



Attracting and retaining international students in the EU

Common Template for EMN Study 2018

Final version: 5th September 2018

Subject: Common Template for the EMN Study 2018 on “*Attracting and retaining international students in the EU*”

Action: EMN NCPs are invited to submit their completed Common Templates by **4th December 2018**.

If needed, further clarifications can be provided by directly contacting the EMN Service Provider (ICF) at emn@icf.com and to Veronika Vasileva (veronika.vasileva@icf.com) and Norma Rose (norma.rose@icf.com).

1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In view of growing labour market challenges, the EU and its Member States have increasingly looked at migration as a means to address ageing populations, sustain welfare systems and find skilled workforce. According to the OECD, the EU welcomes more migrants than any other single OECD destination, with more than two million permanent-type migration flows to EU countries in 2016.¹ Labour migrants comprise about one in three new migrants to the EU, however, at the same time, third-country migrants only comprise 4% of the total EU working-age population between the ages of 15 and 64.^{2,3}

One way to tackle this shortage in skills is through the attraction and retention of third-country nationals who choose the EU for the purpose of higher education. While the EU/EFTA as a whole is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for international students, with a 4% increase of flows in 2016, the competition with other OECD countries, such as the United States, Australia and Japan persists.⁴ The retention of international students in the EU also remains a challenge, as only a small fraction of graduates reside in an EU Member State to take up employment. In recent years, the EU and its Member States have been working on several comprehensive strategies to enhance the attractiveness of Europe's higher education system. The most prominent example at EU level is the EU's new students and researchers directive adopted in 2016 (Directive (EU) 2016/801),⁵ which notably seeks to improve and harmonise minimum legal standards for welcoming and retaining international students. At national level, some Member States have developed new national strategies for the attraction of students and many universities have increased their efforts to attract international students, for instance by organising information campaigns in third countries and increasing their social media presence. In parallel, Member States have concluded bilateral and multilateral agreements with third countries, with the aim of facilitating the admission of third-country national students to the EU.

¹ OECD, *International Migration Outlook*, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook-2018_migr_outlook-2018-en#page24

² OECD/EU (2016), *Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Europe 2016*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264257290-en>

³ Please note that a complete statistical overview will be presented in the Synthesis Report.

⁴ OECD, *International Migration Outlook*, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook-2018_migr_outlook-2018-en#page34

⁵ 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 purpose of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing (recast).

A number of studies have been carried out in recent years on the topic of attracting international students (see "Relevant sources and literature" below). Most importantly, the 2012 EMN Study on "Immigration of international students to the EU" and the 2013 EMN Study on "Attracting highly qualified and qualified third-country nationals" looked into the immigration and mobility policies of (Member) States, as well as the policies and concrete practical measures in place that aim to attract (highly) qualified third-country nationals. The 2018 study aims to update this information and complement it with retention policies. This topic was also touched upon by the 2015 EMN Study on "Changes in immigration status and purpose of stay: an overview of EU Member States' approaches", by outlining the conditions that regulate the changes of status between different categories of third-country nationals.

Particularly in view of the deadline to transpose the 2016 Students and Researchers Directive by 23 May 2018, it is assumed that changes to Member States' policies with regard to attracting and retaining students have taken place recently, which this study aims to capture.

2 STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this study is to explore what national practices are in place in Member States to attract and retain third-country national students. The Study will only focus on legal migrants issued with a residence permit or long-stay visa for the reason of studies, and will thus not include beneficiaries of international protection.

More specifically, the Study aims to:

- Provide a statistical overview of the number of third-country national students present in EU Member States and Norway from 2012-2017 and 2018 data if available, the duration of studies, the number of graduates who reside in the Member States after their studies, etc.
- Examine the incentives in place in EU Member States and Norway to attract and retain third-country national students;
- Describe the admission criteria of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), language requirements and the process for recognition of diplomas;
- Provide an overview of the bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements in place with third countries covering international students;
- Outline the challenges and good practices of EU Member States and Norway with regard to the attraction and retention of international students.

3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The overall focus of this Study are third-country nationals who are granted residence permits or long-stay visas for reasons of studies, and/or are undertaking a higher education degree (Bachelor, Masters or PhD level⁶). For the purpose of this study, higher education comprises tertiary education programmes at levels 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The study only focuses on full-time students. The Study covers the period from 2013-2017 for statistics and 2012-September 2018 for policy developments, to take into account changes made as a result of the transposition deadline of the Students and Researchers Directive.

For abbreviation purposes, the terms 'international students' is used in the study in the meaning of third-country national students from non-EU/EEA countries. The definitions should be read in line with Articles 3 (3) of the Students and Researchers Directive.

The following categories are excluded from the scope of this study: researchers, part-time students, third-country national family members of EU citizens, vocational post-secondary education students, trainees and apprentices, au pairs and beneficiaries of international protection.

4 EU LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

The importance of attracting international students is well-recognised by the European Union. Promoting the mobility of third-country nationals to the EU for the purpose of study has been part of the EU's policy since 1994 with the adoption of the Council Resolution on the admission of third-country nationals to the territory of the Member States of the EU for study purposes. This is also in the context of the Bologna Process, launched with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, which is one of the main voluntary processes at European level, as it is nowadays implemented in 48 states. The Bologna Process led to the

⁶ Please note that the inclusion of PhD students in this study depends on whether they fall within the realm of students at national level.

establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The 2015 European Agenda on Migration reiterated the need for promoting the mobility of international students, calling for the EU to provide a safe haven for those fleeing persecution and at the same time also to feature as an attractive destination for the talent and entrepreneurship of students, researchers and workers.⁷ In line with this objective, the international dimension of the Erasmus + Programme encourages student mobility from third countries, providing an opportunity for students from eligible partner countries to study in an EU Member State.

In terms of the legislative framework, in October 2002, the European Commission put forward a proposal for a Directive establishing common entry and residence conditions for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service. The Directive entered into force in December 2004 with a transposition deadline for Member States of January 2007.

The Council and the European Parliament adopted in 2016 the Students and Researchers Directive, which is the result of the recast of the 2004 Directive on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service and the 2005 Directive on researchers, based on the 2011 evaluations of these Directives by the Commission.⁸

The Students and Researchers Directive clarifies the admission and residence requirements by setting out general conditions for admission, and specific conditions for researchers, students, school pupils, trainees, volunteers and au pairs. The new Directive still follows a sectoral approach. While it sets uniform and binding rules on conditions for admission for students, researchers, trainees and volunteers participating in the EU's voluntary scheme, provisions on other volunteers, school pupils and au-pairs are optional.

The Study is very topical in light of the transposition deadline of the Directive. The Directive aims to make the EU a more attractive destination for students, in particular by improving their mobility conditions, allowing them to stay at least nine months after the completion of the studies period and allowing them to work (for at least 15 h/week). Furthermore, procedural guarantees have been reinforced for all categories (decision on an application within 90 days and provision of a justification of a negative decision).

5 PRIMARY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE STUDY

The Study will aim to address the following:

- To what extent is the attraction and retention of students a policy priority for Member States?
- What is the number of students coming to the Member States for the purpose of studying? How many remain in the EU after finalising their studies to take up employment? What is the legal and policy framework in place in Member States and what recent changes have been made to policies and practices?
- In light of Article 7 and Article 11 of the recast Students and Researchers Directive, how are the admission and reception criteria for third-country national students implemented in practice by Member States (e.g. tuition fees, procedure to be granted a residence permit, recognition of diplomas, etc.)? For those Member States, which do not apply the Directive, what are the admission and reception conditions in place?
- In light of Articles 24 and 25 of the recast Students and Researchers Directive, how are the conditions⁹ for access to the national labour market or self-employment for third-country nationals while being enrolled as a student and after completion of studies implemented in practice by Member States? For those Member States, which do not apply the Directive, what are these conditions?
- Have Member States concluded bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements with third countries covering third-country national students? If so, how do these incentivise students to take up higher education in the EU?
- What is the role of universities, companies, local governments etc. in the retention of international students (e.g. scholarships, traineeship programmes, apprenticeship contracts)?
- What challenges do Member States face with regard to attracting and retaining third-country national students?

⁷ COM(2015) 240 final

⁸ COM(2011) 587 final and COM(2011) 901 final.

⁹ Article 25 of the Students and Researchers Directive

- Which good practices are in place in Member States related to the attraction and retention of students?

6 RELEVANT SOURCES AND LITERATURE

EMN Studies

- EMN (2015): Changes in immigration status and purpose of stay: an overview of EU Member States approaches. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00.emn_study_on_the_change_of_status_final.pdf
- EMN (2013): Attracting Highly Qualified and Qualified Third-Country Nationals. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/attracting/emnsr_attractinghqworkers_finalversion_23oct2013_publication.pdf
- EMN (2012): Immigration of International Students to the EU. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/immigration-students/0_immigration_of_international_students_to_the_eu_sr_24april2013_final_en.pdf

EMN AHQs

- 2017.1234 – **Talent mobility** – requested 11 October 2017
- 2017.1233 – **Implementation of the Directive (EU) 2016/801 (research, studies, training)** – requested 26 July 2017
- 2017.1189 – **Retaining TCN Students** – requested 26 May 2017¹⁰
- 2017.1136 – **Transposition of Directive (EU) 2016/081** – requested on 27 January 2017
- 2016.1111 – **Verification of the reliability of potential students** – requested 25 October 2016

Other studies and reports

- The Conference Proceedings of the EE EMN Annual Conference on “The EU in the global race for talents: Challenges and solutions in strengthening the EU’s competitiveness”, held on 21-22 September 2017. <http://emn.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/nr9.pdf>
- OECD/EU (2016), Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Europe 2016, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264257290-en>. A study on the intra-EU mobility of third country nationals, by Yves Pascouau, Senior Adviser to EPC (European Policy Centre, a think-tank based in Brussels) on migration and mobility policies (2013) http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_3496_intra-eu_mobility_of_third-country_nationals.pdf
- A study by the Migration Policy Centre on “A Comprehensive Labour Market Approach to EU Labour Migration Policy” (2015) <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/824e91bc-d642-4626-9267-676945e15053/language-en>
- A report on learning mobility, by the JRC (Joint Research of the European Commission) (2015) http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC99969/learning%20mobility%20technical%20report_pubsy_pdf.pdf
- A study by OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), “The Impact of the Implementation of Council Directives on Labour Migration Flows from Third Countries to EU Countries” (2016) <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/5j1wxbzkbvfl-en.pdf?expires=1519893945&id=id&acname=guest&checksum=C2DDC88488C17F6BEEC76D45022311EB>

¹⁰ Please see the 2017 EMN Inform on Retaining third-country national students in the EU: <http://emn.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Inform-student.pdf>

7 AVAILABLE STATISTICS

International level

Statistics on international mobility of students are provided by UNESCO¹¹ and OECD.¹²

EU level

Statistics are available through Eurostat on the number of residence permits issued to third-country nationals by reason, including education reasons. The Synthesis Report will also make reference to the Erasmus Plus/Erasmus Mundus Programme in the section outlining the EU policy framework and will present some general data on the number of international students who took part in these exchange programmes. This will be developed by the EMN Service Provider (ICF).

National level

Subject to availability, the following statistical data sources should be included insofar as possible:

- Statistics on the number of international students enrolled in HEIs in Member States and Norway;
- Statistics on the number of international students who have graduated in the Member State and Norway.
- Statistics on the number of international students remaining in the Member State and Norway after graduation per reason.

8 DEFINITIONS

The following key terms are used in the Common Template. The definitions are taken from the EU 2016 Students and Researchers Directive and the EMN Glossary Version 6.0.¹³

‘Employer’ means any natural person or any legal entity, for or under the direction or supervision of whom or which the employment is undertaken;

‘Family members’ mean a third-country national, as specified in Art. 4(1) of Directive 2003/86/EC (normally members of the nuclear family – i.e. the spouse and the minor children), who has entered the territory of the European Union for the purpose of family reunification;

‘Higher education institution’ (HEI) means any type of higher education institution recognised or considered as such in accordance with national law which, in accordance with national law or practice, offers recognised higher education degrees or other recognised tertiary level qualifications, whatever such establishments may be called, or any institution which, in accordance with national law or practice, offers vocational education or training at tertiary level. The term ‘higher education’ encompasses all tertiary institutions which may include, inter alia, universities, universities of applied science, institutes of technology, *grandes écoles*, business schools, engineering schools, IUTs, colleges of higher education, professional schools, polytechnics and academies.

‘International student’ means a third-country national who has been accepted by a higher education institution and is admitted to the territory of a Member State to pursue as a main activity a full-time course of study leading to a higher education qualification recognised by that Member State, including diplomas, certificates or doctoral degrees in a higher education institution, which may cover a preparatory course prior to such education, in accordance with national law, or compulsory training. Member States will be asked to state at the beginning of their national contribution and in the statistics provided whether doctoral candidates (PhD students) are included when referring to “students” or not;

‘Long-stay visa’ means an authorisation issued by a Member State as provided for in Article 18 of the Schengen Convention or issued in accordance with the national law of Member States not applying the Schengen *acquis* in full;

‘Residence permit’ is defined as “an authorisation issued using the format laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1030/2002 entitling its holder to stay legally on the territory of a Member State”;

‘Third-country national’ is defined as “any person who is not a citizen of the European Union within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of TFEU and who is not a person enjoying the Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Schengen Borders Code”;

¹¹ <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

¹² <https://data.oecd.org/education/htm>

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary/

9 ADVISORY GROUP

An “Advisory Group” (AG) has been established within the context of this Study for the purpose of providing support to EMN NCPs during the development of the specifications for the Study, as well as the drafting of the Synthesis Report. In addition to COM, and the EMN Service Provider (ICF and Odysseus), the members of the AG for the Study include EMN NCPs from AT, DE, EE, ES, FR, LT, LU and NL. EMN NCPs are thus invited to send any requests for clarification or further information on the Study to the following representatives of the AG:

- ★ COM: Magnus.OVILIUS@ec.europa.eu; Helene.CALERS@ec.europa.eu
- ★ EMN Service Provider: emn@icf.com; veronika.vasileva@icf.com; norma.rose@icf.com
- ★ Odysseus Expert (Philippe de Bruycker): debruyck@ulb.ac.be
- ★ AT EMN NCP: mbassermann@iom.int
- ★ DE EMN NCP: janne.grote@bamf.bund.de
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10 TIMETABLE

The following tentative timetable has been proposed for the Study going forward:

Date	Action
9 th February 2018	1 st Advisory Group meeting
27 th February 2018	Circulation of <u>Version 1 of the Common Template</u> for the Study to COM and AG members
22 nd June 2018	2 nd Advisory Group meeting
6 th July 2018	Circulation of the revised Common Template for the Study to COM and AG members
13 th July 2018	Deadline for comments on revised template from COM and AG members
23 rd July 2018	Circulation of the <u>revised Common Template</u> for the Study to COM and EMN NCPs
13 th August 2018	Deadline for comments revised template for the Study from EMN NCPs

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Date	Action
22 nd August 2018	Circulation of the final draft Common Template to EMN NCPs and COM
5 th September 2018	Finalisation of the Common Template and official <u>launch</u> of the Study
4 th December 2018	<u>Submission of National Reports</u> to EMN Service Provider by EMN NCPs
31 st January 2019	Circulation of <u>Version 1 of the Synthesis Report</u> for the Study to COM and AG Members
11 th February	Circulation of the <u>revised Synthesis Report</u> for the Study to COM, AG members and EMN NCPs
March	<u>Finalisation</u> of the Synthesis Report for the Study and of the National Reports for publication on the EMN website

11 TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The template provided below outlines the information that should be included in the National Contributions of EMN NCPs to this Study. The indicative number of pages to be covered by each section is provided in the guidance note. For National Contributions, the total number of pages should **not exceed 35-40 pages**, including the questions and excluding the Statistical Annex. A limit of **25-30 pages** will also apply to the Synthesis Report, in order to ensure that it remains concise and accessible.

Common Template of EMN Study 2018

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National Contribution from *Member State**¹⁴

Disclaimer: The following information has been provided primarily for the purpose of contributing to a Synthesis Report for this EMN Study. The EMN NCP has provided information that is, to the best of its knowledge, up-to-date, objective and reliable within the context and confines of this study. The information may thus not provide a complete description and may not represent the entirety of the official policy of the EMN NCPs' Member State.

Top-line factsheet [max. 1 page]

*The top-line factsheet will serve as an overview of the **National Contribution** introducing the Study and drawing out key facts and figures from across all sections, with a particular emphasis on elements that will be of relevance to (national) policy-makers. Please add any innovative or visual presentations that can carry through into the synthesis report as possible infographics and visual elements.*

Please provide a concise summary of the main findings of Sections 1-5:

Attraction and retaining of international students has not been highlighted as one of the policy priorities of Latvia, and this topic is not widely discussed in public space (internet resources and television), but this situation may change in the future, as there is a rather rapid increase in international students (including EU citizens) – from 2% of the total number of students in 2010 to 11% in 2017.¹⁵

Directive 2016/801 has been fully transposed into Latvian legislation, further changes in this area are not expected. Changes to the Immigration Law due to the transposition of Directive 2016/801 have broadened students' rights, for example, students no longer have to submit documents certifying corresponding education for the commencement of studies (since the educational institution conducts verification of the existence of a corresponding level of education), students have mobility opportunities, and after graduation students can apply for a temporary residence permit for a period of 9 months to search for a job or start a business. Simultaneously with the transposition of Directive 2016/801, various additional national incentives have been introduced: graduate and postgraduate students are now allowed to work up to 40 hours per week, instead of the previous 20 hours, the term of a temporary residence permit granted to a student has been extended, exceeding the expected study time for four months.

Tuition fees for international students are usually higher than for the residents of Latvia; however, compared to other EU countries, they are still relatively low: in engineering sciences – from 2200 to 4000 EUR, in computer science – from 2000 to 4000 EUR; the most expensive tuition fee is in medicine studies – from 7000 to 15000 EUR (per year), although medical studies are one of the most demanded among international students. In all study programmes, HEIs require language skills, mostly English.

Studies for international students are not financed from the state budget; however, state scholarships are available, for which only citizens of countries, with which Latvia has entered into a respective bilateral agreement, may apply. HEIs also offer discounts on tuition fees and scholarships. HEIs try to provide all students with the opportunity to live in dormitories and offer other types of practical

¹⁴Replace highlighted text with your **Member State** name here.

¹⁵Overview of higher education in Latvia in 2017, link - http://www.izm.gov.lv/images/statistika/augst_izgl/AII_2017_parskats.pdf

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assistance, such as opening a bank account. Some HEIs also offer other types of assistance, such as airport transfers to the city centre when the student first arrives in Latvia.

In order to receive a permit to stay in Latvia, the future student must prove that he or she has sufficient funds of at least 430 EUR per month, although, during the admission procedure, individual HEIs can ask the student to prove funds in the amount of 5500 EUR (in a bank account). Undergraduate students can work up to 20 hours per week, and students have the right to operate as a self-employed person. Some HEIs have indicated that, although the law provides for the right to work, they do not support employment during studies, as it often negatively affects the quality of study results.

The challenges of attracting students are related to the lack of a network of Latvian embassies and representations around the globe; the inflexibility of certain public authorities; dishonesty of students who come to Latvia for employment instead of studies; difference in the quality of studies of international and local students, as international study programmes cost more.

The following aspects are identified as good practice in attracting international students – good cooperation with state institutions; the option for HEIs to submit document to migration authorities instead of students; agreement on good practice in attracting international students between the largest HEIs in Latvia and the Ministry of Education of Science.

In contrast, the challenge in retaining international students is the lack of a conceptual vision, and many HEIs in general do not strategically think about retaining students in the country. However, some HEIs state that several international students are employed as academic staff, as well as in units of other HEIs. International students are also employed in companies, where they gain practical training during studies, or start their own businesses.

Section 1: National legal and policy framework in the Member State

This section aims to provide an overview of the national policies in the Member States and Norway related to entry and residence of third-country nationals as students. The focus should be put on the recent changes that have been introduced in Member States and Norway since 2012.¹⁶

Please note: Statistics provided in Annex 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 will be used to contextualise the national legal and policy framework reported on by Member States in this section.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please elaborate:

PhD students can be treated in both ways – as students or researchers. It depends on the individual circumstances.

Q1c. What are the **main changes** to: (a) law, (b) policy and (c) practice since 2012 with regard to international students? Please specify whether these changes were made in response to Directive (EU) 2016/801 or other national policy priorities.

According to the amendments to the Immigration Law adopted in 2018, students have been granted extended rights to employment (students in master's or doctoral programs have been granted unrestricted access to labour market. All other students are allowed to work up to 40 hours per week during study holidays).

International students are granted the right to stay that exceeds the term of study agreement for 4 months. The purpose of the amendment has been justified by the necessity to finish all formalities related to the obtaining/translating/legalizing diploma and submitting documents for the next residence permit, if a person has decided to look for a job in Latvia. Above-mentioned amendments have not been made in response to Directive 2016/801, they reflect the national policy needs.

Mobility rights have been introduced according to the directive 2016/801.

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

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

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

¹⁶ The last EMN studies related to this public were published in 2013 (see the study on Highly qualified migrants at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/studies_en)

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

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

Please elaborate:

Export and internationalisation of higher education is not a national policy priority, while attraction of international students (both from the EU and international students) and internationalisation of higher education is included in several planning documents at the horizontal level. The increase of the share of both the academic staff and international students has been defined as one of the objectives to be achieved or sub-goals of directions of action¹⁷ in Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030, as well as in the Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020¹⁸.

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

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

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

As mentioned in the response to Q1e, internationalisation of higher education has not been identified as a priority at the level of the Ministry of Education and Science, but given the fact that internationalisation, competitiveness and exportability of higher education has been prescribed in national planning documents, then this issue is also included in the planning documents relating to education at the horizontal level.

The international competitiveness of education is one of the sub-goals of directions of action of Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2014-2020.

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

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

If you have answered yes, please provide a list of the study fields targeted and the reasons. Please differentiate clearly between attraction and retention:

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

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

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the main issues of the debate:

¹⁷Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030, http://www.varam.gov.lv/in_site/tools/download.php?file=files/text/dokumenti/pol_doc//LIAS_2030_parluks_en.pdf

¹⁸Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020, http://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/images-legacy/NAP2020%20dokumenti/NDP2020_English_Final.pdf

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

Higher education institutions are autonomous institutions of education and science with the right to self-governance.

The Ministry of Education and Science implement a unified State policy and development strategy in education; draw up draft policy planning documents and regulatory enactments; control over State budget expenditures provided for education;

Sectoral ministries controlling institutions of higher education and colleges – Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of defence; Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of Health. They control the financial and economic activities of the institutions;

The Administration of Studies and Science coordinates and administers studies and student credits;

The Council of Higher Education formulates a national concept for the development of higher education and institutions of higher education; provides an opinion on the reorganisation and liquidation of higher education institutions;

The Council of Rectors discusses issues regarding the establishment of common study programmes, the utilisation of the academic staff and material base;

The Academic Information Centre recognises international diplomas in Latvia.

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

Please explain:

There is no specific public entity at national level, however, taking into account increasing number of international students, 12 HEI established Higher Education Export Association. On May 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Higher Education Export Association signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on attracting international students. Pursuant to the memorandum, higher education institutions – the members of the Higher Education Export Association – through testing the students' general knowledge and foreign language skills, will select candidates who meet the appropriate admission criteria, while the Foreign Ministry will ensure that the students' visa applications are duly processed in line with the time schedule laid down in the memorandum.

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

Yes, migration authorities cooperate with HEIs.

No, migration authorities do not cooperate with HEIs.

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

Each year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the State Border Guard and the Ministry of Education and Science, organises a seminar for HEIs to discuss the latest trends related to the enrolment, employment, etc. of international students, and answers to questions asked by HEI representatives. The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs meets with HEIs on a bilateral basis to discuss problems encountered within the process of international student entry.

Q3c. Is there an approval procedure¹⁹ in place in your Member State for public/private HEIs for the purpose of hosting international students? If so, are international students only allowed to study in those HEIs?

Yes.

No.

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

¹⁹ Article 15 of the Students and Researchers Directive

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

- Yes, higher education is state-sponsored for third-country nationals.
- No, higher education is not state-sponsored for third-country nationals.
- Other (e.g. state support depends on the student's country of origin):

Please elaborate:

Studies of international students are not funded by the state, but there are national scholarships (for citizens of countries with which Latvia has concluded a corresponding bilateral agreement), scholarships offered by HEIs and tuition fee discounts.

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

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

2.1 Admission conditions for international students

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

Please elaborate:

- 1) Valid travel document;
- 2) Study agreement with HEI;
- 3) Sufficient financial resources (at least in the amount of the minimum monthly wage set by the state per month);
- 4) Health insurance policy;
- 5) There is no threat to national security, public order or public health;
- 6) Place of residence.

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

IMPORTANT: *Please explain also under each question Q4b-4i how each of the below listed admission conditions are considered to attract international students / are used to attract them / are used flexibly in order to attract international students, or are there some that are considered disincentives.*

[Possible visual element: for the Synthesis Report, the applicable admission conditions (including fees) could be visualised in one infographic page]

Q4b. Is a proof of **acceptance** by HEI required in your Member State in order to obtain the visa/residence permit?²⁰

- Yes.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate:

A study agreement with a HEI is a document proving the validity of the purpose of the entry (study) indicated by the person.

²⁰Article 11 (1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

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

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

Please explain:

Academic recognition of foreign academic degrees regulates by Academic Information Centre.

Q4d. What are the **level of tuition fees for third-country nationals** in your Member State? ²¹ *If applicable, please distinguish between the different qualifications levels (ISCED levels 5-8).*

- If possible, please provide here a range of the level of tuition fees per academic year in euro/national currency:

<i>Medical Science</i>	<i>7000 – 15000 EUR</i>
<i>Business Studies and Management Sciences</i>	<i>2000 – 6000 EUR</i>
<i>Engineering and Technology</i>	<i>2200 – 4000 EUR</i>
<i>Mathematics and Informatics</i>	<i>2000 – 4000 EUR</i>

- Is the level of fees for third-country nationals determined centrally (e.g. by the state) or by each HEI?

By HEI

Please explain:

- Is evidence of payment an admission condition?
- Yes.
- No.

Practical note: Payment is not admission condition in the sense of immigration procedure, but this usually is admission condition in HEI.

- Are the fees capped in your Member State (i.e. is there a higher/lower threshold limit imposed)?
- Yes.
- No.

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

If you have answered no, please elaborate:

Usually fees for international students are higher.

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

²¹ See Article 11(1)(b) of the Students and Researchers Directive

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 Yes. No.

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

Systematically no, but HEI have the right to free any students from the tuition fee, but such cases are evaluated case by case. To promote academic excellence and expand the diversity of the student community as social support, HEI can apply tuition fee discounts.

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

Please elaborate:

- 1) The fee for processing documents required to request a long-term visa is 60 EUR under general procedure, and 120 EUR for processing documents filed less than three business days before the end of the residence term.
- 2) Processing of documents submitted for application for a residence permit within 30 days – 70 EUR, 10 business days – 200 EUR, 5 business days – 400 EUR. This state fee is not paid by students enrolled in graduate and postgraduate programmes. State fee payable for issuing a residence permit – eID card – is 14.23 EUR (issuance within 10 business days) or 28.46 EUR (issuance within two business days).
- 3) Application fee at the universities usually is between 100 and 150 EUR. Some HEIs apply registration administration fee 1500 EUR²².

Q4f. Are international students required to provide a proof of sufficient **knowledge of the language** of the course?²³ If so, what is the required level? Does the student have to provide an attestation (e.g. TOEFL test)?

 Yes, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is required in general. A proof is required for specific courses. No, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is not required.

If proof is required (either in general or for specific courses), please elaborate and specify the required level, using the levels defined by the CEFR:²⁴

Please elaborate:

A proof of sufficient knowledge of English is required in all study programmes. Usually this is in the form of an entrance exam developed by the HEI itself. However, many HEIs accept IELTS or TOEFL, etc. certificates – in this case the student is exempted from the entrance exam in English.

It should be noted that language proficiency is not one of the preconditions for admission in the field of immigration procedure, i.e. the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs does not check whether the student has sufficient knowledge or a certificate to grant the student a temporary residence permit – this lies within the competence of the HEI.

Below is an example of the requirements for the minimum level of English language proficiency at Riga Stradins University (the largest educational institution in terms of international students):

Certificate	Minimum score
IELTS	6.5
TOEFL iBT	85
TOEIC	700

²²Registration administration fee EUR 1500 at Riga Stradiņš University, <https://www.rsu.lv/en/study-here/admissions/undergraduate-programmes>

²³See Article 11(1)(c) of the Students and Researchers Directive

²⁴<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

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TOEFL PBT	550
GCE	B level
Cambridge First Certificate in English	170
Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English	170

- The student has to provide an attestation.
- Yes, an attestation is required for all courses.
- An attestation is required for specific courses.
- No.

Q4g. Are international students automatically qualified for **health insurance**?²⁵

- Yes, students automatically qualify for health insurance.
- No, students need to submit proof of health insurance.

Please elaborate:

The minimum level of insurer's liability for the insurance period indicated in the policy shall not be less than EUR 42,600²⁶

Q4h. Is there a pre-determined level of **sufficient resources** for international students at national level?²⁷ If so, what is the level of sufficient resources and what type of resources are accepted?

- Yes.
- No.

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

Please explain:

The student must prove that there are sufficient resources at his/her disposal to provide for him-/herself and his/her family member. Financial resources must correspond to the minimum monthly wage²⁸ (In 2018 - 430.00 EUR).

However for some HEIs there is need for confirmation letter (official letterhead, signed, stamped) from your bank stating that you have a minimum of EUR 5,500.00 in your personal bank account. The account can be a shared account with one of your parents. In this case the bank letter should confirm that there are a minimum of EUR 11,000.00 in the shared bank account.

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

- Bank statement.
- Guarantee by a third person.
- Other, please specify: scholarships, a statement from the potential employer if the student plans to work during his/her studies up to 20 hours per week.

Q4i. Other admission conditions

²⁵See Articles 7(1)(c) and 11(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

²⁶Cabinet Regulation of 28 July 2018 No. 591 "Regulations on Insurance of Foreigners", available at <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=179063>

²⁷See Articles 7(1)(e), 7(3) and 11(1)(d) of the Students and Researchers Directive

²⁸ Cabinet Regulation of 21 June 2010 No. 550 "Regulations Regarding the Amount of Financial Means Necessary for a Foreigner and the Determination of the Existence of Financial Means". - *Latvijas Vēstnesis* No. 100, 28.06.2010 [came into force on 17.07.2010] <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=290808>

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

Please elaborate:

There could be library security deposit in some HEI, approximately 75,00 EUR (refundable).

2.2 Special incentives for attracting international students

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

NB: Please also state whether measures to attract are targeted to a specific qualification level (ISCED levels 5-8) or sciences/fields of education (e.g. STEM²⁹).

[Possible visual element to be included in the Synthesis report: the incentives used in Member States could be visualised in a one infographics page]

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

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

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

Information about study options is available on the website of the HEI, and HEIs develop cooperation networks abroad.

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

- Yes, provided by the state/regional authorities. Please elaborate by providing 1-2 examples:

In accordance with bilateral agreements on co-operation in education and science made between the Latvian government and a number of countries, the State Education Development Agency of Latvia offers scholarships to international students, researchers and teaching staff for studies, research and participation in summer schools in Latvian higher education institutions (HEIs).

Bilateral agreement countries: Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Peru, South Korea, Spain, Tajikistan, The People's Republic of China, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

Everyone can apply for the scholarship who have successfully completed at least one academic year of studies. Scholarship for bachelor's and master's students – 500 euro per month; for PhD students – 670 euro per month.

- Yes, provided by HEIs. Please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:

Scholarships and financial aid is provided from Alumni Association (mostly private companies) and financial aid for studies to citizens of some EU countries such as Finland, Denmark, Sweden, The Netherlands.

- Yes, provided by private entities. Please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:
- No.

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

- Yes, provided by the state.
- Yes, provided by HEIs.
- Yes, provided by private entities.
- No.

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

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

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

- Yes.
- No.

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

- Yes.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please explain:

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

- Yes, support for spouses available.
- Yes, support for children available.
- Yes, support for other family members available (please specify which family members this includes when elaborating below).
- No.

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

- Yes.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate:

Study programmes of higher education may be implemented both in the official language and any of the national languages of the European Union if acquired by foreigners (it is not stipulated that international students should also be from EU Member States).

Before 2018 many private HEIs offered study programmes in Russian. Changes to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education prohibit HEIs from offering study programmes in non-EU official languages.

HEIs develop programmes for their licensing, therefore one of the requirements of higher education institutions is that international students know those language (most commonly English) in which the particular study programme is implemented. Often, both Latvian and international students have to take specialised English courses (industry terminology) during the first year, but this is an initiative of the HEI itself.

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

- Yes.
 No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate:

In Latvia, EU financial instruments are used to develop study programmes in EU languages, with the exception of the Latvian language. Within the framework of these financial instruments, HEIs could receive funding by applying for projects.³⁰

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

- Yes.
 No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate: Processing of documents for requesting a residence permit is possible not only under normal procedure – within 30 days, but also expeditiously – within 10 or 5 business days, paying an increased state fee.

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

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

Answer: N/A

2.3 Hosting international students: preparation, arrival and housing

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

- Long-stay visa issued in the third country:
 Residence permit issued (please specify the type and length of the permit): *Residence permit is granted for a period, which exceeds the study period indicated in the study agreement by four months, while the residence permit card is issued for 1 year (it must be registered (renewed) annually).*
 Other (please specify):

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

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

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

Please elaborate:

Processing under general procedure – within 30 days, expeditiously – within 10 or 5 business days. Documents are processed within the specified period according to the applicant's request.

³⁰Specific Objective (SO 8.2.1) "To reduce fragmentation of study programmes and to strengthen sharing of resources" <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=296513>

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

Please explain:

The permit is not renewed if the student has not made progress in studies, i.e.:

- the study term exceeds the term stated in the study agreement for more than one year if the initial study agreement has been concluded for a period of up to 3 years,
- the study term exceeds the term stated in the study agreement for more than two years if the initial study agreement has been concluded for a period exceeding 3 years.

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

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

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place.

Yes, support provided by HEIs.

No.

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

HEIs provide support to international students, mainly related to opening a bank account and receiving a residence permit, and, if necessary, provide accommodation in student dormitories, although international students have often already found a new home for themselves. HEIs also tend to organise introductory lectures on studies, life and culture in Latvia.

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

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place.

Yes, support provided by HEIs.

Yes, support provided by other organisations.

No, support not available.

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

HEIs provide accommodation in dormitories, but not all international students use this opportunity. HEIs are interested in arranging accommodation, as it is an essential requirement for students to obtain a residence permit or long-term visa.

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

Yes, state-organised measures for courses in place.

Yes, courses provided by HEIs.

Yes, support provided by other organisations.

No.

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

Some HEIs want to develop preparatory courses, but they point out that the law does not allow students from third countries to be invited to preparatory courses, but only for full-time studies. However, during studies, some HEIs offer the opportunity to attend free Latvian courses, as well as awareness lectures on Latvian culture, environment and traditions.

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

Please elaborate:

There are HEIs that provide free transfer from the airport, when the student first arrives in Latvia. International students can also receive ISIC Student Certificate, which provides discounts in a number of companies.

2.4 Rights of international students

Q8. Right to work

Q8a. How many hours are international students allowed to work per week or months per year?³¹

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

Please elaborate:

During studies, students may work up to 20 hours per week for any employer, while during study holidays students may work up to 40 hours per week. Graduate and postgraduate students may work up to 40 hours per week.

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

Yes, restrictions in place.

No.

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

Students may work for any employer. It should be noted that international students, like other foreigners, are not entitled to occupy positions which can be occupied only by Latvian citizens – the President, Parliament deputy, minister, civil servant, judge, prosecutor and other similar positions.

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

Yes, prior authorisation required.

No.

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

Each student is granted authorisation for the right to work automatically upon the issuance of a residence permit.

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

Yes, self-employment possible.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the regulations in place: Students are entitled to exercise self-employed activities up to 20 hours per week, without receiving a special permission to exercise self-employed activities.

³¹See Article 24 of the Students and Researchers Directive.

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

- Yes, deferral of studies possible.
- Yes, carrying out a training/job in parallel to studies possible.
- No.

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

Training in parallel to studies is permitted if it is carried out not more than 20 hours per week (for graduate and postgraduate students – 40 hours per week). Training within the scope of a study programme is also possible. Deferral of studies due to training is possible, but in this case another permit must be obtained – not as a student, but as an employee or a trainee (depending on the case).

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

- Yes.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please indicate the period: the study period may not exceed the period indicated in the study agreement for more than one year if the initial study agreement has been concluded for a period of up to 3 years or for more than two years if the initial study agreement has been concluded for a period exceeding 3 years.

So, if the study agreement is concluded for three years, the total study period may not exceed four years, while if the study agreement is concluded for five years, the total study period may not exceed seven years.

Q10b. In accordance with Directive 2016/801 Article 21(3),³² Member states may withdraw a visa/residence permit in case of a lack of progress in the relevant studies. Has your Member State transposed this provision?

- Yes.
- No.

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

The Immigration Law stipulates that a residence permit can be revoked or it cannot be renewed if a student has not made sufficient progress in studies. It means that studies in one study program cannot more than for one year exceed the study time stipulated in the study agreement (if the study agreement has been signed for up to three years) or it cannot exceed the study time stipulated in the study agreement for more than two years if the study program is longer than three years. A residence permit will not be revoked if the prolongation of studies is based on circumstances beyond the control of the foreigner. Additionally, the residence permit can be refused if within last 5 years period a student more than twice has been excluded from the study program due to the insufficient progress.

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

- Yes.
- No

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

Half of the study period is accounted in the case of obtaining a permanent residence permit.

³²

See Article 21(2)(f) of the Students and Researchers Directive

External factors affecting attracting international students

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

- HEI rankings
- Member State is a hub for specific fields
- Language in which courses are taught
- Culture
- Socio-economic factors (e.g. living costs)
- Other (please specify): tuition fees are relatively low
- No information available.

Please elaborate:

HEIs implement study programmes in English with the aim of attracting international students. Private HEIs were so far able to admit student in study programmes implemented in foreign languages (including Russian), but amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education adopted in 2018 stipulate implementation of study programmes in the official language or in any of the EU official languages in all HEIs (both state and private). So far, a large share of mobile students chose to study in Russian, but given the amendments to the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, such option will no longer be possible.

It is also worth noting that living costs in Latvia are lower than in other EU Member States.

Aviation and medical study programmes offered in Latvia are comparatively of high quality and open up opportunities for international students to work in these sectors in other EU countries afterwards.

2.5 Challenges and good practices in attracting international students

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

a) Challenges:

Please elaborate:

HEI:

- *consular challenges, insufficient network of Latvian embassies around the globe;*
- *due to the lengthy process of obtaining residence permits, applying for studies in the autumn semester is difficult for graduates of secondary school of the corresponding year;*
- *inflexibility of certain state authorities in attracting international students;*
- *different student experience in past studies, their understanding of the study process as such is a challenge for the academic staff.*

Migration authority:

- *students whose purpose is not studies, but, for example, employment, and who often change study programmes; after failure to fulfil contractual obligations with the previous educational institution students conclude an agreement with another educational institution.*
- *the time of employment often exceeds the permissible 20 hours per week, but this fact is difficult to prove and detect.*

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- the increase in the number of international students necessitates additional administrative resources.

Ministry of Education and Science:

- Not to imperil the quality of education when attracting more and more international students. This challenge applies to all involved: Latvia (how to improve the quality of studies and not to lose the prestige of education acquired in Latvia), HEIs and students.
- Avoid excessively facilitated admission of students to higher education institutions in Latvia, without the necessary knowledge coverage, thus risking to reduce the quality and prestige of higher education.
- Taking into account that at present international students are paying more for higher education in Latvia (higher income for higher education) than Latvian students, the State's challenge is to prevent the gap between acquired higher education by eliminating the differentiation of education of higher institutions.

b) Good practices:

Please elaborate:

HEI:

- Good cooperation with some state institutions.

Migration authority:

- the possibility for representatives of HEIs to submit student documents for applying for residence permits, thus reducing the number of visits to migration institutions;
- the possibility to submit HEI invitations for residence permits electronically using a secure electronic signature.
- the possibility to send applications for residence permits to less busy territorial units of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs for processing in order to reduce the administrative burden of the territorial units located in the capital.

Ministry of Education and Science:

- Several HEIs in Latvia have signed the Agreement on Good Practice of Attracting International Students and Delivering Studies, undertaking:
 - To provide timely information to potential students about the accreditation of programmes, which is the basis for issuing a diploma, as well as other issues related to the study process.
 - To provide timely information to potential students about admission terms, the possibility of recognising previously acquired diplomas, studies and other costs.
- Good practice ensures the preservation/improvement of the quality and prestige of higher education, which will ensure the growth of potential students in the future.
- An example of good practice for HEIs is to maintain easily accessible and comprehensible information on their websites in English or other foreign languages (in which study programmes are implemented).

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

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

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

NB: in your answers to Q14-16, if applicable, please indicate whether the policy/offer/strategy differs between qualification levels (ISCED levels 5-8).

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

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

Please briefly outline the conditions:

- For what period of time does your Member State allow students to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?³³ What happens after this period?

Students' initial temporary residence permit exceeds the expected study period for four months, while after graduation students can apply for a temporary residence permit to seek employment or start a business up to 9 months. During the validity of the study permit students can work until the expiry of the temporary residence permit (also during the four months period that exceeds the study period indicated in the agreement), while employment during the 9 month period is not allowed.

Please elaborate:

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

Yes.

No.

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

- Does the international student require a minimum level of degree in order to be allowed to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?³⁴

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please indicate the minimum level required: Master's Degree.

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

Lowered salary requirement for a work/residence permit.

Unrestricted access to the labour market.

Other incentive(s).

No.

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

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

Yes, initiatives implemented by HEIs.

Career centres operate in the largest HEIs in Latvia, where students are offered consultations about employment after graduation or during studies (combined with studies). These consultations are available to both local students and international students. During the academic year, HEIs organise Career days, the basis of which is company involvement. Students in Latvia often choose to study in professional higher education programmes, during which all students have to take internship. Consequently, all

³³See Article 25(1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

³⁴See Article 25(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

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students of professional programmes are already developing experience in the Latvian labour market, thus expanding their ability to find suitable work for themselves. For example, the Career Centre of Riga Technical University has created a job advertisements portal, in which companies directly address students of Riga Technical University.

Yes, initiatives implemented by the private sector.

HEIs collaborate with private companies, including undergraduate study programmes. For example, HEI "Turība" stated that it cooperates with a private company in the study direction Computer Systems, where students continue to work after graduation. Another HEI RSU indicated that it cooperates with private companies, students usually start this practice at the end of their studies; however, international students mostly return to their home country or go to another country.

Other initiatives.

No.

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

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

Yes, strategy implemented by HEIs.

Yes, strategy implemented by the government.

No.

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

3.2 Challenges and good practices in retaining international students

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

A) Challenges:

Please elaborate:

HEI:

- *There is no conceptual vision for retaining students in the country;*
- *Most HEIs are not interested in retaining students, as HEIs' vision primarily is to attract students rather than retaining them.*

Ministry of Education and Science:

- *One of the major challenges of HEIs in retaining international students is both the attraction of competent lecturers and researchers and readiness of the academic staff to teach study courses in English.*
- *In order for HEIs to be able to attract international students over the long-term, this process needs specific, carefully designed targets and objectives that are integrated into the HEI's strategy.*

B) Good practices:

Please elaborate:

HEI:

- *Involve students as academic staff, as well as in other HEI units;*
- *International students start their own businesses after graduation.*

Ministry of Education and Science:

- *Good practice would be to provide every student, including international students (especially students of ISCED 2011 level 7 and 8), the opportunity to engage in research and scientific projects.*
- *Starting in 2019, the accreditation process will be carried out in accordance with the international standards set by EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) in order to develop the quality and strengthen the capacity of study programmes, whereby the State of Latvia will be able to assure that any student, either Latvian or international, receives high-quality education.*

Section 4: Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with third countries

Q18. Has your Member State concluded and/or intends to conclude any **bilateral and/or multilateral agreements** with countries of origin concerning international students? Please distinguish between agreements in place with countries with developed economies and those with developing economies³⁵ as classified by the United Nations³⁶ and summarise and provide an overview of the type of agreements – without listing all the agreements and detailed provisions.

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

Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with industrialised countries. *Please elaborate on the aspects listed below):*

- The most common provisions of the agreements;
- Most common world regions/countries of origin with which agreements have been concluded;
- Are specific fields of studies or qualification levels covered in the agreements?
- Are specific categories of persons covered under the agreements? (e.g. specific age groups; gender; other socio-demographic characteristics).

One of the most common clauses in intergovernmental agreements with other (third) countries is the provision of assistance for mobility to students from another country. Most often intergovernmental agreements are concluded with other European Union countries. In addition to EU Member States, Latvia has concluded a bilateral agreement with the United States and Israel (a bilateral agreement on the provision of professional training for young immigrants has been concluded with Canada).

The US Memorandum of Understanding determines the annual selection procedure for mobility, cooperation with higher education institutions, approval and issuance of necessary documents and the provision of scholarships, maintenance and health insurance.

In addition to other clauses, the intergovernmental agreement with Israel includes the commitment of both parties to provide scholarships and other facilities for studies and research.

Specific areas or qualifications are not covered in these intergovernmental agreements.

Specific categories (except for the category "student" or "researcher"/"academic staff") are not distinguished in these intergovernmental agreements.

Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with developing countries. *Please elaborate on the aspects listed below):*

- The most common provisions of the agreements;

³⁵This distinction is relevant as the objectives and purpose of such agreements could differ significantly between these two categories.

³⁶http://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_DevelopmentStatus_Hierarchy.pdf

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- Most common world regions/countries of origin with which agreements have been concluded;
- Are specific fields of studies or qualification levels covered in the agreements?
- Are specific categories of persons covered under the agreements? (e.g. specific age groups; gender; other socio-demographic characteristics).

More often, intergovernmental agreements with third countries include areas of cooperation in the fields of culture, education and science, emphasising the preservation of cultural heritage and awareness-raising in the other country. In certain intergovernmental agreements, there is an agreement on exchange studies in the field of culture or a specific type of studies – undergraduate or graduate.

There are 8 bilateral agreements with developing countries (transition economies not included): 3 Eastern Asia countries; 1 Western Asia country; 1 South America country; 1 Central America country; 1 South Eastern Asia country; 1 Northern Africa country.

Specific areas or qualifications are not covered in these multilateral agreements.

Specific categories (except for the category "student" or "researcher"/"academic staff") are not distinguished in these multilateral agreements.

No bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned.

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

- Yes, measures related to brain drain in place.
- No.

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

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

- Yes.
- No.

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

In Latvia HEIs are autonomous, therefore they are able to conclude bilateral cooperation agreements with HEIs of other countries. For example, the University of Latvia has concluded 207 bilateral cooperation agreements with various institutions from 50 different countries.

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

A) Challenges:

Please elaborate:

- *It is hard for HEIs to find quality partners;*
- *Lack of time and resources in implementing various initiatives;*
- *Intergovernmental agreements have not been assessed.*

B) Good practices:

Please elaborate:

- *Typically, joint study programmes are very interesting for international students, especially double diploma programmes.*

Annex 1 National statistics

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

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



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