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**IMMIGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
TO FRANCE**

*French Contact Point of the European Migration Network
(EMN)*

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PRESENTATION OF THE FRENCH CONTACT POINT

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In France, the National Contact Point (NCP) of the European Migration Network (EMN) is the Secretary General for Immigration and Integration of the Ministry of Interior.

The French National Contact Point is part of the Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation, which facilitates access to statistics and data on migration and asylum, required for the elaboration of EMN outputs.

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Executive Summary

The fourth Global University Summit, held in Paris in May 2011 within the framework of the French Presidency of the G20, recalled the vital role of international student mobility. Until 2006 France was the world's third-ranked destination for foreign students¹, behind the United States and Great Britain. In a highly competitive international context, Australia moved up to take third position and France dropped to fourth place, just ahead of Germany².

Over a period of ten years, the ranks of students from abroad have helped to significantly swell the overall student population in France. In the 2010-2011 academic year, France welcomed 284,659 students from EU and non-EU countries. Since 2000, this number has increased by 64 % since they were about 174 000. Between 2009 and 2010, the number of foreign students rose by 2.3 %, while the overall number of students increased by 0.2 %³.

Students from EU and non-EU countries represent currently 12 % of the total student population and almost 41 % of all doctoral students. Nearly three-quarters of these were studying at university; more were enrolled, proportionally, in masters and doctoral programmes than in undergraduate courses. In 2010, almost one out of every two foreign students in higher education in France⁴ was from Africa: 24 % came from the Maghreb region and 20 % from the rest of the African continent. Less than a quarter (24 %) were from Europe, of whom 19 % were from the European Union. Finally, 23 % were from Asia, the Middle East or Oceania and 9 % from the Americas⁵.

In a highly competitive international context, policies related to attracting and hosting international tertiary students have taken on great importance, involving numerous stakeholders at various different levels. Increasingly, what is at stake under these policies is not only economic, but also commercial and cultural in nature. Over the last decade, significant efforts have been deployed to foster greater international openness and to attract students from abroad. The creation of the EduFrance agency in 1998, which became Campus France in 2007, was a decisive step in this process. In charge of promoting higher education and managing the reception and mobility of international students, Campus France has undergone continuous development so as to serve as a one-stop-shop for managing all the differing aspects of international student mobility. As of the mid-1990s, French higher education institutions have themselves adopted policies for developing more ambitious international relations, not only by diversifying partnerships abroad, but also by improving international students' experience of reception in France.

The governmental policy implemented has been focusing on qualitative objectives. The aim is no longer merely to help further France's influence in the international arena by hosting the future elites of emerging countries, but rather to give broader consideration to the conditions surrounding the reception and success of foreign students in France, emphasising access to masters and doctoral studies, in specific selected disciplines, and ensuring geographical diversity of the students' countries of origin. Two types of mobility can be identified today: **programme-based mobility** and **non-programme-based mobility** (or "free-mover" mobility). If foreign students fall under the latter category there is no specific monitoring of their studies, whereas programme-based mobility enables proper monitoring of students these days. Moreover, programme-based mobility entails a raft of associated mechanisms for ensuring greater success for foreign students, such as the option of taking French language courses prior to relocation.

In France, migratory flows of international students are influenced by several factors, such as enduring ties with former colonies. The language of instruction is also a key factor for attracting

¹ Including EU nationals.

² Campus France, *Les étudiants internationaux chiffres clés 2011* (in French)

³ Ministry of Higher Education and Research, *État de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche en France* (Higher Education and Research in France), 2011 Edition (in French)

⁴ With the exception of institutions falling under the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Social Affairs

⁵ Ministry of Higher Education and Research, *Repères et références statistiques* (Statistical References and Benchmarks), DGESIP-DGRI, 2011 (in French)

international students. While use of the French language remains a determinant criterion for students from French-speaking countries, it may, conversely, constitute a barrier for other students. Consequently, educational establishments are increasingly offering programmes taught in English, which are completed by French courses for foreign students.

Given the growth in the international student population within the EU, the complexity of its composition and the importance of international student mobility, it would be most worthwhile to draw up an overview of Member States' policies regarding international students. The main aim of the European Migration Network (EMN) is to provide the European Union, Member States and civil society with up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum, both at the European level and at the national level, with a view to supporting policy- and decision-making in this domain. The objective of this study is to provide an overview of the immigration policies implemented by Member States in relation to international students, from admission until the end of the studies. This study is thus designed not only for policy-makers, but rather for all higher education stakeholders in France and, more specifically, for those working to enhance the reception of international students and the international openness of educational institutions. The study conducted by the French Contact Point has several characteristics to be borne in mind. It was undertaken in the context of presidential elections, in May 2012. Although certain changes have already been implemented by the new government, the first effects on national policy regarding international students are likely to be more noticeable as of autumn 2012.

The question at the heart of the study is how to strike a balance between policies designed to **actively attract international students to France** and measures aiming to **prevent risks of abuse and misuse of student status**. The objective is thus to take stock of international student immigration into France based on an analysis of the policy and legal framework. The study focuses chiefly on the analysis of migration behaviours rather than on wider aspects of student behaviours.

Given that this study is to be conducted within the framework of a European network, it was deemed important to begin by recalling the manner in which higher education is structured in France, before analysing the policies implemented at the national level and stakeholder strategies. Emphasis has thus been placed on the unique characteristics of France's higher education system, which includes both universities and *grandes écoles*, be they public or private. It should furthermore be noted that French policy in relation to international students is an inter-ministerial concern, involving input from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry of Education. Currently, the two-fold aim is to attract the best students at the post-graduate level as well as to focus on programme-based mobility so as to ensure successful study trajectories. It is in this regard that a major merit-based scholarship scheme has been rolled out.

The second part of the study details the procedures concerning the entry and residence of international students as well as the period following the completion of their studies. First, the mechanisms for selecting international students are outlined, including various factors such as the level of studies or the type of institution chosen. This is followed by an examination of the conditions for entering and staying in France, especially visa requirements. This part of the study thus affords an analysis of France's application of Directive 2004/114/CE and an exploration of the issue of labour market access for foreign students and recent graduates. France's position tends to favour a round-trip scenario, the idea being that it is the student's country of origin that will benefit from the skills acquired in France.

Then, the analysis of different forms of international cooperation between France and third countries offers an outline of concrete measures aiming to streamline formalities for international students and to improve international mobility generally.

Finally, this study analyses the impact of international students in France which is assessed on the basis of various criteria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to analyse the policy and legal framework regarding entry and residence of international students in France. The study outlines the different aspects of the student mobility in the European Union, from the admission procedures until the access to the labour market. It also examines how the Directive 2004/114/EC has been transposed and implemented in France, while underlying the characteristics of France's higher education system.

In this study, the term of "international students" refers to third-country national students. However, it may sometimes include EU nationals, regarding in particular strategy of the French higher education institutions, which do not differentiate these two groups. Students from EU and non-EU countries are also included in the analyses of some statistical sources⁶.

1.1 Methodology

This study draws upon questionnaire and interview material as well as data from a wide range of sources.

- *A series of interviews and questionnaires aiming to take stock of the roles played by the various contributors to national policy in relation to international students*

This study is based on a series of individual and group interviews with various stakeholders, conducted in June-July 2012. Indeed, the goal is to analyse student immigration in France from the respective viewpoints of the stakeholders involved at different levels.

The aim is not merely to collect data from the main ministries concerned, but also from international relations staff from the institutions of higher education, representatives from university associations or associations from the *grandes écoles*, as well as operators.

Meetings were thus arranged with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MHER) including its Directorate for International and European Relations and Cooperation, and of the Ministry of Education. French higher education institutions are mostly under the authority of the MHER, with the exception of certain specialised establishments. An interview was thus held within the Directorate General for Education and Research, under the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food Processing Industry and Forestry, so as to more closely analyse the strategy for developing international openness and the hosting of international students in the establishments under this ministry's remit.

The interview with Campus France, the French agency for promoting international mobility, higher education and reception, was deemed crucial for our study.

Strong emphasis was also placed on institutions of higher education. In order to reflect the unique characteristics of the French system, interviews were held with representatives from universities (University Paris Descartes) on the one hand, and *grandes écoles* (*Sciences Po*), on the other. As a complement to these interviews, meetings were also held with representatives in charge of international relations from the Conference of French University Rectors and the Conference of *Grandes Écoles*.

A questionnaire was also sent to French higher education institutions, located in Paris and in some student cities. The objective is to outline a wide range of practises related to international strategy of the universities and *grandes écoles*. It also provides comparison criteria depending on the type of establishment, its size and its location.

⁶ It is the case of the statistical data provided by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

➤ *Various sources of information*

Our study draws on many and varied sources of information, such as reports and studies conducted both nationally and Europe-wide, surveys of international students, and even newspaper articles.

A large number of national reports focus on the development of policies implemented in relation to international students and on the analysis of obstacles to the mobility. Other studies, dedicated to the perception of international students, identify strength and weaknesses of reception and stay in France through the eyes of surveyed students.

Nevertheless, during the course of our research, we did experience certain difficulties, owing to a shortage of available data regarding certain aspects of the study. Indeed, there is scant information on the abuse or misuse of student status in France. During our consultations, the interviewees essentially mentioned a few isolated examples. Our analysis is thus based on several newspaper articles covering some of the better-known cases, but is unable to accurately assess the magnitude of the phenomenon at the national level.

Moreover, many of the studies on national policy regarding international students were conducted in 2005-2006, whereas a great many changes have been implemented since. Finally, it should be noted that there is very little data on international students upon completion of their studies. It is thus difficult to assess the professional integration and prospects of those who obtained their qualifications in France.

All figures provided are the latest available. They come from the General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration and from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

It should be noted that statistical data from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research include both students from EU and non-EU countries.

1.2 Definitions

In the framework of this study, ‘*international student*’ refers to ‘*a third-country national arriving in the EU for the purposes of study*’.

In the context of EU migration, the EMN⁷ glossary defines an international ‘student’ as “*a third-country national accepted by an establishment of higher education and admitted to the territory of a Member State to pursue as his/her main activity a full-time course of study leading to a higher education qualification recognised by the Member State, including diplomas, certificates or doctoral degrees in an establishment of higher education, which may cover a preparatory course prior to such education according to its national legislation,*”. This is based on the definition of ‘student’ under Article 2 of Council Directive 2004/114/EC.

The **International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)** classifies the educational cycles according to six levels, with higher education falling under levels 5 (first stage of tertiary education) and 6 (second stage of tertiary education):

➤ *Level 4*

Level 4 corresponds to post-secondary non-tertiary education. Of very limited application in France, this includes in particular qualifications such as the *certificat de capacité en droit* (certificate of professional competence in law) and preparation for the *DAEU*, a diploma granting access to university education.

⁷ See <http://emn.intrasoft-intl.com/Glossary/index.do>

In view of its limited application in France, level 4 is not included in this study. The French higher education system is divided into short and long courses corresponding to levels 5 and 6.

➤ *Level 5*

Level 5 corresponds to the **first and second stages (cycles) of tertiary education** (*Licence*, equivalent to a Bachelor's degree, and *Master*). France distinguishes between two types of level 5 education. **ISCED 5A**, also referred to as 'university type' education, corresponds to the *Licence* and *Master* degrees and equivalents as awarded by universities, engineering schools, business schools, etc. **ISCED 5B** covers career-oriented higher education, which offers shorter programmes generally requiring two or three years of study, such as the *BTS* (*brevet de technicien supérieur*), *DUT* (*diplôme universitaire de technologie*) or programmes for the paramedical and social sectors.

Level 5 covers several types of qualification awarded after two, three or five years of studies. The terms "*bac+2*, *bac+3* or *bac+5*" commonly used to distinguish between them refer to the number of years of study completed after obtaining the *baccalauréat* high school diploma.

Career-oriented **short programmes** are designed to enable graduates to begin a professional career in the shortest possible time. These programmes are selective, with admission generally determined on academic record and interview, and are open to international students. They offer qualifications such as the *brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS)*, requiring two years of study in a technical secondary school, or the *diplôme universitaire de technologie (DUT)*, which requires two years of study at a university institute of technology (*IUT*). Close to 7 000 international students (including EU nationals) were enrolled in *IUTs* in the 2010-2011 academic year⁸. These career-oriented courses offer graduates the opportunity either to enter the job market directly or, via the "*passerelle*" (reorientation) system, to continue in higher education by embarking on a *licence professionnelle* (vocational degree), a *licence générale* (academic degree) or even an engineering or business school course⁹.

Two types of undergraduate degree (*Licence*) exist in France. The *licence professionnelle*, designed to provide rapid access to the labour market, is open to students who have successfully completed two years of higher education. French universities offer a wide range of specialist subjects. The *licence générale* is a three-year degree course offered by universities.

Long programmes are provided by the universities, *grandes écoles* or specialised schools. Organisation and recruitment methods vary depending on the type of establishment concerned. They lead to a qualification at the level of *bac+3* (equivalent to a Bachelor's degree) or *bac+5*, a Master's degree. France also distinguishes between two types of Master's degree: the *master recherche*, a research-oriented masters course for those students working towards a doctorate, and the *master professionnel*, which includes periods of internship and prepares graduates to embark on a professional career.

➤ *Level 6*

Level 6 covers the third cycle of higher education, leading to the *Doctorat*. All students holding a diploma at masters level or an equivalent international qualification may apply to a doctoral programme. The course, provided by a doctoral department, lasts an average of three years and,

⁸ Ministry of Higher Education and Research, *Repères et références statistiques* (Statistical References and Benchmarks), 2011 Edition (in French)

⁹ Access to block release training is available only to international students already in France and holding a residence permit (Art. L. 5221-5 of the French Labour Code).

subject to the successful defence of a dissertation, leads to the award of a Doctorate. There are currently over 300 doctoral departments in France, operating under the auspices of higher education institutions, mainly universities. The proportion of doctoral candidates from abroad has risen significantly over recent years, from 35,2 % in 2005-2006 to 41,3 % in 2010-2011¹⁰.

Doctoral candidates employed by their host institution now benefit from measures (special visas and residence permits) designed to encourage international students to seek doctoral training in France.

Although the European “Students” Directive excludes researchers, France issues international doctoral candidates with a temporary residence permit as a “scientist/researcher” (Circular No. IMIM1000111C of 26 July 2010). For the purposes of this study, we will not include these “scientist/researcher” residence permits, as we are unable to distinguish between doctoral candidates and salaried researchers.

France does not use the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), instead employing the terms *Licence*, *Master* and *Doctorat*, corresponding to first, second and third cycle studies respectively. French Ministries also rely on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This study, which uses ISCED as its benchmark, will focus essentially on ISCED levels 5 and 6.

¹⁰ Ministry of Higher Education and Research, *Repères et références statistiques* (Statistical References and Benchmarks), 2011 Edition (in French)

2. THE FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

2.1 Structure of the French higher education system

Under the Bologna Process and the harmonisation of higher education courses in Europe, the French university system is organised into three degrees: *licence* (L), *master* (M) and *doctorat* (D). International students who meet the required admission and academic conditions may enrol in the subject and degree course of their choice. The French higher education system also has several unique characteristics that merit further description for a fuller understanding of national policy and admission processes as regards international students.

One such characteristic of higher education in France is the existence of **two systems of provision, each applying different admission processes: the universities and the *grandes écoles***, whether public or private.

Entrance to the **university system** is non-selective. Access to the first year of university is open to all students holding the French *baccalauréat* or a certificate of secondary education from abroad. There are 83 public universities in France, offering a wide range of courses. They are State-funded (by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research) and confer national qualifications. The Law of 10 August 2007 on the Freedom and Responsibility of Universities (known in France as the *LRU* or *Pécresse law*) gave universities a broader range of responsibilities and powers, one of its aims being to make French universities more effective and more attractive in the international arena.

Offering degree courses from *licence* to *doctorat*, this is the system that accounts for the vast majority of students. 80 % of post-secondary students in France, of which some **10 % are international students both from EU and non-EU countries**, are enrolled in the university system¹¹. Over three-quarters of them attend universities.

The *grandes écoles*, on the other hand, operate a **selective system with a limited number of places**. The Ministerial Order of 27 August 1992 on education terminology defines a *grande école* as a higher education establishment recruiting its students by competitive examination and offering high-level courses. These schools generally apply a specific admission process for international students, who are selected via competitive examination, on academic record or at interview. The *grandes écoles* fall into several categories: engineering schools, business and management schools, the *écoles normales supérieures* (*ENS*), veterinary schools and the institutes of political studies (*IEP* or *Sciences Po*) and other schools specialising in various areas. The *grandes écoles* come under the authority of the ministry with responsibility for their specialist field. They may be either public or private. France has some 230 business and management schools, for example, with a total of 17 000 international students enrolled in 2010-2011¹².

Admission to the *grandes écoles*, which are renowned for the excellence of the education they provide, is generally subject to two years of preparatory classes for the *grandes écoles*. Admission to the preparatory classes, which come under the authority of the Ministry of Education, is highly selective; the classes are designed to prepare students for the competitive entrance examinations to the *grandes écoles* in three different fields of study: literary, scientific, or business and management. They are open to international students who meet the selection criteria. In 2010-2011, some 3 000 international students were enrolled in preparatory classes, representing 4 % of the total student body¹³.

¹¹ Source: Campus France

¹² Ministry of Higher Education and Research, *Repères et références statistiques* (Statistical References and Benchmarks), 2011 Edition (in French)

¹³ Ministry of Higher Education and Research, *Repères et références statistiques* (Statistical References and Benchmarks), 2011 Edition (in French)

Many higher education and research institutions, keen to offer research and training opportunities that are more consistent, more transparent and better suited to local needs, have joined forces to form **higher education and research clusters** (known as *PRES*). Instituted under the research programme law of 18 April 2006, the *PRES* clusters help to raise the international profile of French establishments, a particularly important factor in the context of international rankings. There are currently 23 *PRES* clusters in France, made up of universities, *grandes écoles*, specialised schools and research organisations.

French higher education is also characterised by the existence of **public and private establishments**. All of the public establishments award State-recognised national qualifications. **Private establishments**, for the most part consisting of faith-based institutions (Catholic Institutes, for example), engineering or business schools or other specialised schools, fall into one of two categories. Some, such as the engineering or business and management schools, are accredited to award national State-recognised qualifications (level 5: two to five years of studies). They may also come under the authority of a ministry. Other, independently organised, establishments award qualifications that are not recognised nationally.

It should be noted that French higher education is an open system that offers students opportunities to move from a short programme to a long programme of higher education or to gain admission to a *grande école* via a parallel entrance examination, thanks to “*passerelles*” (reorientation pathways) at different levels of study and in different fields.

2.2 National policy framework regarding international students

a) National policy applying to international students in France

National policy on foreign students in France is founded on a number of key stages, from admission to a higher education institution to the right to enter and remain in the country. In addition to this process, there are specific conditions governing the period following the completion of study. A number of agencies, in France and abroad, deal with international students over the course of these stages on the timeline, from the initial search for information on studying in France through to arrival in the country.

➤ *Criteria for admission to French higher education institutions*

The process of admission to French higher education institutions depends on whether or not the student is a national of an EU Member State. There are also separate admission conditions for international students coming to France under an exchange programme and those seeking individual admission outside established programmes (known as “free movers”). Individual situation and level of studies determine whether an international student may enrol directly in the establishment of his/her choice in France or is required to follow a specific admission process.

International students must satisfy the **following conditions**:

- for enrolment in the first year of studies, a certificate of secondary education giving the holder access to higher education; for other years, a qualification corresponding to the level of studies applied for;
- appropriate proficiency in French. Institutions are free to set their own French proficiency requirements. However, to enroll in the first or second year of a *licence*, international students are required to provide proof of French language skills at level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) drawn up by the Council of Europe. It must be attested by a test of French as a foreign language. For a *master*, level C1 or C2 may be required, depending on the criteria set by each establishment.

University admission procedures for international students depend on a number of criteria, including the candidate's current country of residence, level of studies and intended field of study. International students holding a certificate of secondary education issued in another country and seeking admission to the first or second year of university studies must submit an **application for pre-enrolment (DAP)** to the Cooperation and Cultural Action Service at the French Embassy of their country of residence, which then forwards their application to the universities of the candidate's choice. The visa application process begins once the student has been issued with a **certificate of pre-enrolment**. The administrative formalities for this admission process are particularly stringent and subject to strict deadlines.

In certain specific instances, international students wishing to enrol in the first year of university studies may be given an exemption from this process and allowed to register via the **online post-baccalauréat admission (APB) service**¹⁴, in the same way as French candidates.

Students wishing to register for a masters or doctoral degree course submit their application directly to the establishment of their choice.

The *grandes écoles* have their own selection processes for international students, either based on academic record or through competitive written entrance examinations followed by interviews.

A paperless online application process has been instituted for some 30 countries to simplify the formalities for international students. This procedure is defined in the framework convention « Centre for Studies in France » (*Centre pour les études en France - CEF*), signed between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Conference of French University Rectors, the *Conférence des Grandes Ecoles*¹⁵ and the *Conférence des Directeurs des Écoles Françaises d'Ingénieurs*.

Under this **CEF procedure**, the candidate submits a single online application for all the establishments of his/her choice. This makes for more transparent, more secure and swifter processing of applications, benefitting both students and higher education institutions alike. Students from the *CEF* countries¹⁶ concerned must go through the process in order to apply for their student visa. **85 % of student visa applications** are made via the *CEF* process.

With the exception of courses taught in English, **proficiency in French** is a key criterion for admission. Any student applying for admission to a French higher education institution will be required to provide an official certificate of their level of proficiency in French. In France, the **International Centre for Education Studies** (known by its French initials, *CIEP*) is responsible for the pedagogical and administrative management of national certification, tests and diplomas of French as a foreign language. The *CIEP* operates internationally on behalf of the French Ministry of Education, particularly in the field of French as a foreign language and international cooperation in education. It also serves as a partner of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Various certifications of French as a foreign language, such as the *TCF* test or the *DELF* and *DALF* diplomas, have been developed to determine levels of proficiency in French, corresponding to the

¹⁴ The online preliminary first-year enrolment application website <http://www.admission-postbac.fr> was set up by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research to simplify formalities for both French and international students, for students with a *baccalauréat* obtained in a French high school outside France and for those international students applying for admission to selective establishments not subject to the *DAP* process, such as the University Institutes of Technology (*IUTs*) or preparatory classes for the *grandes écoles*.

¹⁵ *Grandes Ecoles* in management and Engineering are grouped together within the *Conférence des Grandes Ecoles*, a French non-profit organisation which aims at promoting their activities and contributing to the improvement of their educational programmes.

¹⁶ 31 countries are subject to the *CEF* process: Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo (Brazzaville), Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea, India, Japan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Senegal, Russia, South Korea, Syria, Taiwan, Tunisia, Turkey, USA, Vietnam.

six-level scale of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) drawn up by the Council of Europe.

As part of the *DAP* process described above, students must take a specific language proficiency test, the *Test de Connaissance du Français (TCF-DAP)*. There is a fee for the test (59 euros), which can be taken in a number of approved testing centres around the world.

Students seeking admission to the second or third cycle of higher education are generally required to provide proof of proficiency at **level B2 (for undergraduate level) or C1 (for a master)**. The **DELF (basic diploma of French as a foreign language)** and the **DALF (advanced diploma of French as a foreign language)** are awarded by the Ministry of Education. They constitute official certification of proficiency in French, with six distinct diplomas (*DELF* A1 to B2 and *DALF* C1 to C2). Students may take the necessary tests at approved centres in France and around the world.

International students are exempted from these language proficiency tests if they are nationals of a **State using French as an official language** or if they have attended **bilingual French sections** in schools featuring on a list drawn up jointly by the Ministry of Education and the MFA.

➤ *Terms of entry and stay*

International students must have their **application for pre-enrolment (DAP) to university** accepted before they can embark on any further formalities. Once their application has been accepted by a higher education institution in France, they should then contact the **French Consulate in their country of residence**, which is responsible for issuing visas. A number of national policies have been introduced over the last 30 years to regulate the entry and stay of international students in France. The exact provisions are set out in greater detail in section 3.2 below. This paragraph sets out how national policy in relation to international students has evolved. In France, visas for periods of more than three months (long-stay visas) are governed by the Code on Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum (the immigration code known as the CESEDA). In recent years, the process of issuing visas to international students has been simplified. The **long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit (LSV-RP)**, introduced in 2009, is issued to international students for a period of one year, except in the case of Algerian students who are subject to special provisions. Visa applications should be made to the consular service of the student's country of residence. Holders of the LSV-RP visa no longer have to apply to their local Prefecture for a residence permit upon arrival in France. They are, however, required to contact the French Office for Immigration and Integration (*OFII*) and complete certain formalities within three months of their arrival.

The law of 24 July 2006 on immigration¹⁷ also introduced provisions that benefitted international students by simplifying the issuance of residence permits to students applying through the *CEF* process and in possession of a visa. The process of visa renewal and extension was also simplified.

In accordance with Council Directive 2004/114/EC, which includes a criterion of “availability of adequate financial resources”, international students are required to provide proof of **adequate financial resources**. The decree of 6 September 2011 increased the minimum level of resources required for international students, which now stands at 615 euros per month. The increase is designed to ensure that the student has the necessary financial resources to pursue his/her education to a successful conclusion under the best possible conditions.

Students wishing to **extend their stay** in order to study in France for a number of years must apply for a residence permit within the two months prior to their visa expiring.

Current policy is based on **qualitative objectives**, focussing on the **reception of international students**. **Campus France** is the agency responsible for promoting French higher education abroad

¹⁷ Law No. 2006-911 of 24 July 2006 on immigration and integration

and providing information and support for international students planning to study in France, via a network of branch offices, the Campus France “*Espaces*”, around the world. The **Égide** association (French centre for international student reception and exchanges) is responsible for the organisation and management of certain mobility programmes for international students and researchers on Ministry of Foreign Affairs grants. The National Centre for Student Services (**CNOUS**), backed up in the regions by the Regional Centres for Student Services (**CROUS**), is the public agency responsible for the reception and support of international students on French and foreign-government grants, through its International Affairs Division (**SDAI**). The CampusFrance public interest group and the Égide association were recently merged to form a **new public institution under the name of Campus France, as an umbrella agency responsible for promoting French higher education, overseeing the entry and reception of international students in France and managing international mobility**. The international activities of the **CNOUS** will shortly be transferred to the newly created agency.

While much has been done to simplify the formalities required of international students upon their arrival in France and during their studies, the transfer of status that occurs upon completion of their studies often proves more complex.

➤ *Period following completion of studies*

Third-country nationals studying in France are issued with “student” residence permits. Should they wish to extend their stay upon completion of their studies, they must apply for a new residence permit that reflects their new status. The most frequent **status transfers** are from “student” to “**employee**” or “**private and family life**”. France’s rationale, however, tends to favour a **round-trip scenario**, the idea being that the country of origin will benefit from the skills that international students have acquired in France.

Under the terms of France’s **chosen immigration policy**, a scheme was set up in 2006¹⁸ enabling highly qualified students to gain initial professional experience in France. In 2010, the Ministry of the Interior’s General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration commissioned a study by Migration Conseil, a consultancy specialising in the rights of foreign nationals, to assess the system set up in 2006 and gain a clearer picture of international student profiles and of status transfer mechanisms¹⁹. The study showed that those students wishing to work in France after completing their studies faced sometimes lengthy and complex procedures. The Circular of 31 May 2011 tightened the status transfer procedure for students applying for work permits by calling on Prefectures to subject such applications to “thorough scrutiny”. The objectives of the policy on issuance of residence permits thus appeared to pose an obstacle to the path followed by international students in France. One of the problems identified was the different practices observed in the prefectures when processing applications.²⁰ The study suggested that the difficulties encountered by international students could also be explained by a lack of adequate preparation for their status transfer, or ignorance of the procedures to be followed.

In the wake of the Presidential election in May 2012, the Circular was repealed on 31 May 2012 and replaced by another, designed to ensure equal treatment of international students throughout France, to streamline students’ formalities and to provide a rapid response to their application for status transfer.

¹⁸ The law of 24 July 2006 on immigration and integration entitles students with the equivalent of a Master’s degree or higher to obtain initial professional experience in France. Upon completion of their studies, they are issued a temporary residence authorisation valid for a period of six months, during which they can seek employment.

¹⁹ Migration Conseil study on status transfer among international students, commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, January 2012.

²⁰ Extract of an interview with Harald Schraeder, Policy Officer, Europe, Conference of French University Rectors

b) Strategies adopted by the various stakeholders

One of the characteristics of French national policy in this area is that it is based on an **inter-ministerial framework**, comprising the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)**, the **Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MHER)**, the **Ministry of Education** and the **Ministry of the Interior**, plus a **unique overseas network** of French embassies and consulates.

Whereas the role of the MHER and MFA is to encourage international student mobility flows to France, the Ministry of the Interior appears to be more concerned with managing migration flows and combating abuses of procedure against a background of economic crisis and high unemployment. French higher education institutions are not subject to any real national directives, each developing its own strategy independently.

➤ *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry of Education*²¹

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the mobility and attractiveness policy of French higher education in recent years. The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, represented by the **Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships**, works closely with the **Ministry of Higher Education and Research** and the **Directorate for European and International Relations and Cooperation (DREIC)**. The DREIC operates under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

French national policy is based on precise objectives designed to increase international student mobility towards France while at the same time meeting current needs. The ministries concerned have established priorities covering target geographical areas, fields of study and levels of qualification:

• **Geographical areas**

The **BRICS** countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are priority targets. A number of other areas, in particular the emerging nations of **Latin America**, are also seen as priorities. Under the terms of Brazil's *Sciences sans frontières* (Science without Borders) programme, for example, there are plans to increase the number of Brazilian students in France to 10 000 over the next four years. At the start of the next academic year, 800 Brazilian students will be enrolled on mobility programmes in a French higher education establishment. **African countries** continue to be major partners, thanks to enduring historical, cultural and linguistic links. France is somewhat unusual in maintaining strong links with its former colonies. Every year, France welcomes large numbers of students from the countries of French-speaking Africa.

A wider aim is to **diversify the geographical origins of students** coming to France. There has been a 30 % increase in the number of students from Asia and a 20 % increase in those from Latin America.

• **Target levels: *Master (M)* and *Doctorat (D)***

Many joint degree arrangements have been set up at these levels, including joint masters, integrated courses or even joint supervision of doctoral theses.

In answer to a written question to the National Assembly published on 12 April 2011, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research reiterated its primary objectives with regard to international students: *The objective is also to increase the proportion of organised mobility under inter-university partnerships, which encourage quality of both exchanges and study trajectories. [...] The masters and doctorate levels are a priority as regards the reception of international students; they*

²¹ This paragraph is based on interviews with representatives of the MFA, MHER and DREIC.

currently account for just over half of all international students. The aim is to increase this proportion to two-thirds, since these are the levels that offer the most fruitful prospects and offer the greatest benefits for the interested parties continuing their studies in France²².

- **Priority fields of study**

The main target subjects are the **sciences**, more specifically the engineering sciences, **business and management** and **law**. Another objective is to **establish needs-based priorities with the countries of origin**, through bilateral agreements or cooperation agreements between universities. **Two-thirds of the international students** in France are currently enrolled in these target fields of study.

- **Encouraging programme-based mobility**

France is increasingly seeking to focus on **programme-based mobility** through scholarship and grant programmes or cooperation agreements between universities, the aim being to ensure greater success for international students coming to France. Despite a significant increase, **programme-based mobility still currently accounts for a mere 20 % of the flow of international students coming to France, while free movers account for 80 %**.

In a highly competitive international context, the aim is to attract the **best international students**, especially those from the emerging nations. In pursuit of this aim, France has set up an extensive system of merit-based scholarships.

At the **meeting on raising the profile of higher education organised within the framework of France's presidency of the G20 and G8**, on 10 May 2011²³, Valérie Pécresse, then Minister of Higher Education and Research, and Alain Juppé, then Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, set out a number of key guidelines. Whereas 50 % of students on mobility in France are currently enrolled in masters or doctoral courses, the objective is to increase this proportion to 75 % over the next three years. Noting also that programme-based mobility accounted for only 20 % of the total flow of international students into France, they set a target of increasing the figure to 50 % in three to five years' time.

➤ *Ministry of the Interior*²⁴

The Ministry of the Interior, through its General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, is responsible for **implementing national immigration, asylum and integration policy**. This responsibility includes managing policy on the admission and residence of international students in France. The instructions set out by the President and Prime Minister in a letter dated 31 March 2009 to the Minister then in charge of immigration specifically mention the following objective:

We ask you to step up efforts to encourage the reception of international students. France must be in a position to attract at least 50 000 international students a year, by diversifying recruitment sources on a global scale. You should aim equally for a target of 70 % of international students in disciplines essential to the economic development and wellbeing of the population of their home countries, and at giving priority to their return to their home countries whilst guaranteeing freedom of movement between the country of origin and France. To that end, you will cooperate with the

²² National Assembly, written question No. 104831 to the Minister of Higher Education and Research, published in the French Official Gazette on 12 April 2011.

²³ The event, entitled "Raising the profile of international higher education at the G8/G20", featured representatives of the top eight destination countries for international students: Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. India attended as an observer.

²⁴ Summary of information provided by the Residence and Work Permits Division and the Visas Division of the General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education to establish a single operator for student mobility, replacing the agencies currently in place (Campus France, Égide and France Coopération Internationale)

The quantitative objective was reached in 2009 itself.

In France, there has been **no specific debate on the issue of international student migration as such** but rather on the **consequences of students' staying on after completion of their studies and on labour market access** during a period of economic crisis and high unemployment.

The **Circular of 31 May 2011**, known as the Guéant Circular, drew strong reactions from representatives of higher education, federations of establishments, and national and international student unions. Amid growing awareness of the obstacles encountered by large numbers of international graduates applying for a transfer from “student” to “employee” status, in September 2011 a group of French and international students founded the *Collectif du 31 mai* to help international graduates with their administrative formalities and raise public awareness of the issue. Simultaneously, the Conference of *Grandes Écoles* (CGE), the Conference of Directors of French Engineering Schools (CDEFI) and the Conference of University Rectors (CPU) joined forces in almost a year's lobbying for the repeal of the Circular, pointing out its negative impacts at the international level. The CGE has also taken on the task of identifying all cases of students denied the possibility of remaining in France to begin their professional career. Media advocacy on the part of these bodies, coupled with the role of the *Collectif du 31 mai*, stressing the conflict of objectives between policies designed to attract international students and policy on the issue of visas upon completion of studies, has done much to bring this question into the public arena and prompt a reaction from political decision-makers²⁵.

In order to supplement and clarify the Circular of 31 May 2011, **a new Circular on labour market access for international graduates with degrees at least equivalent to masters level was signed on 12 January 2012** by the Minister of the Interior, Overseas France, Local and Regional Authorities and Immigration, the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Higher Education and Research.

The new text was prompted by cases reported by elected officials and rectors of universities and *grandes écoles* of recently graduated international students refused permits that would entitle them to work in France. The supplementary Circular invited Prefects to ensure that labour immigration controls should not be exercised in such a way as to impact negatively on the attractiveness of the higher education system, or on the needs of certain French firms for specific high level skills.

In the wake of this year's Presidential elections, the Circular of 31 May 2011 and the supplementary text of 12 January 2012 were both repealed by the issue of a **new Circular**²⁶ *intended to lay the foundations for an improved relationship between France and the international students coming here to continue their higher education, as the accompanying press release stresses. The aim, the release continues, is to ensure equal treatment of international students throughout France, to simplify the formalities required of them and to provide a rapid response to their application for status transfer. The time taken to process applications for a transfer from “student” to “employee” status shall not exceed two months, to ensure that administrative delays do not penalise students in their search for employment or in taking up a position offered to them.*

²⁵ Extract of interviews with CGE and CPU.

²⁶ Circular dated 31 May 2012 on labour market access for international graduates.

➤ *Campus France Agency*²⁷

The CampusFrance agency was set up in 2007 as a public interest group, replacing the EduFrance agency; its main objective was to promote French higher education internationally. The law of 27 July 2010 introduced a major change with the creation of a new public institution (*EPIC*) to be known as Campus France, **offering a one-stop shop to simplify reception facilities for international students**. Following the merger of the CampusFrance public interest group and the *Égide* association (French centre for international student reception and exchanges), the newly formed Campus France agency is now responsible for promoting French higher education worldwide, for managing the reception and mobility of international students and researchers and for the management of scholarships, internships and other mobility programmes for international students and researchers. The new agency thus brings under a single umbrella a wide range of skills formerly distributed around several operators, bringing greater consistency and a higher profile to the promotion of international student mobility and reception. These broader responsibilities now encompass **all the steps involved in bringing international students to France**. Operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, Campus France will also take over the international responsibilities of the *CNOUS* with effect from 1 September 2012. A decree²⁸ issued on 30 December 2011 sets out details of the agency's organisation and mechanisms for action.

In France, the agency has a correspondent in each *PRES* cluster.

The **Campus France Forum** brings together all of the Campus France member establishments, be they universities, *grandes écoles* or schools under the authority of other ministries, such as art schools which are under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Communication. The Forum is organised in the form of thematic commissions, giving establishments the opportunity to play an active part in formulating strategy for the promotion of French higher education on the international stage.

➤ *Campus France offices (“Espaces Campus France”) abroad*

Outside France, the agency is supported by the French diplomatic and consular network which manages **141 Campus France offices (“Espaces”) and 41 branches in 110 different countries, including the 31 countries that use the CEF process**. Since 2008, this network of Campus France offices has been rising steadily. For example, the number of offices has increased by 10 % between 2010 and 2011. The offices employ more than 300 persons around the world, under the authority of the French Embassy. In 2011, 38 % of the offices were located in French Institutes, 29 % in *Alliances Françaises*, and 10 % in cultural services of French Embassies.²⁹

➤ *French higher education institutions*

The higher education system in France is characterised by the coexistence of universities and *grandes écoles*, with each establishment adopting its own strategy as regards international openness and the attraction of students from outside France. Recent years have seen decisive changes in the higher education landscape in France. The **LRU law**³⁰ gave the universities freedom to develop a truly international strategy.

Four-year contracts between the government and the higher education institutions lay down strategic guidelines for each establishment over the upcoming four-year period. International policy

²⁷ Extract of an interview with representatives of Campus France.

²⁸ Decree No. 2011-2048 of 30 December 2011 relating to Campus France (NOR: MAEA 1026501D)

²⁹ Campus France, Activity report 2011 (in French)

³⁰ Law No. 2007-1199, dated 10 August 2007, on the Freedom and Responsibility of Universities

has been included in the contract since the 1990s. In addition, a stronger international focus and greater emphasis on attracting students from abroad have become a strategic priority for institutions. The issue is a regular subject of discussion at meetings between various establishments. In 2010, for example, the Conference of University Rectors and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research organised a seminar on **strategies for internationalising the universities**³¹. More recently, the annual seminar of university vice-presidents in charge of international relations this year took as its theme “**supporting mobility trajectories**”³².

The strategy adopted by France’s higher education establishments is based on several key priorities. Developing **cooperation agreements but also international programmes as part of joint qualifications or off-shore courses** is now one of their top priorities. **Mobility programmes**, and **European programmes** in particular, have also become a means for higher education establishments to develop their international attractiveness policies. France has consistently figured as the most attractive country in the **Erasmus Mundus** programme, ever since the programme was first introduced, and welcomes a large number of international students under its auspices.

As a means of attracting non-French-speaking students, many universities and *grandes écoles* offer courses taught **in English**. The Campus France catalogue of courses in English lists close to 600 programmes open to English speakers.

Much preliminary work has been done on the **reception of international students**, with considerable thought currently being given to how this can be improved. At the start of the university term, for example, many French establishments now set up one-stop shops, bringing the various operators and government agencies together on campus to help international students complete all the formalities required of them.

It is noteworthy, however, that the strategy adopted depends considerably on the **financial resources** of the establishment concerned. Those with the deepest pockets have representative offices abroad or organise regular overseas recruitment programmes. Campus France member establishments regularly take part in student fairs overseas as part of a “French pavilion” representing the entire French higher education sector.

³¹ *Quelles stratégies pour une internationalisation des Universités? Outils et Objectifs* (What Strategies for Internationalising the Universities? Tools and Objectives), seminar held at the University of Poitiers, 27 and 28 May 2010.

³² *L’accompagnement des parcours de mobilité* (Supporting Mobility Trajectories), annual seminar of university vice-presidents in charge of international relations, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Conference of University Rectors and the Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe in Toulouse, 28 and 29 June 2012.

*An example of a “grande école”: Sciences Po Paris*³³

Sciences Po is an independent higher education institution with a particularly selective admission process. Developing its **international reputation** is one of its priorities, which it pursues by developing partnerships and joint projects with leading international higher education and research establishments, by making international mobility a mandatory component of courses for all students, and by welcoming international students, from EU and non-EU countries.

Of the 10 000 students currently enrolled at *Sciences Po*, **almost 44 % (i.e. some 4 400) are foreign students, drawn from over 130 countries**. The majority of these students are from the United States, Germany, Italy and China.

Its **strategy of international student recruitment** is designed to meet a number of objectives:

- *Sciences Po* is keen to make its mark as an **internationally competitive** institution and thus attract talent from all over the world to both its undergraduate and masters programmes.
- The high proportion of international students is an **indicator of the quality of its teaching**.
- International students **offer a constant challenge, encouraging *Sciences Po*** to keep revisiting and updating its programmes and training opportunities

An **international admission procedure** is open to students from abroad wishing to embark on or continue their higher education at *Sciences Po*. Of the 13 000 candidates for admission to *Sciences Po*, **4 500 go through the international procedure** open to all students who studied outside France or who passed their *baccalauréat* in a French high school abroad.

The **curriculum** is based on three levels corresponding to the LMD: the *Collège universitaire* or undergraduate programme, offered at seven campuses, each specialising in a particular geographical area, the *Master* and the *Doctorat*.

The international procedure for admission to the undergraduate programme consists of an initial online application (“initial qualification for admission”) followed by an admission interview before a panel. Interviews are held in a number of different cities around the world. International candidates for the *Master* and *Doctorat* are selected on the basis of online applications.

In every programme, considerable emphasis is placed on **fluency in more than one foreign language, including English**. Language proficiency is also an **essential selection criterion** for candidates. Some courses, however, do not require a minimum level of proficiency in French. Courses **taught in English** are an integral part of programmes, especially at the masters level, with some offering subjects taught exclusively in English.

³³ Extract of an interview with Francis Vérillaud, Deputy Director in charge of International Relations and Exchanges, Sciences Po Paris.

An example of a university: Descartes Paris³⁴

French universities are not subject to Ministry instructions on national strategy. International policy forms part of the **four-year contract** signed by Descartes University Paris, with the aim of developing **international partnerships in both education and research**.

Five countries are considered priorities, either because the university already has a history of cooperation with a particular country (Germany and Canada), or because it is seeking to forge links with BRICS countries (China, Brazil, Russia).

In theory, Descartes University Paris focuses on admissions at masters and doctoral level, where selection is also stricter. In practice, however, many students are enrolled in undergraduate courses. The university places considerable emphasis on **research** and on developing international partnerships through projects such as development of the **LabEx** (laboratories of excellence) scheme and **IDEX** (excellence initiatives).

Descartes University Paris is a member of the Sorbonne Paris Cité **PRES** cluster, its aim being to raise its international profile and reinforce its ability to develop more projects.

In 2011-2012, the university ran a number of **targeted promotion campaigns**, in Germany and Brazil in particular. Campaigns of this sort may be launched either with the aid of Campus France or by the university alone.

The **university website** has a dedicated international section, which was recently updated by the Directorate of International Partnerships. It provides a great deal of information useful to international students, available in English as well as French.

One of the problems recently identified is that, while most universities in the Paris region have developed an international policy, they provide **no follow-up of international students during or on completion of their studies**, mainly due to lack of time and resources.

➤ *Other ministries involved*

Most public higher education institutions come under the authority of the MEHR, except for certain specialised schools, such as art and architecture schools (under the Ministry of Culture), or courses in agronomy, agriculture or the environment, which fall under the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. This ministry has a bureau of European relations and international cooperation to deal with these issues.

As regards higher education, France's Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry **differs in several respects** from its counterparts in other EU Member States³⁵. It acts as the **ministry of oversight for all agronomic establishments**, be they **technical or higher education bodies, public or private**. **International cooperation** is one of the Ministry's five key missions in agricultural education, as defined by the agricultural orientation law of 9 July 1999. This **international cooperation mission** centres on hosting incoming international students, the aim being to establish **high-quality**

³⁴ Extract of an interview with Michèle Cambra, International Partnerships Director, Descartes University Paris. The university specialises in human and health sciences and is the only university in the Paris region offering courses in medicine, pharmacy and dentistry.

³⁵ Extract of an interview with Pierre Autissier, European Relations and International Cooperation Manager, and Françoise D'Épenoux, Higher Education Training Programmes Manager, General Directorate for Education and Research, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

relations with a certain number of **countries seen as priorities**, such as Brazil, China, India and Russia. Key partnerships, based on historical links, have also been forged with the countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Although there is a clearly defined national strategy, there appears to be a lack of coordination between the different actors involved. The Conference of University Rectors is firmly of the opinion that greater coordination between actors at national and local level would pave the way for greater consistency³⁶.

³⁶ Conference of French University Rectors, *Propositions relatives à la politique internationale des universités - L'accueil des étudiants internationaux* (Proposals on University International Policies – reception of international students), 15 September 2011 (in French)

3. LEGAL AND PRACTICAL CONDITIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL THAT APPLY TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

3.1 Admission

a) Specific measures designed to encourage third-country nationals to pursue their studies in France

➤ *Targeted promotion campaigns: the role of Campus France*³⁷

Numerous targeted campaigns have been run, either by **Campus France**, or by the **establishments** themselves.

Every year the agency Campus France, with the assistance of its offices (“*Espaces Campus France*”) and of Embassies abroad, organises numerous **promotional events around the world**. These events, which vary greatly in terms of format, aim not only to satisfy the growing interest displayed by French higher education institutions, but also the priorities identified by the line ministries in terms of programme-based mobility and promotion of postgraduate study. The events mostly take the form of **international education fairs**, **in situ student recruitment drives** and **targeted thematic missions** on training solutions for a given academic field.

Emphasis is also placed on **institutional formats**, notably with the organisation of **Country Days** (“*Journées pays*”) in France. These events, which bring together university cooperation experts from a given country, are designed to offer the French establishments a heightened understanding of the higher education landscape in the selected country and to develop university cooperation and exchanges between France and the country in question. The countries chosen in 2011 were Saudi Arabia, the United States, India and Japan.

The **Campus France offices** (“*Espaces Campus France*”) themselves arrange a variety of targeted promotional activities throughout the year: support services for French institutions visiting the country where they are located, involvement in promotional endeavours and guidance for students in local higher education institutions.

French establishments take part in these targeted promotional campaigns, commensurate with their resources and their strategy, either on their own or via the intermediary of Campus France.

➤ *A foreign qualification recognition system: the ENIC-NARIC centre*

The **ENIC-NARIC³⁸ France Centre**, at the International Centre for Education Studies³⁹, is France’s focal point for information regarding academic and professional recognition of credentials. It issues comparability statements for foreign qualifications and provides information on the procedures to follow in order to start practice in a regulated profession in France, as well as on procedures regarding recognition of French qualifications outside France.

➤ *Funding of studies for foreign students: a key component of France’s policy for attracting students*

International students in France can apply for various kinds of scholarships, be they at the local or national level, or European-wide or international. Students may also benefit from government grants from their home country.

³⁷ Extract of an interview conducted with representatives of Campus France.

³⁸ European Network of Information Centres - National Academic Recognition Information Centres.

³⁹ Centre international d’études pédagogiques (CIEP)

- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs scholarships and mobility programmes**⁴⁰

As part of France's attractiveness policy, MFA scholarships are aimed more and more at **high-potential international students from emerging countries**. The MFA is engaging increasingly in co-funding, so as to encourage private sector and local body involvement in France's attractiveness policy and the training of international students. The ministry manages several types of programmes:

Academic scholarships (*bourses du gouvernement français - BGF*) are awarded directly by the Cooperation and Cultural Action Services of **French Embassies abroad**.

The **Eiffel Scholarships** programme⁴¹ targets students from emerging countries in three priority fields of study: basic and engineering sciences, business and management, political sciences and law. Scholarship recipients receive a monthly allowance of 1 181 euros at masters level and 1 400 euros at PhD level, as well as funding for travel expenses, medical insurance and cultural activities. The scholarship is attributed for the duration of the student's programme of study for masters students (2 years) and for ten months in the case of doctoral students, as part of a *cotutelle* agreement or joint thesis supervision.

The **Excellence-Major Grant programme**⁴², designed for the top pupils from French overseas high schools, comprises two chapters. The first chapter, funded by central credits from the Agency for Education in French outside France, offers a two-year Excellence grant for undergraduate studies in France. The second chapter, funded by credits from the MFA, covers three additional years up to attainment of a Master's degree. The amounts of the endowment vary.

Co-financed programmes have been developed by the MFA, involving partnerships with both the public sector (**ARCUS Programme**⁴³) and the private sector (**Quai d'Orsay/Entreprises Programme**⁴⁴). Under the Quai d'Orsay/Entreprises Programme, the MFA covers the social insurance and French-language courses for international students prior to their departure, while the partner companies provide each student with a scholarship, mentoring within the firm and career planning support at the end of their coursework, and possibly even a job offer.

Students for whom the MFA covers one or more types of costs, such as living allowance, travel expenses and luggage transport, social insurance or tuition fees are given the status of **Student on a French Government Grant** (SFGG) or "*boursiers du gouvernement français*" (BGF), defined by the Ministerial Order dated 27 December 1983. A scholarship holder with this status is exempt from university enrolment fees and the costs entailed in joining the student social security scheme. It also makes it easier to obtain a visa.

So as to guarantee a high-quality reception in France, a **Quality Charter** for welcoming students on French government grants⁴⁵ was established at a government seminar on attractiveness, held on 7 February 2005. The Charter sets out the responsibilities of each stakeholder involved at the various stages of the student mobility experience.

⁴⁰ Extract of an interview with Éric Lamouroux, Head of the Higher Education Department, and Françoise Sellier, Manager of Student Mobility Policies and Programmes, from the Mobility and Attractiveness Policy Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁴¹ The Eiffel Scholarships programme was launched in January 1999, and the Eiffel-Doctorate programme, designed for outstanding doctoral students, was added in 2005.

⁴² The Excellence-Major Scholarships programme was jointly established by the MFA and the Agency for Education in French outside France (known by its French acronym AEFÉ) in 2000.

⁴³ Launched in 2005 and co-financed by the MFA and partner regions, the ARCUS (Regional Action for Academic and Scientific Cooperation) Programme aims to develop scientific and university cooperation with emerging countries. It provides funding for international students to study in partner French establishments.

⁴⁴ Created in 2006, the Quai d'Orsay/Entreprises Programme is the umbrella term for scholarship programmes that are co-financed by companies and the MFA. Some major French groups from the high-tech and industrial sectors, such as Thalès, Orange and GDF-Suez, are participants in the Programme.

⁴⁵ http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/Version_anglaise_Charte2008.pdf

Every year some **16 000 scholarships for study and internships** are awarded, representing almost **90 million euros**. In 2011, **14 687 european and third-country national students received grants from the French government**, 71 % of whom came to France for study and 29 % for internships. **A significant proportion of SFGGs (40 %) are from Africa**, including 20 % from the Maghreb region and 20 % from sub-Saharan Africa. 19 % of SFGGs come from Europe, including 10 % from outside the European Union. 18 % are from the Asia-Pacific region, 12 % from the Near and Middle East and 12 % from the Americas and the Caribbean. There was a noticeable **shift in the geographical distribution of French government scholarship recipients between 2006 and 2011**, when the number of SFGGs from Algeria, for example, dropped from 1 702 to 1 285, and the number of SFGGs from China shrank from 990 to 544. During this same period, the number of SFGGs increased for Haiti (from 139 to 613), India (from 305 to 390) and Mexico (from 258 to 305)⁴⁶.

The policy of awarding scholarships would thus appear to be one of the MFA's most vital instruments for attracting students from abroad. Until now, French government grants have been handled by one of the MFA's two operators (either Égide or the *CNOUS*). From 1 September 2012, however, it is Campus France that will manage the entire range of the French government's scholarships as well as the programmes entrusted to it by foreign governments (*Bourses des gouvernement étrangers - BGE*).

⁴⁶ Source: Table 2. Students on French Government grants – top 13 source countries, 2006 to 2011.

Table 1. Students on French Government grants – by geographical region, 2011

Geographical region	Study grants		Training grants		Students on French government grants	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
AFRICA	3 704	64 %	2 099	36 %	5 803	40 %
Maghreb sub-region	1 558	54 %	1 339	46 %	2 897	20 %
Sub-Saharan sub-region	2 146	74 %	760	26 %	2 906	20 %
AMERICA - CARIBBEAN	1 233	70 %	537	30 %	1 770	12 %
North America	46	47 %	51	53 %	97	1 %
South America and the Caribbean	1 187	71 %	486	29 %	1 673	11 %
ASIA - PACIFIC	2 259	85 %	403	15 %	2 662	18 %
ASEAN countries	1 217	93 %	96	7 %	1 313	9 %
EUROPE	1 958	71 %	797	29 %	2 755	19 %
European Union	850	67 %	421	33 %	1 271	9 %
Non-EU countries	1 108	75 %	376	25 %	1 484	10 %
NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST (including Egypt)	1 254	74 %	443	26 %	1 697	12 %
WORLD TOTAL	10 408	71 %	4 279	29 %	14 687	

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships, Mobility and Attractiveness Directorate

Note: These figures do not include 245 Mexican students on French government grants outside the programme. (These students were handled by Égide and the National Centre for Student Services (CNOUS)).

Table 2. Students on French Government grants – top 13 source countries, 2006 to 2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Algeria	1 702	1 571	1 514	1 535	1 452	1 285
Morocco	1 014	1 070	927	838	848	810
Tunisia	1 295	1 293	1 129	994	937	802
Vietnam	756	741	786	733	714	628
Haiti	139	145	105	71	322	613
Russia	614	700	668	581	595	562
China	990	926	846	716	671	544
Syria	758	750	693	634	593	535
India	305	417	347	385	348	390
Egypt	221	231	200	221	201	325
Brazil	291	273	286	311	324	307
Mexico	258	268	259	143	168	305
Cameroon	279	259	251	236	256	256
TOTAL (13 countries)	8 622	8 644	8 011	7 398	7 429	7 362

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships, Mobility and Attractiveness Directorate

- **Scholarships from foreign governments**

Some countries award mobility scholarships, based on academic excellence, to their students. Recipients of these types of scholarship are given the status of **Student on a Foreign-Government Grant** or *boursiers des gouvernement étrangers (BGE)* and may be eligible, in some cases, for costs such as their health insurance, transport or even language courses, to be covered. The *Science sans frontières* (Science without Borders) programme, for example, was created by the Brazilian government with a view to fostering the international mobility of Brazilian students and researchers. Merit-based scholarships are awarded for a period of 12 to 36 months to researchers and students from several scientific disciplines.

- **Scholarships offered under European programmes**

The Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe is the national point of contact and information centre regarding European programmes in France. **Under Action 1 of the Erasmus Mundus programme**, focusing on **joint programmes** at masters and PhD levels, there are 131 masters courses and 34 doctoral programmes – almost half of which involve French establishments – on offer in the 2012-2013 academic year, covering a broad range of subjects. Various kinds of scholarships may be awarded to students, based on criteria of academic excellence as stipulated by the institutions. “Category A Scholarships” are awarded to **students from third countries who are neither residing in Europe nor have resided in a European country for more than 12 months in total over the past five years**. At the masters level, the amount of these scholarships is from 14 000 to 48 000 euros, depending on the duration of the masters course and the mobility trajectory.

At the doctoral level, these scholarships range from 61 200 euros to 129 900 euros, depending on the trajectory, type of contract and activity. “Category B Scholarships” are awarded to **European students or third-country students who have lived in Europe for more than 12 months in total over the past five years**. The grants for masters students range from 5 000 to 23 000 euros, depending on the duration of the masters course and the mobility trajectory.

Action 2, “Erasmus Mundus Partnerships”, supports student mobility between European institutions of higher education and establishments in certain targeted third countries. The scholarships amount to approximately 1 000 euros per month for first cycle and masters students, and 1 500 euros per month for doctoral candidates. Travel and visa expenses are also covered.

- **Scholarships awarded by other ministries**

The Ministry of Agriculture, for example, has established a merit-based scholarship scheme for masters level students. Targeting priority countries, about five scholarships, totalling 16 000 euros, are awarded each year. The ministry also manages a sizeable envelope from the MFA, earmarked for receiving ten or so **Haitian students** every year since the 2010 earthquake. As the follow-up of **these students** is also under its remit, the ministry handles the issue of their **return** to Haiti, the goal being that their training corresponds to one of their home country’s true **needs**⁴⁷.

- **Scholarships from local bodies**

Some local bodies award mobility scholarships to international students, primarily at masters and PhD levels. Examples include the *Master Ile-de-France* grant (greater Paris area) or the *Coopération et Mobilités Internationales* programme from the Rhône-Alpes region.

⁴⁷ Extract of an interview with Pierre Autissier, European Relations and International Cooperation Manager, and Françoise D’Épenoux, Higher Education Training Programmes Manager, General Directorate for Education and Research, Ministry of Agriculture.

- **Scholarships awarded by institutions of higher education**

French establishments themselves also offer scholarships to international students. **The Emile Boutny Scholarship** from *Sciences Po*, for example, aims to attract the finest international students. The amount of the grant varies between 3 000 and 12 300 euros per annum at the undergraduate level, and between 5 000 and 16 000 euros per annum for the masters level.

University Paris Descartes offers two types of scholarship programmes for students: one is based on social criteria; the other is designed for doctoral candidates, with a view to fostering mobility of doctoral thesis students enrolled in a *cotutelle* arrangement. For these scholarships, awarded to students already enrolled in the institution, no distinction is made between French or foreign students⁴⁸.

- **Scholarships from other entities**

Other international organisations and bodies also offer mobility scholarships to international students. The *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)*, funded chiefly by France, provides scholarships aimed at postgraduate students as part of its “academic and scientific mobility” initiative. Scholarships are awarded in accordance with twin criteria: scientific quality and appropriateness of the candidature for regional development.

- **Faster treatment of applications**

There are several mechanisms which facilitate formalities for international students, even though they do not directly fast-track applications for course places. Scholarship programmes, the *CEF* procedure and programme-based mobility all constitute approaches developed in France with the aim of offering international students support and streamlined processing of all their administrative formalities.

With a view to improving international students’ experience of their reception in France and simplifying their paperwork, cooperation agreements have been signed between Prefectures and institutions of higher education, in particular in areas where there are high numbers of international students (Article R.311-1 of the Code on Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum). This means that students may submit their residence permit application to the co-signatory institution, which transfers it directly to the appropriate Prefecture. The latter will then arrange an appointment for the applicant as quickly as possible, and no later than three weeks following submission of the original application with the university.

- b) Information provided to international students**

Under the authority of the French diplomatic network abroad, Campus France enjoys support from its network of 141 offices (*Espaces*) and 41 branches in 110 countries, including 31 countries where the *CEF* procedure is used. The agreement signed between the Cooperation and Cultural Action Service of the Embassies of France and the agency Campus France, stipulates that one of the main missions of the Campus France offices is to **inform students as to the possibilities of studying in France, scholarships and other miscellaneous questions, to offer students guidance when planning their studies and assistance with administrative procedures regarding enrolment and visa application.** Each “*Espace Campus France*” therefore has a duty to guide students through their study-related formalities, from choosing their course of study to preparing their departure. With the exception of the *CEF* procedure, all of these services are available to students free of charge. However, there is a fee for the language proficiency test as well as the admission procedure through the *CEF*.

⁴⁸ Extract of an interview with Michèle Cambra, International Partnerships Director, Descartes University Paris.

There are many and varied sources of information and means of communication deployed. The Campus France **internet site**⁴⁹, available in French, English and Spanish, provides international students with the information necessary to prepare for their stay in France. In 2011, the website registered approximately 3.5 million visits. Several **catalogues and search engines are available on line**, listing all of the scholarship programmes, training courses in English and doctoral programmes. Over and above the Campus France website, there are currently **61 “local”** sites, translated into 30 different languages. Created by Campus France *Espaces*, these websites address local students directly in their own language, adapting to their requirements. Many *Espaces* also use **social networking** tools such as Facebook and Twitter so as to have direct contact with students and update them on study programmes or scholarships.

The Campus France *Espaces* also have a wealth of **documentation** at their disposal, translated into several languages, such as brief guides on subject areas, on qualifications and on the establishments, as well as practical handbooks on studying in France.

Staff at the Campus France *Espaces* also offer **personalised advice** (face to face, by telephone or through e-mail) and support for any student planning to study in France. In 2011, 1 400 000 requests for information were received by the Campus France *Espaces*, with 50 % of these requests regarding masters level, 44 % undergraduate level and 7 % doctoral level⁵⁰.

An **international survey of 21 000 international students**⁵¹ showed that Campus France plays an important role in students' decision-making processes. The Campus France website, which was used by 56 % of respondents, is the **primary source of information** on studies in France. The Campus France *Espaces* are mentioned less frequently; they were used by 21 % of respondents. The prominence of the *Espaces* does nonetheless appear to be growing among students who are preparing to head to France; compared with respondents who had already completed their studies, the prospective travellers had visited the *Espaces* in twice the numbers.

EU and third-country national students may also gather information **directly from the French higher education institutions** via their internet sites. Most of the sites have an international section, translated into English and designed with international students in mind, providing information on admission procedures and administrative formalities, the courses of study and arrival in France. The information varies, however, in terms of accessibility and comprehensiveness, from one establishment to another.

c) **Visa issuance process for third-country nationals wishing to pursue their studies in the European Union**

Since 2005, French diplomatic and consular services have been issuing between 60 000 and 75 000 student visas annually. After a steady decrease between 2003 and 2006, the trend reversed in 2008. Depending on their length of stay in France, international students may be granted different types of visa. The duration of stay determines whether it is Community law that applies (if less than three months are to be spent in France) or national law (for long-stay students).

➤ **Short-stay visas**

The Community Code on Visas, which came into force in April 2010, sets out the short-stay visa issuance regulations for the Schengen Area. Under Article 16 visa fees may be waived for

⁴⁹ <http://www.campusfrance.org>

⁵⁰ Campus France, Annual Report 2011

⁵¹ Campus France, Exclusive Campus France-TNS Sofres Survey, *Les étudiants étrangers en France : image et attractivité* (Foreign Students in France: Image and Attractiveness), Les notes de Campus France, October 2011 (in French)

international students. Consideration of applications is the responsibility of consular authorities. Appointments for applicants to appear in person for a Schengen visa (uniform visa) should ordinarily be arranged within 15 days. The waiting time for visa issuance is also set at 15 days. As of April 2011, the applicant is notified as to the grounds for any refusal of a short-stay visa application (Article 32 of the Community Code on Visas).

Students wishing to pursue **language tuition or any other form of short training course** may apply for a **short-stay visa or Schengen visa**.

The “**admissions test**” **student visa** enables international students to take a test or competitive examination in a French tertiary education institution, public or private, signatory to an agreement with the State (Code on Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum, R313-3). Students who successfully pass the said examinations may apply, without returning to their country of origin, for a one year renewable residence permit, at their nearest Prefecture. They may then go on to complete their studies as planned. The *CEF* procedure must be followed for this type of visa in countries where it is in use.

➤ *Long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit*

In France, visas for sojourns of more than three months (long-stay visas) are governed by the Code on Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum (*CESEDA*).

Consideration of and ultimately the decision to issue or refuse a visa application come under the exclusive remit of the consular authorities. Article L211-2 of the *CESEDA* stipulates that the authorities are under no obligation to disclose the grounds for refusal, except in the case of certain categories of applicant.

The **long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit** (LSV-RP) may be issued for a **maximum of twelve months**. It is granted to all international students wishing to pursue their studies in a French higher education institute, except Algerian students, whose status is covered by the Franco-Algerian Agreement of 27 December 1968. As of 1 September 2009, long-stay visa holders are no longer required to apply for a separate residence permit at the Prefecture. The visa itself serves as a residence permit. The two phases are thus **combined into a single application procedure**. There are, however, some formalities to which students must attend, within three months of their arrival, at the French Office for Immigration and Integration.

France also issues student visas to third-country nationals who, prior to commencing their studies in a French institution, have **completed a preparatory year devoted to learning the language**.

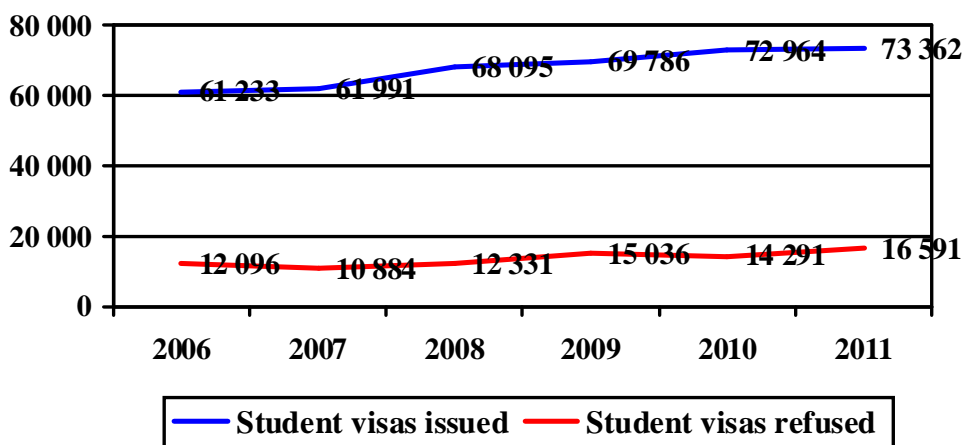
Visa issuance is not automatic. For some nationalities the central authorities are consulted, and all long-stay visa applications for the purposes of study are the object of this kind of consultation. Depending on the nationality of the applicant, it may be a short- or long-stay visa that is required for entry into the country: some are exempt from short-stay visas and only require long-stay visas; others require both short-stay and long-stay visas.

The **conditions of Articles 6 and 7 of Council Directive 2004/114/CE**⁵² are met as of the **moment when the visa application is lodged**. Out of all of the provisions of Articles 6 and 7 of Directive 2004/114/CE, only the optional provisions, namely 6.1.b (given that France has not transposed the Directive’s optional “pupil” provisions into national law), 7.1.c and 7.1.d (as the requirement, in France, for sufficient level of language and evidence of fee payment are solely the prerogatives of the institutions themselves, irrespective of residence permit issuance procedures), have not been incorporated into French law.

Apart from requirements that applicants be able to demonstrate their identity and domicile, no further conditions have been added to those set forth in Articles 6 and 7. There is, nonetheless, still a **degree of discretion** in the procedure, namely: (i) **prior to issuance of the LSV-RP**, when the consular services examine the applications and gauge the coherence and seriousness of the proposed studies as well as several criteria outlined in the inter-ministerial Circular dated 27 January 2006; and (ii) at the time of **“student” residence permit renewal**.

In some specific cases, students fulfil all of the requirements under Directive 2004/114/CE but still have their visa application denied, for instance if they constitute a threat to public order, public security or public health, in accordance with the provisions of this same European text.

Figure 1. Issuance and refusal of student visas – 2006 to 2011



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Visas Division

⁵² Article 6(1) of Council Directive 2004/114/EC states that “a third-country national who applied to be admitted [...] shall (a) present a valid travel document as determined by national legislation. Member States may require the period of validity of the travel document to cover at least the duration of the planned stay; (b) if he/she is a minor under the national legislation of the host Member State, present a parental authorisation for the planned stay; (c) have sickness insurance in respect of all risks normally covered for its own nationals in the Member State concerned; (d) not be regarded as a threat to public policy, public security or public health; (e) provide proof, if the Member State so requests, that he/she has paid the fee for processing the application on the basis of Article 20.”

Article 7(1) of Council Directive 2004/114/EC sets forth the conditions specific to students, stating that “a third-country national who applied to be admitted for the purpose of study shall: (a) have been accepted by an establishment of higher education to follow a course of study; (b) provide the evidence requested by a Member State that during his/her stay he/she will have sufficient resources to cover his/her subsistence, study and return travel costs. Member States shall make public the minimum monthly resources required for the purpose of this provision, without prejudice to individual examination of each case; (c) provide evidence, if the Member State so requires, of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course to be followed by him/her; (d) provide evidence, if the Member State so requires, that he/she has paid the fees charged by the establishment.

After a steady decrease in visa issuance between 2003 and 2006, the trend then reversed: a small increase between 2006 and 2007 (+ 1.2 %) was followed by a strong increase (+ 9.8 %) between 2007 and 2008; **this upward trend has continued ever since.**

These findings can be explained mainly by:

- the development of initiatives launched by French higher education institutions, either directly or through the agency Campus France, which has established Campus France *Espaces* in 110 countries where people wishing to study in France can meet with a Campus France representative and receive advice and information;
- the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' creation of a digital admission procedure system, defined in the framework convention « Centre for studies in France » (*Centre pour les études en France - CEF*). This online application process has been instituted for 31 countries. The CEF procedure is connected to over 200 French higher education institutions, so as to assess the applications from a pedagogical perspective. Cultural services of French embassies as well as visa services may also access students' application files.

Table 3. Issuance and refusal of long-stay visas – 2006 to 2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Student visas issued	61 233	61 991	68 095	69 786	72 964	73 362
Total long-stay visas issued	127 230	149 978	162 237	163 449	173 604	173 007
Student visas as a percentage of all long-stay visas	48.1 %	41.3 %	42 %	42.7 %	42 %	42.4 %
Student visas refused	12 096	10 884	12 331	15 036	14 291	16 591
Total long-stay visas refused	15 824	16 842	19 098	23 369	21 891	25 046

Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Visas Division

The growth in student visa issuance between 2006 and 2011 (+ 19.8 %) was matched by a corresponding increase in the number of student visa application refusals, which rose from 12 096 to 16 591 over the same period (an increase of 37.2 %), albeit with some fluctuation in the number of refusals between these two dates.

On average, student visas represent 43 % of the total number of visas issued from 2006 to 2011. This percentage has remained stable since 2007.

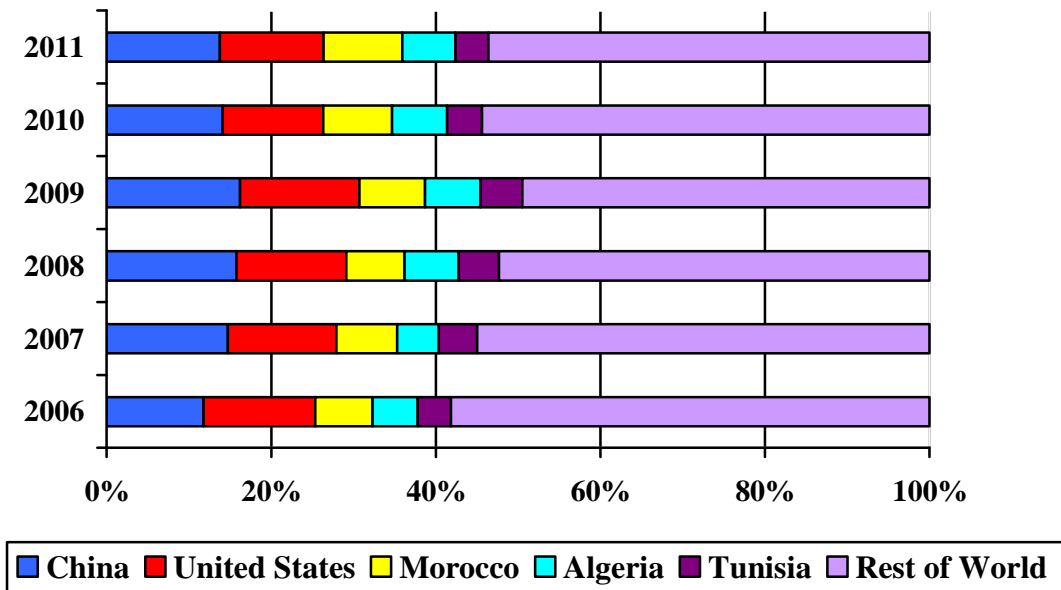
The proportion of student visas refused rose from 19.7 % in 2006 to 22.6 % in 2011, averaging 19.8 % between these two dates.

In 2011, 66.6 % Algerian nationals applying for a student visa were turned down (3 148 refusals). The same was true for 35 % of Chinese (3 529 refusals), 13.4 % of Tunisians (393 refusals), 10.6 % of Moroccans (740 refusals) and 0.5 % of applicants from the United States (46 refusals).

Among the foreign nationals whose student visa applications were refused, there is a preponderance of Africans (Senegal, Rwanda, Mali, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Cameroon).

In 2006, 76.4 % of all visa applications rejected were for student visas. That same year, a peak was recorded, which was then followed by a steady increase, from 64.6 % in 2007 to 66.2 % in 2011.

Figure 2. Student visas issued – top five source countries, 2006 to 2011



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Visas Division

The five source countries whose nationals were granted the most student visas from 2006 to 2011 were China, the United States, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. **It is the Chinese who have the most visas granted for purposes of study.** Since 2008, the number of visas granted to Chinese applicants has stabilised at around 10 000 per year.

These top five source countries account for just under half of the total number of visas granted for purposes of study. Nationals from Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Japan and Senegal make up the next largest group.

If these statistics are considered alongside trends in first student residence permits issued per country (cf. Figure 5), it is clear that there are more nationals from the United States receiving a “student” visa (ranked second) than there are obtaining a residence permit (ranked fifth). This can be explained by the fact that nationals from the United States come for a short cycle of studies (one year) and therefore do not request a residence permit upon expiry of their LSV-RP.

➤ *Visa applications and information on the conditions and procedures for entry and residence*

Information on the conditions and procedures for entry and residence for international students is readily available on the internet sites of French Embassies or Consulates abroad, on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs internet site in France, on the Campus France website and even on the Prefectures’ websites (service for foreign nationals).

International students wishing to come to France must lodge their applications with the French consular authorities in their country of residence. The **timeframe for issuing the documents** depends not only on the workload of the visa services and time of year, but also on the nationality of the applicant. Thus, it can vary from a few days to a few weeks. The start date of the proposed period of study is taken into consideration for the start of the visa’s validity.

With the introduction of biometrics, students are now required to appear in person in order to submit their application, either directly with the Consulate, or with a Consulate-designated external service provider.

Students residing in one of the **31 countries using the CEF procedure** must complete their application on-line if they wish to obtain a visa for study. There are several steps in the application process. Applicants must first create an account on the website of the Campus France office in their

country and follow a paperless procedure to apply for admission to any of approximately 230 French establishments. Throughout the procedure, the Campus France *Espace* can offer advice and assistance. Secondly, the Campus France *Espace* undertakes an **administrative examination of the application** lodged and **authentication of qualifications** and documents and then schedules an **interview to discuss the applicant's proposed study plan**. Language testing will also be arranged if required. Given the candidate's electronic file and the report resulting from the interview, the Cooperation and Cultural Action Service then issues an **Opinion on the study plan**, which is available for the perusal of the Consulate and of the higher education institutions belonging to the CEF agreement. The institutions send on-line offers of preliminary admission directly to the student and to the *Espace*. Finally, the Consular service, having examined the applicant's electronic file and the visa application submitted, decides whether or not to grant a LSV-RP.

In other countries, foreign students submit an Application for Pre-enrolment or contact the establishments directly, depending on the case. The visa application procedure may commence once the candidate has received notification of pre-enrolment.

► *International students participating in specific programmes*

For students registered under European programmes or bilateral agreements there is a **simplified fast track process**, applied whenever possible.

Special consular provisions enable international students taking part, for example, in European programmes to obtain their visa pursuant to certain conditions. Lists are thus sent out by the Cooperation and Cultural Action Services, in liaison with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Given that France has one of the world's most extensive networks of diplomatic and consular services, students have no need to lodge visa applications with consulates of other Member States.

d) **Most common grounds for the rejection of relevant authorisations to study in France**

One of the most common reasons for refusing a visa application is that the applicant's proposed study plans in France are inadequate or inconsistent with his/her situation in the country of origin. There may also be an associated resource insufficiency or risk of misuse of the visa once obtained.

e) **Tuition fees for international students**

Unlike other countries, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, France does not require its international students to pay additional fees. Foreigners studying in France **thus pay the same tuition fees as French students**. At the start of the 2011-2012 academic year, the enrolment fee for university was **177 euros at the undergraduate level (*Licence*), 245 euros for masters level and 372 euros for doctoral studies**. The amount set for engineering schools was 584 euros. Enrolment fees are higher for private establishments – business schools in particular – and can reach **3 000 to 10 000 euros per annum**.

The low tuition fees in our universities are characteristic of France and enhance its attractiveness as a study destination. Not everyone shares this point of view, however, given that some students deem higher tuition fees to indicate a higher quality of education. There have already been discussions in France as to the correlation between tuition fee level and the quality of education, with the French trade union *CGE* speaking out in favour, for example, of introducing higher tuition fees for international students. Several pre-eminent establishments have already adopted such a policy. **Tuition fees at *Sciences Po* are based on a system of redistribution**. EU students and French students pay fees commensurate with their family's income. Third-country national students, on the other hand, pay the tuition fees in their entirety (**9 800 euros per year at the *Collège universitaire* level, and 13 500 euros for a *Master***, in 2012-2013)⁵³.

⁵³ Extract of an interview with Francis Verrillaud, Deputy Director in charge of International Relations and Exchanges.

The Conference of French University Rectors would prefer to see the establishment of a “package” payment, to be added to the costs of tuition. Such an all-inclusive price would cover **all of the costs regarding services provided specifically** to international mobility students (educational support, language courses, tutoring and such like)⁵⁴.

f) Changes in fees regarding entry into France and admission to educational establishments since 2006

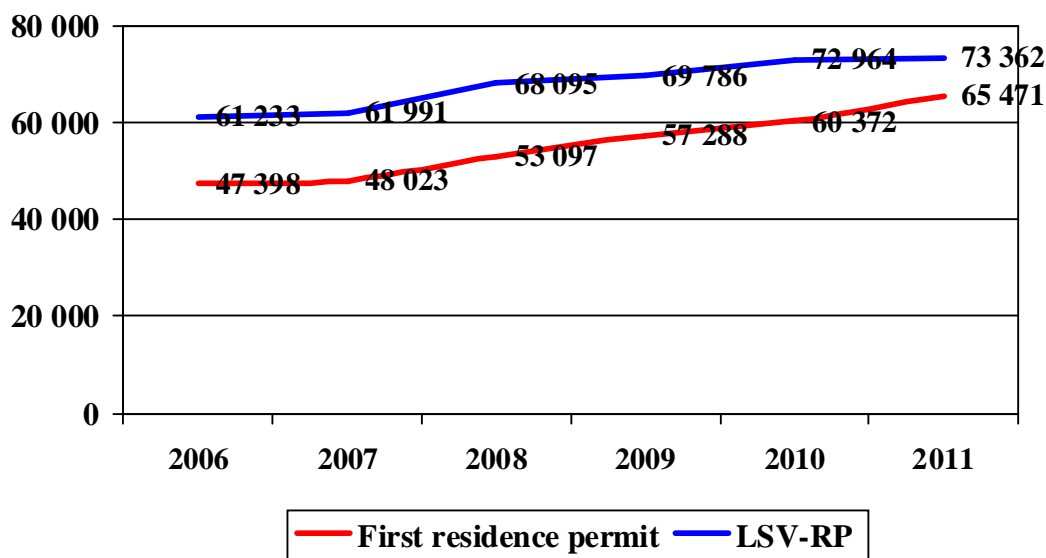
There has been no increase in enrolment fees for institutions of higher education. Similarly, the costs of lodging a visa application have not changed since 2006. The cost is currently 99 euros. It is half-price for students applying via the Studying in France Centre (*CEF*) mechanism, and free for holders of a French government grant, holders of a foreign-government scholarships and for students covered by European programmes.

g) Statistics on admission of international students

➤ *Inflows of international students (third-country nationals) to France*

The figures regarding the quantity of residence permits issued to international students are taken from the IT application for managing the files of foreign nationals in France known as AGDREF in its French initials (*Application de gestion des dossiers des ressortissants étrangers en France*)⁵⁵. **The residence permits only concern third-country foreign nationals. It should be noted that all figures for 2011 are provisional.**

Figure 3. First residence permits and visas issued to students – 2006 to 2011



Sources: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Visas Division and Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

Note: LSV-RPs were introduced gradually after 1 June 2009. Up to this date, temporary long-stay visas were issued.

⁵⁴ Extract of an interview with Harald Schraeder, Policy Officer, Europe, Conference of French University Rectors

⁵⁵ The computer application for managing the files of third-country nationals in France became operational in 1993 (Order dated 29 March 1993). Thanks to this tool, users in Prefectures and central administration can, depending on their level of access, manage and consult individual files in the shared databases.

The AGDREF application is, however, used more for producing residence documents, than as a true tool for managing and monitoring the different processes relating to a third-country national’s stay in France. In 2001 the application was updated and equipped with a derivative database designed to generate immigration statistics.

The number of first-issue residence permits granted to international students has been consistently rising since 2006, going from 47 398 to 65 471 by 2011, which is a 36 % increase. Growth in the number of residence permits can be compared with the rising number of visas; from 61 233 in 2006 to 73 362 in 2011, representing an increase of 19.8 %.

The fact that there are fewer residence permits than visas can be explained by the fact that some LSV-RP holders (long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit) never actually come to France, while others fail to validate their LSV-RP with the French Office for Immigration and Integration for some reason or other and therefore do not appear in the statistics. The discrepancy is gradually being reduced, as temporary long-stay visas are being phased out, as of 1 June 2009, in favour of LSV-RP visas.

Table 4. Student residence permits (first issues and renewals) – 2006 to 2011

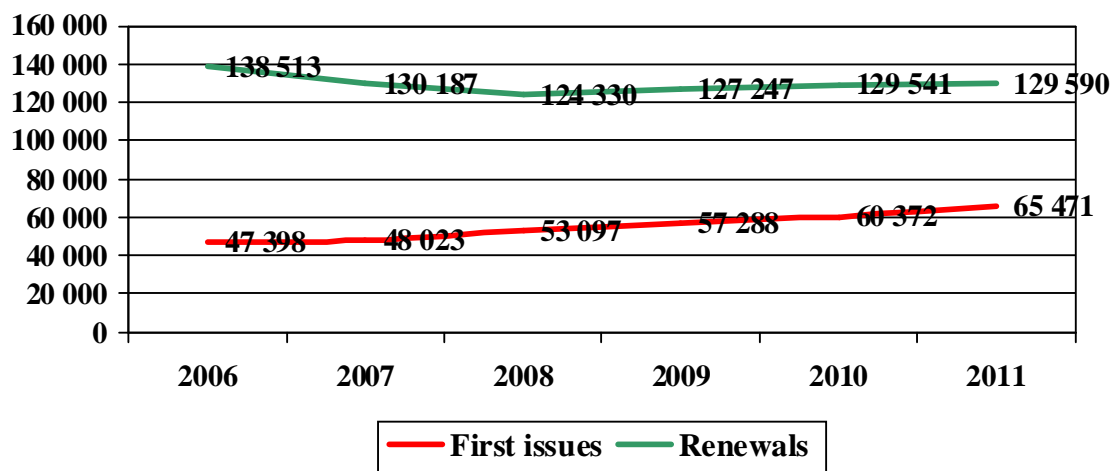
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
First issues	47 398	48 023	53 097	57 288	60 372	65 471
Renewals	138 513	130 187	124 330	127 247	129 541	129 590
Total	185 911	178 210	177 427	184 535	189 913	195 061

Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

The number of first permits issued has been steadily rising since 2006 (+ 36 % from 2006 to 2011) while the number of renewals dropped between 2006 and 2008, before starting to climb again from 2009.

Out of the total number of study-related permits issued in 2010, 31.7 % constituted first-time permits while 68.3 % were permit renewals.

Figure 4. Trends in student residence permits (first issues and renewals) – 2006 to 2011



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

Table 5. First student residence permits issued – by gender, 2006 to 2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Female	24 343	24 950	27 184	29 555	31 168	35 369
Male	23 055	23 073	25 913	27 733	29 204	30 102
Total	47 398	48 023	53 097	57 288	60 372	65 471

Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

Women are slightly more numerous than men in the annual student inflows, accounting, on average, for 51.5 % of the annual inflows from 2006 to 2010, whereas their male counterparts represented 48.5 %.

This distribution is perfectly representative of the male-female distribution of overall annual flows (regardless of category), since women represented 51.1 % of all flows on average between 2006 and 2010, and men 48.9 %.

Table 6. First residence permits (all categories) by gender – 2006 to 2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Female	103 033	98 974	101 596	106 290	107 130	109 672
Male	96 133	91 930	102 324	102 313	101 467	99 848
Total	199 166	190 904	203 920	208 603	208 597	209 520

Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

Table 7. First student residence permits – by duration, 2006 to 2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
3 to 5 months	907	984	1 235	1 399	1 968
6 to 11 months	6 261	7 264	8 113	3 729	352
12 months or more	40 230	39 775	43 749	52 160	58 052

Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

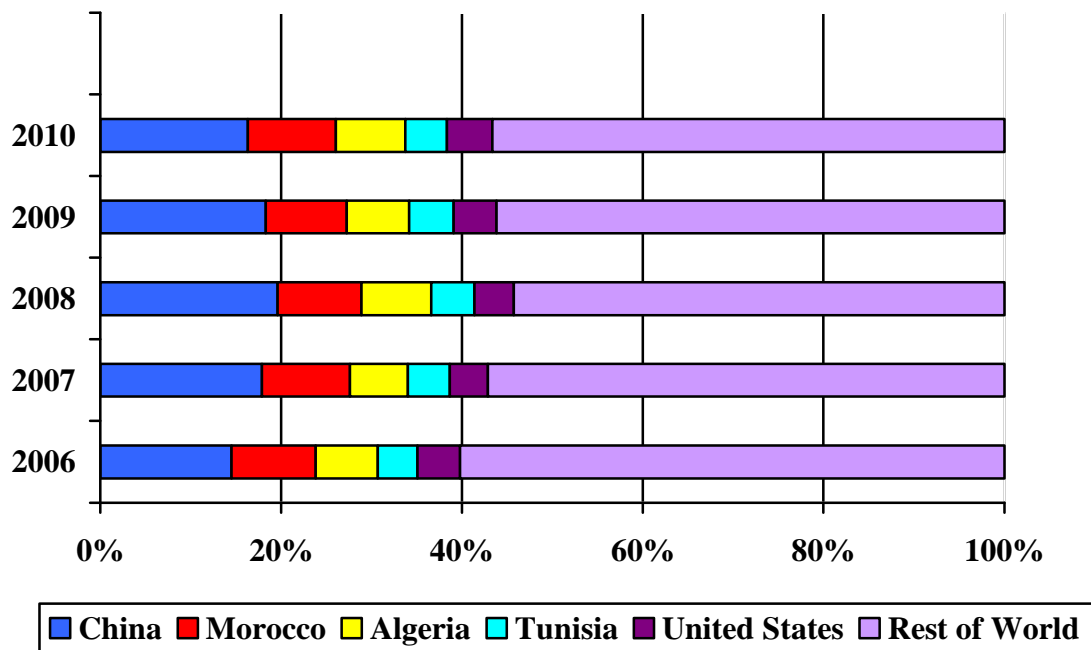
Most residence permits issued to students are for 12 months or more, in accordance with the duration of the studies in question. In 2010, 96 % of first-issue residence permits were granted for a period of 12 months or more. The same trend can be observed when all permits are taken as a whole (including renewals). **In 2010, 86.2 % of all residence permits were issued for a period of 12 months or more.**

Table 8. Student residence permits (first issues and renewals) – by duration, 2006 to 2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
3 to 5 months	3 858	3 499	3 386	4 240	6 226
6 to 11 months	21 809	20 870	21 449	18 915	20 119
12 months or more	160 244	153 841	152 592	161 380	163 568

Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

Figure 5. Trends in first student residence permits issued – top five source countries, 2006 to 2010



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

In 2010, 60 300 third-country nationals were granted residence permits to study in France. **One-fifth of these were from the Maghreb region** (5 800 from Morocco, 4 600 from Algeria and 2 700 from Tunisia). **A comparable number of students came from China. The United States fluctuated between fourth and fifth place over this five-year period.**

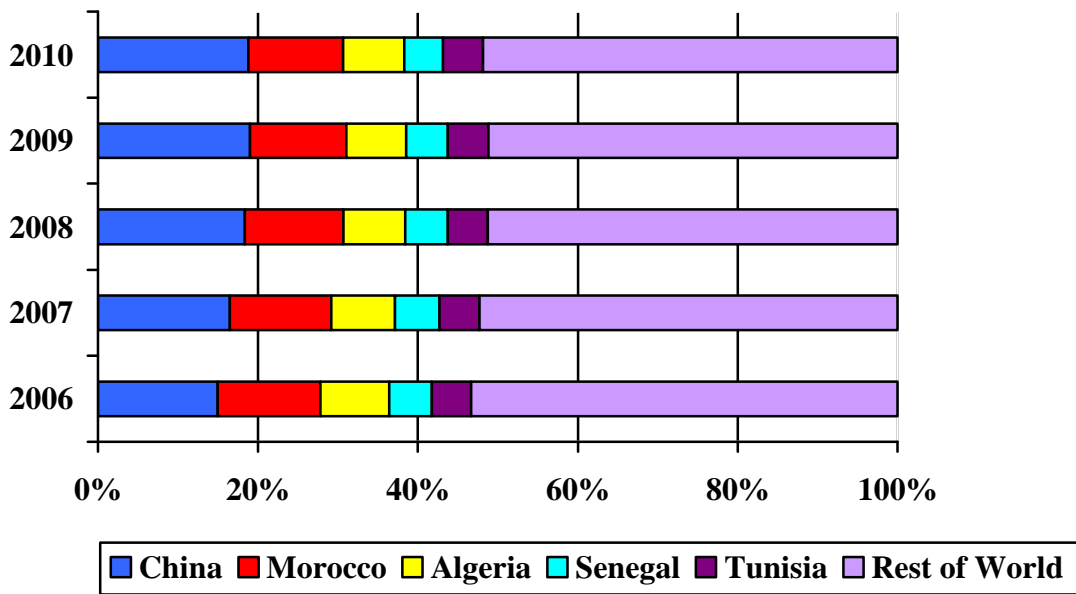
These top five source countries (26 000 international students in 2010) represent just under half of the total number of international students.

When these figures are compared with overall migratory inflows, four out of these five source countries reappear, albeit in a different order (in decreasing order): Algeria, Morocco, China, Tunisia and Turkey. **Turkey thus takes the place of the United States when it comes to overall annual flows.**

This geographical distribution of source countries does change over time. Emerging countries are moving ever higher up the rankings, at the expense of countries with strong historical ties with France, or with a long-standing tradition of student mobility.

Chinese students are becoming more numerous; they were only 6 300 in number in 2004 but totalled 9 850 in 2010. **The number of Brazilian students has also risen steeply for this period,** increasing from 1 200 to 2 090 between 2004 and 2010. **On the other hand, there has been a decline in the number of Japanese students** (from 2 500 to 1 600).

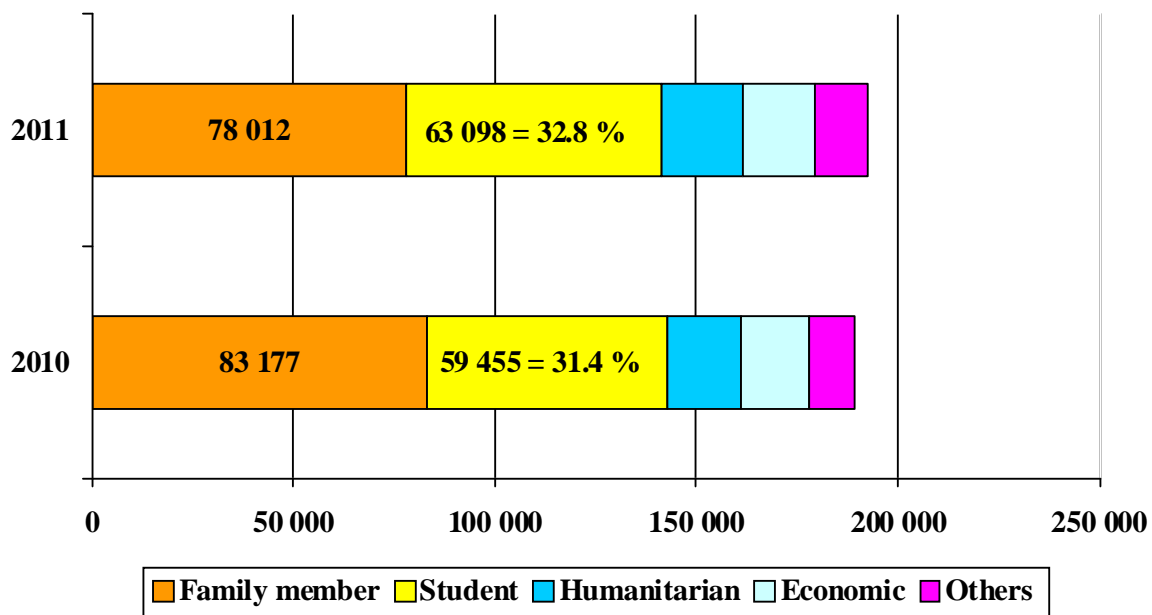
Figure 6. Student residence permits (first issues and renewals) – top five source countries, 2006 to 2010



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

If the total issuance of residence permits is compared with the issuance of first-time permits only, **Senegal overtakes the United States** in the ranking, which can be explained by the fact that nationals from the United States tend to renew their residence permits less frequently because they generally come for short study cycles.

Figure 7. Students as a percentage of annual immigration figures – 2010, 2011



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

Note: The “humanitarian” category comprises those seeking asylum, third-country nationals who enter France for medical treatment and victims of trafficking in human beings. The “others” category comprises visitors, third-country nationals who entered France as minors, and retired persons.

In 2010, students accounted for 31.4 % of annual flows, while people immigrating for family reasons represented 43.9 %.

In 2011, the proportion of students rose slightly, reaching 32.8 % of annual flows, while the percentage of people immigrating for family reasons dropped, representing a mere 40.5 % of these flows. It should be noted that the 2011 figures are not final.

➤ *Stocks of third-country and EU national students in France*

The sources used in order to quantify the number of non-French students in France come from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MHER)⁵⁶ and the Ministry of Education. These sources comprise the following elements:

- SISE information system (a student monitoring information system);
- Surveys conducted by the Information Systems and Statistical Studies Office on engineering schools and institutions of higher education not attached to universities (MHER);
- Data on *Sections de Techniciens Supérieurs* vocational training and preparatory classes for *grandes écoles* collected by the Assessment, Forward-Planning and Performance Directorate (Ministry of Education);
- Surveys specific to the ministries in charge of agriculture, health, social affairs and culture.

Regarding international students, the various different census surveys of students enrolled in France take into consideration students claiming a foreign nationality, including those who have completed their secondary schooling in the French education system. It is possible to distinguish those who do not have a *baccalauréat* for only for those at university . **The figures in this section relating to international students thus include both EU nationals and third-country nationals.**

The number of foreign students in metropolitan France and French overseas *départements* has undergone a boom since late 1990s. Between 1998 and 2010, it has risen by 87.5 %. In 2006 and in 2007, the number of foreign students fell, before resuming the upward trend again in 2008 (+ 1.9 %) and quite markedly so in 2009 (+ 4.8 %). **The numbers increased by 2.3 % (6 500 students) in 2010 to reach a total of 284 700; this is a new record.**

Owing to a slight drop (- 0.1 %) in the number of French students, **the proportion of EU and third-country national students in higher education has risen by 0.3 points to reach 12.3 %.**

The number of EU and third-country national students increased across all forms of training in 2010. It grew by 10.7 % in non-university engineering courses, by 10.5 % in preparatory classes for *grandes écoles*, and by 8.1 % in business, management, sales and accountancy schools. On the other hand, the increases have been far more moderate in the artistic and cultural institutions (+ 1.7 %) and for the university institutes of technology, known as *IUTs* (+ 0.5 %).

⁵⁶ The Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Education statistics include all students enrolled in studies leading to a national or university qualification upon completion of a course of study lasting no less than one year, as well as preparatory courses for civil service entrance examinations. Only enrolments in the main course of study are counted. All forms of studies are taken into consideration (distance learning, lifelong learning, work-study programmes or apprenticeship training). The 78 public universities and the Albi *Centre universitaire de formation et de recherche* (CUFR) are included. All administrative units have been considered. As of 2004-2005, Paris-Dauphine University has been granted the status of *grand établissement*, and as such is no longer classified under “universities”. Since 2008-2009, teacher training institutions in metropolitan France and on Réunion Island have been incorporated into an associated university. Those enrolled in these institutions are thus counted as being enrolled at university. The same has been true for those in the Antilles-French Guyana region since 2010. Moreover, 17 engineering schools attached to a university are now no longer counted in the field “university”.

The proportion of EU and third-country national students is highest in general academic disciplines and health at university, in the national polytechnic institutes and in the universities of technology (respectively 16.0 %, 20.1 % and 24.1 %).

In social and paramedical training institutes, non-university accountancy courses, *IUTs*, *Sections de Techniciens Supérieurs* vocational training and in preparatory classes for *grandes écoles* the proportion of these students is low (between 1 % and 6 %).

At university, they represent 15.2 % of all enrolments. This proportion increases markedly with the level of studies: **they account for 11 % of enrolments at the undergraduate level, 19 % in masters courses and 41.3 % in doctoral studies.**

Among the students from EU and non-EU countries, the proportion of them who do not have a *baccalauréat* increases with the level of university studies: it stands at 70.9 % at the undergraduate level, 85.4 % in masters courses and 89.6 % in doctoral studies.

At university, almost one foreign student in every five is from the European Union (18.2 %), nearly one in two is from Africa (46.8 %) and one in five is (21.8 %) is Asian. Geographical origin varies with the level of university studies. There is, for instance, a greater proportion of students from Asia in doctoral studies, where they account for more than 30 % of foreign students enrolled, as opposed to 21.6 % at the undergraduate level and 19.6 % in masters courses.

Table 9. International students⁵⁷ enrolled in higher education (Metropolitan France and French Overseas *départements*) – 2006 to 2011

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2010-2011 as %age of all students in this category
Universities	208 007	204 290	(1) 206 475	(1) 214 252	218 364	15.2
Other academic disciplines and health	201 838	198 013	199 559	206 868	210 940	16.0
<i>of which, university engineering courses (2)</i>	3 271	3 533	2 798	2 910	2 983	14.3
University institutes of technology (UITs)	6 169	6 277	6 916	7 384	7 424	6.4
Primary school teacher training colleges	833	777	674	791		
Sections de Techniciens Supérieurs vocational training	6 514	5 593	5 122	5 419	5 831	2.4
Preparatory classes for the grandes écoles	2 392	2 153	2 440	2 875	3 176	4.0
Non-university accountancy training courses	404	351	316	347	354	3.9
Universities of technology	1 508	1 709	1 849	2 001	2 116	24.1
<i>of which, university engineering courses</i>	891	1 036	1 206	1 308	1 408	23.4
National polytechnic institutes	2 297	1 322	1 320	1 446	1 473	20.1
<i>of which, university engineering courses (2)</i>	1 145	599	578	660	689	12.8
Other non-university engineering courses (2)	7 151	7 653	8 966	9 391	10 398	11.5
Business, management, sales and accountancy schools	10 570	12 538	13 483	15 882	17 164	14.1
Higher education institutes of fine arts and culture(3)	8 606	7 972	7 772	7 964	8 103	11.9
Higher education institutes of social and paramedical studies	1 791	1 717	657	592	592	0.4
Other institutes and training courses (4)	13 021	14 447	16 312	17 179	17 088	14.4
TOTAL	263 094	260 522	265 386	278 139	284 659	12.3
As a percentage of all students enrolled in France	11.7	11.7	11.9	12	12.3	/

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability, General Directorate for Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Statistics / SISE database

(1) As of 2008, students enrolled in primary school teacher training colleges that come under universities are not counted separately. If primary school teacher training colleges are included, there were 215 034 international students in 2009 - 14.9 % of university students.

(2) Including engineering training in partnership programmes.

(3) Including higher education institutes of architecture, journalism and communication.

(4) Not a homogenous group.

⁵⁷ Including EU nationals.

Table 10. International students⁵⁸ in universities (Metropolitan France and French Overseas *départements*) – by geographical origin and level of studies, 2010-2011

	<i>Licence</i>	<i>Masters</i>	<i>Doctorate</i>	TOTAL
European Union (EU)	18 442	16 476	4 756	39 674
Other European countries (non-EU)	5 294	3 980	1 017	10 291
Africa	43 227	48 955	9 909	102 091
America	7 442	8 012	2 818	18 272
Asia	20 603	18 940	7 955	47 498
Oceania	256	121	39	416
Stateless or no nationality declared	56	40	26	122
TOTAL	95 320	96 524	26 520	218 364
As a percentage of all students	11 %	19 %	41.3 %	15.2 %

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability, General Directorate for Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Statistics / SISE database

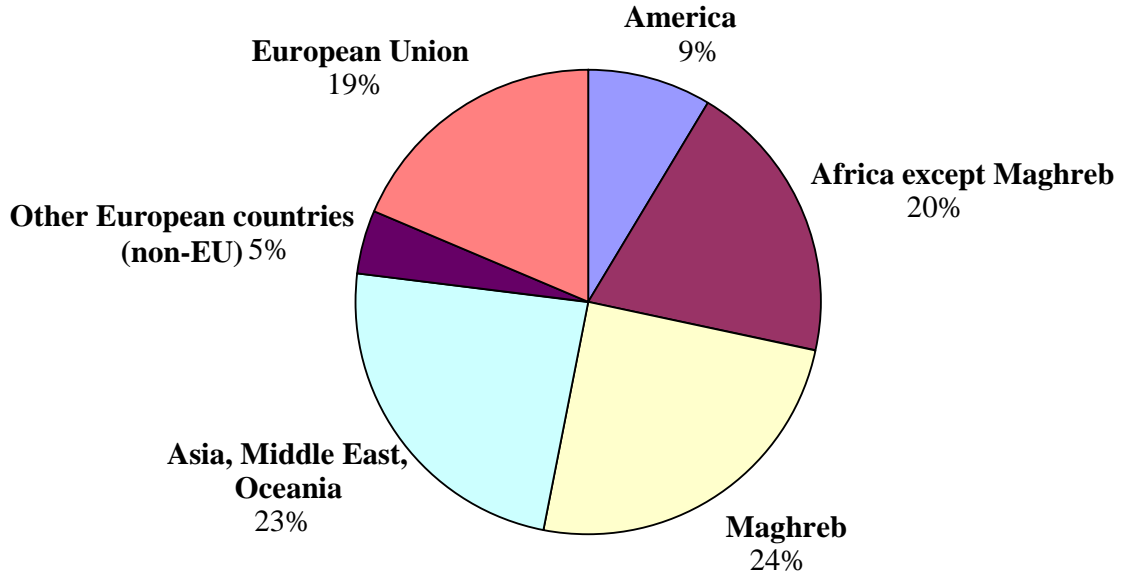
In higher education in France (with the exception of establishments run by ministries in charge of agriculture, health and social affairs), **nearly one international student in two was from Africa in 2010**: 24 % of these students were from the Maghreb region and 20 % from the rest of the African continent. **Less than a quarter (24 %) were from Europe, including 19 % from the European Union. Finally, 23 % were from Asia, the Middle East or Oceania and 9 % from the Americas.** Half of all the international students were of the following ten nationalities: Moroccan, Chinese, Algerian, Tunisian, Senegalese, German, Italian, Cameroonian, Vietnamese and Spanish.

Moroccan students were still the largest group of international students in France in 2010 (32 000 individuals). This figure represents a 1.6 % increase from that of 2009. **The number of Chinese students has practically stabilised (+ 0.2 %)** after a lengthy period of considerable growth (notably the rise of 7.2 % between 2008 and 2009) **and they are the second-largest group of international students in France (29 100).** Their numbers have surpassed those of Algerians (22 800), which have risen by 4.8 %. Among the leading nationalities of international students, the only ones for which numbers were lower in 2010 than in 2009 were Senegalese (- 1.8 %), Tunisian (- 4.9 %) and Lebanese (- 6 %). In 2010, therefore, Spanish students (+ 8.3 %) overtook their Lebanese counterparts (10th and 11th ranked). There were also particularly large increases for Vietnamese students (+ 5.9 %) and Italian students (+ 5.2 %).

There is a high concentration of North African students (excluding Morocco and Tunisia) in universities (excluding IUTs and engineering courses): 89 %, as opposed to 73 % for international students taken as a whole. Proportionally, there are fewer Moroccans at university (59 %), but they have a greater presence in non-university engineering courses (10 %, as opposed to 4 % for international students overall), in preparatory classes for *grandes écoles* (4 %, as opposed to 1 %) and in IUTs (5 %, as opposed to 3 %). Chinese students go to university less (65 %) than the overall international student population, but slightly more frequently to non-university engineering schools (7 %) and business, management and accountancy schools (9 %, as opposed to 6 % for international students overall). Other Asian students show a strong tendency to opt for artistic or cultural courses (10 %, as opposed to an average of 3 %).

⁵⁸ Including EU nationals.











Figure 8. International students⁵⁹ in higher education institutions (Metropolitan France and French Overseas *départements*, public and private) – **by geographical region of origin, 2010-2011)**



Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability, General Directorate for Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Statistics / SISE

⁵⁹ Including EU nationals.

Table 11. Top 10 countries of origin of international students⁶⁰ in France – 2010-2011

	Morocco	11 %
	China	10 %
	Algeria	8 %
	Tunisia	5 %
	Senegal	3 %
	Germany	3 %
	Italy	3 %
	Cameroon	3 %
	Vietnam	2 %
	Spain	2 %

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability, General Directorate for Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Statistics / SISE

⁶⁰ Including EU nationals.

Table 12. Institutions in Metropolitan France and French Overseas *départements* attended by international students⁶¹ (by country or geographical region) as percentages (1)

Origin	Universities - excluding university institutes of technology and engineering	University institutes of technology	Engineering at university	Non-university engineering schools(2)	Post-secondary technical sections and similar	Preparatory classes for the grandes écoles
Germany	71	2	0	4	1	1
Italy	74	1	0	3	1	1
Other EU Member States	74	2	0	3	3	1
European countries (non-EU)	76	2	0	2	2	1
Morocco	59	5	3	10	3	4
Algeria	89	1	0	1	2	1
Tunisia	77	1	2	6	2	2
Other Maghreb countries	90	1	1	2	1	0
Senegal	77	5	2	5	2	1
Cameroon	71	2	2	7	3	1
Other African countries	81	3	1	2	3	1
Lebanon	71	0	2	6	0	1
Other Middle Eastern countries	82	1	0	1	3	0
China	65	4	2	7	0	0
Vietnam	77	3	1	5	1	0
Other Asian countries	64	3	0	3	2	1
South America	72	1	1	9	1	0
North America	75	1	0	1	1	1
Central America and the Caribbean	77	1	0	3	3	1
Oceania	75	1	0	2	1	1
Total	73	3	1	4	2	1

⁶¹ Including EU nationals.

Business, management and accountancy schools	Higher education institutes of fine arts and culture	Other higher education colleges (3)	Total %	Number of students	Percentage change 2010 /2009 (%)	Geographical origin
11	2	8	100	8 483	1.5	Germany
6	3	10	100	7 412	5.2	Italy
7	3	7	100	36 451	4.7	Other EU Member States
6	3	7	100	13 025	6.3	Other European countries (non-EU)
8	2	5	100	32 020	1.6	Morocco
2	1	4	100	22 818	4.8	Algeria
3	1	7	100	13 645	-4.9	Tunisia
2	0	3	100	1 848	6.5	Other Maghreb countries
4	0	4	100	9 842	-1.8	Senegal
7	0	6	100	7 355	2.1	Cameroon
4	1	5	100	37 964	3.6	Other African countries
6	1	12	100	5 208	-6	Lebanon
3	2	7	100	10 342	-0.2	Other Middle Eastern countries
9	4	7	100	29 122	0.2	China
2	2	10	100	6 664	5.9	Vietnam
8	10	9	100	14 792	1.5	Other Asian countries
4	3	10	100	12 628	5.8	South America
10	3	8	100	6 463	6	North America
6	2	7	100	5 247	14.2	Central America and the Caribbean
9	6	5	100	548	3.4	Oceania
6	3	7	100			Total

(1) Not including paramedical training courses and higher education institutes that come under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

(2) Including engineering training in partnership programmes.

(3) Not a homogenous group.

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability, General Directorate for Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Statistics / SISE information system

For the third year running, the number of EU and third-country national students enrolled in French public universities has risen. In autumn 2010, 218 400 students in the universities of metropolitan France and French overseas *départements* were foreign nationals, which was 1.9 % more than in 2009-2010. **The proportion of students from abroad reached 15.2 %.**

The number of students from EU and non-EU countries without a *baccalauréat* is also on the rise, and represents 79.6 % of the total this population (79.3 % in 2009-2010). This proportion has risen by 7.7 percentage points in seven years. These are students who have not followed the typical secondary school trajectory within the French education system. They come to France to pursue their tertiary studies after completing their secondary education in their home country,

validated by an equivalent to the *baccalauréat*, which enables them to enrol at university. Nearly half of these international students are African (46.8 %), next come European students (22.9 %) and Asians (21.8 %), while American students (8.4 %) account for just under 10 % of the international student population as a whole.

Moroccan students are the greatest in number (21 600), ahead of the Chinese (20 800) and Algerians (20 600). The number of Moroccan students is decreasing (- 1 % as compared with 2009-2010), as is that of Chinese students (- 1.3 % as compared with 2009-2010, after having registered + 4.4 % in 2009-2010). **The number of Algerian students has increased 5 %. Among European students, German students are the greatest in number (12.5 % of Europeans),** followed by Italian students (11.2 %), Romanian (7.6 %), Spanish (7.6 %) and Russian students (7.4 %). **Nearly four-fifths of all European students are from the European Union.**

African students tend to enrol in scientific and sports disciplines (31.1 % as opposed to 25 % for the entire international student population) or economic (24 % as opposed to 21 %) rather than in arts (19 % as opposed to 30.2 %). Among African students, 75.9 % do not hold a *baccalauréat*.

Women account for the majority of students (52.9 %) from all continents except Africa; they make up only 42.8 % of the students from Africa. On the other hand, female students account for more than two-thirds of European students (68.2 %).

Table 13. International students⁶² enrolled in universities in Metropolitan France and French Overseas départements (excluding primary school teacher training colleges) – 2006 to 2011

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Overall total of foreign students enrolled in universities	208 007	204 290	206 475	214 252	218 364
<i>number of those without a French baccalauréat (high-school diploma)</i>	160 701	159 368	162 687	169 896	173 761
Year-on-year change (%)	-0.7 %	-1.8 %	1.5 %	3.8 %	1.9 %
Percentage of foreign students (%)	14.9 %	15 %	15.4 %	15.5 %	15.2 %

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability, General Directorate for Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Statistics / SISE

In 2010-2011, France welcomed a total of 284 659 EU and third-country national students, 218 364 of whom (77 %) were enrolled at university.

Table 14. International students⁶³ enrolled in universities by level of studies – 2006 to 2011

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
TOTAL	208 007	204 290	207 144	215 034	218 364
<i>Licence</i>	95 082	89 245	89 784	92 896	95 320
Masters	87 686	89 192	91 242	95 473	96 524
Doctorate	25 239	25 853	26 118	26 665	26 520

Source: Ministry of Higher Education and Research, General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability, General Directorate for Research and Innovation, Information Systems and Statistics

⁶² Including EU nationals.

⁶³ Including EU nationals.

Table 15. International students⁶⁴ in universities - by origin and subject area, 2010-2011

	Law	Economics, Social and economic adminins- tration	Humanities, Science	Science and Phys.Ed.	Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy	UIT	Total	% by nationality	% of women	% without <i>baccalauréat</i>
Europe	7 995	7 388	22 143	7 141	4 159	1 139	49 965	22.9	68.2	77.1
European Union:	6 641	4 857	17 938	5 776	3 618	844	39 674	18.2	67.2	77.2
<i>Top 10:</i>										
<i>Germany</i>	1 108	717	3 020	859	400	146	6 250	2.9	68.7	81.9
<i>Italy</i>	741	395	2 910	998	483	60	5 587	2.6	63.9	83.8
<i>Romania</i>	609	602	1 264	566	740	36	3 817	1.7	76.2	87.6
<i>Spain</i>	464	434	1 842	639	306	102	3 787	1.7	63.5	81.4
<i>Belgium</i>	405	315	1 041	450	492	87	2 790	1.3	58.4	59.1
<i>UK</i>	496	162	1 596	250	110	63	2 677	1.2	64.5	64.4
<i>Portugal</i>	371	362	985	462	244	202	2 626	1.2	61.3	28.5
<i>Poland</i>	395	450	1 090	378	130	27	2 470	1.1	77.3	83.3
<i>Greece</i>	481	95	892	273	112	17	1 870	0.9	70.6	89.4
<i>Bulgaria</i>	370	439	686	181	89	9	1 774	0.8	71.9	88.3
<i>Luxembourg</i>	300	269	472	166	239	4	1 450	0.7	51.1	85
non-EU countries	1 354	2 531	4 205	1 365	541	295	10 291	4.7	72	77
<i>Russia</i>	429	876	1 824	382	135	52	3 698	1.7	80.7	85.6
Africa	10 982	24 521	19 371	31 755	11 391	4 071	102 091	46.8	42.8	75.9
<i>Top 11:</i>										
<i>Morocco</i>	1 427	6 540	2 773	7 123	2 065	1 662	21 590	9.9	43.1	72.5
<i>Algeria</i>	1 538	3 279	4 941	6 811	3 782	266	20 617	9.4	42.7	78
<i>Tunisia</i>	487	1 491	1 934	5 101	1 671	172	10 856	5	46.5	82.3
<i>Senegal</i>	1 274	2 295	1 598	2 419	254	476	8 316	3.8	37.5	82.6
<i>Cameroon</i>	798	1 340	864	1 672	685	166	5 525	2.5	47.9	68.1
<i>Guinea</i>	554	1 469	441	1 210	178	82	3 934	1.8	28.1	89.1
<i>Gabon</i>	607	756	819	872	118	470	3 642	1.7	49.5	78.9
<i>Madagascar</i>	370	1 076	665	771	415	132	3 429	1.6	57.9	63.5
<i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>	705	993	582	609	344	81	3 314	1.5	46.6	62.6
<i>Congo</i>	489	617	446	652	246	171	2 621	1.2	42	64.1
<i>Mali</i>	446	659	401	414	120	24	2 064	0.9	34.4	87.2
<i>Benin</i>	282	493	273	414	214	30	1 706	0.8	34.3	81.1
<i>Comores</i>	216	382	508	427	64	36	1 633	0.7	43.8	64.3
Asia	3 387	11 743	14 580	12 582	3 218	1 988	47 498	21.8	55.6	88.9
<i>Top 8:</i>										
<i>China</i>	713	6 536	6 341	5 714	208	1 240	20 752	9.5	60.4	95.1
<i>Vietnam</i>	241	2 267	651	1 639	392	182	5 372	2.5	54.2	91.2
<i>Lebanon</i>	391	390	598	1 651	772	17	3 819	1.7	43.3	78.5
<i>Turkey</i>	420	329	781	344	94	72	2 040	0.9	61.8	65.9
<i>Syria</i>	117	104	476	540	732	1	1 970	0.9	30.9	91.1
<i>Iran</i>	203	152	745	509	145	8	1 762	0.8	56	86.7
<i>South Korea</i>	98	117	1 238	134	56	18	1 661	0.8	71.3	83.8
<i>Japan</i>	98	42	1 005	62	18	20	1 245	0.6	71.6	91.4

⁶⁴ Including EU nationals.

Table 15 (continued). International students⁶⁵ in universities - by origin and subject area, 2010-2011

	Law	Economics, social and economic administration	Humanities, Science	Science and Phys. Ed.	Medicine, dentistry, pharmacy	UIT	Total	% by nationality	% of women	% without <i>baccalauréat</i>
America	2 353	2 191	9 639	3 102	765	222	18 272	8.4	60.5	82.4
<i>Top 6 countries:</i>										
<i>United States</i>	433	200	2 691	279	56	37	3 696	1.7	71.1	89.7
<i>Brazil</i>	429	355	1 601	522	126	22	3 055	1.4	63.1	88.2
<i>Colombia</i>	311	311	1 222	364	68	19	2 295	1.1	60.3	82.8
<i>Mexico</i>	195	179	829	391	49	15	1 658	0.8	57.8	88.6
<i>Haiti</i>	292	391	507	312	98	44	1 644	0.8	40.8	62.5
<i>Canada</i>	210	110	629	167	101	38	1 255	0.6	63.3	80.3
Oceania	62	21	272	51	7	3	416	0.2	66.6	85.6
Stateless or nationality not declared	19	13	48	25	16	1	122	0.1	54.9	48.4
TOTAL	24 798	45 877	66 053	54 656	19 556	7 424	218 364	100	52.9	79.6
Percentage of foreign students	12.5	24.4	15.1	18.6	9.6	6.4	15.2			

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education and Research. General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability. General Directorate for Research and Innovation. Information Systems and Statistics / SISE database

3.2 Stay

3.2.1 International students

a) Regulations concerning duration of stay

If international students wish to **extend their study period in France**, they must go to their nearest Prefecture to renew their residence permit, **in the two months prior to the expiry of their current visa**. There is thus no requirement that they return to their home country to apply for a visa afresh. They must show evidence of their intention to continue the studies commenced, by producing a certificate of enrolment in the institution concerned, as well as their transcript or any other document attesting to their progress and regular course attendance. Students must also demonstrate that they have sufficient resources.

⁶⁵ Including EU nationals

When renewing a “student” residence permit, the Prefect assesses whether or not **the proposed studies are genuine and serious**⁶⁶. This assessment is based on several criteria:

- **regular attendance and participation in examinations;**
- **continuation of studies within the same degree course;**
- **seriousness of proposed studies in the case of a change of course.**

b) Success rates for international students: what are the effects on their entry and residence permission?

While a one-off failure at some point over the course of the year does not jeopardise residence permit renewal, refusal may occur in the case of **unjustified and repeated failures, poor attendance** or an **incoherent study plan**. French procedure is thus in alignment with Article 12 of **Directive 2004/114/CE** which stipulates that a Member State may refuse renewal if the student “does not make acceptable progress in his/her studies in accordance with national legislation or administrative practice.”

The criterion of **genuine and serious nature of the studies** is applied under the supervision of the administrative judge. The latter has therefore, on numerous occasions, had cause to **clarify the definition of this principle**:

- the Council of State generally maintains that there is no obligation, under regulatory provisions, for the administration to issue a residence permit to all foreign nationals in possession of an enrolment certificate from an institution of learning. The provisions, rather, enable it to gauge, under the authority of the judge, the authenticity and seriousness of the studies pursued (Council of State ruling, 11 February 1994, No. 104337).
- four years to obtain a *Licence* is considered an average timeframe for students (Bordeaux Administrative Court of Appeals ruling, 8 December 2008, No. 08PA00317)
- delay (of eight years) in proceeding with the defence of a thesis because of alleged – but not demonstrated – financial difficulties and health reasons, justifies a refusal of a renewal application (Council of State ruling, 6 November 2000, No. 216454).
- failure to appear for examinations and repeated academic failures since 1996 cannot be justified solely by difficulties with the French language (Council of State ruling, 29 June 2001, No. 220409).

Student pass rates are one of the indicators of France’s organic law on Budget Acts. Institutions are furthermore required to submit the student pass rates for each course and each subject to facilitate the assessments conducted by *AERES*, the French higher education and research assessment agency. It would seem that failure rates are higher for international students than for their French counterparts over the course of their studies. The available figures concerning pass rates for international students do, however, highlight a major problem at university. While much emphasis is being placed on a quality reception for international students, it appears that they subsequently lack the support that they need as they move through their course of study. This is one of the reasons for fostering programme-based mobility for international students.

c) Authorisation to work during period of study

Under Article L. 313-7 of France’s immigration code, international students are permitted to engage in employment on an ancillary basis **provided that it does not exceed a limit of 964 hours per annum**, which corresponds to 60 % of full-time work for the year. They may not, however, engage in self-employment.

⁶⁶ Circular dated 7 October 2008 concerning the genuine and serious nature of studies proposed by international students, NOR: IMI/I/08/00042/C

Algerian students, whose status is governed by special conditions⁶⁷, may work no more than **50 % of full-time employment per year** and must obtain a **temporary work permit**, over and above their Residence Card indicating “student” status.

Based on the observations of the services concerned, it has become clear that this ancillary work is generally unrelated to the studies pursued in France. Moreover, the main areas of employment are hospitality-café-restaurants (fast food), household services (home help, private teaching), as well as the security industry and surveillance.

Pursuant to the provisions of **Decree 2007-1915 dated 26 December 2007**, international students are also eligible for **student jobs in public higher education establishments**, in the following areas: assisting incoming students; helping disabled students; providing tutoring; providing IT support and assistance with new technologies; assisting with cultural, scientific, sporting, and social initiatives; working in the career centre; and supporting their institution’s promotional endeavours⁶⁸.

Special case of international students enrolled in medicine and pharmacy

Students studying medicine and pharmacy who are from third countries or a European country in transition (Romania, Bulgaria) are, depending on their level of studies, either fully exempt from work permits, or required to obtain a work permit, but exempt from eligibility requirements based on the employment situation in France.

These same students enrolled in their second, third and fourth years of second-cycle medical studies and pharmacy students enrolled in their fifth year and completing their hospital externship are bound to fulfil their duties in the hospital setting. As these duties are considered part of the study cycle, students retain their student status and **do not require a work permit** for this purpose, provided that said duties are unremunerated.

Within the framework of **inter-university international exchange programmes**, public health establishments may take in international students enrolled in second-cycle medical studies in their country of origin, in accordance with the requirements set out in the *Instruction DGOS/RH1/DGESIPA-MFS/2011/352* dated 8 September 2011 on the obligations of public health institutions accepting international students doing second-cycle medical studies in their country of origin.

In some categories, **residential medicine or pharmacy students** from third countries or a European country in transition (Romania, Bulgaria), must request a **temporary work permit although they will be exempt from the labour market test requirement**. This is the case, notably, for doctors having passed the international internship examinations and those working as junior doctors (*faisant fonction d’interne* status) enrolled in a specialisation. The temporary work permit is issued for six months, renewable for a maximum of four or five years.

In order to obtain figures regarding the number of international students working during their studies, we used the 2008 population census, based on annual census surveys⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Franco-Algerian Agreement of 27 December 1968

⁶⁸ Student employment contracts are for a maximum duration of 12 months between 1 September and 31 August. Students’ working hours may not exceed 670 hours between 1 September and 30 June, and 300 hours between July and 31 August.

⁶⁹ Towns with fewer than 10 000 inhabitants undergo an exhaustive census once every five years. For towns of 10 000 inhabitants or more there is an annual survey based on an 8 % population sample, spread randomly across their total geographical area. After five years, the entire geographical area of these towns is taken into account and the results of the census are calculated on the basis of the resulting 40 % sample of their population.

The sample studied below relates to persons engaged in employment who claim to be students, pupils or unremunerated trainees; **it covers 14 742 third-country nationals aged 15 to 34 years. Men and women appear in equal proportions.**

Table 16. Working third-country nationals aged 15 to 34 declared as pupils, students or unpaid trainees – by age bracket and gender

Age bracket	Male	Female	Total
15 to 19 years	341	465	806
20 to 24 years	2 365	3 064	5 429
25 to 29 years	3 107	2 840	5 947
30 to 34 years	1 537	1 023	2 560
Total	7 350	7 392	14 742

Source: 2008 Population Census

Table 17. Working third-country nationals aged 15 to 34 – by gender and level of education

	Male	Female	Total
High-school educated, no leaving certificate	121	103	224
Primary- or middle-school educated, no leaving certificate	53	85	138
High-school leaving or advanced certificate	1 004	1 215	2 219
Technical or vocational high-school diploma or certificate or paralegal studies	243	294	537
Vocational studies certificate	106	156	262
Middle-school leaving certificate	72	138	210
Qualified artisan	36	56	92
Primary-school leaving certificate	19	43	62
<i>Licence</i> , advanced technician's certificate, paramedical, nursing or social work qualification	1 455	1 452	2 907
Master or doctorate (including medicine, pharmacy and dentistry), engineering or <i>grande école</i> diploma, etc.	4 214	3 819	8 033
No schooling	27	31	58
Total	7 350	7 392	14 742

Source: 2008 Population Census

Out of the total 14 742 working pupils, students and trainees, **71.5 % are students (10 940 students, including 2 910 enrolled in first-cycle studies and 8 030 in second and third cycle).**

Table 18. Working third-country nationals aged 15 to 34 – by gender and nationality

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Senegalese	995	632	1 627
Chinese	663	921	1 584
Cameroonian	388	446	834
Ivorian	291	309	600
Malagasy	233	362	595
Lebanese	366	186	552
Vietnamese	242	292	534
Guinean	372	131	503
Colombian	175	294	469
Gabonese	204	233	437
Beninese	316	117	433
American (U.S.A.)	103	311	414
Congolese	210	194	404
Brazilian	173	202	375
Mauritian	148	180	328
Malian	174	125	299
Turkish	148	134	282
Togolese	171	109	280
Japanese	55	205	260
Zairian	127	118	245
Mexican	67	142	209
Haitian	96	106	202
Syrian	156	28	184
Canadian	50	129	179
South Korean	59	105	164
Chilean	81	54	135
Georgian	39	93	132
Comorian	68	56	124
Iranian	52	63	115
from the Central African Republic	62	52	114
Indian	68	36	104
Other nationalities	998	1 027	2 025
Total	7 350	7 392	14 742

Source: 2008 Population Census

42.9 % of African nationals undertake employment while completing their school or university studies. The corresponding proportion of Asian nationals is 14.3 % while the figure for those from the Americas is 7.1 %.

In this sample, 2 000 individuals are listed as having “other”, unspecified, nationalities.

Table 19. Working third-country nationals aged 15 to 34 – by socio-professional category

	Male	Female	Total
Artisans	75	21	96
Business managers and sales people	85	176	261
Civil service managers	58	38	96
Drivers	294	20	314
Heads of companies with 10 or more employees	23	19	42
Members of clergy / religious leaders	15	4	19
Retailers	88	86	174
Foremen and skilled workers	70	26	96
Business administrative staff	434	748	1 182
Civil servants	314	475	789
Sales assistants	581	1 171	1 752
Engineers and technical managers	291	167	458
Agricultural workers	10	8	18
Unqualified manual labourers	283	185	468
Unqualified factory workers	268	55	323
Qualified maintenance, warehouse and transport workers	71	28	99
Qualified artisans	408	110	518
Qualified industrial workers	50	25	75
Catering and service industry workers	1 300	1 846	3 146
Police and military personnel	489	41	530
School teachers and similar	491	465	956
Teachers, professors and scientists	655	464	1 119
Information, art and entertainment professionals	129	217	346
Middle management in the civil service	36	54	90
Middle management in retailing and business	385	549	934
Paramedics and social workers	156	248	404
Self-employed	76	62	138
Technicians	210	82	292
Others	5	2	7
Total	7 350	7 392	14 742

Source: 2008 Population Census

Of the 14 742 students, pupils, and trainees who are engaged in employment, 21.5 % are professionals offering their services directly to private clients, 7 % are employed in retail, 7 % have an administrative position in a company and 7 % are teachers or are working in scientific professions. The remainder are spread across various other professions, including school teachers, and private sector middle management.

d) Working conditions and rights for international students

International students who are paid employees have the **same rights as their French counterparts**. They are part of the French social insurance system and have access to healthcare.

e) Access to healthcare and other welfare entitlements

There are some significant benefits available to international students, who have the same entitlements as French students.

➤ *Student social insurance scheme and access to healthcare*

When it comes to access to healthcare, no distinction is made between French citizens and students from third countries. Upon enrolment in a higher education institute, international students, like French students, are required to subscribe to the student social insurance scheme. The student must be younger than 28 years of age as at 1 October of the academic year in question and be enrolled in an institute of higher education recognised by the student social insurance scheme. For the 2011-2012 academic year the premium was set at 203 euros. The fee for joining the student social insurance scheme is waived for international students registered as Students on a French Government Grant.

This social cover may be topped up through subscription to complementary student health insurance, meaning that health expenses will be covered almost in their entirety.

➤ *Housing assistance for students*

As is the case for French students, international students may apply for a student housing allowance (social housing assistance or housing benefit). This allowance, which is paid out by the French Family Allowance Fund, is calculated in accordance with the level of rent to be paid and the student's resources. It generally amounts to approximately 150 euros per month.

3.2.2 International students' family members

International students may request that family reunification procedures be initiated for members of their family (spouse and underage children) if they can justify **a sojourn of at least 18 months in France**. Such students must have at their disposal **sufficient income** and **housing to accommodate the family members**. Article L 411-5 of the French immigration code offers a clear explanation of the required level of resources, which 'should be at least equivalent to the index-linked statutory minimum monthly wage' (known as the *SMIC* in French). Furthermore, the onus is on the applicant to prove his/her relationship to any children for whom entry into France is sought.

There is no legal obstacle to the holder of a residence permit inscribed with the word "student" applying for family reunification, as the Constitutional Council made clear in 1993 (Constitutional Council decision dated 13/08/1993, No. 93-325 DC, published in the Official Gazette on 18 August). The Circular dated 17 January 2006, however, issues some reservations, in particular with regard to the criteria of resources: *As stipulated by the Constitutional Council (Decision No. 93-325 of 13 August 1993), students are not excluded from the right to family reunification. However, students who have a temporary authorisation to undertake paid employment on an ancillary basis only have a temporary work permit. Their resources may be deemed sufficient with regard to the SMIC criterion, but since temporary work permits are by nature non-permanent and changes of status are dependent on several conditions, said resources from student employment fail to provide any guarantee of stability.*

The residence permit issued to family members granted residency in France under the principle of family reunification is, pursuant to Article L.431-1 of the French immigration code, a **temporary residence permit, valid for a period of one year**, regardless of the type of residence permit held by the person originally in France with whom the others are to be reunited. The temporary residence permit bears the words “*vie privée et familiale*” (private and family life) and enables the bearer to undertake any form of **employment** under existing legislation. A person holding this kind of permit may also undertake **remunerated professional training** and use the **services of the employment office** to look for work.

In France, anyone may apply for **family allowances and housing assistance**, regardless of nationality. Applicants and their family members must reside in France. Non-EU foreign nationals must also provide the French Family Allowance Fund with a valid residence permit.

As can be seen from the statistics regarding family members below, the right to family reunification is not a determinant factor in choosing France as a study destination. In order to quantify family members of international students in France, we have examined the number of visas issued to them between 2006 and 2011⁷⁰.

The number of visas issued to students’ family members was 848 in 2006, 903 in 2007, 797 in 2008, 985 in 2009, 850 in 2010 and 719 in 2011. The numbers were growing until 2009 and then began to decline as of 2010.

As concerns distribution by nationality, **Brazilian students’ spouses and underage children were issued 170 visas in 2006** (which represents of 20 % of all student family member visas issued in 2006), **and 84 in 2011**. From 2006 to 2008, these visas were mostly issued to spouses and underage children of third-cycle (doctoral level) students. As of 2009, with the establishment of the LSV-RP, these visas were issued on the basis of family settlement for family members of students holding a LSV-RP.

While the number of visas issued to family members of Brazilian students decreased, the opposite was true for family members of Syrian students. The number of visas issued to this group rose from 59 in 2006 to 125 in 2011 (which is 17.4 % of all visas issued to students’ family members in 2011).

The next largest group are family members of American students (53 visas issued on average between 2006 and 2011), **Egyptian students** (40 visas issued on average over the same period) and **Saudi Arabian** (35 visas issued on average over the same period).

The pattern is standard across all countries: these visas are issued mainly for spouses and underage children of third-cycle students. As of 2009, the family members coming to France for family settlement are coming as family members of students who hold a LSV-RP.

⁷⁰ Source: Visas Division, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Ministry of the Interior

3.3 The period following the completion of study for international students

a) Initial professional experience

Since the passing of the law dated 24 July 2006, a **scheme enabling the issue of temporary residence authorisations for six months, non-renewable**,⁷¹ was set up for third-country nationals meeting the following criteria:

- They have successfully completed, in a nationally accredited institute of higher education, a course of study leading to a qualification that is at least equivalent to a **Master's degree**; the list of eligible qualifications is set forth in the Order dated 12 May 2011.
- They wish to complement their studies, with a view to their return to their country of origin, with **some initial professional experience**, contributing directly or indirectly to the economic development of France and the country from which their nationality is derived.

These temporary residence authorisations concerned:

- 721 foreign nationals in 2008
- 1 165 foreign nationals in 2009
- 1 734 foreign nationals in 2010

Third-country nationals may apply for a temporary residence authorisation, at the latest, **four months** before the expiry of their current permit. They must submit their valid temporary student residence permit, **a qualification that is at least equivalent to a Master's degree** – this may be submitted later, when the temporary residence authorisation is issued –, as well as **a covering letter outlining the reason for applying** which furthermore explains how the proposed professional experience contributes directly or indirectly to the economic development of France and the country from which their nationality is derived and how it dovetails with their intention to return to the country of origin.

For the duration of this authorisation, the student may seek employment and, if successful, engage in employment related to the academic programme completed. The authorisation, alternatively, enables the student to work at any job up to the limit of **60 % of the official work week**.

At the end of the six month period, a graduate who has a job or an offer of employment related to the qualification obtained and which is remunerated at a full-time monthly rate of at least 1.5 times the SMIC (minimum monthly wage), is permitted to remain in France to further this professional activity, and is **exempt from eligibility requirements based on the employment situation in France**. All other work authorisation issuance conditions are still applicable. In particular, the remuneration offered to the applicant must be at least equivalent to that of a French employee performing the same role and the position on offer must be related to the qualification obtained and, where applicable, the skills of the applicant. The applicant may then obtain a temporary residence permit (*carte de séjour temporaire*) inscribed with “**employee**” or “**temporary employee**”.

Should the employment contract offered to the student include **remuneration lower than 1.5 times the SMIC per month of full-time work**, the application for a status transfer is adjudicated under the conditions prevailing in **ordinary law** and is subject to the labour market test.

⁷¹ Under bilateral agreements, which are outlined in the study, there are certain special exemptions to the terms under which a temporary residence authorisation may be issued.

Changing guidelines on administrative practice regarding status transfer procedure

In 2011, the French public authorities, with a view to **reducing professional immigration**, published a Circular, on **31 May**, requesting that all Prefects examine work permit applications **with greater care**. The direct target of these instructions was the possibility for students to change status: Prefects were requested to examine students' work permit applications **more rigorously**, and to **thoroughly scrutinise** status transfer requests filed by international students. Highly-qualified graduates, in the belief that they were unfairly targeted, took action and denounced the Circular. Representatives from French universities and *grandes écoles*, as well as from firms, also expressed their concern regarding the economic impact of said Circular. On 12 January 2012 a fresh Circular, aiming to restore France's attractiveness, partly tarnished by the Circular of 31 May 2011, was published. Prefects were asked, notably, to *give priority to the re-examination of applications lodged as of 1 June 2011* and to *issue the applicants a six month non-renewable temporary residence authorisation, with authorisation to work, or, for those with an offer of employment, an acknowledgement with authorisation to work while their application is being processed*.

These two Circulars were repealed on **31 May 2012** and replaced by a new text which **slightly relaxed the rules governing residency in France for international students upon completion of their studies**.

As concerns the temporary residence authorisation mechanism for students of masters level or higher, the Circular from 31 May 2012 picks up on most of the provisions that had been set forth in the earlier Circular of 12 January 2012. It recalls that applications for a status transfer lodged by holders of a temporary residence authorisation should be examined *with great care*. As had previously been the case, the Circular also underscores that requests for a change of status should not be subject to the labour market test for holders of a temporary residence authorisation. In addition, a student who has not yet received their qualification may apply for a temporary residence authorisation as long as evidence of successful completion *signed jointly by the Director or President of the higher education institution and the head of the firm* is provided. This provision had already been established by the Circular dated 12 January 2012. Finally, the condition of the position's appropriateness for the applicant's qualifications, repeated in this Circular, becomes the main requirement when processing applications.

As regards a status transfer under ordinary law, the new Circular offers more flexibility as to the evidence required to demonstrate eligibility based on the employment situation in France and reduces the applicant's job-search period from two months to three weeks. Moreover, status transfer applications are to be filed during the two months prior to the expiry of the "student" residence permit. This Circular also requests that applications be processed within a maximum timeframe of two months.

Under the new text, cases in which students' status transfer applications were refused after 1 June 2011 are not to be dismissed. Students whose applications have been turned down between 1 June 2011 and 31 May 2012 may apply afresh; such applications are to be given priority assessment. The new Circular states that they will receive a **document of acknowledgement allowing them to work which is valid for three months or a six-month temporary authorisation² enabling them to engage in employment**, if they meet certain conditions.

Between 2006 and 2011, 89 202 persons changed status, including 57.3 % from student status for reasons of employment (51 764), 34.9 % for family reasons (31 193), and 6.8 % for other reasons (6 245)⁷².

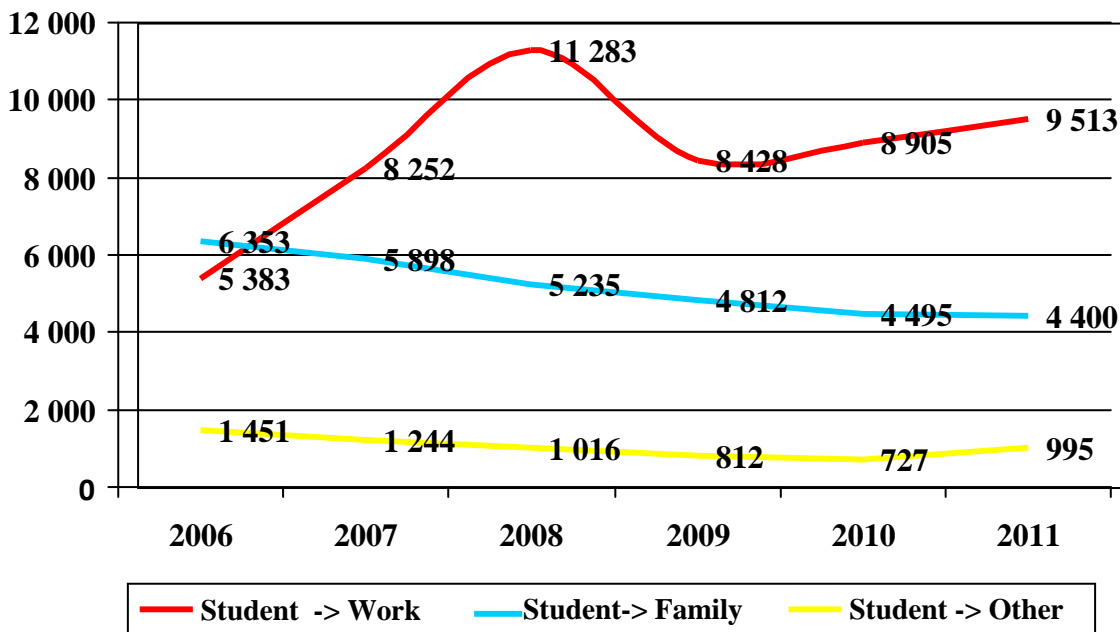
Between 2006 and 2011, only 5 104 individuals changed from another status (employee, family member or other) to student status. These were chiefly Algerian, Moroccan and Chinese nationals.

Changes of status from student status to that of worker have been steadily increasing since 2006, peaking in 2008 (11 300 status transfers). This rise may be explained by the fact that the temporary residence authorisation has made it easier for large numbers of students to find work.

Changes of status from student status for family reasons, on the other hand, have been steadily decreasing since 2006, dropping from 6 353 in 2006 to 4 400 in 2011.

In 2010, out of a total number of 184 423 residence permits issued to students (first-issues and renewals), there were 14 127 status transfers, that is to say 7.6 % of annual flows, and 8 905 transfers from student status to that of employee, representing 4.4 % of annual flows.

Figure 9. Trends in transfers from student status to other statuses – 2006 to 2011



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

⁷² The reasons given as “other” include both visitors and those applying on humanitarian grounds (refugees, Stateless persons, patients, victims of human trafficking, etc.)

Table 20. Transfers from student status to other statuses – 2006 to 2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number transferring from student to family member status	6 353	5 898	5 235	4 812	4 495	4 400
Number transferring from student to employee status	5 383	8 252	11 283	8 428	8 905	9 513
Number transferring from student to another status	1 451	1 244	1 016	812	727	995
Total	13 187	15 394	17 534	14 052	14 127	14 908

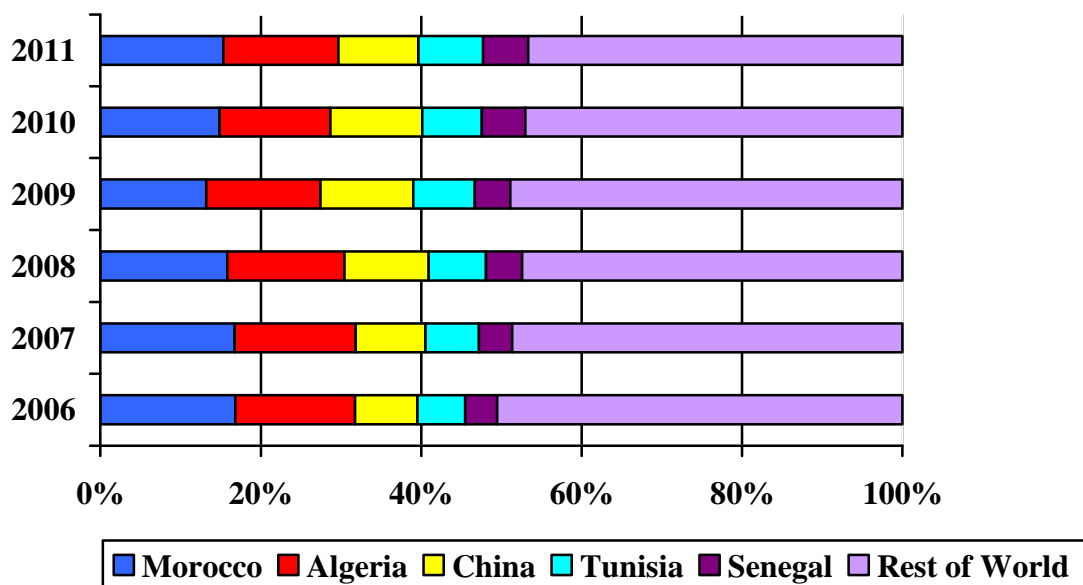
Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

In 2011, of the 9 513 persons who transferred from student to employee status, 1 765 were from Morocco (18.5 %), 1 342 from Algeria (14.1 %), 1 020 from China (10.7 %) and 907 from Tunisia (9.5 %). Those who remain in France to work after completing their studies correspond to the largest contingents of students, with the exception of nationals from the United States, who do not stay to work in France.

The gender distribution of third-country nationals in 2011 was 3 648 women (38.4 %) and 5 865 (61.6 %) men.

In 2011, 81.6 % of the individuals changing to employee status were between 23 and 30 years old.

Figure 10. Trends in transfers from student status to other statuses – top five source countries, 2006 to 2011



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

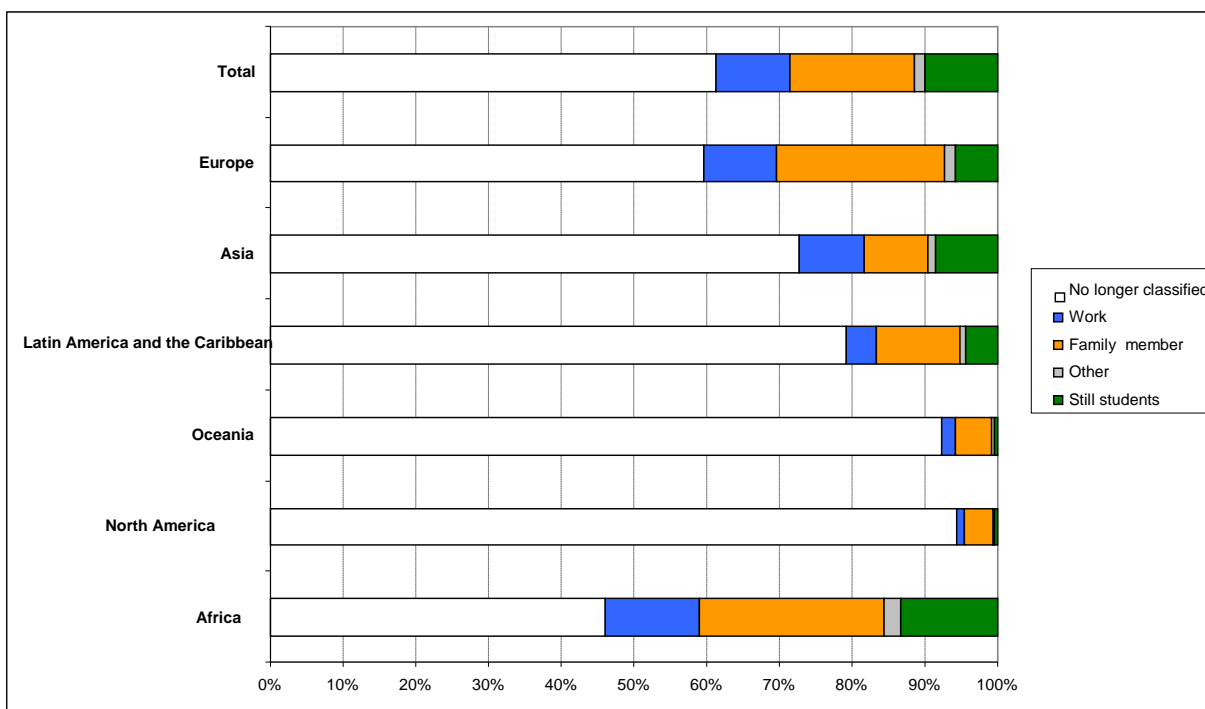
The top five countries account for just over half (51 % on average over six years) of the total number of people changing status.

Moroccan nationals are the largest group to change status in order to remain in France after their studies, be it for professional or family reasons.

These statistics relate to transfers from student status to another status in the course of a given year. **It is also worthwhile considering the outcomes for international students over several years.**

Thanks to the application for managing the files of third-country nationals in France known as AGDREF, it is possible to monitor the trajectories of those who enter France from a third country. People who enter and then remain in the country in order to pursue their studies can be tracked year upon year.⁷³ Figure 11 below describes the entire group of people entering France as students in 2002. Thus **60 % of the students who entered in 2002 no longer held a residence permit at the end of 2009 (they are “no longer classified”)**. **Approximately one-third of them were still present.** They appear to have settled in France on a long-term basis, either because they have married, or because they have found employment, or, **for 10 % of them, because they still hold a “student” residence permit.**

Figure 11. Reason for residence (as at the end of 2009) for third-country nationals who came to France as students in 2002



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

Note: the “no longer classified” statistic is obtained by deducting the sum of known changes from the total number of residence permits. It is likely that these persons have left France; other possible reasons are death, naturalisation, etc.

This situation can be further analysed when broken down by geographical origin. The vast majority of **students from North America and Oceania** came to complete a short cycle of study (one year) and for the most part leave upon completion.

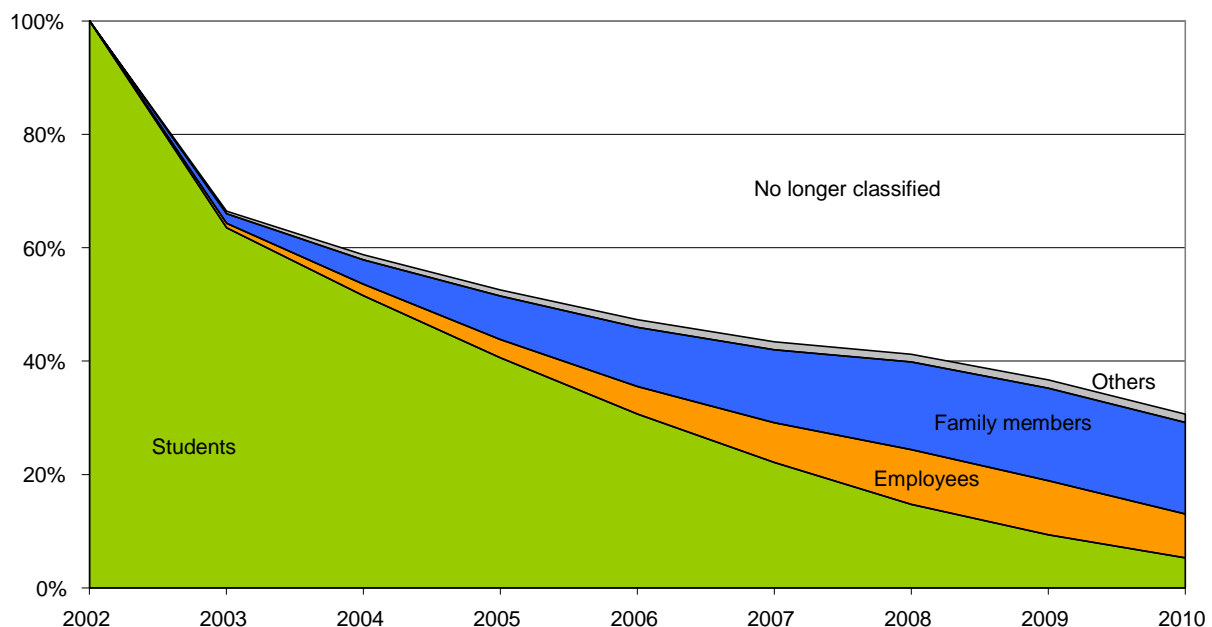
⁷³ Ménard Samuel and Papon Sylvain, *Le devenir des étudiants étrangers en France* (What becomes of International Students in France), Infos Migrations No. 29, November 2011 (in French)

Of the **students from European countries (non-EU, especially Eastern Europe) and Asia** (mostly female students), about two-thirds subsequently left the country, and a quarter remained in France as a spouse or for professional reasons. Those who hold a “family member” residence permit are, moreover, often working.

Students (mostly male) from Africa follow a different pattern. After eight years, slightly more than half are still in France. Having come to France in order to complete two university cycles, or even a whole degree course, many are still students. A considerable proportion, about 40 %, remained in France after changing status: in decreasing order, to family member status; and to employee status. This population is, by and large, male.

The pattern, year on year, is quite regular, once past the first year (in which those who were planning a short stay do indeed leave the country). There are some unusual situations that arise: students who change status but then subsequently return to a student status (cf. Figure 12).

Figure 12. Trends (2003-2010) in residence status of third-country nationals who came to France as students in 2002



Source: Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration, Department of Statistics, Studies and Documentation

b) Job search assistance and unemployment support

International students who have finished their studies are permitted to remain **six months** in France in order to seek employment. International students are not entitled to unemployment benefit, irrespective of the type of contract entered into. Indeed, to be eligible for unemployment benefit, job seekers must be registered with the employment office, whereas students cannot register (Art. R. 5221-48 of the French Labour Code). In this way, the situation for international students is identical to that of French students; they may not register with the employment office either. However, in the case of fixed-term contracts, international students are paid, as is the case for any employee, an end-of-contract insecurity bonus.

When searching for employment, students may seek assistance from the National Centre for Student Services, which maintains a special list of vacancies.

c) Access to the labour market after completing studies

Once they have graduated in France, international students who have received a job offer may apply for a residence permit as an “employee” or “temporary employee” so as to enter the national labour market. Applications are examined by the appropriate services within the Prefectures concerning the right to reside (immigration services) and the right to work (migrant labour services). If all of the conditions regarding qualification/experience and remuneration are met, then an **EU Blue Card** may be issued.

Suitability is one of the criteria for examining work permit applications provided for by the Labour Code (Art. R.5221-20). In cases of unsuitability (over-qualification or under-qualification), the administration will deny permission to work. The aim of this measure is to combat misuse of procedure and social dumping.

d) The skills of third-country nationals and the needs of the French labour market

The Law on the Freedom and Responsibility of Universities provides for the existence of a **work placement office** in every university, the role of which is to list vacancies for jobs and internships relating to the courses taught at that university and to offer support to students seeking their first job. There is, however, no specific mechanism for matching the needs of the national labour market with the skills of international students. This would run counter to the principle of students’ return to their home countries and could foment brain drain.

e) Applications for work permits and authorisation to stay without leaving France

As has already been stated in this study, students are not obliged, upon completion of their studies, to leave France in order to lodge applications. They must complete the formalities at the Prefecture closest to their place of residence.

f) Changes to migration statuses other than employee status

In France, most of the status transfers for international students in the short term are to employee status, whereas in the long term, changes of status are usually for **family** reasons.

A third-country national residing in France with a “student” temporary residence permit may change status and obtain the same residence permit as his/her spouse if eligible for the **family reunification procedure**. All of the prerequisites for family reunification pursuant to the French immigration code (the *CESEDA*) must be fulfilled. But if a third-country national marries, the right to family reunification is acknowledged and there is no requirement that the person to reside outside France while the application is being processed. This waiver applies whenever the third-country national eligible for family reunification resides on a regular basis on French soil. The same is true for Algerian nationals.

In conformity with the provisions of **Article L. 314-11, 1° of the CESEDA**, a third-country national married to a **French national**, provided that they have been living together continuously since the date of marriage and that the spouse has retained his/her French nationality, is eligible *ipso jure* for a “**family member**” temporary residence permit.

Statistics concerning students’ change of status for family reasons can be found in Figures 9,10, 11, and 12, as well as in Table 20.

3.4 Misuse of the ‘student route’ to migration

Cases of misuse can be detected at different phases in the migration process and by various authorities. Indeed, they can be identified when the **visa is being processed by the consular**

authorities or **during a residence permit renewal by the services at the Prefecture. Irregular migration networks** can also be dismantled once the case has been referred to the competent civil court and investigated by the appropriate police services. In such cases as these, it might be the heads of institutions that alert the authorities as to their suspicion of fraud. It is difficult to list the main forms of misuse of student status because they are not inventoried by the French authorities. It is similarly difficult to gauge the extent of the phenomenon, indicating, in particular, whether there is a prevalence of certain groups, educational sectors or study programmes where misuse is detected. Some **individual cases** will be nonetheless mentioned in this section. It cannot be said that these situations are representative of fraudulent behaviour across the country. The **practical detection and prevention measures** implemented by the French authorities will subsequently be discussed.

a) The main forms of abuse of student status

Individual cases have been discovered and then made public by the French media (in particular the written press) following the dismantling of networks. Two distinct types of fraud can be identified: **enrolment fraud** and **certification fraud or falsification of documents**. According to the Ministry of the Interior, this kind of abuse is above all observed in relation to **nationals from countries facing strong migratory pressure**. Misuse of student status is mainly detected upon renewal of residence permits, which leads to a refusal of the renewal application.

- **Example of enrolment fraud:**

On 15 July 2010, the University of Villetaneuse Paris-XIII filed a complaint with the Bobigny District Court denouncing **influence peddling and fraud**, after having discovered that some newly enrolled **Chinese students** did not have the required level of French and had received help from a network upon payment of 2 000 to 3 000 euros. A large proportion of these students were already in France at the time of enrolment and had already spent an initial year at another university. These controversial cases represented some 50 to 60 files, which is to say 10 % of all Chinese students enrolled at Paris-XIII. The courses of study sought by these students were **law, business and management and economic and social administration**⁷⁴.

- **Examples of certification fraud:**

In 2011, an employee of a private Parisian *grande école* provided **a large number of Indian nationals** with **false qualifications and fake academic transcripts** so that they could come to France. The trafficker, who was also of Indian nationality, had arranged entry into the country in this way for **400 illegal immigrants**. It was the Embassy of France in India that notified the police in 2010. Several officials, whose role was to issue student visas, had noticed a marked increase in the number of certificates issued by one single school, the International Institute of Paris (2IP), to Indian students. Once alerted, the Paris public prosecutor's office launched an enquiry and entrusted the investigation to the police officers from the **Central Office for Combating Illegal Immigration and Employment of Undocumented Third-Country Nationals**, who swiftly traced the network and identified the key person behind it⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Article by AFP, *Paris-XIII dupée par des étudiants chinois* (Paris-XIII duped by Chinese Students), Libération, 10 November 2010, <http://www.liberation.fr/societe/01012301898-paris-xiii-dupee-par-des-etudiants-Chinese> (in French)

⁷⁵ Article entitled *Les étudiants étaient des clandestins* (The Students were really Illegal Immigrants), Le Parisien, 9 September 2011, <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/les-etudiants-etaient-des-clandestins-09-09-2011-1599020.php> (in French)

Following a complaint lodged by a lecturer from the University of Toulon's institute of business administration, an inquiry was launched on 26 March 2009 regarding **active and passive bribery, and fraud**. This inquiry was concerned with **alleged trafficking of qualifications for Chinese students**. Since it began in 2004, this fraud had allegedly benefitted several hundred Chinese students enrolled at the institute of business administration. In the summer of 2009, two missions from the national education and research general inspectorate had highlighted serious malfunctions at the University of Toulon. In May 2010, the Rector of the University of Toulon was dismissed from the public service due to the alleged trafficking of degrees⁷⁶.

Failure to abide by the terms of authorised employment⁷⁷, absenteeism, lack of progress or limited progress in the chosen field, and applications for permits for purposes not related to the studies, during or after the period of study, have been observed by French Prefectural services and are indicators of misuse.

b) Extent of misuse

While it is difficult to measure **the extent** of this phenomenon, the media did reveal, in 2010, **irregularities regarding the growing numbers of Chinese students in France** (27 000 Chinese students enrolled in higher education in 2010, including 21 000 in universities), which have increased tenfold in ten years. In 2009, a **report on the selection and admission of Chinese students**, commissioned by the MFA and the MHER and drafted by their **general inspectorates**, signalled the **evaporation of students between their French language study year and their first year of university studies**. The inspectorates consequently recommended a greater push for programme-based mobility and students at the masters and doctoral levels, in line with the general orientations on student mobility flows into France. Although the report was not made public, the French press revealed its main conclusions. It would seem that France accepts a great many students not admitted to the particularly selective Chinese higher education system, based a competitive university entrance examination, the "Gakao". The report furthermore mentions the lack of transparency in the operations of certain **Chinese "agencies"**, which have been repeatedly decried over the last few years.⁷⁸ Upon payment of high fees, these agencies ensure the placement of students in universities abroad, promising them a visa, enrolment in a tertiary education institution and accommodation. One of the major concerns underscored in the report is the insufficient **command of the French language**. This means, according to the report, that the test of French as a foreign language is not a reliable enough "barrier" in and of itself. The French media recalled that in March 2009, **the International Centre for Education Studies** had issued a warning to French

⁷⁶ Article by Jacqu e Philippe, *Trafic de dipl mes : enqu te   l'universit  de Toulon* (Degree Trafficking: Investigation into the University of Toulon), Le Monde, 29 July 2009, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2009/05/05/trafic-de-diplomes-enquete-a-l-universite-de-toulon_1189071_3224.html (in French)

Jacqu e Philippe, *University de Toulon : Laroussi Oueslati r voqu  de la fonction public*, Le Monde, 21 May 2010, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2010/05/21/universite-de-toulon-laroussi-oueslati-revoque-de-la-fonction-public_1361324_3224.html (in French)

⁷⁷ It is the Prefecture's services that verify international students' compliance with the limitation on working hours during their studies when renewing the "student" temporary residence permit. To facilitate *ex post* verification, the student may not be hired unless the employer has filed a nominal declaration with the Prefecture 48 hours prior to recruitment. There are severe penalties for failure to observe the caps on working hours. The Prefect may revoke the student's temporary residence permit in cases of non-compliance with the limit of 60 % of full-time employment for the year (Article L313-5 of the French immigration code). The reliance on declarations limits the extent to which misuse of the student route to migration can be effectively verified. Indeed, since the system does not permit thorough checks and monitoring, there are suspicions of misuse of the procedure even though this may remain unproven formally.

⁷⁸ Cerisier Ben Guiga Monique, Blanc Jacques, *Rapport d'information fait au nom de la Commission des affaires  trang res, de la d fense et des forces arm es, sur l'accueil des  tudiants  trangers en France* (Report established on behalf of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Armed Forces on the reception of international students in France), Senate, June 2005 (in French)

universities, pointing out irregularities in sessions of the **French language proficiency test (TCF)**. The test centres in question were Beijing, Shanghai, Canton, Wuhan and Chengdu.

This is not a new phenomenon. Already in 2006, a study by researchers from the Institute for Research in the Sociology and Economics of Education-National Scientific Research Centre and the French National Institute for Agricultural Research-National Institute of Agronomic Sciences revealed that certification fraud had **taken on a new dimension** with the globalisation of higher education and the development of new technologies⁷⁹.

Following the numerous abuses detected in 2009, the International and European Relations Commission of the **Conference of French University Rectors (CPU** in its French initials) called a meeting to assess the existing admission process for Chinese students wishing to enter French universities and to propose new admission procedures. In its outcome statement, *the CPU urges universities to favour mobility based on inter-university agreements rather than free-mover student mobility. Partnerships with Chinese establishments are therefore to be given priority so as to optimise students' chances of successfully completing their studies in France. To this end, in situ interview procedures for Chinese applicants, such as those already employed by some French universities, offer an additional guarantee both for the student and for the host institution.*

The CPU further advocates enrolment in courses leading to a qualification, including, where required, a preparatory year for linguistic and cultural reasons, *so as to avoid any ambiguity regarding the applicant's entry into the country.*⁸⁰

c) Practical measures undertaken to detect and prevent misuse

On 10 May 2011, at the meeting on promoting international higher education organised under the French presidency of the G20 and G8, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs stated that: *The aim is not, of course, to encourage unbridled illegal immigration, or student mobility that no longer holds true to its purpose. That is why the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research entrusted their respective inspectorates with the task of investigating the mobility of certain students who had indulged in the illicit trafficking of qualifications. Those responsible have been severely penalised; these abuses are resolutely condemned and our two ministries have stepped up their vigilance in this regard.*

Several measures have been undertaken by the French authorities to detect and prevent misuse.

➤ *Checking qualifications*

- **Upon receipt of visa applications**

Two aspects are taken into consideration when processing visa applications for studies in France:

- academic: verification of qualifications, study plan and the student's ability to carry out the proposed course of study;
- consular: verification of the applicant's situation in terms of resources, accommodation, and public order and/or public security.

The coherence and the seriousness of the study plan are assessed by the French consular authorities with regard to four specific criteria⁸¹:

- **the level attained by the applicants in their university studies;**

⁷⁹ Grolleau G., Lakhil T. *Éléments d'analyse économique des faux diplômes (Economic Analysis of Fake Qualifications)*, *Revue internationale de droit économique*, 2/2007 (t. XXI, 2), pp. 115-128 (in French)

⁸⁰ Position of the CPU on admission procedures for Chinese students in French universities, 28 May 2009

⁸¹ Circular of 27 January 2006, NOR: MAEC060001C

- **the quality of any previous courses of study;**
- **the institutional framework in which the applicants are planning their study abroad;**
- **consideration of language skills.**

In the 31 countries using the *CEF* procedure, the Campus France *Espaces* undertake an administrative evaluation of the applicant's file as well as an authentication of qualifications, and schedule an interview to discuss the student's personal study plan. This mechanism was designed to streamline formalities for international students planning to study in France. Informations provided about applicants' profile help the universities to take decisions and allow them to save time when processing applications. Finally, the Consular authorities, having examined the applicant's electronic file and the visa application submitted, decide whether or not to grant a LSV-RP. Thus, centralising applicants' files enables a dialogue between the different actors involved while making the processing of applications more transparent.

- **Upon residence permit renewal**

Administrative case law imparts to the administrative authority the prerogative of verifying that the "student" residence permit renewal applications received truly correspond to the reason given for staying in France, underscoring **the criterion of the genuine and serious nature of the studies** required for international students.

The Circular dated 7 October 2008 summarises the criteria upon which such an assessment may be based. Three cumulative criteria were identified and must be taken into consideration:

- **regular attendance at classes and examinations pertaining to the course of study pursued;**
- **verified continuation of studies within the same degree course;**
- **verified seriousness of proposed studies in the case of a change of course.**

- *Obligation to take tests*

International students wishing to enrol in a French higher education institute must provide the results from their French language test. There is no test, however, in French universities to verify the authenticity of the students' qualifications. Assessment of applicants' academic level is based solely on the application sent to the institution. Some selective establishments, such as the specialised schools and the *grandes écoles*, do nonetheless still require that candidates go through entrance tests or interviews. This mechanism, designed to ensure selection of the very best candidates, can indirectly reduce risks of misuse.

- *Licensing and inspection regimes for institutions*

Article R. 313-9 of the French immigration Code stipulates that the host institution is to operate under certain conditions, in accordance with applicable legal and regulatory provisions. Its ability to take on international students under these conditions may be subject to verification by the administration responsible for the institution. In practice, the services thus verify that enrolment in a higher education institute confers enrolled persons with **student status** and that the course of study pursued will lead to a **qualification**. However, that fact that a qualification is not recognised by the State does not constitute grounds for refusing a residence permit renewal application.

The State **authorises** establishments to award **national qualifications**. The accreditation criteria are based on the quality of education, the manner in which students are selected, or the calibre of the teaching staff. **The evaluation** is carried out by **the French higher education and research**

assessment agency (AERES)⁸², which examines not only the way in which the institution runs, but also the quality of research and the structure of the training provided. Some French higher education institutions also offer qualifications abroad, for instance as part of an off-shore campus. In such cases, the *AERES* carries out an *in situ* evaluation.

There are many international students who, before commencing their studies in France, enrol in **language schools** so as to perfect their level of French. Given the countless schools to choose from, the International Centre for Education Studies has established a label of approval, aiming to ensure that the language training and services offered by these schools is of high quality. The “*qualité français langue étrangère*” (**quality French as a foreign language**) label is awarded by three ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Higher Education and Research, and the Ministry for Culture) to centres meeting various criteria of excellence. Some are accredited to run French language testing and examinations and may award national diplomas of French as a foreign language.

⁸² Created by the 2006 programme law on research, and operational as of March 2007, the *AERES* (*Agence d'Évaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur*) is designed to help enhance the quality of the higher education and research system, in accordance with European recommendations and the decisions made by European ministers under the Bologna process. Endowed with the status of an independent administrative authority, the agency is in charge of assessing higher education and research establishments, research entities, research units, higher education training courses and qualifications, as well as validation of the assessment procedures used by their staff.

4. TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

4.1 Bilateral/multilateral agreements including mobility partnerships

France has signed several agreements on coordinated management of migratory flows. They comprise provisions regarding not only the entry of third-country nationals for the purposes of study, but also labour market access for these students.

a) Entry for third-country nationals for the purposes of study

The Campus France offices or Centre for Studies in France (*CEF*) set up in the partner country makes it easier for international students to come to France. This occurs through various types of promotional activities, and in various forms, as set forth in agreements relating to coordinated management of migratory flows and to mutually beneficial development or youth mobility:

- **Franco-Beninese Agreement of 28 November 2007:**

Creation of a Campus France *Espace*; information on French higher education establishments and the training requirements highlighted by the Beninese government.

- **France-Burkina-Faso Agreement of 10 January 2009:**

Promotion of inter-university agreements between higher education establishments in the two countries;

Facilitation of student enrolment in establishments of higher education and vocational training in the two countries, and of residency during the period of study.

- **Franco-Cameroonian Agreement of 21 May 2009:**

Promotion of inter-university agreements between higher education establishments in the two countries.

- **Franco-Congolese Agreement of 25 October 2007:**

Creation of a Campus France *Espace*; information on French higher education establishments and the training requirements highlighted by the government of Congo.

- **Franco-Macedonian Agreement of 1 December 2009:**

Promotion of higher learning for students of science and technology;

Promotional endeavours by France – via the Campus France *Espace* in Macedonia – to highlight the training courses available, through documentation and the organisation of an annual forum on technology and the sciences.

- **Franco-Montenegrin Agreement of 1 December 2009:**

Development of ties between young French people and young Montenegrins and encouraging them to become involved in socio-economic projects in Montenegro and in France.

- **Franco-Senegalese Agreement of 23 September 2006:**

Improvement of operations of the *CEF* created in Dakar by France in 2005, which is to include in its assessment criteria the training needs identified by Senegal and submitted to the higher education technical section for analysis.

- **Franco-Serbian Agreement of 2 December 2009:**

Promotion of higher learning for students of science and technology;

Promotional endeavours by France – via the Campus France *Espace* in Serbia – to highlight the training courses available, through documentation and the organisation of an annual forum on technology and the sciences.

b) Initial professional experience for these students upon completion of their studies

The bilateral agreements on coordinated management of migratory flows, with the exception of those signed with **Senegal** and **Russia**, offer the possibility, as is stipulated by France's immigration Code, for students with certain qualifications to complement their training with some initial professional experience upon completion of their studies. Residency and work for such students is covered by a temporary residence authorisation, subject to conditions, which vary depending on the agreements, regarding the duration, the qualifications held, contribution to the economic development of France and the country of origin, remuneration and the prospect of return to the home country.

- **Conditions regarding duration:**

- six months renewable once as of right: **Benin, Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Tunisia, Lebanon**
- for **Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia**: residence permit for 12 months non-renewable;
- nine months, non-renewable: **Cape Verde, Congo**;
- nine months, renewable once as of right: **Cameroon and Gabon**.

- **Conditions regarding qualifications:**

- Qualification at least equivalent to a Master's degree obtained in a French institution: **Cape Verde, Congo**;
- Qualification at least equivalent to a Master's degree obtained in a French institution or in the country of origin as part of an agreement to issue qualifications within an international partnership: **Lebanon**;
- *Licence professionnelle* or qualification at least equivalent to a Master's degree obtained in a French institution: **Benin, Gabon**;
- *Licence professionnelle* or qualification at least equivalent to a Master's degree obtained in a French institution or in the country of origin as part of an agreement to issue qualifications within an international partnership: **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mauritius, Tunisia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia**.

Holders of a temporary residence authorisation are permitted to seek and engage in employment related to their training, with a salary which is 1.5 times the guaranteed minimum wage in France (SMIC) and under these conditions they can obtain a change in status of their residence permit, regardless of the employment situation. This provision is contained **in all agreements**.

- **Prospect of return to the home country:**

This element is contained in all of the agreements with the exception of those signed with Cameroon and Gabon.

4.2 Cooperation with the European Union and international organisations

France's Code on Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum makes reference to European mobility programmes in Article R-313-7, sub-paragraph 2: *In application of Paragraph I of Article L. 313-7, a third-country national applying for a student resident permit must furthermore submit evidence of registration, enrolment or pre-enrolment in a public or private institution of higher education or basic training, or evidence of enrolment or pre-enrolment in a vocational training establishment within the meaning of Chapter II of Volume IX of the Labour*

Code, or evidence of registration in a European Union cooperation programme in the areas of education, training and youth.

a) Intra-European mobility of international students under the Erasmus Mundus programme

From the launch of the programme in 2004 until 2011, France was the leading participant, coordinating the highest number of Erasmus Mundus masters courses (32), ahead of Spain and Belgium (14 apiece), the Netherlands (13) and Germany (10). Moreover, almost half of the 131 masters courses on offer at the start of the 2012-2013 academic year will involve French establishments. At doctoral level, France and Italy were the top two European countries in 2010 and 2011 for coordination of Erasmus Mundus doctoral programmes: with nine programmes coordinated by France and seven programmes coordinated by Italy. More than half of the 34 Erasmus Mundus conjoint doctoral programmes at the start of the 2012-2013 academic year will involve French institutions.⁸³

➤ *Terms of entry and residence for Erasmus Mundus students*

Students who already have a residence permit or long-stay (D) visa issued by a Schengen area Member State may enter France for a **period of less than three months** without a visa. Students planning to stay **longer than three months** in France, must have a long-stay visa. If they envisage staying **between three and six months**, they may apply for a temporary long-stay visa, and are exempt from residence permit requirements. For stays of **longer than six months**, a long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit (LSV-RP) is needed, valid for a maximum of 12 months.

International students may lodge their visa application in the Member State where they reside. Some French higher education institutions, however, reported to the Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe that students had to return to their home country in order to lodge a new visa application. Furthermore, students holding long-stay visas for study sometimes encounter difficulties obtaining visas for countries outside the Schengen area (notably the United Kingdom) because they have no residence permit.

In the 2012-2013 academic year, 248 international students with grants will enter French institutions as part of Erasmus Mundus Masters courses. Twenty-nine international doctoral students with scholarships have been accepted by French institutions under Erasmus Mundus Doctorate programmes⁸⁴.

There are no statistics on students migrating to France under the Erasmus Mundus programme as the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) does not collect such data. The agency's data relates solely to the number of students who hold an Erasmus Mundus grant.

➤ *Measures aiming to ease international students' mobility within the EU*

Instructions were issued to consulates in order **to ease international students' mobility within the EU**. Applications lodged in relation to European programmes are to be processed in a swifter and simplified manner. Students under these programmes are furthermore exempt from visa fees.

In the 31 countries using the *CEF* procedure, Erasmus Mundus students are exempt from the *CEF* interview requirement and payment of the *CEF* fees, in conformity with the Framework Agreement on the Centre for Studies in France (*CEF*) signed on 14 December 2005 and renewed on 10 January

⁸³ Information provided by the Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe (2E2F).

⁸⁴ Source: the Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe (2E2F). It should nonetheless be noted that these figures only concerned scholarship students whose first destination is France. Statistics concerning all trajectories (France as the second or third destination) are not collected by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

2007, as well as with the Amendment to the Framework Agreement on the Centre for Studies in France (*CEF*) signed on 10 December 2007. However, several French higher education institutions reported to the Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe (the *2E2F* agency) that some of the Campus France *Espaces* using the *CEF* procedure had not been notified about the amendment simplifying formalities for Erasmus Mundus students.

In addition, as a national Erasmus Mundus structure, the *2E2F* agency works in close cooperation with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mobility and Attractiveness Policy Directorate under the Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships) to facilitate visa and permit application procedures for students enrolled in Erasmus Mundus courses in France. Each year, the *2E2F* agency sends the list of students and doctoral students on a scholarship to the MFA so that this information can then be disseminated among the Embassies.

➤ *Cases of students encountering difficulties obtaining a visa*

Neither the *2E2F* agency nor the establishments interviewed had knowledge of any difficulties encountered by Erasmus Mundus students studying in France who wished to continue their studies in another State. Only a few cases were reported by universities, concerning students who had difficulty formalising their stay because they had been accepted by a French educational establishment and settled in France without having arranged the necessary visa formalities. On the other hand, the most common scenario is that of students who are unable to enter French territory because of a **visa refusal**. Generally, the students facing this situation are those that complete the first part of their Master's degree or Doctorate in another Member State and subsequently encounter major difficulties obtaining a visa for their second year in France. Some students had to discontinue their Erasmus Mundus studies. It should be noted that certain nationalities are subject to visa refusals for which no justification is provided (notably, nationals from Pakistan and Iran).

According to one study of Erasmus Mundus students and alumni on the way that they experienced their time in France⁸⁵, only 10 % of the respondent students and alumni reported problems obtaining a visa in France, with the percentage being higher among African students (14 %). The primary cause of dissatisfaction reported by students is the waiting time involved in obtaining a visa. On a broader level, respondents were more critical of difficulties with administrative procedures (banking formalities, registering for insurance, joining the social insurance system, etc.). However, 80 % of those interviewed reported that they had received support from Erasmus Mundus course directors and staff from the French higher education institutions in dealing with the paperwork.

b) Measures facilitating intra-European mobility for international students outside EU exchange programmes

International students may file their application to continue their studies in France from their country of residence. Students who already hold a residence permit or long-stay (D) visa issued by a Member State of the Schengen area may enter France without a visa for a **period of less than three months**. For students planning to stay **longer than three months** in France, a long-stay visa is required. This can be obtained prior to their arrival in France. If students envisage staying **between three and six months**, they may apply for a temporary long-stay visa, and are exempt from residence permit requirements. For stays lasting **longer than six months**, a long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit is necessary, valid for a maximum of 12 months.

France has not received word of any difficulties encountered by international students studying in France who wished to continue their studies in other Member States.

⁸⁵ Campus France Agency / Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe (*2E2F* agency), *Étudiants et alumni Erasmus Mundus : quelle expérience du séjour en France ?* (Erasmus Mundus Students and Alumni: How was their Stay in France?), Les notes de Campus France, September 2010 (in French)

There are no special fast track or simplified procedures for international students who are currently studying in another Member State. Under certain mobility programmes, however, there are some simplified procedures for obtaining visas. This is the case, for example, with the Mediterranean Office for Youth (MOY) programme⁸⁶. There are special measures in place, stipulated by the participating countries, so as to facilitate procedures in terms of entry, residence and initial professional activity for candidates who are eligible for an MOY grant.

c) Cases of international students extending their studies in another Member State through mobility programmes

We have no knowledge of instances where international students have extended their studies through mobility programmes to stay in another Member State for longer than initially envisaged.

4.3 Other forms of cooperation between countries

Several types of cooperation have been developed between France and third countries. As higher education in France becomes ever more internationalised, there is a trend that has already emerged over the last few years to reach beyond the border and develop bilateral agreements, off-shore courses and joint programmes with double degrees or conjoint degrees in cooperation with many institutions of higher education around the globe. Decree No. 2005-450 dated 11 May 2005 regarding the issuance of qualifications under international partnerships sets forth the conditions under which French qualifications may be awarded in the framework of international partnerships. Given the ongoing development of these different kinds of international partnerships, the issue of terminology needs to be addressed. A practical guide aiming to clarify the various types of existing agreements and designed for institutions of higher education is currently being drafted at the Directorate for International and European Relations and Cooperation⁸⁷.

The establishments themselves have also set up their own initiatives. In order to ensure that only high-quality partnerships are signed at the international level, Paris-Est Créteil University adopted, on 12 March 2012, a “Charter of quality for international partnerships on qualifications”.

Over and above the numerous bilateral or European exchange programmes, there are also various types of cooperation programmes currently operational abroad that enjoy the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Cooperation among establishments can come in different forms, with the primary format being **student exchanges between French establishments and institutions abroad**, which ensure a regular flow of students. A second – and rapidly expanding – category of cooperation is that of **double degrees** established between institutions in France and abroad. Some take cooperation even further and go so far as to award **conjoint degrees**. These partnerships may be initiated by the establishments themselves or through a governmental project, involving the support of the ministries concerned.

According to the Conference of *Grandes Écoles* (CGE), there are **7 000 cooperation agreements** in total across all of its member establishments. These are chiefly agreements regarding exchanges of students, teaching staff, and there are even some research agreements. The *grandes écoles* belonging to the CGE have set up targeted partnerships based on geographical or thematic criteria⁸⁸.

⁸⁶ The Mediterranean Office for Youth (MOY) supports the mobility of students and young professionals in 16 countries bordering the Mediterranean: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, Egypt, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Montenegro, Slovenia, Tunisia, and Turkey.

⁸⁷ Extract of an interview with Marc Rolland, Deputy Director, and Gilles Vial, Policy Officer, Directorate for International and European Relations and Cooperation.

⁸⁸ Extract of an interview with Brigitte Porée, Policy Officer, International Affairs and Communication, Conference of *Grandes Écoles*

The *filières francophones*, **higher education programmes in French**, are courses offered in the French language by foreign universities in partnership with French establishments which enable students to earn a double degree. They differ from **French “universities” abroad**, such as the French universities in Armenia or in Egypt. The *Université française d’Arménie (UFAR)*, for example, awards double degrees in law, in marketing and in management, in partnership with the Lyon 3 University. Its purpose is to train executives as required by the Armenian labour market. Numerous plans for **off-shore programmes** have also become a reality in different parts of the world, such as the one from University Paris-IV in the United Arab Emirates or the *École Centrale* in Beijing. When it comes to French institutions’ off-shore projects, the Conference of French University Rectors stresses the importance of cooperation with the foreign partners *in situ*, as the goal is to avoid any competition between the establishments in question⁸⁹.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with a few key countries, is developing educational hubs that will offer courses of excellence in certain fields, such as management or engineering. The North Africa and Middle East region boasts the creation of the business schools *École Supérieure des affaires* in Beirut, the *École supérieure algérienne des affaires* in Algiers and the French Arabian School of Management and Finance in Manama (Bahrain).

The *Centre de Formation Franco-Vietnamien à la Gestion (CFVG)* is a School of Management located in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City which offers masters courses and MBAs. It is the first programme stemming from **Franco-Vietnamese cooperation** regarding education, created in 1992 by the Vietnamese government (Ministry of Education and Training) and the French government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The CFVG receives support from numerous French partners (Paris Chamber of Commerce, French universities and *grandes écoles*).

French establishments have also helped create engineering schools, with the aim of supporting the economic development of certain cutting-edge industrial sectors, such as the *Institut franco-chinois d’ingénierie et de management* engineering and management school in Shanghai or the China-EU Institute for Clean and Renewable Energy (ICARE) in Wuhan.

The **University of Science and Technology of Hanoi (USTH)** is a Vietnamese university of excellence, created in partnership with a consortium of some fifty French institutions of higher education and research. USTH’s Master’s degree, recognised by both France and Vietnam, enables students to pursue their doctoral studies in either of the two countries or elsewhere.

Finally, in some countries specific programmes have been established, an example being the “Malaysia Programme”, run by Campus France. This “tailor-made” programme for education in engineering grants the selected students a merit-based scholarship and tutoring throughout the degree course. After having completed some initial training at the University of Kuala Lumpur, students commence study at a university institute of technology in France; from there, they may continue their studies at a university or in an engineering school.

Programme-based mobility, actively encouraged by the relevant authorities, nowadays enables proper monitoring of students. Furthermore, it entails a range of associated mechanisms for ensuring greater success for international students, such as the option of taking French language courses prior to relocation. Given the diversification of exchanges and the steady increase in student mobility, the question of the impact of international students in France inevitably begs an answer.

⁸⁹ Extract of an interview with Harald Schraeder, Policy Officer, Europe, Conference of French University Rectors

5. IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN FRANCE

a) Competition for study places and the implications of this for European Union students

Since higher education in France is not based on a quota system, there is no such thing as competition, in the true sense of the word, for study places among students from the European Union or from third countries. Admission procedures, however, as described in this study, may differ depending on the level of studies and the students' country of residence. The very selective admission system of France's *grandes écoles* generally includes a separate international admission procedure. Designed for students with qualifications obtained outside France, this admission procedure makes no distinction between students from the European Union and those from third countries.

b) Cases of international students remaining in France to work following the completion of their studies

Even in 2006, a European study on policies towards foreign graduates noted the lack of statistical analyses available in the countries studied, especially regarding the percentage of graduates who stay on in the host country upon completion of their studies and the sectors in which they work⁹⁰.

While the Law on the Freedom and Responsibility of Universities provides for career orientation and professional development, the absence of any follow-up on international students after they graduate is an acknowledged problem in France. All French universities now include **work placement offices**, and their services are equally available to French students and international students on mobility. However, most of the activities and surveys conducted within the framework of these offices concern the student body taken as a whole, failing to distinguish between French graduates and foreign graduates. In 2010-2011 a large survey of graduates from all French universities was carried out so as to understand their professional situation thirty months after graduating, but the results are focused on French students⁹¹. French establishments are doing very little, essentially because of a lack of time and resources, to keep tabs on international students who remain in France to work after completing their studies. Against this backdrop, the CPU is encouraging institutions to introduce follow-up mechanisms regarding the professional integration of their international students (statistics, monitoring tools, etc.) with a view to assessing the period in which graduates seek their first placement and consistency with the university studies pursued⁹². The situation appears to be the same in official circles, even though the line ministries do appear to be taking an ever greater interest in what becomes of international students in France. One explanation for the lack of reports on the period following the completion of study may be the fact that France tends to favour the 'round-trip' scenario. The small proportion of international students graduating with their French counterparts (since many come under a mobility programme for a pre-defined period of time and not for the entire degree course) may also justify the shortage of statistical analyses concerning international students' post-graduation activities. Moreover, **alumni** networks are not very strong in French higher education institutions, except in the case of *grandes écoles*. The main objective is to develop a network of former students, but there is no particular monitoring of students after their studies.

⁹⁰ Jandl Michael, Suter Brigitte, *Comparative study on policies towards foreign graduates. Study on admission and retention policies towards international students in industrialised countries*, International Centre for Migration Policy Development - Vienna, 2006

⁹¹ Ministry of Higher Education and Research, *L'insertion professionnelle des diplômés de l'université* (Professional Development of University Graduates), Note d'information No. 12-06, June 2012 (in French)

⁹² Conference of French University Rectors (CPU), "*Propositions relatives à la politique internationale des universités - L'accueil des étudiants internationaux*" (Proposals on Universities' International Policies – Reception of international students), 15 September 2011(in French)

There are some projects initiated by some French establishments that are worthy of mention. They were introduced via their observatory on education and professional development, which aims to provide a better understanding of international graduates' professional integration in France. Lille 1 University, for example, publishes detailed statistics in this regard every year. In 2011, a report on the professional integration of PhD graduates from Lille 1 University analyses, in particular, the situation of international doctoral graduates⁹³. The report's findings show that, on average, thirty months after obtaining their PhD from the university, 93 % of doctors of foreign nationality are working. Nearly three-quarters are in positions related to teaching and/or research and 25 % are technical managers or engineers in the private sector. Among those who graduated in 2006, 2007 and 2008 and are gainfully employed, almost six doctors in ten are working outside France. Among those employed in France, four graduates in ten work in or near Lille.

Every year the Conference of *Grandes Écoles* publishes a survey on the professional integration of recent graduates⁹⁴. While some data concerning international students can be found therein, the survey does not lend itself to an in-depth analysis of this group of students. In 2011, the proportion of international students graduating from CGE member establishments was around 9 %, of whom approximately 25 % were of Moroccan nationality, 11 % Chinese and 7 % Tunisian.

The IT application for managing the third-country nationals' files known as AGDREF does permit monitoring of international students in France, year upon year. As at the end of 2009, for example, 60 % of all students who entered in 2002 no longer hold a residence permit. About one-third are still in France and appear to have settled in the country, either because they have married or because they have found employment or because they still hold (for 10 % of them) a student residence permit. The majority of status transfers in France are long-term and for **family** reasons. The situation **differs depending on geographical origin**: The vast majority of people from North America and Oceania came to complete a short cycle of study (one year) and for the most part returned to their home country upon completion. About two-thirds of all students from European countries (non-EU) and Asia subsequently left the country, while a quarter remained in France for family or professional reasons. Students from Africa generally follow a different pattern; after eight years, slightly more than half are still living in France. Having come to France in order to complete long courses of study, many are still students. About 40 % have remained in France after changing status: to "family member" status or "employee" status. Currently, among the 6.24 million individuals in France considered to be "highly qualified", there are 710 000 immigrants. The proportion of immigrants in this group is relatively high considering the proportion of immigrants in the overall population⁹⁵.

c) The risk of "brain drain"

Brain drain is defined as the loss suffered by a country as a result of the emigration of a highly qualified person. In France, student immigration is generally viewed as temporary, circular migration. The predominant outcome scenario of studying in France is the student's return to his/her country of origin upon graduation. However, under the law on immigration promulgated on 24 July 2006, French legislation makes special provision for students holding qualifications at least equivalent to a Master's degree. These graduates may apply for a six-month temporary residence authorisation to look for work in France with a view to gaining initial professional experience

⁹³ OFIP (*Observatoire des Formations et de l'Insertion Professionnelle* – the observatory on education and professional development), *Devenir à 30 mois des docteurs de Lille 1, promotions 2006, 2007 et 2008* (Doctors of Lille 1 University Thirty Months after Graduation: Years 2006, 2007 and 2008), Lille 1 University, 2011 (in French)

⁹⁴ Conference of *Grandes Écoles*, *20^e enquête insertion des jeunes diplômés* (Twentieth Survey of Recent Graduates' Professional Integration), Edition 2012 (in French)

⁹⁵ Ménard Samuel and Papon Sylvain, *Le devenir des étudiants étrangers en France* (What becomes of International Students in France), Infos Migrations No. 29, November 2011 (in French)

(CESEDA, Art. L. 311-11). Thanks to this procedure, the qualification obtained in France can be put to good effect while the circular nature of student migration is nonetheless maintained.

d) How misuse of the ‘student route’ to migration affects France’s national policy towards international students

Policy changes concerning international students do not stem from heightened abuse or misuse of the ‘student route’ to migration, but rather from an increase in volume. The previous government’s strategy of selecting international students was part of its ‘chosen immigration’ policy.

Ultimately, the cases of misuse detected in France have led to tighter verification procedures both prior to migration (migratory risk, family ties in France, etc.) and after the fact (genuine and serious nature of the studies) so as to show up any untoward use of procedure.

e) The impact of international students in relation to revenues generated by institutions of higher education

In France, the impact of students, be they French or non-French, is more generally thought of in terms of costs rather than in terms of revenues. The State’s efforts in higher education show in the very affordable university tuition fees, which benefit all students. The State’s contribution averages out at 10 000 euros per year per student, French or foreign.

f) The impact of international students in relation to demographic challenges in France

The number of students enrolled in French higher education institutions has been increasing constantly over the last few years. From 1990-1991 to 2010-2011, the total number of students enrolled in higher education in France rose from 1 717 060 to 2 318 700⁹⁶. The question of demographic challenges is therefore of less relevance in the French context, especially given that France’s natural balance is positive. It should nevertheless be noted that the growing numbers of EU and third-country national students in France do contribute to the overall increase in the student population. In 1990-1991, there were 161 148 students from EU and non-EU countries enrolled in higher education in France, representing 9.4 % of the total student body. In 2010-2011, there were 284 659, or 12.3 % of the total student body.

The situation is quite different at the **doctoral** level where, on average, 41 % of the students are foreign nationals. In some laboratories where students from abroad outnumber their French counterparts, international openness is thus fundamental.

There is, however, an imbalance between mobility inflows and mobility outflows, as the proportion of French students going abroad to study is smaller than the proportion of EU and third-country national students on mobility in France. Currently, only 5 % of French students make a study sojourn abroad. Yet one of the aims of the EU 2020 strategy is that, by the year 2020, 20 % of graduates will have spent some part of their studies or training in another country.

One of the current priorities, therefore, rather than to address demographic challenges, is to correct this imbalance between mobility inflows and outflows.

g) Public opinion/public perceptions of international students in France

According to the French employers’ organisation, MEDEF, international graduates in France are highly sought after for positions often involving significant responsibility at the **international level**. French firms today are actively seeking these talented individuals from abroad with their

⁹⁶ Ministry of Higher Education and Research, DGESIP-DGRI, *Repères et références statistiques* (Statistical References and Benchmarks), 2011 (in French)

knowledge of languages and the markets in their countries. MEDEF does not believe that they are taking the place of French graduates. In this respect, reduced “student” flows are seen as a threat to the attractiveness and competitiveness of French companies. Once they graduate, these EU and international students are an asset to French firms, who hope to benefit from their better skills and open up new markets.

h) Monitoring of international students once they return to their country of origin

Several initiatives have been launched by diplomatic posts at the local level with the aim of **monitoring international students who had spent time in France studying or completing an internship.** French Embassies abroad have thus developed a series of “**Club France**” groups, which are open to students who have spent some time on mobility in France and who are now back in their country of origin. These clubs, such as the Club France Morocco or Club France China, aim not only to provide follow-up of alumni, but also to organise a variety of events and, ultimately, develop a true network which will have some local influence.

At the national level, the MFA has asked Campus France to set up a **tool to be deployed in all countries,** that would serve not only to develop a large network of alumni having studied in France, but also to facilitate their professional development once they return to their country of origin, by helping them connect with French firms that are present locally.

i) The Campus France survey of international students: image and attractiveness⁹⁷

At the behest of Campus France, and with the agreement of its line ministries, an **international survey of 21 000 foreign students** was carried out by the market research and opinion poll institute, TNS Sofres. This survey covers students preparing to head to France for study (Group 1), students currently studying in France (Group 2), and students who have completed their term of study (Group 3). This qualitative study aims to ascertain students’ expectations, reasons for coming to France and their degree of satisfaction, so as to identify ways to make France an even more attractive higher education study destination. The survey’s findings show that Campus France plays an important role in international students’ decision-making process. According to the students surveyed, it is above all its academic and cultural aspects that make France an attractive destination. The quality of the education provided, the value of the qualifications and the reputation of the establishments are all attractive features emphasised by the international students. However, the survey also highlights certain points of dissatisfaction that were common to all of the students: *Unlike other difficulties, the cost of living, the trouble finding accommodation and the complexity of the requisite administrative procedures are not foreseen by students coming to France. While it is difficult to change the cost of living, something could be done to offer more practical information on the types of accommodation available, on how to look for housing or on how to handle the paperwork successfully.*

With this survey, the goal is not only to identify the main strengths of higher education in France through the eyes of international students, but also to determine priorities for action.

⁹⁷ Campus France, Exclusive Campus France-TNS Sofres Survey, *Les étudiants étrangers en France : image et attractivité* (International Students in France: Image and Attractiveness), Les notes de Campus France, October 2011 (in French)

6. CONCLUSIONS

Student mobility is now seen to be a vital component of international flows. More and more international students are choosing France for their study abroad. In this regard, France boasts many strengths on the world stage: the quality of French education and French qualifications, and also the low university fees. On top of these advantages, France offers improved reception services for incoming students, in particular with the development of a one-stop shop system.

France's attractiveness policy is based on several fundamental instruments, notably a sizeable repertoire of merit-based scholarships. Emphasis is increasingly placed on selecting international students, and favouring certain fields and levels of study. The aim is to encourage programme-based mobility. This ensures that international students have the best possible reception in France and maximises their chances of success. It also minimises the risk that the 'student route' is misused for migration purposes. Several practical measures have been adopted to facilitate student mobility, chiefly through programme-based mobility and European and international exchange programmes.

Nevertheless, while policies in relation to international students in France have undergone major changes over the last few decades, some serious challenges still remain. Despite streamlined procedures in mobility programmes, there are still many obstacles to the mobility of international students due to administrative formalities that are often deemed complicated. Although the reception of international students has improved in the last ten years, considerable effort is still required, particularly with regard to housing. As many different stakeholders are involved at different levels, better coordination should ensure that policies are implemented more effectively and more coherently.

One of the questions to be answered concerns the future that awaits students trained in France, and in particular the rate of professional integration in France and the fields of activity chosen.

Finally, the role of Campus France in its new format will be decisive in the development of policies concerning mobility and the promotion of higher education in France.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

1. Campus France

G rard Besson, Deputy Director
Olivier Chiche Portiche, Director of Higher Education Promotion
Arthur Soucemarianadin, Director of institutional relations
Juliette Linares, Campus France *Espaces* Support Team Leader, Higher Education Promotion
Anne Plaine, Europe Desk Officer
Charlotte Dupont, Campus France *Espaces* Support Team Member

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mobility and Attractiveness Policy Directorate)

 ric Lamouroux, Head of the Higher Education Department
Fran oise Sellier, Manager of Student Mobility Policies and Programmes

3. Ministry of Higher Education and Research (General Directorate for Higher Education and Employability)

Claude Jolly, Deputy Head of Strategy Policy on Higher Education and Employability
Yves Vallat, Project Leader, European and International Affairs

4. Ministry of the Interior, General Secretariat for Immigration and Integration

- Residence and Work Permits Division

Elodie Degiovanni, Assistant Director, Residence and Work permits Division
Philippe Garabiol, Deputy Assistant Director, Residence and Work permits Division
J r me Baron, Policy Officer for Regulations on Immigrant Workers
Marjorie Vincent-Genod, Assistant Legal Officer EU and other areas
- Visas Division
Alain Ferr , Head of Visas Division

5. Directorate for European and International Relations and Cooperation (DREIC) Ministry of Higher Education and Research / Ministry of Education):

Marc Rolland, Deputy Director
Gilles Vial, Policy Officer

6. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (General Directorate for Education and Research)

Pierre Autissier, European Relations and International Cooperation Manager
Fran oise D' penoux, Higher Education Training Programmes Manager

7. Sciences Po Paris (L'Institut d' tudes politiques (IEP) de Paris)

Francis V rillaud, Deputy Director in charge of International Relations and Exchanges

8. Descartes University Paris (Paris V)

Mich le Cambra, International Partnerships Director

9. Conference of Grandes  coles

Brigitte Por e, Policy Officer, International Affairs And Communication

10. Conference of French University Rectors

Harald Schraeder, Policy Officer, Europe

APPENDIX 2. LIST OF ACRONYMS

Agence 2e2f : Agence Europe Education Formation France
2E2F Agency: Agency for Education and Professional Training in Europe

Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Etranger
Agency for Education in French outside France

APS : Autorisation Provisoire de Séjour
Temporary residence autorisation

CDEFI : Conférence des Directeurs des Écoles Françaises d'Ingénieurs

CEF : Centre pour les Études en France
Centre for Studies in France (one-stop shop run by CampusFrance in a number of third countries to cater for international students applying to French higher education institutions)

CESEDA : Code de l'Entrée et du Séjour des Étrangers et du Droit d'Asile
Code on Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Right of Asylum

CGE : Conférence des Grandes Écoles
Conference des Grandes Ecoles (*Grandes Ecoles* in management and engineering in France are grouped together within the *Conférence des Grandes Ecoles*, a French non-profit organisation which aims at promoting their activities and contributing to the improvement of their educational programmes).

CIEP : Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques
International Centre for Education Studies

CNOUS : Centre National des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires
National Centre for Student Services (canteens, accommodation, grants)

CPGE : Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Écoles
Preparatory classes for the *grandes écoles*

CPU : Conférence des Présidents d'Université
Conference of French University Rectors

CROUS : Centre Régional des Œuvres Universitaires et Scolaires
Regional Centre for Student Services, see *CNOUS*

CST : Carte de Séjour Temporaire
Temporary residence permit

DAP : Demande d'Admission Préalable
Application for pre-enrolment

DALF : Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française
Advanced French Language Diploma

DELFF : Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française
French Language Diploma

DREIC : Direction des Relations Européennes et International et de la Coopération
Directorate for European and International Relations and Cooperation

IUT : Institut Universitaire de Technologie
University Institute of Technology

Loi LRU : Loi relative aux libertés et responsabilités des universités
Law on the Freedom and Responsibility of Universities

MAE : Ministère aux Affaires Étrangères et européennes
MFA : Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MESR : Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche
MHER : Ministry of Higher Education and Research

PRES : Pôle de Recherche et d'Enseignement Supérieur
Higher education and research cluster

SCAC : Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle
Cooperation and Cultural Action Service

Boursier du Gouvernement Français
SFGG : Student on a French Government Grant

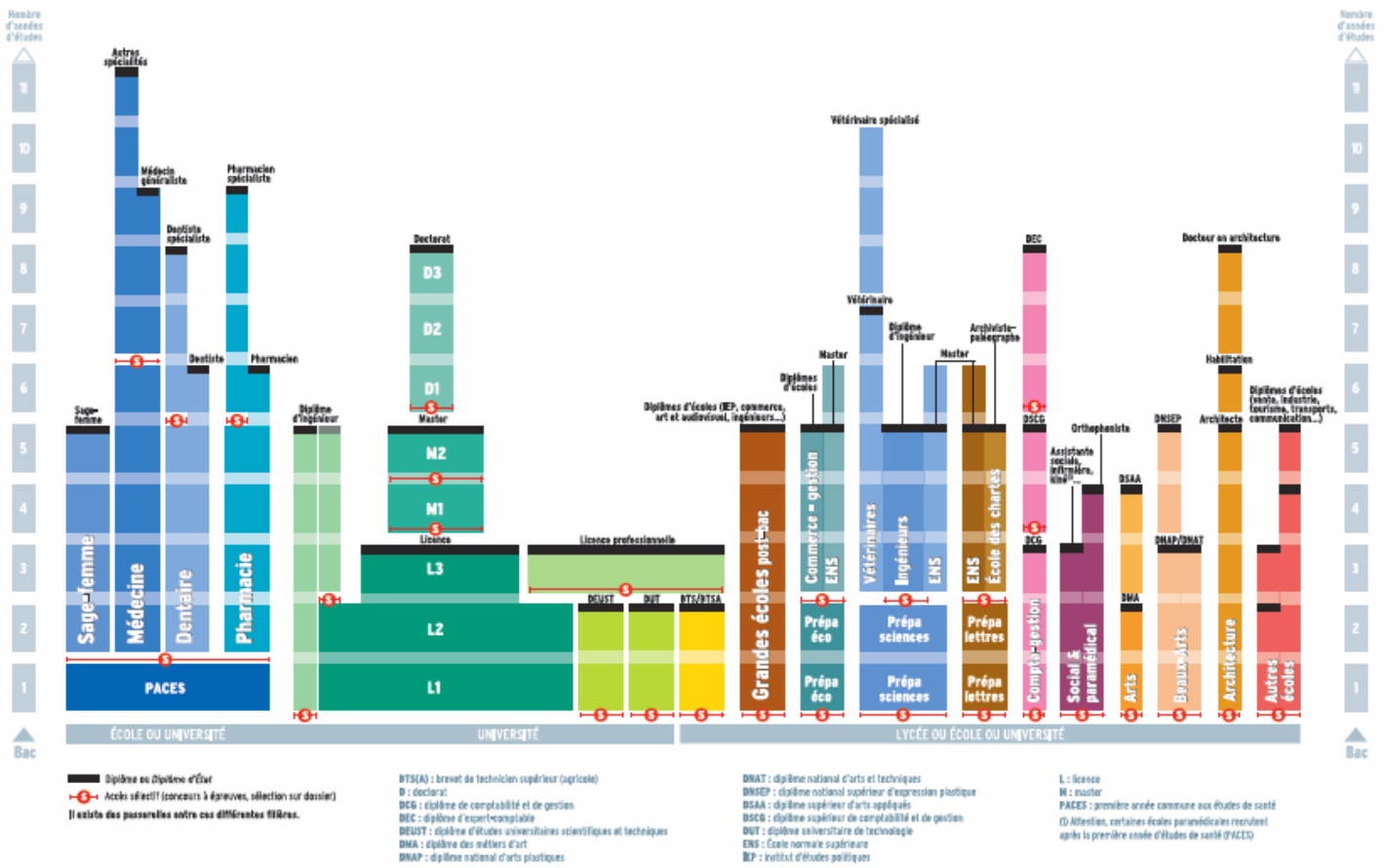
SMIC : Salaire Minimum Interprofessionnel de Croissance
Statutory minimum wage (index- linked)

VLS-TS : Visa de long séjour valant titre de séjour
Long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit (LSV-RP)

APPENDIX 3. CHART OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE⁹⁸



L'enseignement supérieur en France/2011-2012



L'enseignement supérieur en France : *Higher Education in France*

Baccalauréat : *Secondary-school leaving certificate*

Nombre d'années d'études: *Years of study*

Ecole ou université : *Higher education institute or university*

Université : *University*

Lycée / école / université : *Secondary school / higher education institute / university*

PACES (première année commune aux études de santé) : *foundation year in health studies*

(s) = accès sélectif (concours à épreuves, sélection sur dossier) : (s) = *Selective admission (exam or written application)*

Sage-femme : *Midwifery / Midwife*

Médecine / Médecin généraliste / Autres spécialités : *Medicine / General practitioner / Specialist doctor*

Dentaire / Dentiste / Dentiste spécialiste : *Dentistry / Dentist / Specialist dentist*

Pharmacie / Pharmacien / Pharmacien spécialiste : *Pharmacy / Pharmacist / Specialist pharmacist*

⁹⁸ Source : ONISEP : <http://www.onisep.fr/Choisir-mes-etudes/Pres-le-bac/Schema-des-etudes-apres-le-bac>

Licence (L) : *Undergraduate degree*

Master (M) : *Master*

Doctorat (D) : *Doctorate*

BTS : Brevet de technicien supérieur: *advanced technician's certificate*

BTSA : Brevet de technicien supérieur agricole: *advanced agricultural technician's certificate*

DUT : diplôme universitaire de technologie : *technological university diploma*

Licence professionnelle : *professional qualification at undergraduate level*

DEUST : diplôme d'études universitaires scientifiques et techniques : *scientific and technical university diploma*

Grandes écoles (post-bac) : (*post-secondary*) **Grandes écoles**

Diplômes d'écoles (équivalent à un diplôme de Master) : *Grandes écoles degrees (equivalent to Master's degree)*

Sciences politiques / commerce / art et audiovisuel / ingénieur... : *Political science, business, engineering, fine art, video art...*

IEP : Institut d'Etudes Politiques : *Institute of political science*

Commerce - gestion : *Business and management*

Vétérinaire / Vétérinaire spécialisé : *Veterinary / Veterinary specialist / Veterinary surgeon*

Ingénieur : *Engineer*

ENS : École Normale Supérieure : *École Normale Supérieure (graduate school)*

École des Chartes : *École des Chartes (archivist / librarian)*

Archiviste / paléographe : *Archivist / palaeographer*

Comptabilité - gestion : ***Accountancy and management***

DCG : diplôme de comptabilité et de gestion : *accountancy and management certificate*

DEC : diplôme d'expert-comptable : (*8 years of higher education*) *certified public accountant*

DSCG : diplôme supérieur de comptabilité et de gestion : *higher accountancy and management certificate*

Social et paramédical : ***Social and paramedical studies***

Assistante sociale / infirmière / kiné : *Social worker, nurse, physiotherapist, speech and language therapist**

* Certaines écoles paramédicales recrutent après la première année d'études de santé : *Some institutes offering paramedical studies accept 2nd year students if they have passed the foundation year in health studies.*

Art : ***Art***

DMA : diplôme des métiers d'art : *art school certificate (2 years)*

DSAA : diplôme supérieur d'arts appliqués : *higher certificate in applied arts (4 years)*

Beaux-arts : ***Fine art***

DNAP : diplôme national d'arts plastiques : *Undergraduate degree of fine art*

DNSEP : diplôme national supérieur d'expression plastique : *Master of fine art*

Architecture : ***Architecture***

Diplôme d'architecte : *Degree in architecture*

Habilitation : *Qualified architect*

Docteur en architecture : *Doctorate in architecture*

Autres écoles : ***Other higher education institutions***

Diplômes d'écoles (vente, industrie, tourisme, transports, communication...): *2, 3, 4 and 5 year certificates in sales, industrial systems, tourism, transport, communication...*

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