer from the German Rectors' Conference).

## 5.3 Preparatory and language courses

There are no uniform standards concerning preparatory courses for international students. The HEIs themselves decide whether and what preparatory courses they offer to international students.

### 5.3.1 Studienkollegs and preparatory courses

Studienkollegs are found across Germany and offer a structured course to prepare international students for studying in Germany. They address students whose school leaving certificates are not recognised as equivalent to a German certificate and who therefore need to pass an assessment test. The Studienkollegs prepare students for this test (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 72). Some of them form part of HEIs. However, they do not prepare students for a specific course of study, but for a field. Studienkolleg attendance is free of charge (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 72). The Studienkollegs are addressed at applicants for undergraduate courses (bachelor or state examination level). They are available in all Länder except for Brandenburg, Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia (Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 67).

Where no public Studienkollegs exist, some HEIs offer preparatory or foundation courses for mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer), which usually take one semester and focus on both language skills and basic knowledge of the subject (Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 67). In addition, HEIs often offer preparatory courses for certain courses of study. These are usually addressed to all students of a subject and do not focus on international students.

### 5.3.2 Language courses

In addition, numerous HEIs offer language courses in preparation for studying in Germany. As a rule, these courses take place during the summer holidays or during a semester. The German Academic Exchange Service provides a database with German language courses and preparatory courses at universities on its website.<sup>45</sup> A special residence title may be granted for participation in a language course which prepares applicants for a course of study (see Chapter 4.2).

### 5.3.3 "Studienbrücke" programme

The "Studienbrücke" programme by the Goethe Institut is another option. It prepares students in their countries of origin for studying a STEM subject at certain partner HEIs in Germany so that students can directly embark on their chosen course of study in Germany. "The programme fully prepares pupils wishing to study in Germany by offering them a combination of language courses and tests (TestDaF and TestAS including preparation), STEM courses, intercultural training courses and academic guidance counselling" (Goethe Institut 2018). The language courses take part at the Goethe Institutes in the country of origin, while technical language courses and the preparation for the TestAS training are provided online. The partner HEIs in Germany reserve a certain number of places for participants in the programme (Goethe Institut 2018). "The Studienbrücke is offered in the region Eastern Europe/Central Asia (Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus), the USA, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and South America" (Goethe Institut 2018). Its partner HEIs are Ruhr-Universität Bochum, TU Dortmund University, the University of Duisburg-Essen, RWTH Aachen University, Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and the European University Viadrina (Frankfurt/Oder).

<sup>45</sup> Database provided by the German Academic Exchange Service on German language course and preparatory courses at universities: <https://www.daad.de/deutschland/studienangebote/international-programmes/en/> (3 Dec. 2018).

## 5.4 Challenges and measures in attracting international students

### 5.4.1 Challenges

State actors and HEIs regard the highly complex rules for higher education admission and the complicated visa and residence procedures as a challenge to attracting international students (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). Since the HEIs themselves decide on the admission of international students, applicants have to meet different criteria and provide different documents (see Chapter 4.1). This makes it difficult to inform about the conditions for studying in Germany in a uniform and coherent way. Moreover, the relative complexity of the courses on offer and the admission conditions makes it difficult to “match” the HEIs’ offers with “suitable” students (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service).

“Numerous potential students who get advice from the information centres run by the German Academic Exchange Service criticise the strict German admission rules. In comparison to other important host countries in particular, students perceive the process (from becoming interested in a course of study to actually starting their studies in Germany) as long and uncertain. Above all, this is due to the fact that the admission test focuses on the quality of the school system and not on a student’s individual abilities. As a result, some students ultimately decide to stay in their countries of origin or to go to other countries, mainly the US or the UK” (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 74).

Comparatively long lead times of higher education and visa applications are another challenge to Germany’s attractiveness as a potential destination for study purposes. They may lead to students’ getting a visa only after their course has started, which means that they may miss their first lessons as well as orientation and information events (Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 63). Another challenge is that the foreigners authorities may handle the issuance or extension of residence titles differently, for example in terms of required documents or the period for which the residence permit is granted (see Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 69).

Beyond these administrative challenges, the fact that the number of courses held in English is relatively

small in an international comparison may be regarded as a hurdle to attracting international students. The German Rectors’ Conference also sees obstacles on the part of teaching staff: There were often reservations about expanding the range of courses offered in English. “In addition to a lack of language skills or a lack of experience, they are (quite rightly) concerned that the quality of the lessons might suffer or that German as a language of science might lose importance” (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference).

And finally, the German Academic Exchange Service regards higher education marketing as such and its methods as a challenge: “The channels used for promoting the German Academic Exchange Service’s offers in the area of advice and information need to be reviewed regularly for their effectiveness. In addition, it is necessary to watch for new, emerging channels, particularly in the social media” (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service).

### 5.4.2 Measures

National information and marketing initiatives are regarded as a suitable measure to improve the transparency of the range of potential courses and provide a better idea of Germany as a potential destination. Initiatives at the national level, such as GATE Germany, are successful from the vantage point of the German Rectors’ Conference because they offer HEIs a good option to market themselves abroad and provide them with the necessary know-how. According to the German Rectors’ Conference, this helps to project a better international image of German HEIs and of Germany as a higher education location as a whole (Background interview with the German Rectors’ Conference).

The German Academic Exchange Service believes that “authentic communication [and] a targeted approach via modern channels (such as social media, videos, story telling)” are important during the information and higher education marketing process (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). “Adapting the marketing and communication tools to the relevant target groups (target country, subject, course level, language etc)” is mentioned as well, as are testimonials and ambassadors programmes or tutorials and online-based preparatory courses (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service).

Preparatory courses, such as Studienkollegs or language courses, have proven their worth in reducing

the “entry barrier” to the German higher education system (see Chapter 5.3). And the possibility of receiving a residence title for the purpose of participating in preparatory courses or applying for a course of study is another good practice (see Chapter 4.2). In particular, Studienkolleg attendance can increase students’ chances of successfully studying in Germany. In addition, individual aptitude tests for the examination of admission requirements are sometimes seen as a measure to reduce formal hurdles – such as proof of higher education entrance qualification – and to facilitate access to higher education (see Section 4.1.3).

Turning to courses offered in English, the German Rectors’ Conference regards appointment and employment policies as the “most important tool”: “Language skills increasingly play a role during the selection process for teaching staff or administrative professionals, and the HEIs try to increase the number of international teachers and employees” (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference). The German Rectors’ Conference supports a holistic approach, which covers not just courses in English, but also includes administrative departments in the internationalisation efforts:

“A (strongly) rising number of international students and teachers will need a truly international campus to be comfortable in their learning, teaching and research efforts. This does not stop at bilingual procedures and documents; rather, it requires all higher education staff to be open to multilingualism. Targeted training, such as language courses or intercultural training, may have highly favourable effects” (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference; see also Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 83 et seq.).

However, there is also no one-sided support for increasing the number of English-language courses on offer, partly because a purely English-language course of study can hamper the social integration of international students and their later transition to a profession (see Chapter 5.2). Some stakeholders recommend a better combination of English and German-language courses or slowly increasing the number of courses held in German during the course (see Chapter 6.4.2).

# 6 Support and assistance

## 6.1 Advice and support in everyday life

Depending on the HEI and the course of study, international students can rely on different, and often several, bodies which provide orientation, advice and support for everyday life. One of them is the German Academic Exchange Service, which is an important source of information for international students, above all via its website and ahead of students' decision to study in Germany (see Chapter 5.1). At the higher education level, international offices are often the first and most important points of contact. In addition, there may be additional options at the faculty, institute or course level.

The student services organisations offer advice and support, too. Overall, there are 58 student services organisations in Germany (DSW, n.d.). "They are non-profit organisations, which are independent from the higher education institutions and aim to promote and support roughly 2.6 million students in Germany" (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs). The student services organisations are responsible for all students, which means that they do not particularly address international or foreign students. They run student residences, canteens, cafeterias and childcare centres, process applications for education assistance and offer social and psychological counselling for students.

The concrete range of offers depends on the local situation. Some student services organisations organise their own welcoming and information events for international students.

"18 student services organisations offer a service package, which includes accommodation, meals, semester contributions and insurance. This makes financial planning for the first semester easier. Since first-year students in particular often do not have a comprehensive knowledge of German, almost all student services organisations provide their information in several languages; some also give personal advice in a number of languages" (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs).

Additional support is often available in student residences.

"45 student services organisations rely on student tutors to serve as points of contact, resolve conflicts and support foreign fellow students in all necessary matters. The tutoring programmes by the student services organisations make a significant contribution to the successful integration of foreign students, particularly at the beginning of their stay. They provide orientation in the new city and at the new higher education institution. The tutors help with everyday life at the peer-to-peer level and serve as intercultural consultants, for example in case of language difficulties or bureaucratic hurdles" (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs).

Several student services organisations also organise contact and tutoring programmes for international and German students or international students and locals outside the student residences (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs).

The German National Association for Student Affairs, which is the umbrella organisation of the German student services organisations, also runs the Service Center for Intercultural Competence (Servicestelle Interkulturelle Kompetenz, SIK), which is supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. This Service Center "supports the student services organisations in their work on behalf of international students" (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs), for example by providing training, conferences and advice to the individual organisations to develop their service and advice offers further (DSW 2018c).

## 6.2 Scholarships and other financial support options

Beyond their own financial means and student jobs, international students rely on scholarships to finance their stay in Germany (see Chapter 3.1.7). Scholarships may be financed by the government or by pri-

vate sponsors, by German institutions or by institutions from the country of origin or a third country, and they may be addressed to students of all or of specific groups of subjects. In addition to scholarships, there are other possibilities to finance studies at a German HEI, such as Federal training assistance (BAFöG) and student loans, which are however only available to international students to a limited extent or not at all (see Chapter 6.2.3).

### 6.2.1 Scholarships addressed specifically to international students

At the Federal level, the German Academic Exchange Service is the most important scholarship sponsor for international students. Scholarships by the German Academic Exchange Service are largely financed by the Federal Foreign Office, i.e. from public funds (DAAD 2018d). In October 2018, the German Academic Exchange Service's scholarship database<sup>46</sup> listed 129 programmes by the German Academic Exchange Service and 65 programmes by other organisations for funding studies in Germany (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). This includes both multi-year scholarships for complete courses of study and scholarships for short-term stays, for example for summer courses. As a rule, the German Academic Exchange Service offers scholarships only from the master level upwards. "There is one exception, namely the programme for German schools abroad, which aims to prepare graduates of German schools abroad for undergraduate studies in Germany" (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). The German Academic Exchange Service's most important scholarship programmes focus on the level of qualification (e.g. graduates or doctoral students) and not on certain groups of subjects, types of HEI or countries of origin, even though the "Study Scholarships for Graduates of All Academic Disciplines" is directed mainly at students from industrial countries (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). There is also a programme for doctoral students addressed mainly at students from development countries<sup>47</sup>. In addition, there are funding programmes for postgraduate studies financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and focus on graduates from development countries and emerging markets (DAAD 2018e; for details see also Deutscher Bundestag 2018c).

46 [www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de) (21 Nov. 2018).

47 According to the OECD List of ODA Recipients (DAC List), see BMZ, n.d.

In addition, the German Academic Exchange Service offers a large range of regional or national programmes, with many of them being co-financed or fully financed by foreign partners (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service). These scholarships are often directed at students from a certain country and may be limited to certain (groups of) subjects. Scholarships funded by organisations from the country of origin often include a clause that obliges recipients to return to their home country (SVR 2017a: 23). With 103 funding programmes, mathematics/science is the group of subjects which benefits most from German Academic Exchange Service scholarship programmes, "followed by engineering (99 scholarship programmes)" (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service).<sup>48</sup> In addition, the German Academic Exchange Service provides funding to HEIs under the STIBET<sup>49</sup> programme so that they can offer support to international students and researchers and finance scholarships (DAAD 2014a: 42).

There are other organisations besides the German Academic Exchange Service which offer scholarships particularly for foreign or international students. In addition to the database run by the German Academic Exchange Service, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research maintains a scholarship database which can be searched for funding options for foreign students.<sup>50</sup>

The 'Baden-Württemberg-Stipendium' is a good example of a special scholarship programme at the Land level. It is funded by the non-profit 'Baden-Württemberg Stiftung' foundation and supports stays of international students in Baden-Württemberg for up to eleven months. It includes a component which supports students from development countries, a programme for vocationally qualified people, a programme for students at the Film Academy Baden-Württemberg and a programme which supports higher education students from Baden-Württemberg who want to spend time abroad (Baden-Württemberg Stiftung, n. d.).

Bavaria offers scholarships for foreign students at Bavarian HEIs who are unable to fund their stay from

48 These figures do not refer to programmes which exclusively focus on the relevant group of subjects, but to the total number of programmes available to students of this group of subjects.

49 STIBET is a combined scholarship and support programme.

50 Online scholarship database by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research which can be searched for funding options for foreign students: <https://www.stipendienlotse.de/> (26 Nov. 2018).

their own means or by other scholarships and runs an additional scholarship programme for graduates from central, eastern and south-eastern Europe (Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst 2018).

## 6.2.2 Scholarships for students in general

Several scholarships are addressed to all students at German HEIs, and in some cases, they are also available to international students.

### Organisations for the promotion of young talent

The scholarships granted by organisations for the promotion of young talent are only available to international students who meet certain conditions. They must meet the requirements set out in Section 8 of the Federal Training Assistance Act, i.e. must be eligible for federal training assistance. This applies to foreign students who hold a settlement permit, spouses and civil partners of Germans and EU citizens and beneficiaries of international protection (see Chapter 6.2.3).<sup>51</sup>

### Deutschlandstipendium

The HEIs themselves can award scholarships as well. The 'Deutschlandstipendium' is a nationwide programme, but it is the participating HEIs which award the scholarship. Half of the scholarship amount is financed by the Federal government, the other half by private sponsors (Section 11 of the Germany Scholarship Act<sup>52</sup>). The regular scholarship amount is EUR 300 per month. The scholarship can be awarded to all students, regardless of their nationality or residence status. However, students cannot avail themselves of a Deutschlandstipendium and a scholarship awarded by the German Academic Exchange Service at the same time (BMBF, n.d.e). Students may apply after having enrolled at a HEI – in the case of international students, that means: after having entered Germany.

<sup>51</sup> Beneficiaries of international protection are persons who have been recognised as asylum seekers or refugees or who benefit from subsidiary protection.

<sup>52</sup> 'Act on the Establishment of a National Scholarship Programme' of 21 July 2010 (BGBl. Part I p. 957), last amended by Article 74 of the Act of 29 March 2017 (BGBl. Part I p. 626).

## 6.2.3 Funding by federal training assistance or student loans

There are other options, besides scholarships, to finance a course of study at a German HEI. However, in many cases these options are not or not fully available to international students.

### Federal training assistance

Federal training assistance<sup>53</sup> is usually available only to third-country nationals who have been resident in Germany for a long period of time, for example because they hold a settlement permit, or who are spouses or civil partners of Germans or EU citizens. Beneficiaries of international protection may touch federal training assistance, too.<sup>54</sup>

### Student loan

A student loan by Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) is only available to third-country nationals who are non-mobile foreign students (Bildungsinländer) or spouses or civil partners of Germans or EU citizens and live in Germany together with their spouses or civil partners (KfW 2017). The Centre for Higher Education (Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung, CHE) provides a list of other student loans (CHE 2018: 11).

## 6.3 Support for family members of international students

According to the 21st Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs of 2016, 14% of the mobile foreign students (Bildungsausländer) are married or living in a registered partnership (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 36). This share is more than double that of German students or non-mobile foreign students (Bildungsinländer) (6%; Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 36). "The share of Bildungsausländer who have children is only marginally higher as that of Germans and Bildungsinländer (7% vs 6%)" (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 37).

<sup>53</sup> Federal Training Assistance Act (BAföG).

<sup>54</sup> See Section 8 of the Federal Training Assistance Act for details of the requirements.

In some cases, spouses or civil partners of international students who have joined their families in Germany may be entitled to participation in an integration course (see Chapter 4.5). Even if they are not entitled, they may participate if a place is available (Section 44 subs. 4 first sentence of the Residence Act). And just like all other (new) immigrants, they may avail themselves of the Migration Advisory Service for Adult Migrants (MBE) (Grote 2017: 43). State support for parents, such as child or parental benefits, is not available to international students who hold a residence permit for the purpose of study. Third-country nationals can only touch parental benefits if they “will probably remain permanently in Germany and are allowed to work here” (BMFSFJ 2018; Section 7 subs. 7 no. 2 lit. a of the Parental Allowance and Parental Leave Act). Third-country nationals who hold a residence permit for study purposes may not touch child benefits either (Section 62 subs. 2 of the Income Tax Act).

The student services organisations offer additional support to students with children in particular:

“The student services organisations run roughly 220 childcare centres with a total of 8,850 places in Germany. 4,700 are for children aged below three years. In addition, many student services organisations provide childcare outside regular hours and flexible short-term childcare. With their large range of service and advisory offers, the student services organisations make significant contributions to a family-friendly environment at HEI and to ensuring that parents have the same opportunities to achieve a good result. For example, they offer special accommodation, networking and leisure opportunities, playgrounds and nursing rooms, child facilities and play areas in the canteen, cheaper or free lunches for students’ children, welcome money for newborns or other financial and material support. In addition, many student services organisations provide information and offer specialised advice” (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs).

International students who are granted a scholarship by the German Academic Exchange Service for at least six months will also receive support for their families:

“Spouses and children will be included in the insurance package of the German Academic Exchange Service<sup>55</sup>; a monthly marriage supplement will be

paid for the spouse; and the German Academic Exchange Service may partially fund a German language course for the spouse. Monthly family supplements will be paid for children if the student is not entitled to state child benefits. Depending on the rent, the German Academic Exchange Service may pay a rental supplement. Scholars who are married and/or have children in Germany may apply for the benefits at all places of study (scholars who are not accompanied by their families may only do so in certain cities). These benefits are available to all long-term (i.e. more than six months) scholars of the German Academic Exchange Service, regardless of their status (students, doctoral students, postdocs etc)” (written answer from the German Academic Exchange Service).

## 6.4 Challenges and good practices to ensure a successful graduation and good support

### 6.4.1 Challenges

A considerably larger number of foreign students than of German students drops out of HEIs (DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 66). There may be numerous reasons for this; however, the higher overall ratio suggests that foreign students tend to be faced with challenges in several areas.

#### Looking for accommodation and getting funding

One of the most important challenges which international students have to deal with right after their arrival is looking for accommodation and getting funding for their stay in Germany (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs). According to the 21st Social Survey of the German National Association for Student Affairs, single foreign students who did a complete course of study in Germany were able to spend EUR 776 per month on average in 2016 (Apolinarski/Brandt 2018: 41), i.e. “EUR 140/month less than German students” (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs). Finding affordable accommodation is difficult for all students, particularly in large cities and metropolitan areas. However, for international students who do not enter Germany until their course is

55 This is a combined healthcare, accident and personal liability insurance, which forms part of the German Academic Exchange Service scholarship (DAAD, n.d.a).

about to start it is even more difficult to find accommodation, be it from private landlords or in student residences (Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 69).

## German language

In addition, German HEIs rely “much more on students’ own initiative to learn and study” than HEIs in many important countries of origin (SVR 2017a: 22) which may be a challenge for international students as well as learning and mastering the German language.

“A non-negligible number of applicants turns out to be unable to maintain the level of language knowledge they achieved for the exam during the actual course of study. Universities can provide valuable support by providing targeted language courses (technical terms). [...] Moreover, lecturers sometimes underestimate considerably the level of language skills which is needed to study in Germany. This is particularly true for natural and engineering sciences, where language is supposed to play a less important role. International students often fail to close the gaps in their language skills during the course of study. Insufficient knowledge of German is therefore one of the main reasons for the high drop-out ratios among international students. Since learning the language sufficiently well to graduate successfully is a “full-time job” and cannot be done “on the side”, it is up to the staff responsible for the courses of study to formulate the admission criteria in such a way that students have a sufficient knowledge of German before they even begin their course” (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference).

## Support and advice centres

Challenges also arise in terms of local support and advice. A study on behalf of GATE Germany sees room for improvement in terms of support during the search of accommodation and concrete measures at the time of arrival, such as a pick-up service at the airport (Ripmeester 2017: 5). In addition, international students often do not avail themselves of existing support and advice opportunities. “In many cases, they do not ask for information or support until they are faced with a serious problem” (SVR 2017a: 24) or “in the experience of the advisory staff, they look for quick help, for example in order to prepare for an upcoming test or essay. This does nothing to improve learning and working techniques in the long run” (SVR 2017a: 24). “This selective approach may be due to the fact that students do not feel they can rely on support offers by the HEI, perhaps because support is not provided

at regular hours or is not announced sufficiently. Perhaps the HEIs do not have enough staff at their disposal who are specially trained to understand and deal with the difficulties of international students” (SVR 2017a: 25). Moreover, resources are often inadequate for individualised support. According to the German Rectors’ Conference, this is due to the partly precarious funding of respective support and advice units at the higher education institutions such as international offices or welcome centres (Background interview with the German Rectors’ Conference).

## Residence status

Finally, the residence status and the practices of the foreigners authorities are a challenge not only for attracting international students, but also for supporting them during their stay. “Many international students [...] regard the foreigners authorities mainly as the institution which might destroy their dream of studying in Germany at any time. Even students who speak German quite well, pass their exams successfully and have enough money on their bank account claim that they feel quite uncomfortable about upcoming extension dates” (SVR 2017a: 24). The uncertainty often stems from a lack of knowledge about the legal situation and the rights and obligations of international students (SVR 2017a: 24).

## Social network

And finally, the fact of studying in a country they do not know well and of not having a social network (at least to start with) is often a major challenge for international students (see SVR 2017a: 21). Many find it difficult to get to know German fellow students (Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 68).

### 6.4.2 Good practices

With regard to language skills, the preparatory measures, such as Studienkolleg courses, language courses and courses in the country of origin (for example the “Studienbrücke” programme) are helpful (see Chapter 5.3). Targeted language courses during the course of study, which focus particularly on technical terms, may make it easier for students to study successfully in a foreign language (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference). “Ideally, these language courses form part of the curricula and are credited” and thus made obligatory for students, who may not attend otherwise (written answer from the German Rectors’ Conference; written answer from the German

Academic Exchange Service; see also Geis 2017: 97). A gradual increase in the number of German-language seminars during the course of study is also regarded as a good option to improve the German language skills of international students and prepare them gradually for finding a job in Germany (SVR 2017a: 29).

Some cities and HEIs deal with challenges in terms of uncertainty about the residence status by establishing close cooperations between the HEIs and the foreigners authorities (see Chapter 4.4). Transparent procedures for the issuance and extension of residence titles can also help to inform students better about their residence status and to prevent cases of hardship or misunderstandings.

In order to ensure a successful graduation, students should be well prepared and informed about studying in Germany ahead of starting their course. Offers and requirements such as TestAS, which tests students' ability to begin a course of study in Germany, or other self-evaluation approaches may be helpful because they enable students to inform themselves early on about what is required to study successfully in Germany (see SVR 2017a: 29; DAAD/DZHW 2018a: 74). The German National Association for Student Affairs believes that good communication between the HEIs, the student services organisations and German institutions abroad is necessary to provide students with coherent and comprehensive information before they come to Germany (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs).

Better resources for support measures at HEIs, be it from programmes such as STIBET (see Chapter 6.2.1) or from regular funding, will increase the programmes' effectiveness and usefulness for international students. The German National Association for Student Affairs demands that advisory services should be provided for free and in an interculturally sensitive way (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs). In addition, there are calls for not just creating special advisory services for international students, but for expanding regular advisory services and reworking them in such a way that they are better adapted to the needs of international students (see SVR 2017a: 27). From the vantage point of the German National Association for Student Affairs, tutoring or buddy programmes or meeting places can play a major role, as they can serve as a central point of contact for international students and enable them to meet other students and engage in leisure activities (written answer from the German National Association for Student Affairs).

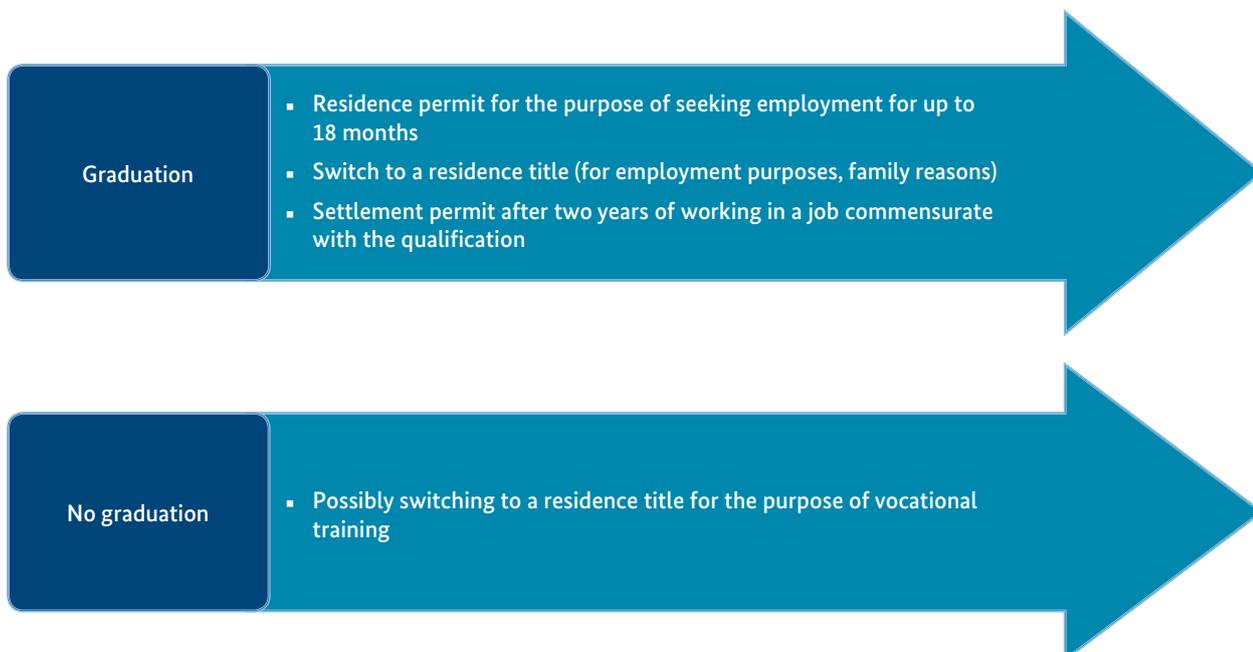
# 7 Legal framework and measures of retention

International students are increasingly regarded as potential qualified workers for the German labour market (see BMI 2018: 10; SVR 2015; Anger/Plünnecke/Schüler 2018: 44 – 45; Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 105). Large companies in or near higher education cities sometimes try to actively recruit international graduates (SVR 2015: 32). One reason why international students are perceived as a potential source of qualified labour is that many of them study science and engineering-related subjects (see Chapter 3.1.4), which are in particular demand on the labour market (SVR 2015: 6; Anger/Plünnecke/Schüler 2018: 44 – 45). At the same time, international students are often faced with larger challenges when entering the labour market than German students or non-mobile foreign students (Bildungsinländer) (SVR 2015: 19).

## 7.1 Legal requirements for staying in Germany after graduation

In 2005, the Immigration Act made it possible for graduates of German HEIs to stay in Germany for the purpose of looking for work or to switch directly to a residence title for the purpose of gainful employment (see Section 16 subs. 5 of the Residence Act; Hanganu/Heß 2014: 35). Over the following years, opportunities to remain after graduation were expanded; graduates now have 18 months for the job search and are legally entitled to stay for seek for employment. Figure 8 gives an overview of the available options to remain after graduation, which will be described in more detail below.

Figure 8: Options for remaining in Germany after graduation



### 7.1.1 Residence permits available after successful graduation

#### Residence for the purpose of looking for and taking up employment

Higher education graduates may be issued with a residence permit for up to 18 months for the purpose of finding employment commensurate with their qualification (Section 16 subs. 5 first sentence of the Residence Act). If they find a job or start their own business during this period, they may be issued with a residence permit for work purposes, provided that the requisite preconditions are met.<sup>56</sup> Approval by the Federal Labour Office is not needed (Section 2 subs. 1 no. 1 of the Employment Regulation). The law does not define what “employment commensurate with the qualification” means. It is necessary to “examine the individual case in detail, taking into account the wages and the type of job” (Fleuß 2018: AufenthG § 16 margin no. 59). Graduates who want to start their own business after graduation need to meet fewer conditions for the issuance of a residence title than other self-employed third-country nationals (Section 21 subs. 2a first sentence of the Residence Act). However, the envisaged business must have some connection to the knowledge acquired during the studies (Section 21 subs. 2a second sentence of the Residence Act).

During the 18 months allotted for the job search, graduates are entitled to pursue an economic activity (Section 16 subs. 5 second sentence of the Residence Act). If they do not find a job commensurate with their qualification during these 18 months, the residence permit may not be extended again. Another residence title may only be issued if they are entitled to it (Section 5 subs. 2 second sentence of the Residence Act). In all other cases, the foreigner has to leave Germany and may apply for a visa from his or her country of origin or from another country if the preconditions for a residence title are met (see Section 5 subs. 2 first sentence of the Residence Act).

#### Settlement permit and naturalisation

Graduates of German HEIs who work in Germany after their graduation can obtain a settlement permit, i.e. a permanent residence title, more quickly than other third-country nationals. They need to work in a job (employment or self-employment, Section 21 of the Residence Act) commensurate with their qualification for two years and hold a residence permit for this purpose for two years. However, the residence permit for research purposes (Section 20 of the Residence Act) is excluded from this rule. In addition, they must have paid contributions into the statutory pension scheme for 24 months (Section 18b of the Residence Act). In all other cases, half of the period spent in Germany during the course of study is counted towards the time of residence necessary for obtaining a settlement permit (Section 9 subs. 4 no. 3 of the Residence Act).

In special cases, a settlement permit may also be issued with a significantly shorter period of residence or without prior residence if the person concerned is a highly qualified person in accordance with Section 19 of the Residence Act, which includes, for example, persons who have specialist knowledge, teachers/lecturers or academic staff in a prominent position.

As a rule, graduates can be naturalised after having been legally and ordinarily resident in Germany for eight years, provided they meet additional requirements (Section 10 subs. 1 first sentence of the Nationality Act (StAG)). If an integration course has been successfully passed and certified by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, the period is shortened to seven years (Section 10 subs. 3 sentence 1 of the Nationality Act). In the case of special integration measures, in particular proof of language skills that go beyond ‘sufficient knowledge of the German language’, the period can also be shortened to six years (Section 10 subs. 3 sentence 2 of the Nationality Act).

The Federal Administrative Court has ruled that “ordinary residence” means that a person’s “residence is not temporary, but meant to be permanent and its end is uncertain” (Dienelt 2016). In 2016, the Federal Administrative Court wrote in a judgment that a stay for study purposes can be regarded as ordinary residence if, “in retrospect, this stay provided access to a permanent residence status” (BVerwG 1 C 9.15, judgment of 26 April 2016). This means that, if a higher education graduate remains in Germany and has his or her ordinary residence here, the course of study may count towards the necessary time of residence for naturalisation.

<sup>56</sup> Residence titles may be issued pursuant to Sections 18, 19, 19a, 20 and 21 of the Residence Act.

### 7.1.2 Right of residence after dropping out of a HEI

International students who drop out of a HEI may, under certain circumstances, start vocational training and be issued with another residence title for this purpose (Section 16 subs. 4 second sentence of the Residence Act). This is possible if they choose an occupation that is included in the official shortage occupation list (Fleuß 2018: AufenthG § 16 margin no. 49). This shortage occupation list is published and regularly updated by the Federal Labour Office.<sup>57</sup> In addition, students must meet the requirements for the issuance of a residence permit for the purpose of vocational training (Section 17 of the Residence Act).

Drop-outs may only be issued with a residence title for other purposes than vocational training if they are entitled to it (see above; see Chapter 4.2 for more details on switching to another course of study).

## 7.2 International students who intend to and do indeed remain in Germany

A relatively high percentage of international students intends to remain. According to a study conducted by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration and by the Migration Policy Group in 2012 found that roughly 80% of the international master-level students surveyed planned to stay “in Germany at least for some time to get job experience” (SVR 2015: 12; SVR 2012: 37). The percentage of those who wished to remain was high in comparison to international students in other countries, too (SVR 2012: 37). Students said they wanted to stay in Germany because of good job opportunities, because of the chance of getting international job experience, because of the standard of living and the education opportunities, for financial reasons (expected income), because they were able to move within the EU, because of the chance of a residence title and because they felt connected to their place of living (SVR 2012: 39).

A study by the research centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees prepared in 2014 found

that, as of 30 September 2013, almost 56% of former international students who had held a residence title for study purposes between 2005 and 1 October 2012 had stayed in Germany (Hanganu/Heß 2014: 49). This calculation is based on data from the Central Register of Foreigners, which do not tell us, however, whether the former students have indeed graduated in Germany (Hanganu 2015: 3; for an overview of other calculations of the percentage of those who stay see SVR 2015: 20). There are clear differences between the Länder when it comes to the percentage of international graduates who stay in Germany. While the percentage<sup>58</sup> of international graduates exceeded that of international students in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Hamburg and Hesse, the opposite was true for Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony, Saarland, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt (SVR 2015: 35). This may be due to the labour market situation in the different regions or Länder, but also to perceived differences in the standard of living or the openness of the places of study or work:

“Apart from economic opportunities, this internal migration might stem from the wish of finding an intercultural, open environment, which is only available in a few metropolitan areas in the new Länder. Some international students in the eastern Länder report that they feel they are ‘outsiders’ or that they are directly discriminated against due to their origin (Dömling 2013b: 474)” (SVR 2015: 35).

## 7.3 Measures and initiatives to facilitate the transition to employment

### 7.3.1 Measures by HEIs

As a rule, the international offices and/or career services departments of the HEIs support international students during the transition to employment. In some cases, individual faculties or institutes offer specialised training, advice or information (SVR 2015: 31). In 2015, the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration surveyed the international offices and career services of 116 state HEIs in Germany about their support services for international students

<sup>57</sup> The most recent list is published on the website of the Federal Labour Office.

<sup>58</sup> This percentage refers to the total of all international students and all international graduates living in a respective Land (SVR 2015: 35).

(SVR 2015: 24). About one quarter claimed that helping international students find a job was part of their HEI's internationalisation strategy (SVR 2015: 30). This shows that the HEI's strategies do not systematically include students' entry into the labour market (see also Chapter 2.2.4). According to a survey by the 'Stifterverband', a joint initiative started by companies and foundations, the labour market integration of international graduates is less important to HEIs than other internationalisation measures, which are more closely related to the studies themselves (Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft 2014: 31). "Higher education institutions which regard the transition into employment as part of the education experience in Germany and explicitly say so in their internationalisation strategy are considerably more likely to provide special services to this effect (80%) than those which do not (55%)" (SVR 2015: 28). About one third of the international offices said in the survey conducted by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration that they supported "international students' entry into the labour market, for example by organising information events about the German labour market or about options to legally stay in Germany" (SVR 2015: 26; see also CSND 2015: 46). About half of the higher education career services departments support students who begin their course of study (SVR 2015: 26). 80% of them, i.e. a large majority, offer graduates "job application trainings, networking events and other [...] support services" (SVR 2015: 27). This includes both offers directed at international and foreign students and offers directed at all students. According to the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, job application trainings, information about the German labour market and career counselling are the most frequently offered services for international graduates (SVR 2015: 29).

### 7.3.2 Measures by the Federal Labour Office and by local institutions

In addition to the HEIs, employment agencies and other institutions offer information and support to international students who are entering the labour market. However, the range of service varies depending on the HEI and city.

The Federal Labour Office, local authorities and foreigners authorities "actively support [...] the wish to stay in Germany which numerous international graduates express" (SVR 2015: 33). Local employment agencies often provide special counselling for higher education graduates. In some cases, they even offer

targeted advice to international students by specially trained counsellors or establish cooperations with the higher education career services (BMW, n.d.; SVR 2015: 34).

In many cases, special support projects form the basis for local services or for cooperations between the local authorities, the HEI and local employers (see also SVR 2015: 33).

### 7.3.3 Measures by companies

Companies themselves often try to get graduates from nearby HEIs to work for them. Large companies are much more active in this respect than small or medium-sized enterprises, for whom international students "very rarely figure in human resources plans" (SVR 2015: 36). At the same time, there are clear differences between the Länder:

"Numerous large and medium-sized companies from Bavaria or Baden-Württemberg regularly employ international graduates. Large employers recruit highly qualified international staff from two thirds of southern German higher education institutions, and many medium-sized companies with 50 – 250 employees have become active in this field as well" (SVR 2015: 36).

## 7.4 Alumni initiatives

Whether and to what extent HEIs maintain contact with and support their students after graduation depends on the HEI. According to the 2015 survey by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, 64% of the higher education career centres "do not maintain contact with international alumni or do not exploit existing contacts to provide international students with better insights into the labour market" (SVR 2015: 27 et seq.).

The University of Bayreuth is a good example of how alumni may be included in a HEI's internationalisation strategy (HRK 2014a: 37). The alumni network is intended to support the international marketing efforts of the HEI and offers training and networking opportunities (HRK 2014a: 37).

The German Academic Exchange Service has also prepared an alumni concept and offers a range of support

and networking programmes for German and foreign alumni. These include support for subsequent research or work opportunities in Germany for foreign alumni. There are special programmes directed at alumni from developing countries, for example funds to help purchase equipment or technical literature or technical training in Germany (DAAD, n.d.b). Moreover, there are more than 160 associations of German Academic Exchange Service alumni world-wide. They are separate organisations, but can obtain financial support from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD, n.d.b). The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation supports universities in developing and implementing “research alumni strategies”, which focus on international doctoral students (AvH 2018). Since 2010, the AvH has thus developed into an important driving force in the higher education institution landscape in the area of support, consulting and networking of alumni (AvH 2018: 3).

Another cross-university alumni project is the ‘Alumniportal Deutschland’, which is based on a cooperation between several institutions.<sup>59</sup> It is directed at everyone who has studied, done research or worked in Germany and offers them information about job vacancies and a social network for mutual exchange and exchange with companies, HEIs and other institutions (GIZ, n.d.). Moreover, it provides alumni networks run by HEIs or other institutions with a platform, on which they can operate their own website and exchange information with other networks (GIZ, n.d.).

## 7.5 Challenges for retaining international students

Challenges for the retention of international students arise from two sides: first, from the students’ individual situation (for example, language skills or the labour market situation), and second, from the provision of support and advice by the HEIs and other institutions.

<sup>59</sup> The portal [www.alumniportal-deutschland.org](http://www.alumniportal-deutschland.org) is run by the German Society for International Cooperation in cooperation with the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service and the Goethe Institute on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Federal Foreign Office.

### 7.5.1 Individual challenges

Residence law challenges, such as time limits on residence titles, administrative burdens for employers and potential employees related to their nationality (Hanganu/Heß 2014: 148) and insufficient knowledge of German (Hanganu/Heß 2014: 279; see Chapter 3.1.5) are among the most important individual challenges for international graduates.<sup>60</sup> Apart from actual administrative burdens and legal uncertainties, reluctance and insufficient knowledge on the part of the employers may play a role as well (SVR 2015: 22). Lack of practical experience and knowledge and of personal and professional networks, which would make it easier to find a job, may be a major hurdle, too (Anger/Plünnecke/Schüler 2018: 45; SVR 2015: 21 et seq.; SVR 2017a: 23; Wissenschaftsrat 2016: 78). The above-average number of university drop-outs among international students is another problem when it comes to finding a job, as dropping out of a HEI may muddy the students’ residence status (see Chapter 7.1.2) and make it more difficult for them to find a qualified job, as they are lacking a formal certificate.

International students have repeatedly said in surveys that they would like to get more support from the HEIs or support which is tailored to their needs (Ripmeester 2017: 5; SVR 2015: 28). In addition, international students often do not know about available support services or are unsure how to avail themselves of these services (Ripmeester 2017: 5).

### 7.5.2 Challenges for supporting institutions

The international offices and career services departments regard insufficient human and financial resources and the lack of reliable funding as major challenges (SVR 2015: 29). The career services departments in particular often do not have enough staff at their disposal to provide as many students as possible with individual counselling. While international offices are often better staffed, their “numerous recruiting and administrative duties mean that they have almost no time to provide intensive support to international students, particularly not in the field of entering the labour market” (SVR 2015: 30). In addition, career services departments are often funded by project-re-

<sup>60</sup> When analysing the results of the graduate survey conducted by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, one should bear in mind that the majority of participants graduated in 2011 or before and had therefore less time to find a job after graduation (12 months instead of 18; see Hanganu/Heß 2014: 280).

lated funds, as are many international offices (CSND 2015: 20; SVR 2015: 31). While some projects may promote innovative approaches or network efforts, they are often not followed up (see SVR 2015: 31). According to the survey by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, most career services departments and some international offices are not allowed for data protection reasons to contact students via their university e-mail and provide them with information (SVR 2015: 27).

Challenges may also arise from cooperation projects between HEIs and employers or other key local or regional institutions. Whether or not cooperations work well often depends on the personal relationships and contacts between individual staff (SVR 2015: 38).

“At most German higher education locations there is a patchwork of career-orientation events, job application trainings and accidental personal relationships between higher education institutions and corporate staff. Systematic cooperation between higher education institutions, employers, foreigners authorities, local policymakers and regional intermediaries is an exception. Only 28% of the German higher education institutions regularly cooperate with regional companies to organise job fairs, internships, mentoring programmes or other formats to support international students in their efforts to enter the labour market” (SVR 2015: 37).

## 7.6 Good practices

### 7.6.1 Measures for students

Promoting practical experience, engagement and private and professional networks are helpful measures to remove individual obstacles to students' remaining in Germany (SVR 2017b: 29). Information events or specific trainings for international students can provide knowledge about the regional labour market and the work culture, about regional companies and the job application procedure as such (SVR 2015: 28). In addition, it makes sense to offer student jobs which enable the students to use in practice what they have learned during their courses (see Chapter 3.1.6).

Including obligatory internships in the course of study also helps to enter the labour market, first, because students are obliged to work as interns, and second, because these internships do not count towards the

maximum of permitted working hours (see Chapter 4.5.1; SVR 2017b: 36).

Learning partnerships between German and international students can improve the international students' social integration (SVR 2017a: 30; see also Chapter 6.1). The module “International Engagiert Studiert” at the Martin-Luther-University of Halle-Wittenberg is a good example:

“Teams which consist of both German and international bachelor students work together for a non-profit practical project. In doing so, they network, gain labour market relevant experience and get ECTS credits” (SVR 2017a: 30; see Chapter 9).

Turning to language-related challenges, it is useful to integrate German-language courses into the curricula or to gradually increase the number of lessons given in German in order to improve international students' language skills and thus make it easier for them to find a job in Germany (see Chapter 6.4.2).

### 7.6.2 Measures at the institutional level

According to the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, sufficient and reliable human and financial resources for the career services departments can remove obstacles at the institutional level:

“As soon as [career services departments] at German higher education institutions have more staff at their disposal than the nationwide average, they offer measurably more support to international and German students. Almost seven out of ten better staffed [career services departments] actively support students right from the beginning of their studies. This is particularly important for international students, who are often too late when it comes to their entry into the labour market” (SVR 2015: 30 et seq.).

Moreover, a cooperation between different institutions in the form of a regional transition management is regarded as helpful to bundle existing support services, align them with each other and the specific local situation and bring international students into contact with potential employers (Anger/Plünnecke/Schüler 2018: 45):

“One option is to implement internship counselling for international students at the higher educa-

tion institution, with the aim of taking into account and communicating the employers' requirements. An overarching organisation can pursue these goals more efficiently than any initiative on its own, simply because it is better visible and can work towards structural changes. Success depends to a large extent on involving all relevant partners, on creating an orderly structure with clear targets and responsibilities (for example a coordination office) and on giving the network sufficient powers to act" (SVR 2017b: 34).

Apart from the HEIs, corporate associations, business promotion institutions, local players, student representatives and civil-society organisations should participate in such networks (SVR 2017b: 34). Between 2015 and 2017, the Federal Commissioner for the new Länder and the Donors' Association supported ten regional networks in six eastern and four western German regions in the framework of the "Study & Work" project (BMW 2017). This project helped to develop a "tool box", which describes promising approaches under the project (BMW 2017: 57).

In addition, targeted cooperation between the local employment agency and the HEI can help to inform international students better about labour market opportunities and existing counselling services (SVR 2017b: 36).

# 8 International cooperations with third countries in the area of higher education

There are a number of cooperations with third countries in the area of higher education, not only at the Federal and Land level, but also (and in particular) at the level of the individual HEIs. According to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, most Federal initiatives and cooperations do not focus on international students as such, but cover the complete range of cooperations in the framework of the internationalisation of higher education.<sup>61</sup> This includes, for example, joint research projects, exchange programmes for teaching and non-academic staff and many others (see below). At the same time, even cooperation projects which do not directly address students may have at least an indirect impact on students, as contacts are established, relationships are built and knowledge is transferred.

At the Federal level, there are bilateral agreements with third countries, for example concerning the mutual recognition of higher education diplomas. In addition, the German Academic Exchange Service, which promotes and shapes international cooperation in the area of higher education via its regional offices and information centres within and outside Europe, is behind key cooperations and partnership initiatives which focus on students (Chapter 8.2). The HEIs themselves also sign cooperation agreements with other HEIs in third countries (Chapter 8.3). Several special programmes by the German Academic Exchange Service focus on development policy issues and on preventing a brain drain or strengthening brain circulation (Chapter 8.4).

61 The German Rectors' Conference provides information on numerous individual cooperations on the internet: <https://www.internationale-hochschulkooperationen.de>; for statistical data on the international mobility of academics and researchers see the website of Wissenschaft Weltoffen: <http://www.wissenschaftweltoffen.de/wwo2018/>.

## 8.1 International cooperations at the Federal and Land levels in the area of higher education and research

Apart from providing funds for scholarships, for example in the framework of German Academic Exchange Service scholarships for foreign students (see Chapter 6.2.1), the Federal government and the 16 Länder support the internationalisation of their HEIs by “separate agreements on research cooperations with other countries” (HRK 2018b).

### 8.1.1 Cooperations at the Federal level

Over the last few decades, numerous bilateral agreements and declarations with third countries<sup>62</sup> have been signed at the Federal level. They cover issues such as mutual recognition of higher education and vocational training qualifications, the recognition of foreign degrees and access to higher education (KMK 2018). For example, the Federal Republic of Germany has signed equivalency agreements concerning the recognition of degrees obtained from German universities of applied sciences in the Republic of Bolivia (BGBl 2000) or with the People's Republic of China

62 At the European level, the first conventions and agreements concerning mutual academic recognition date back to the 1950s, for example the “European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities (1953, ETS 15) and its Protocol (1964, ETS 49), the European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1956, ETS 21), the European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications (1959, ETS 32), the Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees Concerning Higher Education in the States Belonging to the Europe Region (1979), the European Convention on the General Equivalence of Periods of University Study (1990, ETS 138)” (BGB 2007: 715) and the ‘Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region’ (so-called Lisbon Convention) of 1997, which entered into force in Germany in 2007 after the adoption of an implementation act.

concerning the mutual recognition of equivalencies in higher education (BGBI 2004). The latter aims to make it easier for students from both countries to have their higher education degrees and studies recognised. The agreement foresees recommendations to the authorities which are responsible for the recognition (Article 1 of the agreement) and the exchange of lists of the covered higher education and research institutions (Article 3 para. 2 of the agreement). The recommendations contain details concerning the recognition of years of study and certificates, degrees, examinations and further studies, acceptance for doctoral studies in both countries and the right to use an academic title (Articles 3 – 7 of the agreement).

Beyond these agreements, there are additional bilateral declarations concluded by the Education Ministers Conference or the German Rectors' Conference with third countries:

- a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with Australia (DEETYA/KMK 1998),
- a 'Joint Declaration' with Palestine (Representative Office of the Federal Republic of Germany Ramallah/Palestinian Ministry of Education & Higher Education 2006),
- a 'Joint Declaration' with Russia (KMK/Ministerium für Allgemeine und Berufliche Bildung der Russischen Föderation 1999).

These three bilateral declarations focus on the recognition of higher education degrees. However, they may go beyond and also include the recognition of school leaving certificates, periods of study, academic degrees and vocational training certifications (see, for example, the Memorandum of Understanding with Australia).

### 8.1.2 Cooperations at the Land level

The Länder also promote international strategies and processes for the HEIs in their territory and may conclude separate agreements with third countries for this purpose. Each Land will focus on certain regional, subject-specific or target-group-specific aspects. For example, the Baden-Württemberg ministry of science focuses on cooperation with "Europe, the United States of America and Canada, East and South-East Asia, Latin America and Australia" and on the following targets:

- "improve connections between higher education institutions in Baden-Württemberg and international partners,

- increase the share of foreign professors and researchers,
- improve students' international mobility,
- make courses of study more international,
- shape effective and efficient programmes for transnational higher education" (MWK 2018).

Bavaria has established the 'Bavarian Funding Programme for the Initiation of International Projects', which aims to "internationalise Bavarian higher education research further" and provides state and state-supported universities and universities of applied sciences in Bavaria with start-up funding of up to EUR 10,000 for international research cooperations (BayFOR 2018).

The cooperation agreements concluded by the Länder may have very specific foci. Hesse, for example, established the 'Hessen:Massachusetts Exchange Program', which aims to promote the "exchange of students and teaching staff between the Land of Hessen and the Federal State of Massachusetts [in the United States of America, author's note]" (Hessen:Massachusetts Exchange Program 2018). The cooperation agreement was signed by the Hessian State Ministry for Higher Education, Research and the Arts and the University of Massachusetts System and "enables all 13 state higher education institutions in Hessen and the five higher education institutions of the Massachusetts System" to engage in a closer exchange. The programme is open to students from all groups of subjects apart from human and veterinary medicine and dentistry (Hessen:Massachusetts Exchange Program 2018).

Cooperation agreements which involve the Länder often focus on researchers, but sometimes also on students in particular. The German Rectors' Conference counts a total of about 33,000 cooperations in the field of higher education<sup>63</sup>. Several hundreds of these are based on Länder programmes, which tend to focus on certain aspects. International cooperations at the Länder level or in the framework of Länder programmes tend to focus on the 'recognition of courses of study and examinations', 'exchange of teaching staff' and 'exchange of students (at bachelor, master or other levels)' (472 cooperations in each field), with many cooperations covering several foci. A middle or lower two-digit number of cooperations focus on the exchange of researchers (59) and doctoral students (20), the exchange of non-academic staff (17) or on joint research conferences (11) or publications (5), i.e.

63 As listed in the database in the information portal on "International University Partnerships" run by the German Rectors' Conference.

not explicitly on students. A few cooperations in the framework of Länder programmes deal with the cooperation between higher education libraries (9), cooperation concerning teaching and courses of study (9), scholarship agreements (6) or joint Research Training Groups (2) (HRK 2018b).

## 8.2 Cooperation in which the German Academic Exchange Service plays a central role

Turning away from cooperation programmes involving the individual Länder, the German Academic Exchange Service is a central stakeholder in the area of internationalisation and international higher education cooperation. Its scope of action goes beyond that of individual HEIs. The German Academic Exchange Service is an “organisation of German higher education institutions and their student bodies to internationalise research” and promotes, among other things, “transnational cooperations and partnerships between higher education institutions” (see Chapter 2.1.1). It uses its network of about 450 lecturers and language assistants and its “20 Centres of German and European Studies, 29 German-language degree programmes in Central and Eastern Europe, a diverse range of DAAD-funded higher education projects abroad, ranging from individual courses to establishing new HEIs, and a pool of 335,000 alumni” to get a “comprehensive view of the political, economic, social and higher-educational circumstances in each respective country” and gain “expertise for developing suitable programmes and ensuring that funding is put to the best possible use on location” (DAAD 2018b). Since it was founded in 1925, almost two million students and researchers in Germany and abroad have received funding (DAAD 2018f).

In November 2012 and in May 2014, the German Academic Exchange Service published three strategy papers on region-specific academic cooperation until 2020. One of them focuses on China (DAAD 2012a), one on sub-Saharan Africa (DAAD 2014b) and one on the twelve countries in the region Russia, Eastern Partnership and Central Asia (DAAD 2014c).

### 8.2.1 Strategy for the People’s Republic of China (2012)

The People’s Republic of China plays a central role, both as a cooperation partner of German HEIs and as a country of origin of international students in Germany (DAAD 2012a; Chapter 3.1.2). In 2012, the German Academic Exchange Service published a paper on its strategy for international cooperation with China, in which it called the country a future “research superpower” and wrote that “cooperation is already indispensable and will become even more so in the future” (DAAD 2012a: 4). China itself was becoming increasingly interested in international cooperations in the field of higher education, and the country was “increasingly becoming a competitor on the international markets for education” (DAAD 2012a: 4). One of the goals was to “understand this competitor as well as possible and work with it wherever possible, at eye-level and with the aim of finding a balance of interests for both sides” (DAAD 2012a: 4).

The strategy paper lists the following goals for cooperations in the area of international students:

- Increase the number of German students and researchers in China and attract highly qualified Chinese students, doctoral students and researchers to come to Germany for their studies or research. In 2011, the Federal government already agreed in the framework of the first German-Chinese government consultations that “20,000 students and researchers should be exchanged each year” (Bundesregierung 2011: Punkt 20).
- Establishment of model partnerships between HEIs of the two countries and establishment of a joint Institute for Advanced Study (BMBF 2011). This initiative still exists and is being expanded. Germany and China signed several declarations of intention concerning (higher) education in the framework of the German-Chinese government consultations in July 2018. One of them calls for “German and Chinese universities to strengthen their research cooperation in the area of humanities and social sciences. Freie Universität Berlin and the University of Beijing agreed to establish, jointly with other German and Chinese universities, a Maria Sibylla Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Beijing” (BMBF 2018b). This is important because humanities and social sciences had been “underrepresented” in the cooperation of the two countries so far (DAAD 2012a: 11) and there had been

challenges to cooperations in these fields after President Xi Jinping came to power in 2013. At the beginning of 2015, China had “started a campaign against ‘western’ – or, more precisely, foreign – thinking at top higher education institutions” (DAAD 2018g: 6).

In 2011, there were roughly 750 higher education cooperations between China and Germany. As of 13 December 2018, this number had almost doubled, to 1,405 (HRK 2018c).

## 8.2.2 Strategy for sub-Saharan Africa

In 2014, the German Academic Exchange Service released its strategy for ‘Academic Collaboration with the Countries of sub-Saharan Africa’ for the years 2015 – 2020 (DAAD 2014b: 2). It notes that the “interest of German higher education institutions in cooperating with sub-Saharan Africa has increased in recent years, yet the public perception in Germany is not yet in line with the opportunities the education market in sub-Saharan Africa has to offer” (DAAD 2014b: 7). In return, a “growing part of the African middle class can financially afford to study in Germany” (DAAD 2014b: 7). Efforts to strengthen higher education cooperations with African countries still rely in many cases on the concept of a “sustainable transformation” (DAAD 2018h) and “development” (DAAD 2017e: 2; DAAD 2014a: 6) of African countries and regions, which is to be supported by higher education cooperations and support programmes.

One of the fields of action defined in the strategy paper refers directly to international students from African countries, who are to get better access to master and doctoral programmes in Germany (DAAD 2014b: 5). The other four fields of action will at least indirectly affect students, for example by expanding capacities for graduate education and research at African HEIs or supporting HEIs as “effective actors in promoting societal development”, for example by supporting “degree programmes that are relevant to the current and future labour markets” (DAAD 2014b: 2), improving access to German HEIs in African countries and strengthening ties with “Africa’s regional higher education associations” (DAAD 2014b: 2). These cooperation and promotion approaches focus on increasing the proportion of female higher education lecturers in African countries, as higher education teaching is often a male domain (DAAD 2014b: 5), and on “[t]alented young people from economically and politically fragile

African states” who often “do not have access to educational opportunities at an international level” (DAAD 2014b: 5).

The development policy aspect inherent in numerous cooperation and promotional programmes for African countries is also evident from the fact that the German Academic Exchange Service conducts many partnership, cooperation and promotional programmes jointly with or with the support of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. One of them is the programme “Subject-Related Partnerships with Universities in Developing Countries”, which was already established back in 1997 and has supported around 350 projects since. The programme is not addressed exclusively to African countries and HEIs, but these play an important role. As of October 2017, partnerships in 18 African countries<sup>64</sup> existed under this programme alone. The programmes covered, for example, the development of study modules or complete international courses of study, mutual recognition of degrees or the creation of networks between HEIs (DAAD 2017f).

## 8.2.3 Strategy for twelve countries in the region Russia, Eastern Partnership and Central Asia (2014)

The introduction to the German Academic Exchange Service’s strategy paper on ‘Guidelines for the Future Academic Collaboration with the 12 Countries in the Region Russia/Eastern Partnership/Central Asia’ (DAAD 2014c) says that cooperation between HEIs is necessary because “Europe was split for decades by the Cold War”, a fact which creates particular responsibility for the present and the future. Academic exchange can and must help to “create more opportunities for open discussion and for an open-ended exchange of arguments and experiences, which helps to foster knowledge gains on both sides” (DAAD 2014c: 3).

The strategy paper’s recommendations focus on three issues, namely “stronger regional differentiation between the promotional measures in order to

<sup>64</sup> As of October 2017, subject-related partnerships with universities in the following countries existed (figures in brackets indicate the number of cooperations in each country): Ethiopia (4), Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya (3), Malawi, Morocco, Mauritius, Mozambique (2), Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Africa (4), South Sudan, Tanzania (DAAD 2017f).

adequately deal with the increasingly heterogeneous developments in the post-Soviet countries”, “more multilateral measures in order to facilitate an exchange and discussion of different positions, experiences and arguments about the future of eastern Europe” and “better recognition of the partners’ priorities in the field of higher education policy in order to increase the commitment and the provision of resources on the partners’ side and to develop and reach common goals” (DAAD 2014c: 3 et seq.).

The ‘Eastern European Partnerships Programme’, which was founded in 1974, is a key programme in this field. In 2018, “more than 90 German higher education institutions cooperated with around 290 regional higher education institutions in the region” in the framework of this programme. “On average, about 4,500 persons benefit from support under this programme each year” (DAAD 2018i).

Apart from this programme, there are numerous other cooperations with the region at all levels, for example in the framework of the ‘Studienbrücke’ programme by the Goethe Institute, by North Rhine-Westphalia, which puts a special focus on eastern Europe and central Asia (see Chapter 5.3) or by institutions such as the Bavarian Academic Center for Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe (BAYHOST)

## 8.3 Cooperations among HEIs

### 8.3.1 Number and goals of higher education cooperations

The German Rectors’ Conference regards the “incoming and outgoing mobility of students” as a “core part” or “central component of higher education cooperations” (HRK 2018c). Numerous German HEIs or even higher education faculties have concluded cooperation agreements with other HEIs or faculties in third countries. For 2017, the German Rectors’ Conference lists “33,500 international cooperations agreed by 303 German higher education institutions with about 5,400 higher education institutions in 158 countries” in its database<sup>65</sup> (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 107). This list also includes numerous European cooperations, which

often take the form of ERASMUS programmes. ERASMUS programmes accounted for 51% of all cooperations in 2017 (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 107), with 16,568 higher education cooperations being established outside the Erasmus scope. The number of international cooperations outside Erasmus has risen by more than 70% since 2008 (2008: 9,726 international cooperations outside Erasmus; DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 108). “The ratio between cooperation agreements outside Erasmus and the total number of professorships is roughly one to three (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 13), whereby technical universities and smaller universities have such international agreements per professorship far more often than large and small universities of applied sciences or music and fine arts colleges and universities have (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 13 et seq.).

As mentioned above, English-language courses of study are becoming more important and more numerous; they attract both international students and may also increase the attractiveness of a given course of study for German students (see Chapter 5.2).

According to the German Academic Exchange Service, higher education cooperations aim to improve the quality of teaching and research, increase the number of internationally mobile students and researchers, maintain and promote German as a language of culture and research and promote development and international understanding (DAAD 2018j).

The German Academic Exchange Service and the German Rectors’ Conference regard internationalisation and international higher education cooperations as useful for German students, too, as “due to the trend towards globalisation, more and more higher education graduates are expected to know foreign languages and to work in international teams, which requires not only technical abilities, but also a high degree of intercultural sensitivity. Numerous higher education institutions have responded to the new requirements and offer organised exchange programmes, such as Erasmus, or courses of study which already integrate stays abroad” (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 13).

### 8.3.2 Regional foci of higher education cooperations

In 2017, one third of the higher education cooperations (apart from Erasmus cooperations) registered in the information portal of the German Rectors’ Conference focused on European countries, with al-

65 “The information portal on “International University Partnerships” run by the German Rectors’ Conference systematically captures international cooperation efforts at the faculty and university level” (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 107).

most 22% being concluded with EU Member States and 11% with other European states (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 111). Close to 29% of all higher education cooperations were signed with HEIs from Asia, about 17% with HEIs from North America, almost 13% with HEIs from Latin America, 5% with HEIs from Africa and 4% with HEIs from Australia and Oceania, whereby several countries from different regions per cooperation are also possible (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 111).

In 2017, the most important partner countries for the 16,570 international higher education cooperations outside the Erasmus programme were the United States of America (2,271 cooperation agreements or 14% of all cooperations outside Erasmus), China (1,307 cooperations; 8%), Russia (932 cooperations; 6%), Japan (706 cooperations; 4%) and Canada (608 cooperations; 4%). Eight out of the top ten countries in terms of cooperations were third countries (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Most important partner countries for international cooperations outside Erasmus in 2017 (in absolute terms and in %)**

	Number of partnerships	%
US	2,271	13.7
China	1,307	7.9
Russia	932	5.6
Japan	706	4.3
Canada	608	3.7
Brazil	581	3.5
Australia	577	3.5
France	520	3.1
UK	504	3.0
South Korea	442	2.7
India	441	2.7
Mexico	382	2.3
Poland	364	2.2
Spain	291	1.8
Chile	287	1.7
Switzerland	285	1.7
Italy	266	1.6
<b>Other countries</b>	<b>5,806</b>	<b>35.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,570</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Information portal on “International Higher Education Partnerships” by the German Rectors’ Conference; DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 112; blue background = EU Member States and Switzerland (as of 2017); light blue/grey background = third countries.

### 8.3.3 Double-degree courses

Double-degree courses are another tool of the internationalisation of HEIs which involves international cooperation in which there is an agreement between two HEIs in two countries and the students partly complete their studies at the German and at a foreign HEI and receive both national degrees. By mid-2017, 681 such courses offered jointly with 1,472 partner HEIs abroad were available in Germany. This is “equivalent to 3.6% of all courses of study available” (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 16). As a regional breakdown shows, almost two thirds of the partner HEIs for double-degree courses were located in EU Member States in 2017. Almost 9% were in North America, about 6% in Latin America, 4% in China, 4% in the rest of Asia, 3% in the rest of Europe, 2% in Australia and Oceania and 1% in African countries (DAAD/AvH/HRK 2018: 16).

### 8.3.4 Transnational Education (TNE)

Transnational Education (TNE) goes beyond the types of cooperation described so far. It has got significant support since the turn of the millennium<sup>66</sup> and been “systematically” promoted, not least by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, as a tool for higher education internationalisation. The German Academic Exchange Service defines TNE at German HEIs as follows:

“Transnational Education refers to universities, degree courses and individual study modules which are offered abroad essentially for students from the respective host country or region, under the main academic responsibility of a university in another country. Academic responsibility first of all refers to contents (curricula), but typically embraces at least some of the following elements as well: German faculty; degrees awarded and quality assurance conducted by the German university” (DAAD 2014e: 3).

Courses offered by German HEIs abroad rely on the concept that “students [...] want to avail themselves of the high quality of the education offered by well-known foreign HEIs, but do not want to go abroad for

<sup>66</sup> During the initial phase for the promotion and strengthening of TNE, Germany learned from the TNE initiatives which Australia and the UK already started back in the late 1980s (DAAD 2012b: 3).

a complete course of study” (DAAD 2018k). The offers range from “individual courses of study to centres for special subjects or centres of excellence or even the establishment of binational higher education institutions” (DAAD 2018k), with the latter also being supported by the German Academic Exchange Service. In 2018, ten binational higher education institutions, faculties or institutions with German involvement existed in ten countries, nine of which were third countries. The most recent of them had been established in 2014:

- Kazakhstan (since 1999)<sup>67</sup>: Kazakh-German University, Almaty (DKU)
- Jordan (since 2001): German Jordanian University, Amman (GJU)
- Hungary (since 2001): Andrassy Gyula University Budapest (AUB)
- Egypt (since 2003): German University in Cairo (GUC)
- Turkey (since 2006): Turkish-German University, Istanbul (TDU)
- Vietnam (since 2006): Vietnamese German University, Ho Chi Minh City (VGU)
- Oman (since 2007): German University of Technology, Muscat/Oman (GUtech)
- Algeria (since 2008): Pan African University, Institute of Water and Energy Sciences (incl. Climate Change), Tlemcen
- Mongolia (since 2013): German-Mongolian Institute for Resources and Technology, Nalaikh (DMHT)
- Russia (seit 2014): German-Russian Institute of Advanced Technologies, Kazan (GRIAT)

Support for binational projects on the German side is provided not only by the German Academic Exchange Service, but also by individual universities or faculties (for example RWTH Aachen, which supports GUtech in Oman<sup>68</sup>) or by large syndicates of up to 37 German partner universities and partner higher education institutions (for example for VGU in Vietnam; VGU 2018, or for TDU in Turkey; TDU 2018). The Federal government and individual Länder are also involved and provide funding for several binational HEIs. The website of the German Academic Exchange Service gives an overview of existing binational projects and the partners involved.<sup>69</sup>

67 The Federal Ministry of Education and Research has supported the Kazakh-German University since 2007, the Federal Foreign Office since 2009.

68 Website of GUtech in Oman: <https://www.gutech.edu.om/> (3 Dec. 2018).

69 Website of the German Academic Exchange Service with an overview of existing binational projects and the partners in-

### 8.3.5 Representative offices of German HEIs abroad

During the last few years, numerous German HEIs have established their own representative offices abroad which provide information and advice about studying at the relevant HEI. For example, in 2018 “Freie Universität Berlin [...] had representative offices at Brussels, Cairo, Moscow, New Delhi, New York, São Paulo and Beijing. The University of Cologne operates representative offices at New York, New Delhi and Beijing. Ruhr-Universität Bochum, TU Dortmund University, the University of Duisburg-Essen have formed the University Alliance Ruhr and jointly run three representative offices at New York, Moscow and São Paulo” (Wissenschaftsrat 2018: 45). Some Länder have also established representative offices abroad to promote higher education cooperation (see Chapter 5.1.2).

## 8.4 Measures to prevent a brain drain

From the vantage point of the German Academic Exchange Service, the assumption that a brain drain is happening is “one-sided and not borne out by recent research” (DAAD 2014d: 2). The OECD shares this view:

“For their countries of origin, mobile students might be viewed as lost talent. However, mobile students can contribute to knowledge absorption, technology upgrading and capacity building in their home country, provided they return home after their studies or maintain strong links with nationals at home. Mobile students gain tacit knowledge that is often shared through direct personal interactions and can enable their home country to integrate into global knowledge networks. Recent data suggest that students leaving to study overseas are a good predictor of future scientist flows in the opposite direction, providing evidence of a significant brain circulation effect (Appelt et al., 2015). In addition, student mobility appears to shape future international scientific co-operation networks more deeply than either a common language or geographical or scientific proximity” (OECD 2018: 219).

involved: <https://www.daad.de/hochschulen/hochschulprojekte-ausland/gruendung/de/> (3 Dec. 2018).

According to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German Academic Exchange Service, Germany's efforts to attract international students and researchers were never aimed at a one-sided process, but at an exchange, i.e. 'brain circulation'. The German Academic Exchange Service describes its position and its activities as follows:

“We provide the information that foreign graduates of German higher education institutions have many options in Germany, in their home country or in other countries. Our support programmes are not meant to encourage the migration of qualified workers into one or the other direction. We prepare our programmes in such a way that links to the home country are maintained and strengthened. We support networks between Germany and other countries in all directions. First and foremost, societies and governments are responsible for creating attractive working and living conditions in developing countries. However, we can and will help to shape some framework conditions” (DAAD 2014d: 2).

The draft of the Skilled Labour Immigration Act mentions both meeting Germany's need for qualified labour and international development as goals of attracting international students and participants in vocational training to Germany (see Chapter 4.6). Concrete measures to prevent a brain drain or promote development are largely set out in development-relevant promotional programmes of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, which are implemented by the German Academic Exchange Service. One of them is “the provision of tools which facilitate and promote the return of urgently needed higher education graduates to their home countries and support them after their return” DAAD 2014d: 3; see Chapter 7.4). This includes reintegration scholarships or start-up funds for higher education graduates from developing countries (DAAD 2014d: 5). Specific support for students of subjects that are relevant for development are another such measure (see Chapter 6.2.1; Deutscher Bundestag 2018c: 5).

Expenses for a course of study borne by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development or other institutions are only booked as public development expenses if the students “return to a developing country after their graduation” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018c: 9). Moreover, “roughly two thirds, i.e. the majority, of all scholarships awarded by the German Academic Exchange Service and funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development are handed out for studies in the country of origin or

in a neighbouring country (so-called “third-country programme”). This helps to strengthen local structures and create a perspective” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018c: 9).

## 9 Conclusion

Attracting international students and retaining graduates as qualified labour is an important issue for the Federal government and the Länder as well as for numerous HEIs. HEIs have considerable leeway when it comes to preparing their courses of study and setting admission criteria and consider different aspects. German and international student mobility is often only one aspect of a more broadly based internationalisation strategy.

The broad range of potential courses and the complex application procedures, both at the HEIs themselves and for visa and residence permits, may appear intransparent and be an obstacle for international students who might be interested in studying in Germany. However, residence law provisions have been streamlined considerably in the last few years, for example by the introduction of an entitlement to a residence permit, by making it easier for international students to travel within the EU and by introducing and expanding the possibility of staying after graduation in order to seek for employment.

Transparent, multi-language and attractive information, for example the website “Study in Germany”, also help to get answers to many important questions around studying in Germany and providing a coherent picture of what it means to go to a HEI in Germany. A larger number of study courses and modules held in English and efforts by individual HEIs, who may run representative offices abroad or be involved in universities or institutes, also help to increase the attractiveness of Germany as a study location. This is evident from the steadily rising number of international students in Germany over the past decade.

Graduate retention hinges on several factors. HEIs can provide important support and facilitate practical experience and contacts with potential employers during the course of study. Ultimately, however, students’ and HEIs’ commitment and support are only one factor. The local labour market situation, corporate efforts or support from local institutions and employment agencies are just as important. The promotion and successful placement of international students in the field of engagement (e.g. voluntary or community work) is also increasingly regarded as an important factor for societal participation and as a tool for strengthening

retention and a perspective to stay. For example, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees supports the model project ‘Students meet Society’ at the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, which aims to place international students in voluntary work positions at the HEI’s location and to “support better opportunities for social participation and integration during their studies” and “thus also to improve academic success and awaken or strengthen the desire to stay” (BAMF 2017a and 2017b).

International higher education cooperations often aim to strengthen these procedures by minimising administrative obstacles via bilateral agreements, cooperations at the higher education level or Transnational Education projects (for example by mutually recognising degrees) and by making student and (teaching) staff exchanges part of the university structures and curricula and thus making them a matter of course. After years of cooperation, older students and the higher education administrations will have gained practical experience with an exchange programme, can give practical hints concerning accommodation and funding and pass on knowledge on everyday life and subject-specific contents. The fact that the number of higher education cooperations has steadily risen over the past few decades will intensify these processes.

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# List of institutions interviewed in the context of the study

1. Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung)
2. German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst)
3. German National Association for Student Affairs (Deutsches Studentenwerk)
4. German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz)
5. Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration)
6. Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt)

# List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	German	English
AA	Auswärtiges Amt	Federal Foreign Office
APS	Akademische Prüfstellen	Academic test centres
AufenthG	Aufenthaltsgesetz	Residence Act
AvH	Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung	Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
AZR	Ausländerzentralregister	Central Register of Foreigners
BA	Bundesagentur für Arbeit	Federal Employment Agency
BAFöG	Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz	German Federal Training Assistance Act
BAMF	Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
BAY-HOST	Bayerisches Hochschulzentrum für Mittel-, Ost- und Südosteuropa	Bavarian Academic Center for Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe
BGBI	Bundesgesetzblatt	Federal Law Gazette
BMAS	Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales	Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
BMBF	Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
BMFSFJ	Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
BMI	Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat	Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Home Affairs
BMWi	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie	Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy
BVerwG	Bundesverwaltungsgericht	Federal Administrative Court
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	Christian Democratic Union
CEFR		Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CHE	Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung	Centre for Higher Education
CSND	Career Service Netzwerk Deutschland e. V.	Career Service Network Germany e. V.
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern	Christian Social Union
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst	German Academic Exchange Service
DEETYA		Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs of Australia
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft	German Research Foundation
DSW	Deutsches Studentenwerk	German National Association for Student Affairs

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>English</b>
DZHW	Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung	German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies
EC		European Community
ECTS		European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EMN	Europäisches Migrationsnetzwerk	European Migration Network
Et al.		Et alia (and more)
Et seq.		Et sequentes (and the following (pages))
EU	Europäische Union	European Union
e. V.	Eingetragener Verein	Registered Association
f		female
GUtech		German University of Technology in Oman
GWK	Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz	Joint Science Conference
HEI		Higher education institutions
HRK	Hochschulrektorenkonferenz	German Rectors' Conference
ICs		Information Centres
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau	The KfW is a German government-owned development bank
KMK	Kultusministerkonferenz	Secretariat of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany
m		male
MWK	Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst Baden-Württemberg	Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of the Land Baden-Württemberg
n.d.		No date
OECD	Organisation für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PhD		Doctor of Philosophy
REG		Return Expert Group
RWTH	Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule	Rhineland-Westphalian Technical University
SIK	Servicestelle Interkulturelle Kompetenz	Service Center for Intercultural Competence
SGB	Sozialgesetzbuch	Social Code Book
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Social Democratic Party
StAG	Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz	Nationality Act

Abbreviation	German	English
STEM		Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
STIBET	Stipendien- und Betreuungsprogramm	Scholarship and support programme
Subs.		Subsection
SVR	Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration	Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration
TDU	Türkisch-Deutsche Universität in Istanbul	Turkish-German University in Istanbul
TestAS	Test für Ausländische Studierende	Test for Academic Studies
TestDaF	Test Deutsch als Fremdsprache	Language test for foreign learners of German
TNE		Transnational Education
TU	Technische Universität	Technical University
VGU	Vietnamese German University in Ho-Chi-Minh-Stadt	Vietnamese German University, Ho Chi Minh City

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**WP 84** Beneficiaries of protection travelling to their country of origin: Authorization, Policies and Revocation Procedure in Germany. Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)  
Author: Janne Grote (2019)

**WP 83** Developments in Germany in the context of visa liberalisation. Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN).  
Author: Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (2019)

**WP 82** Labour Market Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Germany. Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)  
Authors: Julian Tangermann and Janne Grote (2018)

**WP 80** Unaccompanied Minors in Germany – Challenges and Measures after the Clarification of Residence Status. Focussed Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)  
Authors: Julian Tangermann and Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (2018)

**WP 79** The Changing Influx of Asylum Seekers in 2014-2016: Responses in Germany. Focussed study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)  
Author: Janne Grote (2018)

**WP 77** Return Policy in Germany in the Context of EU Rules and Standards. Focussed study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)  
Author: Paula Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (2017)

**WP 76** Documenting and Establishing Identity in the Migration Process – Challenges and Practices in the German Context. Focussed study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)  
Author: Julian Tangermann (2017)

**WP 74** Illegal employment of third-country nationals in Germany. Focussed study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)  
Authors: Julian Tangermann and Janne Grote (2017)

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Authors: Herbert Brücker, Johannes Croisier, Yuliya Kosyakova, Hannes Kröger, Giuseppe Pietrantuono, Nina Rother and Jürgen Schupp (2019)

**05/2018** Geflüchtete Menschen in Deutschland: Hilfebedarfe und Nutzung von Beratungsangeboten.  
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**3/2018** Volljährige Asylantragsteller in Deutschland im Jahr 2017. – Sozialstruktur, Schulbesuch und Berufstätigkeit im Herkunftsland  
Author: Hans-Jürgen Schmidt (2018)

## Annual Reports (latest)

- MB** Migrationsbericht des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge im Auftrag der Bundesregierung Bericht 2016/2017 (2018)
- JB** Migrations- und Integrationsforschung – Jahresbericht 2017 des Forschungszentrums Migration, Integration und Asyl im Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2018)
- WM** Wanderungsmonitoring: Bildungs- und Erwerbsmigration nach Deutschland. Bericht für das erste Halbjahr 2018 (2018)
- FM** Freizügigkeitsmonitoring: Migration von EU-Bürgern nach Deutschland. Bericht für das erste Halbjahr 2018 (2019)

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