



Doc. 14509

08 March 2018

Encouraging the movement of international students across Europe

Report¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

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Summary

Student mobility is widely acknowledged in Europe as being beneficial for students, higher education institutions, employers and countries, for it promotes economic sustainability, diversity and broadening of skills. Yet, some countries are more successful than others in attracting and retaining international students. This report identifies a number of factors accounting for that variation.

On international student movement and related data, the report also seeks to expose the shortcomings of existing definitions, which are often misleading. For example, they fail to distinguish between student “movement or migration” and all other types of migration: economic, political, etc. This lack of distinction then adversely affects both the status of student movement and our attitude towards it, since blanket restrictive policies on migration in general are taken to apply to student movement as well.

The report looks at good practices in European (and some non-European) countries, noting how these attract international students and retain them in the labour market once they have qualified.

Its recommendations are for the Assembly to invite the political leadership of member States to welcome and support international student mobility because of its benefits for both their education systems and their economies.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 13893](#), Reference 4184 of 29 January 2016.



Contents	Page
A. Draft resolution	3
B. Explanatory memorandum by the Earl of Dundee, rapporteur	4
1. Introduction	4
2. Student mobility in Europe and beyond	4
2.1. Benefits of international student mobility	4
2.2. An increase in overall mobility, yet corresponding to a lack of incentives for non-European students	5
2.3. Mobility patterns of international students	5
2.4. Limitations of existing data	6
3. Factors for variation in countries' ability to attract international students	7
4. Legislative framework and existing policies in the European Union	8
5. International students and pathways to labour migration	9
6. Some conclusions and recommendations	10

A. Draft resolution²

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is convinced that student mobility assists member States' education systems and economies, as the inclusion of international students brings greater diversity and a broader range of skills.
2. The Assembly refers in this context to its [Resolution 2044 \(2015\)](#) on student mobility, in which it stresses that student mobility is one of the core goals of the Bologna Process, which set up the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This has proved to be an important tool for economic progress, social development and intercultural understanding.
3. It also refers to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165, "Lisbon Recognition Convention"), which clearly states that higher education should be designed "to enable all people of the region to benefit fully from this rich asset of diversity by facilitating access by the inhabitants of each State and by the students of each Party's educational institutions to the educational resources of the other Parties".
4. The Assembly urges member States to adopt measures in favour of student mobility. These would address tuition fees, accreditation and the need for compatibility between education systems. Such measures would also help international students find jobs in the countries where they have studied and would make them feel welcomed by the host countries and their political leadership.
5. The Assembly therefore calls on member States to promote student mobility both to and from their countries by:
 - 5.1. providing a welcoming environment to international students and promoting employment prospects in each country of destination, its communities and its higher education institutions;
 - 5.2. introducing policies that facilitate the admission of international students and allow them to gain work experience and, if they so wish, remain in the host country after graduation in order to seek employment;
 - 5.3. implementing fully the Bologna Process for the recognition of higher education qualifications, aligning national qualifications with the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA);
 - 5.4. once jobs have been secured, helping international graduates find accommodation and get longer-term residency and citizenship rights, if they so wish;
 - 5.5. removing language barriers during studies and regarding job searching, assisting international graduates with specific procedures which may differ from country to country;
 - 5.6. for certain smaller countries, where relevant, offering more programmes in English in order to attract international students;
 - 5.7. setting tuition fees for international students at the same or similar rates as those for domestic students.
6. With respect to the analysis of trends in student mobility, the Assembly also calls on member States and relevant international organisations to:
 - 6.1. agree on consistent definitions of student mobility across countries to enable the collection of comparable data;
 - 6.2. in view of present concerns about migration, produce subdivisions within national immigration statistics distinguishing the annual figures of international students coming to different countries from those of all other migrants.

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 23 January 2018.

B. Explanatory memorandum by the Earl of Dundee, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. In 2012, the Parliamentary Assembly noted how European governments had reduced immigration levels without making exceptions for academic mobility (see [Resolution 1906 \(2012\)](#) on the consolidation and international openness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)). It recommended measures to reverse this trend, namely to encourage mobility of students, teachers, researchers and university managers by reducing administrative constraints. As a result, it would become easier to obtain visas and social security benefits. Proper recognition would be given to qualifications, and co-operation would improve with countries outside the EHEA.

2. More recently, [Resolution 2044 \(2015\)](#) and [Recommendation 2066 \(2015\)](#) on student mobility recommended that member States remove obstacles to mobility which, as strongly emphasised by the Bologna Process, has contributed to economic progress, social development and intercultural understanding. The resolution stressed the importance of raising students' interest and motivation and also of explaining how private businesses might support student mobility.

3. Previous Assembly work on student mobility has been done in the context of education (Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media). The 2014 report on student mobility which led to the above adopted texts advised providing more funds for student mobility, improving recognition of learning outcomes, and reducing red tape. Higher education institutions were called upon to provide more information about academic mobility programmes and to include these programmes as part of university courses, joint degrees and foreign language courses as well as sponsorship programmes between incoming and outgoing students.

4. However, since this report is in the context of migration it thus considers more closely associated aspects such as cultural diversity, broadening the range of skills and transition from study to labour markets.

5. I would like to thank Ms Lucie Cerna, Research Associate at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) in Oxford (United Kingdom). Her valuable work has allowed me to make recommendations based on reliable facts and supported by expert sources.

6. As a follow-up to this report and in order to examine the challenges for student movement to and from the United Kingdom following the country's departure from the European Union, the Sub-Committee on Refugee and Migrant Children and Young People of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons will hold a hearing in March 2018 in London, with the participation of relevant parliamentary, government and university institutions.

2. Student mobility in Europe and beyond

2.1. Benefits of international student mobility

7. Academic mobility has benefits for students, higher education institutions, employers and host countries. For students, learning abroad is an opportunity to access quality education, acquire skills that may not be taught at home and to get closer to local labour markets appreciative of good education. Studying abroad is also seen as a way to improve employment credentials within increasingly globalised labour markets.

8. While studying abroad assists the transition from school to work,³ it also develops understanding between different cultures⁴ along with the confidence of "give and take", diplomacy and co-operation.⁵ Not least does it build up language skills, particularly English.⁶

9. Although what is taught abroad may not be offered at home, it might well be valued all the same by local employers who increasingly look for qualifications with an international component.⁷

3. Palifka B. (2003), "Study abroad and the transition from school to work for Mexican College graduates", Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey Working Paper.

4. Williams T. (2005), "Exploring the impact of study abroad on students' intercultural communication skills: adaptability and sensitivity", *Journal of Studies in International Education* 9(4): 356-371.

5. Palifka B. (2003), op. cit.

6. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2004), *Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges*, OECD Publishing, Paris; Mulvey L. (2012), "Why study abroad? Why not!", in OECD, *Languages in a Global World – Learning for Better Cultural Understanding*, Paris: OECD, pp. 319-332.

10. For host countries, mobile students may be an important source of income.⁸ In the short term, international students often pay tuition fees; and in some countries incur higher registration fees than domestic students. They also contribute to the local economy through paying for their living expenses. In the long term, highly educated mobile students are likely to join domestic labour markets. Attracting mobile students, especially if they stay permanently, is a way to tap into a global pool of talent, support the development of new production systems and mitigate the impact of an ageing population upon future skills supply in many countries.⁹

11. Student movement which promotes diversity¹⁰ and the awareness of different cultures,¹¹ enriches innovation and creativity,¹² thereby boosting quality and opportunities. Regions with a diverse workforce often produce improved results, their firms proving to be a fertile source of ideas and better at problem solving.¹³

12. Despite numerous advantages that international student mobility can bring to individuals, higher education institutions, employers and countries, not all countries and other stakeholders have been able to reap these benefits.

2.2. An increase in overall mobility, yet corresponding to a lack of incentives for non-European students

13. Currently there are strong incentives to study abroad. There is a global demand for tertiary education. As a result, a growing number of students spend at least part of their studies abroad.¹⁴ Labour market demand for skilled people has become much more international while transportation and communication costs are now much lower than they were. Many governments and international institutions, including the European Union, have also formed academic, cultural, social and political ties among countries.

14. Student mobility worldwide has risen from 800 000 million foreign students enrolled in higher education programmes in 1975 to 4.6 million in 2016.¹⁵ Between 2000 and 2012, the European Union more than doubled its international student population.

15. However, these figures fail to reflect considerable differences between countries in attracting international students.¹⁶ In addition, while student mobility in Europe is facilitated by the European Union's Erasmus student exchange programme and the EHEA set up by the Bologna Process, these measures are not sufficient to attract non-European students to European universities in the long term.

2.3. Mobility patterns of international students

16. In 2015, English-speaking countries overall received most, with four countries receiving over half the number of mobile students. The United States had 907 000 international students; the United Kingdom 431 000; Australia 294 000; Canada 172 000. International students going to these countries mainly came from Asia, which thus accounted for 87% to Australia, 76% to the United States and 54% to the United Kingdom.¹⁷

7. Santiago P., Tremblay K., Basri E. and Arnal E. (2008), *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Volume 1 and 2*. Paris: OECD.

8. OECD (2016), "International mobility of highly skilled", in *OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

9. OECD (2016), *OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

10. OECD, Strength through Diversity project, www.oecd.org/edu/school/strength-through-diversity.htm.

11. OECD (2004), *Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

12. Suedekum J., Wolf K. and Blien U. (2014), "Cultural diversity and local labour markets", *Regional Studies* 48(1): 173-191. DOI: 10.1080/00343404.2012.697142; Ozgen C., Nijkamp P. and Poot J. (2011), "Immigration and Innovation in European Regions", *Tinbergen Institute Discussion Paper* 11-112/3. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1908138> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1908138>; Parotta P., Pozzoli D. and Pytlikova M. (2012), "The nexus between labour diversity and firm's innovation", *IZA Discussion Paper* 6972.

13. Page S. (2007), *The Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

14. OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

15. OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

16. For the purposes of this paper, "students" are taken to be people studying at post-secondary level. International students are those who left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study. Some countries (such as the Czech Republic, Italy and Korea) only collect data on foreign students. Foreign students are those who are not citizens of the country in which they are enrolled and where the data are collected. Although they are counted as internationally mobile, they may be long-term residents or even be born in the "host" country.

17. OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

17. In 2015, Australia, Austria, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom showed the highest levels of incoming students, measured as a proportion of the total number of international students in higher education. In Europe, international students represent 15.9% of total enrolments in Austria, 18.5% in the United Kingdom, 45.9% in Luxembourg, 11.2% in the Netherlands, 10.3% in Denmark, 9.9% in France and 7.7% in Germany. Foreign enrolments also form a large group of university students in the Czech Republic at 10.5%¹⁸. By contrast, incoming students represent less than 3% of total tertiary enrolments in Slovenia, Spain and Poland.

18. Some 1.52 million international students enrolled in programmes in the European Union in 2015. Yet there is great divergence among EU member States. France (239 000) and Germany (229 000) are major host countries, followed by the Netherlands (86 000) and Spain (75 000). Yet while a majority of mobile students entering France come from Africa (41%), other European countries provide the main source for Germany (42%). However, for both France (23%) and Germany (35%) respectively, Asia accounts for their second highest proportion of incoming students. International students to the Netherlands are also mainly European (57%). Spain is notably different – as many as 37% come there from Latin American countries. Smaller European countries rely much more on student mobility within Europe itself. For example, more than 80% of students going to Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic come from Europe.¹⁹

19. In 2010, by contrast, Europe was the preferred destination: 41% of all international students went there. The fastest growing regions of destination were Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania and Asia, reflecting the internationalisation of universities in an increasing number of countries.²⁰

20. In 2010, the United Kingdom, France and Germany were major host countries, followed by Spain and Austria. Yet, then as now, there were many differences. For while a majority of mobile students to France came from Africa (42.8%), again other European countries were the source of incoming students to Germany (46.4%). A large proportion to the United Kingdom came from Asian countries (42.7%). International students to Austria were also mainly European (83.8%), while inflows to Spain from Latin American countries represented 50%. More than 80% of students going to Austria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Luxembourg, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia came from other European countries.²¹

21. For different reasons outlined in this report (tuition fees, the language of instruction, the quality of higher education institutions and immigration policy), many EU countries continue to find it difficult to attract non-European students. All of these considerations influence the numbers of international students and the duration of their stay.

2.4. Limitations of existing data

22. For measuring international student levels, data is inconsistent. In a number of States, in particular the United Kingdom, statistics do not differentiate between students and other migrants, i.e. students are counted within general migration statistics. Some countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States reclassify students as temporary migrants, thus not counting them within a permanent migrant category.

23. For the OECD and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), data on international and foreign students are obtained from enrolments within their countries of destination. This is the same method used for collecting data on total enrolments, i.e. records of regularly enrolled students in an education programme. Students enrolled in countries that do not report to the OECD or to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics are not included. As a result, for their countries of origin, the total number of national students enrolled abroad may be underestimated.

24. OECD international statistics on education tend to overlook the intervention of distance and e-learning, especially fast-developing MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) students who commute from one country to another on a daily basis and short-term exchange programmes which take place within an academic year, such as the Erasmus programme. Other concerns may arise from the classification of students enrolled in foreign campuses and European schools in host countries' student cohorts. And the OECD does not collect (harmonised) trend data on international students by origin.²²

18. Ibid.

19. OECD (2017b), Education at a Glance Database, Dataset: Share of international or foreign students enrolled by country of origin, http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EAG_ENRL_MOBILES_ORIGIN.

20. OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

21. Ibid., Table C4.7

22. <http://stats.oecd.org/>.

3. Factors for variation in countries' ability to attract international students

25. There are many reasons why countries vary in their ability to attract international students. Student migration is often influenced by differentials in education capacity, i.e. a lack of educational facilities in the country of origin, or the prestige of educational institutions and their courses in the country of destination. It is also driven by comparisons between the returns to or rewards for education and skills in the origin and destination countries respectively. Cultural, linguistic and historical connections between countries as well as existing networks of communities also play a part in guiding international students.²³ Other explanations range from tuition costs, the perceived quality of institutions abroad, the language of instruction, the compatibility and comparability across education systems, immigration policy as well as the perceived economic, political and social climate in possible host countries.

26. As already indicated, tuition fees play a major part. More often than not their levels are set by universities themselves, but governments can control or cap fees through regulation or by increasing public appropriations of educational institutions. They can also reduce the financial impact on individuals by subsidising students (e.g. loans and scholarships).

27. In some countries, tuition fees are the same for both national and international students. For example, within the EHEA, international students from other EU countries are treated as domestic students for paying tuition fees. Outside Europe, countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Israel, Korea and Switzerland also charge the same fees for both domestic and foreign students. However, other host countries (for example Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Canada and New Zealand) differentiate international from domestic students and charge international students higher tuition fees. They thus avoid placing an extra burden upon domestic taxpayers, instead receiving revenue from the international trade of educational services.²⁴

28. International students are less willing to go to countries with high tuition fees. For instance, Sweden introduced tuition fees for international students for some university courses in the academic year 2011/12. The number of non-European Economic Area (EEA) new entrants to these programmes dropped by almost 80% in 2012. It went up slightly by 6 percentage points from 2012 to 2014. At the same time, there was an increase in the number of entrants from the EEA – 28% in the year in which the reform came into effect. There were similar effects after Denmark's reform of tuition fees in 2006.²⁵

29. The most motivated students enrol regardless of fees, since the perceived quality of instruction abroad and the assessed value of host institutions are key criteria for keen international students when selecting their country of destination. Thus popular choices include a large number of high-ranking tertiary educational institutions.²⁶

30. Language, as already observed, is another determinant. Countries whose language of instruction is widely spoken and read, such as English, French, German, Russian and Spanish, have great appeal for international students. English is the lingua franca of the world, with one in four people speaking it.²⁷ Countries where English is an official language (either legally or *de facto*) – such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States – are priority destinations for international students. English is increasingly mandatory in school curricula, even during early education. Thus many want to improve their English by going to where it is the official language. Moreover, a growing number of institutions in non-English-speaking countries (such as the Nordic countries) offer tertiary education programmes in English.²⁸ The Netherlands offers the largest number of English-taught programmes in continental Europe: about 30% of all undergraduate courses and more than half of all masters programmes in the country.²⁹

31. Compatibility across national education systems is another factor, as also are educational accreditation and information: the latter in removing barriers to student exchanges and supporting the global market for advanced skills. The Bologna Process demonstrates co-operation at European Union level. It has boosted

23. OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

24. Ibid.

25. OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

26. Abbott A. and Silles M. (2015), "Determinants of international student migration", *The World Economy*, Vol. 39/5, pp. 621-635. Beine M., Noël R. and Ragot L. (2014), "Determinants of the international mobility of students", *Economics of Education Review*, Vol. 41 (August), pp. 40-54.

27. Sharifian F. (2013), "Globalisation and developing metacultural competence in learning English as an international language", *Multilingual Education*, Vol. 3/7, Springer Open, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/2191-5059-3-7>.

28. OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

29. Nuffic (2015), *Key figures 2015 – internationalisation in higher education*, Nuffic. <https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/key-figures-2015-internationalisation-in-higher-education.pdf>.

student mobility in Europe by harmonising degree structures, strengthening quality assurance and easing the recognition of qualifications and periods of study across EU countries as well as promoting different mobility instruments.³⁰

32. Immigration restrictions and complex related procedures often deter students from going to certain countries. These continue to revise their legal systems in order to attract and retain international students.³¹ Reforms mainly consist of issuing student visas, amending or simplifying immigration procedures and easing restrictions on short-term work permits for students.

33. For example, in Australia, the simplified student visa framework (SSVF) was implemented in July 2016. It is designed to make the process of applying for a student visa easier to navigate for students and to reduce red tape for businesses.³² The number of student visa subclasses has been decreased from eight to two, while a simplified single immigration risk framework has been introduced to help students meet financial and language requirements.³³ In May 2016, the Australian Government announced its 10-year roadmap for attracting foreign students. This is an initiative for improving the quality of teaching, providing much better support and building partnerships – with the aim of attracting 720 000 new enrolments by 2025.³⁴

34. A pathway student visa pilot in New Zealand enables a student to undertake up to three consecutive programmes of study on a single student visa, which may be granted for up to a maximum of five years.³⁵ In 2014, Canada revised its International Student Programme and streamlined work permit access for international students enrolled in a Canadian institution to allow them to work part-time (20 hours per week) off campus.³⁶

35. The decision to study abroad may also be influenced by economic, political and social factors, such as economic growth and employment opportunities; political stability; political climate (feeling welcome or not); the robustness of institutions in the host country; cultural and religious affinities between countries of origin and destination, and networks in the destination country³⁷. Recent social factors such as the financial recession, migration and refugee crisis, Brexit, the rise of populist parties, and reduced economic growth in China have also all influenced international student mobility.

36. International student mobility can be identified in three stages. The first (1999-2006) was shaped by the terrorist attacks of 2001 in the United States, which led to an increase in the numbers of international students studying science and technology. The second stage (2006-2013) reflected the global financial recession, which also motivated traditional destinations to recruit international students. The third stage (2013-2020) is now formed by the slowdown in the Chinese economy, the United Kingdom's referendum to leave the European Union and by American policies. This stage reveals growing competition among new and traditional destinations to attract international students.³⁸

4. Legislative framework and existing policies in the European Union

37. To encourage student mobility, the European Union has implemented a number of programmes and initiatives, most notably the European Union's Erasmus student exchange programme and the EHEA set up by the Bologna Process. These are all tools for economic progress, social development and intercultural understanding. The EHEA has led to changes which make it easier to study and train abroad while the bachelor-master-doctorate structure and advances in quality assurance have facilitated student and staff mobility and strengthened institutions and systems.

30. OECD (2017), *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

31. OECD (2016), "International mobility of highly skilled", in *OECD Science, Technology and Innovation Outlook 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/sti_in_outlook-2016-17-en; OECD (2016), *International Migration Outlook 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2016-en.

32. <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/Busi/Educ/simplified-student-visa>.

33. OECD (2017), *International Migration Outlook 2017*, OECD Publishing.

34. <http://monitor.icef.com/2016/05/australia-releases-10-year-blueprint-for-expansion-of-its-international-education-sector/>.

35. OECD (2017), *International Migration Outlook 2017*, OECD Publishing.

36. <http://monitor.icef.com/2014/02/canada-confirms-new-student-visa-regulations/>.

37. UNESCO (2013), *The International Mobility of Students in Asia and the Pacific*, UNESCO, Paris; Weisser R. (2016), "Internationally mobile students and their post-graduation migratory behaviour: An analysis of determinants of student mobility and retention rates in the EU", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 186, OECD, Paris.

38. Choudaha R. (2017), Three waves of international student mobility (1999–2020), *Studies in Higher Education*, 42:5, pp. 825-832.

38. The most famous programme, Erasmus, provides direct help to those wishing to study or train abroad and to projects which encourage cross-border co-operation between higher education institutions. It focuses upon students' skill acquisition, dealing with macro-economic challenges at national and regional levels.³⁹ The programme also seeks to "enhance the attractiveness of higher education in Europe and support European higher education institutions in competing on the higher education market worldwide".⁴⁰

39. Since it began, in 1987-88, the Erasmus programme has provided over three million European students with the opportunity to go abroad and study at a higher education institution or train in a company.⁴¹ Erasmus mobility, with its emphasis on skills development for employability and active citizenship, is a central element of the European Commission's strategies. In 2015, 33 States participated in the programme, including 28 EU member States. The most popular destination for inward mobility was Spain, which received over 44 000 students, followed by Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy.⁴² The popularity of these five countries has remained more or less constant in recent years.

40. However, existing programmes do not sufficiently facilitate student mobility within and to the European Union. Both Erasmus and EHEA mostly promote short-term stays (average of six months) of students from European institutions to others within the European Union.

41. That is why the European Commission has introduced revised rules in 2016 "to attract non-EU students, researchers and interns to the EU". They are a combination of two previous directives concerning students and researchers. The amended directive extends and improves intra-EU mobility for students and researchers and labour market access for members of the families of third-country researchers (but not students). It grants them coverage under the EU Family Reunification Directive, but exempts researchers from many of its most restrictive conditions (those related to integration measures before reunification and waiting periods). Mobility provisions for both students and researchers are increased. The amended directive also allows both students and researchers to stay on for an additional nine months after completion of studies or research in order to seek work or to start a business.⁴³

42. Although the European Union is a major destination for international students, so far it has not provided all that much work for foreign graduates. The revised EU Students and Researchers Directive can ensure a job-search and setting-up a business period, but more should be done to attract students to the European Union in the first place and to help those who find a job to remain after their studies, by facilitating work permits and making it easier for them to search for work across the European Union.⁴⁴

5. International students and pathways to labour migration

43. International students benefit local economies through their skills and abilities. They are thus often encouraged to find jobs in the countries where they have studied. In 2014, the duration of job-search periods varied between six months in countries such as Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, Denmark and Finland to one year in the Netherlands.⁴⁵

44. However, other countries offer no special facilities for staying on, thus graduates have to use the same job search channels as those available to migrants. In 2014, this was the case in Belgium, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Israel and the United States. In Sweden, foreign students can try to find jobs during their studies. If successful, they may switch to work status even before they have completed their studies.

45. Since 2014, more OECD countries have adopted measures to encourage international students to take on jobs after graduation. Norway, for example, has extended its job search permit for international students and researchers from six to 12 months. Since March 2016, international graduates in the Netherlands may apply for a residence permit within three years of graduation – previously it had been one year. The requirement of obtaining a work permit within the first year has been dropped. In Italy, the government has

39. Dvir Y. and Yemini M. (2017), Mobility as a continuum: European commission mobility policies for schools and higher education, *Journal of Education Policy*, 32(2): 198-210.

40. European Commission (2014), *Erasmus+ Program Guide*. Brussels: European Union, p. 33.

41. European Commission (2014), *Erasmus Facts, Figures and Trends*, The European Union support for student and staff exchanges and university cooperation in 2013-2014.

42. European Commission (2016), *Erasmus+ Annual Report 2016*, Statistical Annex. Brussels: European Commission.

43. OECD/EU (2016), *Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Europe 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264257290-en>.

44. Ibid.

45. OECD (2014), *International Migration Outlook 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

promoted the programme Startup Hubs, which was launched at the end of 2014. This helps foreign students, as well as other migrants already living in Italy, to stay on, by simplifying procedures for those starting up their own business.⁴⁶

46. Estonia now allows international students, as well as researchers, teachers and lecturers, to stay and work for 183 days after their residence permits have expired. In Latvia, since July 2016, undergraduates may work for 20 hours per week. Masters or PhD students can work without any time limitations. Those who have graduated at Masters or PhD level can request a temporary residence permit for a period of six months, during which time they may search for employment. In 2015, Lithuania made it easier for international students to take on jobs after graduation. If employed in highly qualified work, they are entitled to a Blue Card. This enables them to stay on without having to provide evidence of work experience.⁴⁷

47. Yet such employment-search concessions have not necessarily led to increases in the number of jobs for international students. To complicate matters further, in many countries reliable data is lacking on how many remain. For example, in 2008/2009, about 17% of international (non-EU) students changed status and stayed on in Austria, while over 30% of international students did so in France, the Czech Republic and Canada.⁴⁸

48. Between 16.4% and 29.1% of international students from non-EU countries remain in the European Union after graduation. The highest proportion is from north-western Africa and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). However, large enrolment numbers do not necessarily reflect large numbers who stay on. For instance, while Chinese students are the biggest group of international students, only between 13.7% and 15.5% stay on in the countries where they have studied. Current data reveal short-term stay rates (6-12 months after the end of studies). Thereafter analysis becomes difficult.⁴⁹ Different factors can influence stay rates of international students, such as similarity between host and source countries' language, institutional quality and governance effectiveness, and countries' technological readiness and levels of innovation.

6. Some conclusions and recommendations

49. This report concludes that academic movement benefits students, higher education institutions, employers and countries alike. International students contribute towards economic sustainability, greater diversity and a broader range of skills. Therefore, all stakeholders should seek to attract and retain international students.

50. Key issues to be addressed include tuition fees, accreditation of diplomas and compatibility between education systems as well as the ease or difficulty for graduates to find work in the countries where they have studied. Host countries supported by their political leadership should provide a welcoming environment for students.

51. Many EU member States receive a majority of students from other EU-countries rather than from different parts of the world. This report identifies several factors influencing international student mobility in Europe: tuition fees, the language of instruction, the quality of institutions, immigration policy, cultural and historic patterns, and the economic, political and social background in countries.

52. Offering more programmes in English would help countries, in particular smaller ones whose language is not spoken elsewhere, to attract more international students.

53. Setting an appropriate level of tuition fees for international students or charging them the same fees as domestic students would also bring many more of them to Europe.

54. Improving the quality of institutions and creating more world-class universities would give Europe greater appeal as a destination for study.

55. The development of an innovative and competitive environment would also attract international students.

46. OECD (2017), *International Migration Outlook 2017*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

47. Ibid.

48. OECD (2014), *International Migration Outlook 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

49. Weisser R. (2016), op. cit.

56. Introducing immigration policies that ease the admission of international students, allowing them to gain work experience and prolong the job-search period after graduation, would clearly influence the decision of many more of them to seek to study and work outside their home countries.
57. Other measures include removing language barriers during studies and providing support for those wishing to move from study to work.
58. Once jobs have been secured, international graduates could be offered help in finding accommodation and in dealing with local labour market requirements.
59. It is important to provide a positive environment so that from the outset international students are motivated both to study and find jobs in host countries, being made more welcome in their communities and higher education institutions.
60. Improving data collection with consistent definitions of student mobility across countries and creating subdivisions to distinguish immigration statistics by category is essential.