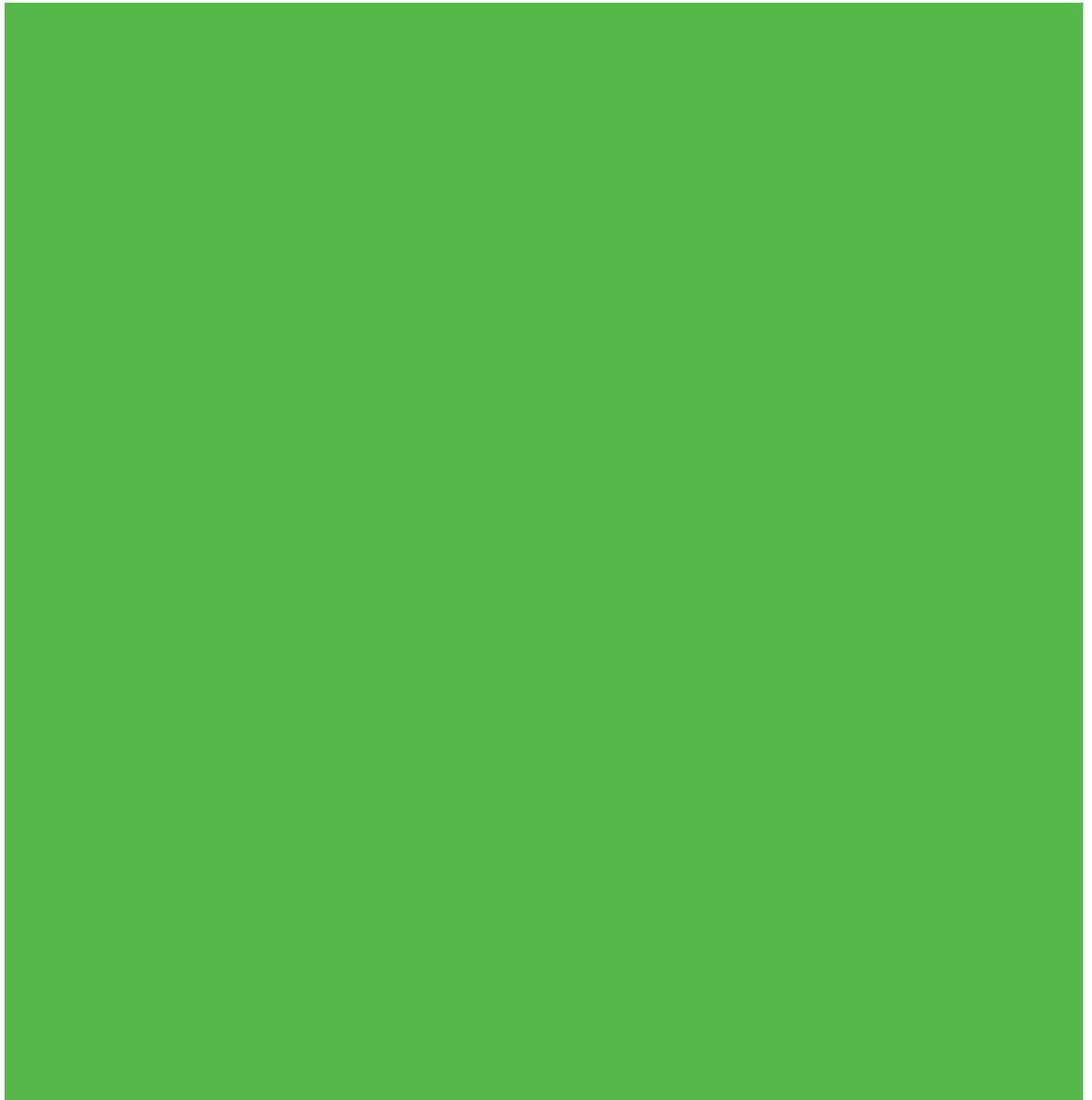




Mobile Talent?

The Staying Intentions of International Students in Five EU Countries



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Executive summary

Since the beginning of the last decade, policy-makers in Europe have increasingly turned their attention to international students as a source of prospective skilled migrants. Against the backdrop of an ageing society, projected labour market shortages and increased competition in the globalised knowledge economy, many countries have introduced significant policy changes or adapted existing policies and laws in order to facilitate international students' entry into the labour market after graduation. Promoting study-to-work pathways, or a 'train and retain' approach, is viewed as a practical policy goal from several perspectives. Most significantly, international students possess a number of characteristics that differentiate them from regular economic migrants: fully recognised credentials, locally relevant education and often work experience, and a demonstrated familiarity with the host country's culture, language, practices and regulations.

This report deals centrally with the question of the staying intentions of international students in five European Union (EU) Member States: France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It is based on the 14-month project 'Value Migration' carried out by the Research Unit of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) in cooperation with the Migration Policy Group (MPG) and funded by the Stiftung Mercator. Although a number of studies have examined the increasing flows of international students and students' motivations for studying abroad and choosing a particular destination, less is known about the factors that shape their post-study migration plans, particularly in the European context. This report covers new ground by providing insight into the post-study migration plans of international master's and PhD students, as well as their awareness and assessment of the legal frameworks

enabling them to stay and work in the country in which they studied after graduation.

International students and graduates have benefited from many EU and national immigration policy developments in recent years, with increased legal certainty in the regimes governing their status and improved opportunities to access the workforce both during and after their studies. A key pathway for international students to access the labour market after graduation is through a post-study job-seeking scheme, in place in all of the countries surveyed except for Sweden. In France, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK, such post-study schemes allow students to stay on for six months, one year and two years respectively for the purpose of finding a job.

Although the general trend in the legal regimes relating to international students in EU Member States has been one of liberalisation, international students are by no means immune from measures that seek to select and limit who enters and stays on a country's territory. Indeed, international students have been targeted in countries where there is political or public pressure to reduce net levels of immigration. Restrictive measures applicable to international students and graduates in the five countries surveyed include labour market tests and/or wage conditions to access certain sectors of the labour market, the requirement to have a job upon graduation in order to stay (in Sweden), the roll-out of more rigorous procedures relating to university access and the monitoring of international students' progress during their stays (in the Netherlands and the UK), and stricter control on status change requests from student to worker (in France).

A broad distinction can be made between the regimes relating to international students in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and those in France and



Germany. The former apply stricter selection criteria at point of entry, and, particularly in the Dutch case, undertake more rigorous monitoring throughout the study period (e.g. educational institutions will soon need to become recognised sponsors of international students, obliged to monitor their immigration status and academic progression; employers of international students must obtain a work permit). These countries, however, offer students comparatively more generous and flexible post-study schemes. This means that, although the selection criteria are restrictive, students can take advantage of relatively generous conditions for staying on if they successfully complete their studies. The regime will soon change in the UK, however, as the government aims to reduce net immigration numbers. In France and Germany, on the other hand, the nature of the respective legal regimes and higher education sectors means that it is easier for students to gain entry (e.g. much lower tuition fees, no requirement for universities to act as sponsors or to register with the immigration authorities in order to host students). In terms of post-study opportunities, however, students wishing to prolong their stay after graduation are currently faced with stricter limits on working than those in the Netherlands and the UK – although changes are expected to come into effect in Germany. Students in France and Germany also have a shorter time period in which they are eligible to apply for the scheme. In comparison with the other four countries, Sweden is a slow mover in providing legal opportunities or special regulations for international students who wish to stay on. The dynamic nature of immigration policy means that the legal frameworks in these countries will continue to change and are likely to fluctuate according to trends in political and public opinion on immigration and specifically the need for controls to be increased or lessened.

The report covers the results of a large-scale survey of over 6,200 international students at 25 universities in the countries studied. The findings reveal that almost two-thirds of the respondents are interested in remaining in their country of study after graduation, and plan to do so for a relatively limited time period (one to two years). Employment opportunities and the desire to gain international work experience are the main reasons for wishing to stay on, supporting the idea that professional experience is increasingly regarded by students as a key aspect of the 'study abroad package'. While career-related factors provide the main motivation for staying on, family and personal relationships were most commonly cited as the reason for planning to leave after graduation. Permanent migration is clearly not the intention of the bulk of respondents, as only around ten per cent indicated, at this stage in their studies at least, that they plan to stay on for more than five years. International students who intended from the outset to use their study abroad experience as a stepping stone to permanent migration appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Overall, the main tendency among respondents is the desire to stay on for a few years to gain international work experience before eventually returning to their home countries or moving elsewhere.

A number of characteristics are associated with the intention to stay on after graduation. Those who are interested in doing so tend to be younger; they also often have prior work experience in the country of study and are less likely to have children. Clear differences between fields of study are also apparent, with those pursuing degrees in science- and technology-related fields (i.e. engineering, mathematics and natural sciences) more likely to express the desire to stay on than social science, art or humanities students. Respondents

from countries in Asia (e.g. China, India, Iran and Sri Lanka) and Eastern Europe (e.g. Ukraine and Serbia) are generally keener to stay on than those from North America, Latin America and Africa. As could be expected, those who plan to stay on are also better informed about the legal opportunities for prolonging their stay after graduation.

The results of the survey show that several factors related to the propensity to stay are directly or indirectly influenced by actors in the higher education sector. For example, the responses from international students in Germany reveal that the intention to stay on is associated with better German language skills, work experience in Germany, higher levels of satisfaction with the study experience, familiarity with the legal regulations for international students, and being of the opinion that international students are welcome to stay and look for work after graduation. These are all areas which could theoretically be supported by higher education actors (e.g. running courses to support language acquisition, facilitating work experience, providing career services for international students, distributing information about immigration law and visa access, and improving the overall study experience). In admitting students, the state also of course plays a role, for example in the language requirements it sets and the general conditions that applicants have to meet. The relationship between policies and practices in the higher education sector and in the realm of immigration is likely to become increasingly relevant.

The survey results indicate a problematic situation with regard to the level of knowledge on post-study work and visa options and the ease of accessing information on these topics. Overall, students do not feel very well informed about the legal opportunities for obtaining a post-study work or residence visa. Re-

spondents in the Netherlands and the UK are most aware of the existence of regulations for international students to transition to work after graduation, and respondents in these countries also find it easiest to access information on legal procedures for post-study visas. Respondents in Germany feel the most poorly informed about their legal options for staying on after graduation (only 14.7 % feel well or very well informed) and some complained about the lack of legal information available in English and therefore the difficulty of navigating the legal framework. Across the board, between 37.0 per cent (UK) and 45.9 per cent (Germany) of respondents feel poorly or not at all informed and less than one quarter in each country feel that it is easy to access such information, suggesting that there is much room for improvement in relation to the availability of clear information about international students' post-study options. Students who are better informed about the legal procedures for prolonging their stay were more likely to rate the legal opportunities for international students positively.

Respondents' perceptions of their employment prospects in their country of study and of the extent to which the labour market welcomes non-EU graduates are broadly positive in the Netherlands and Germany and relatively critical in France and the UK. Respondents in France and the UK expressed frustration at recent changes in the regulations or administrative practices for international students and graduates and were less likely to agree that international students are welcome to stay and look for work after graduation compared to respondents in the other countries. The results reveal that many international students are aware of and responsive to changes in the legal framework governing their stays, as well as the general public debate on immigration. Improving the clarity of and



access to legal information and building a more stable legal framework would be to the benefit of international students who may wish to stay on. Clearer or more accessible information for students is needed on the changes taking place in the UK and France, and the wider availability of information and services offered in English would be beneficial for international students in Germany. In Germany in particular, it would be worthwhile to better prepare international students for what to expect in terms of both the language competencies required for university and the labour market, and the conditions realistically needed to acquire the German language. Because students can study and receive a student permit without a very high level of German language proficiency, many expect that they will be able to navigate university and the world of work without knowledge of the language. Better preparing students for what to expect can have an important impact on their satisfaction levels later in the process.

International students are often praised for their proficiency in the language of the host country and their high levels of acculturation. It is therefore expected that they will be able to avoid a number of the sociocultural, political and economic barriers that other immigrants face in integrating into the labour market and society. Although international students do possess a number of qualities that make them an attractive group of skilled migrants, they still require services and support to guarantee their integration. Emerging research findings and the results of this report indicate that simply studying in a country is not sufficient to overcome many of the difficulties migrants face, such as gaps in language proficiency, acculturation, visa insecurity and concerns about family migration and discrimination. Because international students are generally regarded as temporary migrants, there is a danger

that the state will not directly support their integration, which could have implications for their future success in the country. Crucial for the development of policies and services to support the successful transition of international students from study to work is the better tracking of international students in order to monitor their labour market performance, social integration and other outcomes. Investigating the employability and employment outcomes of international students and graduates and gaining a better understanding of the barriers and opportunities that students encounter in the study destination after graduation are important focuses for future research.

In all of the countries surveyed, the share of survey respondents that expressed the desire to stay on is clearly higher than the share that actually do, pointing to a discrepancy between the intentions or aspirations of students and what occurs in reality. Identifying the factors that contribute to this discrepancy – for instance, the extent to which they are related to individual, structural or push/pull factors – is also an important topic for future research. This report points to a number of opportunities for better supporting international students and graduates and suggests that the five countries studied are not making full use of the skills and potential of their international students. Given that family and personal relationship factors were among the most important reasons cited for leaving, and as many students expressed concern about the insecurity of their status in the country, improving access to long-term residency and family reunification for international students could send a positive signal to current or prospective students. If countries are keen to encourage international students to stay on after graduation, policies on these and other issues will have to become more inclusive of students and better tailored to their needs.

1. New interest in international students as prospective migrants

International students have come into the spotlight as an attractive group of prospective skilled migrants. They are young, highly educated and already equipped with host country credentials. Against the backdrop of an ageing society, projected labour market shortages and increased competition in the globalised knowledge economy, more and more countries are introducing measures to facilitate international students' stay and entry into the labour market after graduation.

Promoting study-to-work pathways for international students, or a 'train and retain' approach, is viewed as a practical policy goal from several perspectives. Most significantly, international students possess a number of characteristics that differentiate them from regular economic migrants: they have fully recognised credentials, locally relevant education and often work experience, and are familiar with the culture, language, practices and regulations of the host country (Suter/Jandl 2008). Moreover, in countries with publicly funded university systems such as Germany and France, the state has already invested in their education. The transition of international students into the labour markets of these countries enables the state, therefore, to recoup some of its investment.

Although a number of studies – especially those carried out in the traditional immigration countries – have examined the increasing flows of international students and their motivations for studying abroad and choosing a destination (Altbach 2004; King/Ruiz-Gelices 2003), less is known about the factors that shape their post-study plans, particularly in the European context. The central theme of this report¹ is the question of the staying intentions of international students² in five EU Member States: France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The report is based on the 14-month project 'Value Migration' carried out by the Research Unit of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) in cooperation with the Migration Policy Group (MPG).

Key factors in whether international students stay on after graduation include the legal framework governing their stay and their ability to obtain post-study employment and residence. The first aspect of this project is therefore a comparison of the legal framework

for international students and graduates in the five countries under study, focusing on laws relevant to the period before, during and after their studies. The second component is a survey of over 6,200 international students at 25 universities. By surveying international students in the final stages of their studies, the project investigates students' propensity to stay on after graduation and the factors that originally motivated them to choose a study destination, as well as their awareness and assessment of the special legal rules that enable them to remain and work in the EU country in which they studied after graduation.

The legal review shows that there is considerable variation between the countries studied with regard to the entry criteria for international students and the length and nature of the post-study schemes available to them, but also identifies similarities in the legal frameworks, reflecting different and converging policies for international students. The empirical results of the online survey show that a high number of students are interested in prolonging their stay after graduation, mainly in order to gain international work experience before eventually returning home or moving onwards. While the staying intentions of international students are high in each of the countries studied, the survey results suggest that students are aware of and responsive to shifts towards more restrictive legal regimes and suggest that this is reflected in their post-study staying intentions. The report also highlights differences in the characteristics of the groups that plan to stay and those that plan to leave after graduation: the former are motivated primarily by career-related factors, while the latter cite family and personal relationship factors as important in their plans to leave. Differences according to region of origin and field of study are also noted.

1.1 International student migration: Measures to attract and retain students and graduates

The rapid growth and expansion of international student migration has been well documented (OECD 2011a; Teichler et al. 2011; Hawthorne 2008; Nuffic 2011; De Wit et al. 2008; UNESCO 2010). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

1 This study was supervised by Prof. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, member of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR). The responsibility for the study lies with the Expert Council's Research Unit. The arguments and conclusions contained herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR).

2 For the purposes of this report, international students are defined as those who have crossed borders for the main purpose of studying. Foreign residents who live in the country as result of their prior (non-study related) migration or that of their families are therefore outside of the scope of this report. When the report turns to the results of the survey of international students in five EU countries, the focus is specifically on non-EU nationals.



(OECD) reports that the number of students studying abroad increased by 77 per cent over the last decade, reaching nearly 3.7 million in 2009. Almost half of these students are enrolled in just five countries: the US (18 %), the UK (10 %), Australia (7 %), Germany (7 %), and France (7 %). Internationally, China is the leading source country for international students, followed by India. Fifty-three per cent of international students worldwide come from Asia, which has quickly become the most prominent sending region.

In recent years, countries in the EU and elsewhere have introduced significant policy changes or adapted existing policies and laws in order to provide international students with options for transitioning to work and residence after graduating. Policy measures that promote the retention of international students include:

- post-study 'job-search' schemes that allow international students to stay in the country after graduation for the purpose of job seeking;
- the general streamlining of procedures for obtaining student visas and highly skilled work permits;
- amended naturalisation and permanent residency laws that take years of residence as an international student into account when assessing eligibility for acquiring citizenship/long-term residence status;
- the easing of work restrictions during the study and post-study periods;
- new visa categories specifically designed to attract and retain international students;
- privileges for international graduates when accessing certain visa schemes, e. g. lower minimum income requirements and the waiver of labour market tests (priority examination).

The policy goal of attracting and retaining highly skilled³ migrants has therefore grown to encompass international students and graduates. While the traditional immigration countries of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the US have for quite some time had pathways in place for international students to transition to

work and sometimes permanent residence, EU countries have taken a less assertive approach⁴ (Merwood 2007; Wilkinson et al. 2010). Indeed, retention policies in EU countries differ from those in the traditional immigration countries in that they generally promote the initial entry of international graduates into the labour market but not necessarily their permanent settlement. The introduction of the Blue Card in some EU Member States may facilitate the longer-term settlement of former international students, although the outcomes are yet to be seen.⁵

Although the general trend in the legal procedures for international students in EU Member States has been one of liberalisation, international students are not exempt from measures to control and limit who enters and stays on a country's territory. Indeed, international students can be targeted in countries where there is political or public pressure to reduce net levels of immigration. This reaction, most explicit in the new reforms to the UK's student system but also gaining currency in the Netherlands and France, stresses the inherently temporary nature of an international student's stay. The UK Border Agency,⁶ for example, recently announced that it aims to reduce the allocation of student visas for non-EU residents as part of its broader plan to reduce net migration to the UK and tackle abuse of student visa procedures⁷ (Mulley/Sachrajda 2011; Easton 2011). In line with this aim, a major reform of the student visa regime, with tougher regulations for international students and graduates, will take effect in April 2012, including more stringent language requirements and time limits for the completion of programmes of study. Significantly, the current Post-Study Work scheme, which allows international graduates to remain in the UK for up to two years and undertake employment without a sponsor, will also come to an end.

Shifts in the policies and practices of the higher education sector have also lent themselves to the increased attraction and retention of international students. With unprecedented competition for inter-

3 There is no universal definition of highly skilled or highly qualified; rather, varying definitions are used, typically based on educational qualification levels, and/or specific occupation or sector, and/or salary level (EMN 2007).

4 For example, the Canadian Experience Class programme has been developed with a specific focus on retaining international students as permanent residents, and enables students to obtain permanent residency and then citizenship after two years of study and one year of work experience (Gates-Gasse 2010).

5 The EU Blue Card allows highly skilled non-EU nationals to work and live in the EU if they meet certain conditions, including being able to present a binding job offer specifying a gross salary of at least 1.5 times the national average. The Blue Card Directive (Directive 2009/50/EC) has been implemented in the Netherlands and France and will soon be implemented in Sweden and Germany. It will not be implemented in the UK.

6 The UK Border Agency is an agency of the Home Office, which is the lead UK department for immigration. The Agency is responsible, inter alia, for controlling migration and considers applications to enter or stay in the UK.

7 Proponents of the tightening of the visa procedures for international students in the UK argue that there was significant abuse and misuse of the relatively liberal visa procedures, with students enrolled at bogus universities and using the post-study work opportunities to access low-skilled jobs rather than those commensurate with their qualifications.

national students, higher education providers have become more consumer-oriented, providing services geared specifically towards international students and scholars such as academic counselling, career services, accommodation assistance, multilingual websites and language courses. There has also been a rapid growth in the marketisation of higher education and recruitment campaigns for international students, expansion in the provision of programmes taught in English, growth in branch campuses and cross-border collaborations and efforts to make degrees and qualifications more compatible and comparable internationally (Altbach/Knight 2007; Verbik/Lasanowski 2007; Robertson 2006; Waters/Brooks 2011). International benchmarking studies such as the International Student Barometer (ISB), as well as other research (e.g. BMBF 2010), show that there is still much to be done on the part of the higher education sector in order to sufficiently meet the needs and expectations of international students and to remain competitive in the international student market. The results from the ISB in Germany point to, for instance, the need to improve career advice services, learning and language support and visa advice for international students (Ripmeester/Pollock 2011). Given current trends, meeting the needs of international students and acting as a competitive player in the international market is likely to remain high on the agenda of the higher education sector.

1.2 International student stay rates: Three quarters leave after graduation

Direct comparisons of the number of international students that stay on after graduation in different countries are limited, as there is significant variation in how countries define international students as well as in what it means to 'stay on'. Nevertheless, the stay rates published by the OECD give an indication of how many students remain in the country after graduation (Fig. 1). The stay rate is defined as the proportion of international students changing to a status other than 'student', to the amount of international students not renewing their student permits in the same year. As such, it represents the share of students staying on for any reason, not necessarily those who enter the labour market or stay on a longer-term basis.

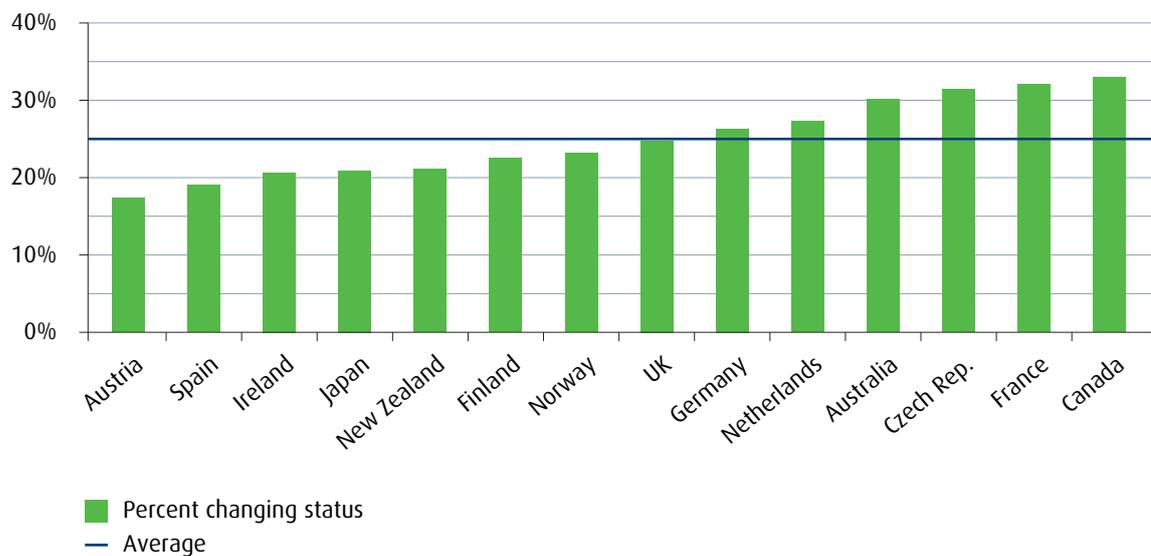
On average, across OECD countries, one quarter of international students stay on after graduation. Canada, France, the Czech Republic, Australia, the Netherlands and Germany all have above-average stay rates. The stay rate is highest in Canada, with nearly one third of international students staying on – significantly, 42 per cent transition directly to permanent residence status. It is important to note that stay rates are not generally disaggregated by length of stay, and thus do not

allow a differentiation to be made between students who may have stayed on for only a few months after graduation and those who stay for a longer period of time or settle permanently. Moreover, the OECD rates include students at all levels of study, while stay rates are known to differ by study level, with those pursuing more advanced degrees more likely to stay on than those at the bachelor level (Finn 2010).

Other sources (e.g. Finn 2010; Wolfeil 2010; Soon 2012) also provide information on the longer-term retention of international students. According to Wilkinson et al. (2010), between 1997 and 2006, 21 per cent of fee-paying international students in New Zealand transitioned to permanent residence, on average within four years of their first student permit. Merwood (2007) reports that approximately 24 per cent of international students in Australia who completed their course in 2002 gained permanent residence. On the basis of UK Home Office data, Mulley and Sachrajda (2011) estimate that no more than ten per cent of non-EEA (European Economic Area) students settle in the UK permanently. Finn (2010) computed the stay rates of international scholars receiving a science and engineering doctorate in the US one, two, five, and ten years previously and found them to be consistently high, ranging from 60 per cent (ten-year stay rate) to 73 per cent (one-year stay rate). He also finds clear variation in the stay rates across disciplines, with students in the fields of science and engineering having the highest propensity to stay, and those in the agricultural and social sciences having the lowest propensity. His findings suggest that a negative event such as a recession or a terrorist attack does affect the stay rate of doctorate recipients, mainly by affecting those graduating and looking for jobs at the time it takes place.

Although much attention has been directed at international students as a valuable group of potential qualified migrants, the OECD points out that 'even if all international students were to stay on, the addition to the youth population as a result of this would not appear to be especially high' (2011b: 65). Given that international students make up, on average, 3.3 per cent of those in the 20 to 24 age cohort in OECD countries (in only two countries – Australia and New Zealand – do they make up more than ten per cent), they do not represent a sizeable group of potential longer-term migrants in their current numbers. Moreover, international student flows can be volatile, changing with economic circumstances, developments in the international marketplace and expansions in home country educational provision. Thus, as Hawthorne (2008: 1) writes, 'international students are not a skilled-migration panacea'. Research findings have also questioned the assumption that international students have better employment outcomes and a higher degree of work readiness than regular economic migrants (Hawthorne

Fig. 1 Percentage of international students changing status and staying on in selected OECD countries (stay rate), 2008 or 2009



Note: For European countries, only students from outside the EEA were included.

Source: OECD 2011b: 67; own calculation

2010; Sidhu 2011). Nevertheless, from an economic perspective, the added value brought by international students is expected to be high, as their age and education level mean a relatively low level of exposure to unemployment and welfare dependency and a high likelihood that they will become net contributors to the national economy. Combined with other initiatives, the retention of international students is therefore likely to help offset labour shortages and mitigate the impacts of an ageing workforce. In addition, it is thought to be valuable for strengthening economic and sociocultural relationships and exchange between countries.

1.3 Higher education in Germany, France, the Netherlands, the UK and Sweden: Differences in international students

The five EU Member States which are the focus of this study have all witnessed rapid growth in the number of international students and graduates, but vary with regard to the structural characteristics of their higher education systems, their stock of international students and the legal framework governing international students and highly skilled migration (Tab. 1).

The UK is the only European country that is considered to be one of the 'major players' in international higher education, along with the US and Australia

(Verbik/Lasanowski 2007). English-speaking countries attract the greatest number of international students worldwide, reflecting the widespread use of English across the globe. The UK therefore has a competitive advantage in the international market over other EU countries (Perkins/Neumayer 2011). Educational institutions in non-English speaking countries, however, increasingly offer programmes taught fully in English in order to increase their attractiveness to international students. Dutch universities are the current unchallenged front runner in continental Europe with regard to the share of English-taught programmes. Currently, over half of all bachelor's and master's programmes at Dutch universities are taught in English.

The cost of international student tuition fees varies widely across the five countries surveyed. In most EU countries, tuition fees are different for EU and non-EU students, though this is not the case for Germany or France. International students pay the highest fees in the UK (around EUR 18,000 a year for master's courses), followed by the Netherlands (between EUR 14,000 and EUR 19,700), Sweden (between EUR 8,500 and EUR 15,000), Germany (up to EUR 1,000, but non-existent in many *Länder*) and France (up to EUR 750 a year). However, the more elite *grandes écoles* in France can charge tuition fees of up to around EUR 16,000 a year. Sweden only recently introduced tuition fees for international students, and has thus transitioned from the

Tab.1 Key characteristics of the five countries surveyed

	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Tuition fees*	Low	Low	High	High	High
	No variation for domestic/international students	No variation for domestic/international students, but fees at <i>grandes écoles</i> vary	Higher fees for international students	Higher fees for international students	No fees for domestic students, but fees for international students
	Up to € 1,000 but non-existent in several <i>Länder</i>	€ 750 at public universities, but up to € 16,000 at the <i>grandes écoles</i>	€ 15,000	€ 18,000	€ 12,000
Share of foreign students** in tertiary stock	10.5 %	11.5 %	7.2 %	20.7 %	9.4 %
Main countries of origin of international students	1. China 2. Russia 3. Poland 4. Bulgaria 5. Turkey	1. Morocco 2. China 3. Algeria 4. Tunisia 5. Senegal	1. Germany 2. China 3. Belgium 4. Spain 5. France	1. China 2. India 3. Nigeria 4. Ireland 5. Germany	1. China 2. Pakistan 3. Finland 4. Iran 5. India

* Approximate annual non-EU student tuition fees at the master's level. Fees do however often vary considerably by discipline and institution.

** These figures originate from the OECD (2011a: 333) and include both EU and non-EU foreign students, defined as those who do not hold the citizenship of these countries. Comparable figures across the five countries were available for only this group.

Sources: Högskoleverket 2010: 57; Nuffic 2011:15; DAAD/HIS 2011a; Ministère de l'éducation nationale 2011; HESA 2011; OECD 2011a: 333

German/French model of state-subsidised education for EU and non-EU citizens alike to the UK/Dutch model of cost recovery for international students. Among the five countries, then, the state most heavily subsidises the education of international students in France and Germany. The more market-based approach pursued in the other three countries means that universities are much more dependent on the fees paid by international students as a source of revenue.

The UK attracts the greatest number of international students across the five countries surveyed, followed by Germany and France. The UK also has the largest share of foreign students among tertiary enrolments (20.7 %), followed by France (11.5 %), Germany (10.5 %), Sweden (9.4 %), and the Netherlands (7.2 %) (OECD 2011a). China is the first or second most predominant country of origin of international students in all of the countries surveyed, reflecting trends on the

global scale. The importance of geographical proximity, language and historical and colonial ties in shaping the flow of international student migration is also apparent when looking at the stock of international students in each country. For example, four of the top five countries of origin of international students in France are part of the country's former colonial empire, as are three of the main sending countries in the UK. The Netherlands stands out as hosting a large number of students from the EU – a full two thirds of its international students are citizens of an EU country, mainly Germany and Belgium (Nuffic 2011).

There is both considerable variation and a number of similarities between the countries surveyed in terms of the legal frameworks for international students and graduates and the schemes that enable students to stay on after graduation; this reflects different and converging policies as regards international students.



2. The legal frameworks for international students and graduates in five countries

As outlined above, the five countries surveyed in this report have experienced rapid growth in the number of international students in their respective higher education institutions. The national reaction to this growth has been, on the one hand, positive, with international students often considered as a source of much-needed funds for universities (particularly where tuition fees are high – in the Netherlands and the UK) and qualified workers for the labour market. However there is growing concern in some of these countries that too many students who gain entry as temporary migrants will become permanent residents – or worse, abuse the student admissions procedure to access the country for purposes other than genuine study. These countries must meet the challenge of building a legal framework that enables them to compete in the global labour market for highly skilled migrants (readily available in the form of international graduates), while at the same time responding to national demands to reduce overall immigration numbers. Various national and EU legislative measures reflect this challenge and influence government responses, whether these entail a call for more restrictions, greater incentives for international students and graduates to study and work, or indeed a mix of both.

2.1 EU level: Policies and regulations for international students and scholars

At the EU level, the European Council has called for legal immigration to be organised to take account of the priorities, needs and reception capacities determined by each Member State.⁸ Policies and laws governing the admission and retention of international students fit into the overarching ‘needs-based approach’ to the management of legal migration to the EU followed by the EU and its Member States; that is, to allow labour migration in sectors of the economy where migrants are specifically required. This approach is often geared towards attracting highly skilled migrants, which, in principle, extends to attracting and retaining interna-

tional students and researchers (Hinte et al. 2011). Increasing the attractiveness of the EU to highly qualified workers and taking measures to allow for the reception of students and researchers and their movement within the EU are thus current EU priorities. This reflects the EU’s sectoral approach to immigration, with students, researchers and highly qualified workers each benefiting from specific EU directives facilitating their entry, residence and mobility in the EU,⁹ unlike general economic migrants who are still largely governed by a patchwork of more or less restrictive national legislative measures.¹⁰ The choice of the EU as a study destination is further encouraged by the purpose-built EU websites Study in Europe (for students) and EURAXESS (for researchers).

While there are no EU-wide rules covering the transition from international student to worker, the European Commission’s recent report on the application of Council Directive 2004/114/EC on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purpose of studies (hereinafter the ‘Students Directive’) highlights the retention of international students in the workforce after graduation as an issue that needs to be addressed. The report also cites access to work at the end of the period of study as a ‘decisive factor’ in the choice of destination country (COM(2011) 587: 11). International students may also enjoy better opportunities to stay on and work in the EU after graduating following implementation of the Blue Card Directive for highly qualified workers, although the wage requirements and other conditions may limit such opportunities in practice.¹¹

2.2 National level: Legal frameworks for international students

A needs-based approach to immigration is also found at national level. All of the countries surveyed have experienced policy shifts in this direction in recent times, mainly to facilitate the immigration of highly skilled migrants. In 2008, Sweden put in place a demand-driven system which included provisions allowing international graduates in employment to stay in the country. In the same year, a points-based system for immigra-

8 European Pact on Immigration and Asylum – 24 September 2008.

9 Respectively, Directive 2004/114/EC (‘Students Directive’) and Directive 2005/71/EC (‘Researchers Directive’). All countries surveyed except for the UK are bound by these EU-wide rules.

10 The Commission’s 2001 proposal for a directive to cover conditions for admission of all third-country nationals seeking entry into Member State labour markets was rejected and in 2005 it instead adopted a ‘sectoral’ approach, addressing selected categories of economic immigrants where common needs and interests existed.

11 As mentioned above, this Directive has been implemented in the Netherlands and France and will soon be implemented in Sweden and Germany. It will not, however, be implemented in the UK.

tion was introduced in the UK with a new post-study route for international graduates to access the labour market.¹² France adopted its policy of 'chosen immigration' (*politique d'immigration choisie*) in 2006, again to accommodate its economic needs, while Germany had the same intention when it switched to a more labour market-oriented management of migration in 2005. The respective new provisions in both countries allow international graduates to stay and look for a job – for six months in France and for one year in Germany. Finally, the Netherlands adopted the Skilled Workers Regulation in 2004 and introduced two new schemes in 2007 allowing international graduates to look for work or directly enter the labour market. Once implemented, the Modern Migration Policy Law¹³ will further consolidate the Netherlands' selective approach to the migration of students, graduates and workers.

International graduates have largely benefited from these developments at EU and national level, with increased legal certainty in the regime governing their status and improved opportunities to access the workforce. However, international students and graduates are by no means immune from measures to restrict and limit who enters and stays on a country's territory. Restrictive measures applicable to international students include:

- labour market tests and/or minimum wages necessary in order to access certain sectors of the labour market;
- the requirement to have a job on graduating (Sweden);
- the implementation of a more rigorous university selection procedure (including the requirement for universities to be registered with the relevant immigration authorities);
- active monitoring of international students during their stay (the Netherlands, the UK);
- the introduction of stricter controls on status change requests from student to worker (France);

- the obligation for the graduate to return home if he or she does not manage to find a suitable job within the given timeframe.

More fundamentally, time spent on a student permit in France, Sweden or the UK¹⁴ cannot be counted towards the time period needed to apply for permanent residence, highlighting the fact that students continue to be considered by these countries as temporary migrants. A different vision is adopted in Dutch and to some extent German policy,¹⁵ as well as in a growing number of other EU countries.¹⁶ International researchers (which can include PhD students) fare better, as time spent on a researcher permit in all countries apart from the UK can be counted when applying for permanent residency.

The following section briefly summarises a selection of general legal rules that apply to international students and graduates in the five countries surveyed.¹⁷ More details are given in the country reports below. It should be noted that international students from specific countries may enjoy a more beneficial status to the ones outlined in this report under international or bilateral agreements. For example, Turkish students who work part-time during their studies are treated as workers under the Association Agreement between the EC and Turkey according to a 2008 judgment of the European Court of Justice.¹⁸ These students are not subject to the general legal regime for students but instead enjoy a privileged residence status and access to the labour market.

2.3 Comparing the frameworks: Opposing trends in a dynamic field

This paper focuses specifically on the transition from student to worker and in general only considers the conditions applicable to student permits, although

12 This route will close in April 2012 – see the UK country report below.

13 The Modern Migration Policy Law was adopted in July 2010. While it should have been implemented on 1 January 2011, this has not yet happened due to technical difficulties. The new law overhauls the Aliens Act with regard to employment, study and family reunification and moves towards a more selective entry policy.

14 International students in the UK may, however, be able to benefit from provisions allowing applications for settlement on the basis of ten years of lawful residence.

15 International students in the Netherlands and Germany cannot actually apply for long-term residence while on a student permit, although the years spent there as a student can be counted at a later stage when applying for long-term residence.

16 Austria, Denmark, Portugal and Spain recently changed their laws to allow student years to be counted when applying for permanent residency (MIPEX 2012).

17 The comparative legal information and country reports were compiled and written by Eadaoin Ni Chaoimh, Associate Legal Policy Analyst at MPG, and a review was carried out by a legal expert in each of the countries surveyed. Given the dynamic nature of migration law, the information here reflects the situation, to the best of our knowledge, as of 1 December 2011. Changes that may have occurred after this date have not been taken into account, but are noted where possible. All currency conversions in this report reflect conversion rates in December 2011.

18 See European Commission Legal Services (2008).



some PhD students could in fact hold research permits; they would therefore be subject to a different legal regime.¹⁹ The EC Students Directive is particularly important in this context as it has been adopted by all of the countries surveyed except for the UK. This directive aims to make the EU more visible, attractive and accessible to international students by instituting a 'coordinated and transparent legal framework' to facilitate their entry to and residence in a Member State. It harmonises conditions such as administrative fees, duration of stay and grounds and procedures for the refusal to renew student permits if insufficient progress in studies is made. It also sets out minimum rules on part-time work for students which may influence their opportunities for finding work in their country of study after graduation. It does not contain preferential rules for family reunification; international students must comply with the general rules if they wish to be joined by a spouse or partner and minor children.²⁰ Nor does it regulate the transition from international student to migrant worker status.

Prior to studying

International students who meet the required admission criteria to study at a higher education institution are eligible to do so if they fulfil the conditions necessary to obtain a residence permit for study and/or a visa to enter and stay in the country concerned. The administrative fee for a student permit varies widely across the countries surveyed: EUR 74 in France, EUR 100 to EUR 110 in Germany, approximately EUR 110 in Sweden, EUR 900 in the Netherlands²¹ and approximately EUR 292 to EUR 807 in the UK, depending on whether the applicant is applying from inside or outside of the UK (Tab. 2). In all of the countries, prospective students must prove sufficient financial means to cover living

costs while studying, although the monthly amount differs from country to country (from EUR 430 per month in France to approximately EUR 685 to EUR 915 per month in the UK). Students in the UK and France are obliged to prove their language skills, and in Germany language proficiency may be examined by the Foreigners Authority if this is not a criterion for university entry. Language skills may also be tested in Sweden and the Netherlands, but as an admission criterion at the discretion of the university as opposed to a state requirement in order to receive a student permit.

In France, Sweden and Germany there are few restrictions on which higher education institutions can host international students, while in the UK and the Netherlands hosting institutions must be registered with the relevant immigration authorities. In the UK and the Netherlands, additional selective criteria for institutions to fulfil, as well as provisions to monitor the academic progress of international students, have either been recently introduced, or will soon be.²² The immigration authorities in the UK and, as of recently also in Sweden, additionally require students to prove that they can pay or have paid the course fees, unlike in Germany or France (where the fees are in any case low or non-existent) or in the Netherlands.

During studies

In France, Sweden and the Netherlands, international students receive a one-year permit, renewable during the study period.²³ In Germany this can be increased to two years, while in the UK permits are granted for the duration of a degree course.²⁴ International students are able to work at least part-time in all countries, as long as this does not interfere with their studies. Only the Netherlands requires employers of international students to obtain a work permit (although without

19 France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden have each implemented the Researchers Directive, which harmonises the rules for international researchers wanting to obtain a researcher permit. This permit may provide favourable conditions for family reunification and time spent on it can count in all four countries when applying for long-term residence. Whether it is possible to teach while on such a permit depends on the country, as do the options for looking for employment once the permit expires.

20 For details on how the Students Directive has been implemented in the Member States, see the Commission 2011 Report on its application – (COM(2011) 587 Final).

21 The high administrative fee payable in the Netherlands could be in breach of the Students Directive according to European Commission Report COM(2011) 587, page 9.

22 If a UK education provider wants to teach international students, it must apply to the UK Border Agency for a Tier 4 sponsor licence. If the application is approved, the education provider will receive a licence and will be added to the register of Tier 4 sponsors. The more 'trusted' the sponsor, the more classes it can offer. The duties of the sponsor include monitoring the student, for example reporting to the immigration authorities if he/she misses more than a certain percentage of classes without permission.

23 Under the Dutch Modern Migration Policy Law, student permits will be valid for the duration of the course.

24 The UK plans to introduce a five-year limit for studies on graduate courses in addition to the current three-year limit for studies below degree level.

Tab. 2 Key characteristics of the legal frameworks for international students

	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Prior to studying					
Fee for student permit	€ 100–110	€ 74	€ 900	€ 292–807	€ 110
Language requirements for student permit	Yes, admission criterion for university or state assessment	Yes, obligatory state test	No (but may be an admission criterion for university)	Yes, obligatory requirement for university	No (but may be an admission criterion for university)
Monthly financial requirement to be proved for student permit	€ 670	€ 430	€ 795	€ 685–915, depending on location	€ 800
During studies					
Permitted working hours	90 full days or 180 half days (approx. 14 hours per week), in addition to university student jobs An increase to 120 full days or 240 half days planned*	964 hours a year (approx. 18.5 hours per week)	10 hours per week in term time and full-time during vacation periods	Up to 20 hours per week in term time and full-time during vacation periods	No restriction on hours, so long as no interference with studies
Security of student permit status	Valid for 1–2 years; renewable	Valid for 1 year; renewable	Valid for 1 year; renewable	Valid for duration of studies	Valid for 1 year; renewable
Do student years count towards long-term residence?	Yes, half of student years count	No	Yes, in full	No	No
Post-study period					
Length and nature of post-study scheme	One-year scheme for job seeking An increase to 18 months planned*	Six-month scheme for job seeking	One-year scheme for working/job seeking	Two-year scheme for working/job seeking, but this will close in April 2012	No scheme at present; a six-month scheme is proposed



	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Post-study period					
Who qualifies for the post-study scheme?	All graduates	Graduates with a master's degree or higher	Two schemes: for one, all graduates with bachelor's or master's degrees; for the second, graduates with master's or PhD degrees who must also pass a points-based assessment	Graduates with a bachelor's or master's degree who must also pass a points-based assessment	Not applicable
Eligibility period for applying to post-study scheme	Must apply on graduation	Must apply 4 months before student permit expires	Must apply on graduation for first scheme and within 3 years for second scheme	12 months from the date the degree was awarded	Not applicable
Permitted working hours during the post-study scheme	90 full days or 180 half days, fulltime planned*	Approx. 18.5 hours per week	Full-time employment	Full-time employment	Not applicable
Conditions for working during Post-study scheme	If work exceeds 90 days, graduates must apply for a work permit, open access to labour market planned*	If work exceeds 18.5 hours per week, graduates must apply for a work permit	May require a labour market test. If the job is highly skilled, it must attract a salary of at least € 26,931 gross a year	No labour market test or other restrictions on employment	Not applicable
Special privileges for international students entering the labour market after the post-study scheme	No labour market test if the job matches their qualifications	No labour market test if job attracts a salary 1.5 times the minimum wage and corresponds to studies	Lower income threshold applies for the highly skilled migrant scheme	No labour market test if worker has held the job for at least six months and continues working for same employer. Automatically considered to fulfil English language requirement. May be exempt from maintenance requirement	None

	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Post-study period					
Conditions for entering labour market directly upon graduation	For the main pathway, no labour market test if job matches qualifications and/or is in 'highly qualified' category	Depends on the scheme. No labour market test if job is 'in demand', is for an EU Blue Card or is for Skills and Talents permit	Depends on the scheme. Labour market test or income threshold may apply	Normal conditions apply, i.e. labour market test required, job must be at a graduate level/sufficiently skilled, sponsorship required ²⁵	No labour market test
Is there a special scheme for highly skilled workers?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but limited	No

²⁵The draft bill implementing the EU Blue Card Directive liberalizes the regulations for international students. The draft bill (BT-17/8682) would allow international graduates to work full time and have open access to the labour market during the post-study period. An amendment proposed by the governing parliamentary groups (CDU/CSU and FDP) in March 2012 would further increase the period international graduates have to look for a qualified job from 12 to 18 months. In addition, international students would be allowed to work 120 full or 240 half days a year during their studies. The bill is supposed to be passed before parliamentary summer recess.

Source: MPG; own compilation

having to conduct a labour market test). International students also enjoy the right, in theory, to be reunited with family members. This could be difficult in practice, however, as international students must generally demonstrate sufficient financial resources to support their families. Moreover, family members will often not be able to work unless they themselves switch to the worker category. As mentioned, in France, Sweden and the UK it is not possible to count the time spent on a student permit when applying for long-term residence in France, Sweden or the UK. In the Netherlands and Germany, on the other hand, it can (the whole period and half of the period respectively).

Post-study employment

All countries allow graduates who succeed in finding a job before their student permit expires to switch to a general worker category and stay in the country, provided they fulfil the necessary conditions. For graduates who have not yet found a job but who wish to stay in the country to look for work, a special post-study

scheme to facilitate their search is in place in all countries but Sweden. The UK will, however, close this route from April 2012, while Sweden has recently proposed the establishment of such a scheme. The length of the post-study schemes varies from six months (France, Sweden's proposed scheme) to 12 months (Germany, Netherlands) to two years (UK's current scheme), and is in all cases non-renewable. This means that graduates on the scheme that have not succeeded in changing status by the time the term ends must leave the country.

An important differentiation can be made between the post-study schemes in the UK and the Netherlands and those in France and Germany. In the UK and to a certain extent in the Netherlands, the schemes in place can also be regarded as working schemes; in France and Germany, on the other hand, they are principally job-seeking schemes.²⁶ Accordingly, under the UK and Dutch schemes, international graduates are encouraged to find employment but are also free to work full-time for the duration of the scheme without having to switch to another worker category to do so. Neither a labour market test nor any additional limitations apply in the UK, while the only limitation in the Dutch

25 It is expected that some special privileges will apply to Tier 4 students who switch directly to the Tier 2 General category after the closure of the post-study worker scheme in April 2012. These include exemptions from the labour market test and the annual immigration quota.

26 New German regulations expected to come into force will, however, allow graduates to work full-time and have open access to the labour market during the post-study scheme, thus moving in the direction of the current UK and Dutch schemes.



Seeking Work after Graduation scheme is that a highly skilled job must attract a salary of at least EUR 26,931 gross a year. Graduates under the Dutch Highly Educated Persons scheme will, however, also be subject to the labour market test. Furthermore, neither this latter scheme nor the UK scheme require applicants to apply immediately upon graduation (unlike the French and German schemes), but instead offer graduates a time period of, respectively, three years and 12 months from graduation to do so. These schemes could, however, be seen as being more selective at point of entry since graduate access is subject to passing a points-based assessment. International students also face more controls when initially accessing UK and Dutch universities and during their studies, which could act as an additional, albeit indirect, filter.

In contrast to the Dutch and UK schemes, those in France and Germany allow individuals to look for work but require that they apply for permission and fulfil the necessary conditions to switch to a worker category if they wish to undertake full-time employment. During this interim period between graduation and employment, which must be accessed either prior to or upon graduation, graduates can work on a limited basis only (under the same conditions as students) until they successfully switch categories by taking up a position corresponding to their qualifications.²⁷ Graduates are not subject to a points-based assessment to access these schemes, although in France it is necessary to hold at least a master's degree in order to qualify. If they are successful in finding a job, international graduates must change to worker status but will be exempt from a labour market test if the job corresponds to their studies and/or is in the 'highly qualified' category. Under the French scheme, the job must also attract a salary of at least 1.5 times the minimum wage. Graduates who cannot meet these criteria may or may not be subject to a labour market test in order to work full-time, depending on the category of worker they wish to switch to.

The post-study schemes in France and Germany can therefore be viewed as largely a prolongation of the student permit which allow individuals to look for work directly after their studies, while the schemes in the Netherlands and in particular the UK in effect provide non-renewable working permits for a category of migrant worker seen as being 'in transition'. The non-renewable nature of the Dutch and UK schemes, however, means that participants who wish to stay after the end of the post-study period will use this time to find a job that will enable them to switch to another category of worker. In this way, the schemes in all four countries are comparable, with each making it easier for participants to switch to a worker category before its term ends than for economic migrants who apply through a general route.

All countries surveyed except Sweden currently have at least one special scheme in place for highly qualified/skilled workers which may allow exemption from labour market tests and which offers better security of status and rights (such as family reunification) for those who can meet the more rigorous requirements such as higher wages and qualifications.²⁸ These schemes respond to the selective 'needs-based' approach adopted by the EU and its Member States, under which the EU Blue Card scheme has been (or will shortly be) introduced in four of the five countries surveyed.²⁹ International graduates who do not qualify for a post-study scheme or who cannot meet the criteria for employment under the scheme must switch to another category of worker (including self-employed) and fulfil the conditions that generally apply to other non-EU migrants. In all countries, those who can neither find a suitable job nor successfully switch categories must leave the country. More detailed information on the options for international students to stay on after graduation in each of the countries is provided in the individual country reports below.

27 The graduate job-seeker can work 964 hours a year (approximately 18.5 hours per week) in France, and 90 days or 180 half-days a year in Germany (as noted above, proposed changes to the regulations in Germany would allow graduates to work full-time).

28 In April 2011 the UK ended a scheme which was specifically designed for highly skilled workers and did not require employer sponsorship or a resident labour market test (Tier 1 General scheme). Since the closure of that scheme, skilled workers must be sponsored by their employer and are generally subject to a resident labour market test, with few exemptions.

29 The extent to which the EU Blue Card will open up new opportunities for international students to enter the labour market in the different countries where it has been or is being implemented is difficult to predict. For example, while the Blue Card income threshold in Germany is generally EUR 44,800 and therefore relatively accessible for some international graduates, the considerably higher income threshold in the Netherlands (EUR 60,000) and the existence of the comparatively assessable highly-qualified migrant scheme (with an income threshold of EUR 26,931 for international graduates) casts doubt on the degree to which the Blue Card will be pursued by international graduates there.

3. Country reports

In this section, the legal frameworks governing the post-study period of international graduates in the five countries surveyed are reviewed in more detail. While section 2 summarises the pre-study, study and post-study periods, this section focuses primarily on the study-to-work pathways in place for international students. The country reports show that Germany is moving towards a more liberal regime for international students, while the UK is taking a number of steps to make their existing relatively liberal regime more restrictive. The Dutch framework offers successful international students a comparatively generous regime for prolonging their stay in the country; there are, however, comparatively stringent measures for international students at point of entry as well as during their studies. Sweden stands alone as the only country reviewed here which does not have a post-study scheme or a special scheme for highly skilled migrants in place, although if students receive a job offer before graduating they are not subject to a burdensome labour market test or 'skilled job' requirement.

3.1 Germany: A 'non-immigration country' undergoing liberalisation

German policy-makers regularly underline the need for Germany to attract skilled labour and improve its position in the international competition for highly qualified labour. As a result, policies are being developed that allow highly qualified migrant workers to enjoy a more favourable regime for entry into and staying in Germany, such as better security of residence and, in some cases, exemption from the labour market test when applying for a job. Some of these rules specifically target international graduates from German and foreign universities and aim to encourage them to work in Germany after graduation.

The Immigration Act which came into force in 2005 provided a legal framework for the labour market-oriented management of immigration. This included the introduction of a one-year job-seeking scheme for international graduates of German universities to ease their transition into the German labour market. Further changes were introduced in 2007, allowing graduates of German universities to take up employment in Germany without a labour market test being applied. In 2009, the Government implemented the Action Programme 'Labour migration's contribution to securing the skilled labour base in Germany', which

aims to attract more highly skilled/qualified workers from abroad to offset the lack of specialists in a number of sectors. This change brought about a reduction in the income requirement for certain highly qualified specialists. These more favourable rules for entering the labour market therefore relate to international graduates; regular migrant workers still ordinarily face a labour market test unless the type of work falls into the highly qualified category.

Once the entrance requirements are satisfied, non-EU citizens wishing to study in Germany have access to all higher education courses, as well as to courses to prepare for higher studies, such as language classes. In order to take advantage of such courses, they must be registered or have an invitation to register as a student at the relevant institution. There is no formal contact between the immigration authorities and universities with regard to the acceptance of non-EU students.

Post-study scheme

The post-study job-seeking scheme allows international graduates to stay on in Germany for up to one year to look for highly qualified employment. Upon graduation, individuals can apply to extend their residence permits within the framework of this scheme. This scheme is intended to be for job-seeking purposes, and graduates are therefore only permitted to work a limited number of hours (the same regulations that apply to students – 90 full days a year).³⁰ Graduates who find a job corresponding to their qualifications during the job-seeking period can be granted a change of status by the Foreigners Authority. If necessary, the Foreigners Authority will obtain the approval of the Federal Employment Agency. A labour market test will not be conducted if the job matches the individual's qualifications, which is a special privilege for international graduates.

Entering the workforce as an employee

Graduates with a job offer may also enter the labour market directly upon graduation. As above, a labour market test will not be conducted if the job matches their qualifications. However other general pre-conditions to obtain a residence permit must be fulfilled, such as proof of a secure livelihood, a valid passport and the same work and pay conditions as comparable German employees. Residence permits for work purposes are generally limited to the duration of the

³⁰ As noted above, new regulations are expected to come into force later in 2012 which would allow graduates to work full-time and have open access to the labour market during the one-year post-study period (see page 18).



Legislative timeline in Germany

January 2005	Immigration Act comes into force providing a legal framework for the labour market-oriented management of immigration and integration measures. Includes a provision allowing international graduates of German universities to remain in Germany for one year to find appropriate employment.
August 2007	Implementation of the Students Directive and the Researchers Directive
October 2007	Decree on the Admission of Foreign Graduates to the Labour Market comes into force, abandoning the labour market test for international graduates of German universities.
July 2008	Federal Government Action Programme 'Labour migration's contribution to securing the skilled labour base in Germany' introduced with the aim of attracting more highly skilled/qualified workers from abroad to counteract a lack of specialists.
January 2009	Labour Migration Control Act implements the Government's 2008 Action Programme, lowering the income limit for certain highly qualified specialists, granting access to the labour market to graduates of foreign universities and allowing graduates of German universities to work in Germany.
December 2011	Federal Government adopts draft bill to implement the EU Blue Card Directive and ease the restrictions on the employment of international graduates during the post-study period (<i>Hochqualifiziertenrichtlinie</i>). Changes in the bill would improve the work and residence opportunities for international students in Germany (full-time employment during the post-study period permitted; eligibility to apply for a permanent residence permit after two years of (qualified) employment (previously five years); no review of employment conditions by Federal Employment Agency).
March 2012	The amendment proposed by the governing parliamentary groups (CDU/CSU and FDP) would further increase the period international graduates have to look for a qualified job from 12 to 18 months. In addition, international students would be allowed to work 120 full or 240 half days a year during their studies.

Overview of study-to-work options in Germany

Post-study scheme (student specific)	One year in length Essentially a job-seeking scheme Only a limited amount of work allowed under the scheme Must switch categories in order to take up full-time employment
Entering the workforce as an employee	No labour market test applies if students find a job matching their qualifications, otherwise general conditions apply
Highly qualified scheme	No special regulations for international students; they must meet the general conditions (outlined below) Income threshold of € 67,200 Permanent residence permit granted
Further avenues (not covered)	Residence permit for research purposes; starting up a business; freelancer visa

employment, although a worker who loses his/her job can stay in Germany until the residence permit expires, unless otherwise stated. If the residence permit is tied to a specific employer or to a specific position, the worker will need permission from the Foreigners Authority to change jobs, who must in turn ask the Federal Employment Service for its consent (where appropriate). After five years of residence in Germany, the worker may apply for a settlement permit or EC long-term residence permit. He/she can count half the time spent as a student towards the five-year eligibility requirement. The bill to implement the EU Blue Card Directive in Germany (*Hochqualifiziertenrichtlinie*) would also allow international graduates to be eligible for a permanent residence permit after two years of qualified employment in which they have paid contributions to statutory pension insurance.

Entering the workforce as a highly qualified employee

Individuals who secure highly qualified work can obtain permanent residence immediately through the granting of a settlement permit, unlike general workers who must wait five years before applying. While this status is ordinarily only available to migrants with jobs attracting a minimum salary of EUR 67,200 a year,³¹ the threshold can be lowered for scientists with specialist knowledge, teaching personnel or outstanding researchers. It is not necessary for a labour market test to be conducted. Settlement permits for the purpose of employment as a highly qualified worker are granted for an indefinite period of time. In the event of unemployment, the highly qualified employee can stay in Germany unless otherwise stated. Special regulations do not exist for international graduates wishing to transfer directly to this category upon graduation or during the job-seeking period. If implemented, the EU Blue Card Directive would require a minimum income of EUR 44,800 a year and holders of the card can apply for a permanent residence permit after paying two years of statutory pension insurance.

3.2 France: Mixed messages for international students

The French university registration procedure aims to attract high quality students residing abroad to follow higher education courses in France. To meet this goal, Campus France (formerly Edu France) was created in

March 2007. It aims to promote French higher education and training throughout the world, and has more than 100 offices in 75 countries.

More and more international students are staying on in France after they graduate, with the percentage rising from 21.7 per cent in 2002 to approximately 32 per cent in 2008. This trend has been facilitated to a certain extent by the introduction of a post-study job-seeking scheme in 2008, which allows graduates with a degree at master's level or higher to stay for six months to look for full-time employment. No labour market test applies on the condition that the graduate receives a salary greater than 1.5 times the national minimum wage and chooses a profession related to the studies pursued. Graduates can also remain in France by switching immediately to another category of migrant and obtaining the necessary permit; these include the Skills and Talents residence permit, the residence permit for researchers or a regular temporary residence permit for employees.

Notwithstanding these options in law, a ministerial decree issued in May 2011 (the *circulaire du 31 mai*, commonly referred to as the *circulaire Guéant*, after the French Minister of the Interior) directs relevant immigration authorities (the *préfectures*) to 'rigorously check' status change requests from student to employee, particularly when looking at the requirement that the job be appropriate to the studies undertaken. It also emphasises that the main aim of international students should be to return home and use their skills to the benefit of their countries. However, following large-scale student protests against the Decree, the Minister promised to clarify its scope by way of regulation.

International students can come to France to study in any public or private higher education institution. Those that need to pass an entrance exam can get a short-term visa for this purpose and, if successful, do not have to return home to complete their application. In order to receive the necessary permit, international students must prove admission (or pre-admission) to the relevant institution; there are then two different procedures depending on student situation and study level. International students do not need to show payment of tuition fees, which in any case are relatively low for public institutions.

Post-study scheme

International graduates with a degree at master's level or higher from a university in France can remain on French territory for six months to look for employment.

31 The amendment to the draft bill proposed by the governing parliamentary groups (CDU/CSU and FDP) would abolish this provision. Instead, holders of a Blue Card would be given permanent residency after three years (or two years with proof of proficiency in German at the B1-level).



Legislative timeline in France

March 2005	Code on the Entry and Residence of Foreigners and the Right of Asylum (CESEDA) comes into force. It has been amended three times since its adoption.
July 2006	First amendment of CESEDA incorporated the idea of selective immigration to take account of France's socio-economic needs. International graduates with a degree at master's level or higher can stay in France for up to six months to look for a job. Adoption of the Students Directive and the Researchers Directive
July 2007	International students can work while studying in France without having to request permission from relevant authorities.
Nov 2007	Second amendment of CESEDA: stricter family reunification and integration rules
May 2011	Ministerial Decree: stricter control on the appropriateness of the job to the studies undertaken when assessing change of status requests from student to employee
July 2011	Third amendment of CESEDA implements the EU Blue Card Directive

Overview of study-to-work options in France

Post-study scheme (<i>student specific</i>)	Six months in duration Must have a master's degree or higher to apply Essentially a job-seeking scheme Only a limited amount of work allowed under the scheme Graduates must switch categories to take up full-time employment
Entering the workforce as an employee	If switching from post-study scheme, no labour market test will apply if the job matches their studies and attracts a salary 1.5 times the minimum wage; otherwise general conditions apply No labour market test is applied if job is on the 'in demand' list.
Highly qualified scheme 'Skills and Talents'	No special regulations for international students; they must meet the general conditions which include the presentation of career plan, documentation showing its beneficial effect for France and the country of origin, and sufficient proficiency in French or the commitment to learn it over a period of two years. Labour market test does not apply Permit granted for three years and is renewable
Further avenues (<i>not covered</i>)	Research/scientific permit; EU Blue Card

In order to do so, they must apply for a temporary permit four months before their student residence permit expires. They are permitted to work during this six-month period; the same conditions apply as those that apply to employment during studies, that is, a maximum of 964 hours a year. Graduate job-seekers are authorised to start working full-time if they find a job that fits with their studies and the salary is at least equivalent to 1.5 times the minimum wage. Within 15 days of signing the employment contract, a request for change of status from student to employee must be submitted at the prefecture with jurisdiction over their place of residence. It is not necessary to conduct a labour market test. The temporary residence permit for employment purposes issued to international graduates is only valid for their first job and can be renewed until this comes to an end. International graduates who subsequently wish to change jobs will be subject to the same procedure as usually applies to other non-EU nationals, which may include a labour market test. The Ministerial Decree of 31 May 2011 specifies that these graduates should not enjoy more favourable treatment than other migrants when applying to change jobs.

Entering the workforce as an employee

An international graduate wishing to continue working in France as a temporary employee or to obtain a Skills and Talents permit without passing through the six-month graduate scheme outlined above will be subject to the same procedure as usually applies to non-EU nationals looking for an equivalent worker status. This may arise in the event that the graduate is ineligible for the post-study scheme (i.e. does not have a degree at master's level or higher) or cannot fulfil the required conditions (i.e. is unable to find a job offering 1.5 times the minimum wage that is relevant to his/her studies).

International graduates can submit a request to change status from student to temporary employee upon graduating if they have a job contract or an offer of a job in France. When considering the application, the government will assess a number of factors including the graduate's background and the duration of their studies in France. A labour market test will be conducted if the job is not on the 'in demand' list. If the graduate succeeds in obtaining authorisation to work, either an 'employed worker' permit (contract for a 12-month period or longer) or a 'temporary worker'

permit (contract for less than 12 months) will be issued – both are forms of temporary residence permits.

Entering the workforce under the Skills and Talents permit

Another option for the international graduate is to apply for a Skills and Talents permit by submitting an application with a project proposal four months before the expiry of the student residence permit. The purpose of this permit is to facilitate the entry into France of foreigners who are likely to make a significant and sustained contribution to the economic development or intellectual, scientific, cultural, humanitarian or athletic advancement of either France or their country of origin. The labour market situation will not be taken into consideration. The applicant must submit a presentation of his/her career plan and detail the skills that are needed in order to achieve the goals set out within it; additional documentation demonstrating the benefits to France and the applicant's country of origin can also be submitted in support of the application. The applicant must also demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the French language or at least make a commitment to learning it for a two-year period. The Skills and Talents permit is granted for a period of three years and is renewable. Spouses of permit-holders are also eligible to work in France.

3.3 Netherlands: Generous regulations for high-performing students

A current priority of the coalition government is the restructuring, control and reduction of immigration. One of the basic premises of the Netherlands' migration policy is the principle of shared responsibility between the government and institutions/companies that bring migrants to the Netherlands. This principle extends to both the admission of international students to Dutch universities and the admission of international graduates to the Dutch labour market, where employers play a central role.³² Once implemented, the Modern Migration Policy Law will further develop this role by obliging educational institutions and employers of highly skilled migrants to become recognised sponsors with responsibilities relating to the migrants they bring to the Netherlands. For example, educational institutions will be obliged to monitor their international students

32 For example, an employer must apply for authorisation from the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) in order to be able to employ highly skilled migrants. The employer must also sign a standard statement with the IND proving that they are up to date with their social security contributions and tax payments and have sufficient turnover to cover the new employee's salary.



Legislative timeline in the Netherlands

Oct 2004	The Skilled Workers Regulation (<i>Kennismigranten</i>) is enacted: PhD students, university lecturers and postdocs regarded as skilled workers without the minimum wage criterion
May 2006	Simplification of the procedure to determine the institutions that qualify as places where foreign students could study; Code of Conduct for International Students in Higher Education in the Netherlands launched
Nov 2006	Implementation of the Students Directive; scientific researchers with specialist knowledge and doctors exempt from minimum wage for skilled workers
August 2007	Higher education institutions can apply on behalf of prospective foreign students
Oct 2007	Implementation of the Researchers Directive
Dec 2007	Scheme for Seeking Work after Graduation enters into force
January 2009	Admission Scheme for Highly Educated Migrants enters into force
June 2011	Implementation of the EU Blue Card Directive

Overview of study-to-work options in the Netherlands

Post-study schemes	Two job-seeking/work schemes exist, each one year in length Full-time employment is permitted Graduates must have a master's or PhD degree and pass a points-based assessment in order to access the Admission Scheme for Highly Educated Persons
Entering the workforce as an employee	Labour market test may apply; depends on scheme
Highly skilled scheme	For standard applications, the job must attract € 37,575 for workers under 30 years old and € 50,239 for workers over 30 years old. Lower income threshold for international students if transferring from the post-study scheme (i.e. € 26,931) Permit granted for period of employment contract
Further avenues (not covered)	Self-employment; research visa; EU Blue Card

with regard to status³³ and academic progress and be more selective with admissions.

Currently, migrant workers wishing to work in the Netherlands must either find a job and obtain a work permit or meet the requirements to qualify as a highly skilled migrant, in which case a permit is not necessary. International graduates of Dutch universities enjoy a more favourable regime and may stay in the Netherlands for a 12-month postgraduate transition period to look for a job, after which they must either switch to one of the worker categories or return home. The 2004 Skilled Workers Regulation made it possible for PhD students, university lecturers and postdoctoral researchers (postdocs) to be regarded as skilled workers without having to meet the minimum income threshold.³⁴

In order to study in the Netherlands, international students must show proof of (provisional) admission to an educational institution funded or designated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The institution must have signed the Code of Conduct and have been entered in the register of the Education Implementation Service (*Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs*). The Code guarantees the quality of an institution's programmes and its student recruitment, selection and counselling procedures. The educational institution must also have entered into a covenant with the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND). International students seeking to pursue a course at a higher education institution that has not signed the Code of Conduct will not be able to obtain visas.³⁵

Seeking Work After Graduation scheme

Under the Seeking Work After Graduation scheme, international graduates of Dutch universities can spend up to twelve months in the Netherlands for the purpose of finding a job as a highly skilled migrant. In order to do so, graduates must hold a bachelor's or master's degree from a recognised Dutch higher education institution and must apply upon graduation. Although the scheme is primarily for seeking employment, graduates have free access to the labour market (both full-time and part-time employment) during this 12-month period and do not need a work permit. If the graduate finds a job that is highly skilled, their prospective employer must be authorised to hire highly skilled workers and the job must attract a minimum salary of EUR

26,931 gross a year (which is lower than the normal minimum threshold for highly skilled work). The cost of applying to participate in this scheme is EUR 600.

Admission Scheme for Highly Educated Persons

The Admission Scheme for Highly Educated Persons is aimed at non-EU citizens who have obtained a master's or a PhD degree from a recognised Dutch higher education institution or from a foreign university listed in the top 150 of the 2007 edition of the rankings published in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* or by Jiao Tong Shanghai University. Therefore, although international graduates of Dutch universities fall under the target group for this scheme, its scope is broader and encompasses graduates of non-Dutch universities as well. This scheme allows successful candidates to stay in (or come to) the Netherlands for a period of up to 12 months to find a job as a highly skilled migrant or to set up an innovative company. Applicants wishing to access this scheme are assessed on the basis of a points system; at least 35 points must be obtained. Thirty points are awarded for having a PhD, 25 points for a master's degree and five points if the applicant is aged between 21 and 40. An additional five points are awarded if the applicant previously lived in the Netherlands for either work or study purposes, speaks Dutch or English or gained their qualifications in a country that has signed the Bologna Declaration. While there is no need to prove financial means, the permit can be withdrawn if the migrant claims state benefits. Notably, graduates have three years from the date of graduation or the completion of their PhD to submit their application, which means that a direct transition to the scheme is not required. International students could therefore leave the country after graduation to live elsewhere and still apply for the scheme within a period of three years. The application fee is EUR 600. Successful applicants cannot freely access the labour market under this scheme and can only work if the employer obtains a work permit and all of the criteria of the labour market test are met (the employer must demonstrate that there are no EU/EEA workers available that are capable of doing the job). The job must attract a minimum salary of EUR 26,931 gross a year, which is lower than the usual minimum threshold for highly skilled work.

33 This will include informing the authorities of status changes. If a former international student is discovered to be illegally residing in the Netherlands within a year of the termination of his/her university sponsorship, the former sponsor will be obliged to pay a proportion of his/her repatriation costs.

34 The standard minimum income threshold is EUR 51,239, or EUR 37,575 if under 30 years of age.

35 Once the Modern Migration Policy Law comes into force, educational institutions will need to be recognised by the relevant authorities (the IND) in order to host international students.



Working after or switching categories during the post-study period

International graduates wishing to stay in the Netherlands after passing through one of the graduate schemes must switch to another worker category and fulfil the necessary conditions. Depending on the purpose of stay, the fee varies from EUR 600 to EUR 950. If a graduate wishes to work as a general (as opposed to a highly skilled) employee, their future employer must obtain a work permit and the application must be approved by the Centre for Work and Income. A labour market test will apply, with a work permit being granted only if there are no Dutch or other EU workers available to fill the position. The employer must report the vacancy to the authorities at least five weeks before applying and must have conducted extensive recruitment activities. Remuneration should be at least equivalent to the national minimum wage and employment conditions should comply with the relevant industry standards. In order to obtain the necessary residence permit, the prospective employee must prove that they have health insurance and sufficient funds and do not represent a threat to public order. The residence permit is valid for the same period as the work permit, with a maximum of three years, after which an extension can be granted on an annual basis. After three years of continuous work, however, free access to the Dutch labour market is granted.

To switch to the highly skilled worker category (*Kennismigranten*) and receive the necessary residence permit, graduates must be able to produce an employment contract which guarantees a minimum annual income of EUR 26,931 (lower than the general threshold to gain access to the highly skilled category of worker). The income requirement does not apply if the worker performs certain functions in an educational or research institution. The residence permit for highly skilled workers is granted for the duration of the employment contract, up to a maximum of five years, after which it may be possible to apply for permanent residence. Unlike the conditions for employing ordinary employees, employers do not need to apply to the Employment Insurance Agency (*Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen*) to obtain a work permit, but must instead sign a standard statement with the IND proving that they are up to date with their social security contributions and tax payments and have sufficient turnover to cover the new employee's salary. Employers must also be admitted to the highly skilled migrant procedure by the IND.

3.4 UK: The tightening of a relatively liberal regime

The UK Government introduced a points-based system for non-European Union migrants wishing to enter and stay in the country in 2008. The system is divided into different tiers according to the purpose of migration and the permitted activity sought; Tier 4 is for students. The transition from student to worker status is currently facilitated by the relatively generous Tier 1 Post-Study Work category. This scheme will close in April 2012, however; after this date, international graduates of UK universities wishing to remain in the UK to work will have to compete with other migrants to gain access to the labour market under the Tier 2 scheme, or qualify under one of the Tier 1 high value categories. Tier 5 is limited to certain types of temporary worker.³⁶

The closing of the Post-Study Work scheme is part of a package of measures with the stated government aim of delivering a strong migration system that 'tackles immigration abuse while allowing genuine students to study at genuine colleges' (UK Border Agency 2011b). These measures fall under wider government policies which include reducing net immigration, ensuring highly skilled workers find employment that is commensurate with their skills and qualifications, and breaking the link between temporary and permanent migration (i.e. reducing the availability of routes leading to settlement). International students have been specifically targeted under this policy, as the current government is of the opinion that 'the student visa system became the symbol of a broken and abused immigration system' and that there were 'too many people coming here to work and not to study', with 'too many foreign graduates staying on in the UK to work in unskilled jobs' and 'too many institutions selling immigration, not education' (May 2011).

The UK offers two main routes for international students wishing to come to the UK for their education. The student visitor route is for those wishing to study in the UK for a maximum of six months, while the Tier 4 route is for people who want to come to the UK for their full-time education. International students who wish to study in the UK at bachelor's, master's or PhD level must generally apply under the Tier 4 (General) category.

These international students must apply for full-time courses of study that are at an 'acceptable level' (i.e. lead to an approved qualification), which includes the courses listed above. Each educational institution providing such courses to international students must obtain a particular type of approval from the UK Border

36 These include charity workers, religious workers and creative and sporting workers.

Legislative timeline in the UK

2008	Points-based system starts replacing most work-based categories and Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) replaces the International Graduates Scheme
March 2009	Tier 4 of the points-based system introduced, replacing the previous student system which was based on the letter of confirmation of enrolment on a course received from an educational institution
May 2010	Government policy to reduce migration targets international students
March/July 2011	Tougher English language requirements and evidence of sufficient student funding; restrictions on working during studies and bringing family members; educational institutions must confirm that new courses represent genuine academic progression; application process streamlined for 'low-risk' nationals (i.e. those from 15 countries considered by the UK Border Agency to be low risk)
April 2012	Post-study work route will close; international graduates wishing to remain in the UK for work must qualify under another immigration category (mainly Tier 2)
By April 2012	Education providers wishing to accept international students must gain 'Highly Trusted Sponsor' status and have a satisfactory review or inspection record

Overview of study-to-work options in the UK

Tier 1 Post-Study Work scheme (to close in April 2012)	Two years in length A job-seeking/work scheme Full-time employment and self-employment is permitted Graduates must pass a points-based assessment to qualify
Entering the workforce as an employee (Tier 2 General scheme – Sponsored skilled worker)	Sponsorship required by a company or an organisation with the right to sponsor migrant workers Switching from post-study worker to Tier 2 (General) worker (until April 2012) Exemption from the 'resident labour market test' for those working for a sponsor as a post-study worker for at least six months Holding a degree which was taught in English is sufficient to fulfil English language requirement
	Switching from Tier 4 student to Tier 2 (General) worker (proposed regime) Exemption from resident labour market test Exemption from annual immigration quota
Other immigration routes (not covered)	Tier 1 (Entrepreneur); Tier 1 (Investor); Tier 1 (Exceptional talent); Tier 5 (Temporary workers)



Agency (UKBA) to sponsor students, known as a Tier 4 Sponsorship Licence. The UKBA publishes a register of institutions authorised to sponsor international students.

In order to be admitted to the UK for study purposes under the Tier 4 category, applicants must provide a Confirmation of Acceptance (CAS) from an approved education provider and prove that they have sufficient funds to cover their course fees and maintenance.³⁷ If necessary, applicants can be granted a temporary visa to pass an admission exam or attend an interview, with the possibility of switching in-country to the Tier 4 category. Prospective students can also come to the UK to follow a pre-sessional course leading to the main course of study and then extend their stay.

Post-Study Work scheme

The principal route for international graduates of UK universities to enter the workforce is currently the Tier 1 Post-Study Work category (to close in April 2012). The idea behind this scheme was to allow the UK to retain the most able international graduates who had already studied in the UK by offering them a two-year bridge to skilled migration routes. A change in the Government's immigration policy, with the aim of reducing net migration, has led to the decision to abolish the scheme with effect from April 2012. The Government has, however, promised to continue facilitating access to the UK labour force for international graduates with a UK degree by waiving the labour market test requirement (UK Border Agency 2011a: 17). To qualify under the Tier 1 Post-Study Work category, applicants must score 95 points in the points-based assessment. Seventy-five points are awarded for the degree, which must have been obtained in the UK within the 12 months preceding the date of the application, from an approved institution, and while the student had a visa or leave to remain allowing them to study. The remaining points are awarded for English language skills and available financial resources.³⁸ The visa application fee is approximately EUR 545 (GBP 474) if the application is made from outside the UK, EUR 1,100 (GBP 918) if it is made in the UK in person and EUR 700 (GBP 594) if the application is submitted by post from inside the UK.

Post-study workers are granted a single two-year period of stay in the UK, with no possibility of extension. Indeed, post-study workers are expected and encouraged to switch to another category of worker, particularly the skilled worker category (Tier 2) (see

below). The time spent in the UK as a post-study worker cannot be counted towards the time needed to qualify for settlement, unless the applicant qualifies under the ten-year residence rule (see above). An international graduate who qualifies under the Post-Study Work scheme will be eligible to bring their family members with them. Additional fees are payable and additional financial resources must be available for each dependant family member. Post-study workers will not be able to claim most state benefits.

Entering the workforce as a sponsored skilled worker

There are a number of different immigration categories available to non-EEA/Swiss nationals who want to work in the UK, each with its own tailored 'points-based assessment'. International graduates may have the option of switching to one of these categories when they finish their studies in the UK without having to first return to their home country. The category most relevant to international graduates is the Sponsored Skilled Worker (Tier 2 – General) category; this seems likely to become the main route to the UK workforce for graduates after the Post-Study category closes. While graduates will be required to have a job offer from a licensed sponsor and must generally have an income of at least GBP 20,000 a year in order to switch to this category, the job will not be subject to the annual cap on Tier 2 numbers and the labour market test will not apply. This will make international graduates from UK universities more attractive to employers compared to overseas candidates, as the recruitment process will be easier, quicker and less costly.³⁹

An international graduate can switch to this category from Tier 4 and currently from Tier 1 (Post-Study), provided he/she has a job offer from a licensed sponsor and scores 70 points in the points-based assessment. Thirty points are awarded for a Certificate of Sponsorship, which is issued by the sponsor and confirms the level of salary that the candidate has been offered. If this is more than GBP 20,000 a year, a further 20 points are awarded. Employees who switch from the current Post-Study Work category having worked for their sponsor for at least six months are exempt from the labour market test. Candidates must usually show evidence of their English language abilities, for which they can claim ten points; graduates from UK universities can rely on their degree certificate to prove this

37 Maintenance funds are prescribed by the Government and depend on the duration of the course and its location.

38 GBP 2,800 in available funds if applying from abroad and GBP 800 if in the UK and applying to switch.

39 For more information on the proposed regime for international graduates due to come into force in April 2012, see the Government's Statement of Intent (UK Border Agency 2011a).

requirement. The remaining ten points are awarded for maintenance if evidence is shown of GBP 800 in available funds; this is awarded automatically for post-study workers switching in-country or when the sponsor confirms that he/she will maintain the applicant if necessary. The application fee is approximately EUR 460 (GBP 400) for those applying from outside the UK, while applications made from within the UK cost between EUR 632 (GBP 550) and EUR 977 (GBP 850).

Sponsored skilled workers can reside and work in the UK for either three years plus one month or for the time given on the certificate of sponsorship plus one month, whichever is shorter. They can then extend their stay by a further two years, or the time given on the certificate of sponsorship plus 14 days, whichever is shorter. They can bring a spouse/partner and any minor children if they have visas and can be supported without recourse to public funds. At present, skilled workers can apply for settlement if they have been in the UK for a continuous period of five years (excluding time spent as a student or post-study worker) and meet all the other requirements, including ongoing employment and English language skills.⁴⁰

Entering the labour market as a high value migrant (Entrepreneur or Investor)

Students may also switch to the high value migrant categories Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) and Tier 1 (Investor) without having to leave the UK, although they must have access to significant resources in order to do so. The UK Government has pledged to develop a new entrepreneur route for bright innovative students who have a business idea and want to make it work in the UK. This is intended to partially replace the current Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) scheme.⁴¹

3.5 Sweden: Slow mover in supporting the study-to-work transition

The Swedish regime for labour migration, including the possibility for students to work after their studies, underwent significant reform in 2008. Under previous rules, the Swedish authorities decided whether there was a need for skilled workers in a certain sector. The current regime places employers at the helm, as it is they who decide, after seeking appropriate employees within Sweden and the rest of the EU, whether there is

a need to recruit international employees. Under this open system, international graduates can stay in Sweden once they have a job offer without being subject to quotas, a burdensome labour market test, or a 'skilled job' requirement. Tuition fees were introduced for international students in Sweden during the 2011–12 academic year. Further proposed changes include a specific regime for highly skilled migrants and the possibility for international graduates to stay in Sweden for six months after graduation to find employment.

International students who wish to study at universities or colleges (at bachelor's, master's or PhD level) are eligible to apply for a residence permit for study purposes at the Swedish embassy in their home country. In order to be admitted to study in Sweden, the applicant must demonstrate admission as a full-time student at a university or college (including for post-graduate studies). Since autumn 2011 it has also been necessary for students to have paid for (at least) the first semester of studies to obtain a student residence permit. A single application fee of 900 SEK (EUR 85) is also charged upon application.

Absence of post-study scheme for international students

Non-EU nationals wishing to work in Sweden, including international graduates, must apply for a work permit. There is currently no specific regime for highly skilled workers but this may soon change. To get a work permit, graduates must have a written job offer from an employer or client based in Sweden. The salary, working conditions and other terms of employment should be at least equal to those applying to persons already residing in Sweden. The employer must also fulfil a number of obligations, including advertising the position in Sweden and in the EU for a ten-day period, offering equal or better contractual terms to those provided under a Swedish collective agreement (or which are customary for that occupation or industry) and ensuring the relevant trade union has had the opportunity to express an opinion on the terms and conditions of employment.

Entering the labour market as an economic migrant

International graduates (like other non-EU workers) can accept any job in the private and public sectors,

40 This is subject to the outcome of a consultation announced by the UK Government following its proposal to withdraw the availability of settlement for Tier 2 (General) workers (starting from those who entered the scheme in February 2011).

41 For more information on the proposed route for graduate entrepreneurs, see the UK Home Office's Statement of Intent (UK Border Agency 2011a).



Legislative timeline in Sweden

May 2006	Implementation of the Students Directive
July 2008	Implementation of the Researchers Directive
Dec 2008	New system to make it easier for non-EU workers to come to Sweden is demand-driven and non-sectoral. Visiting students who complete studies corresponding to 30 European Credit Transfers (ECTS) or one term of research can apply for a work permit while in Sweden but must have a job offer in order to do so.
July 2011	Proposal to allow international students having completed their university education in Sweden to stay for an additional six months to seek employment
Autumn 2011	Tuition fees introduced for non-EU students – decided by each university/institution

Overview of study-to-work options in Sweden

Post-study scheme (student specific)	No scheme exists
Entering the workforce as an employee	No special regulations for international students An employer's only obligations are to draw up a job offer, advertise the vacancy for ten days and ensure the employee enjoys equal working conditions and earns a sufficient income
Highly qualified scheme	No scheme exists
Further avenues (not covered)	Self-employment

or be self-employed under the same conditions as Swedes and other EU nationals. An international graduate who has a job offer can apply for a combined work and residence permit without having to return home. This permit is valid for the period of employment, for a maximum of two years at a time. It can be extended for a maximum of two additional years. A permanent residence permit can be granted after four years if the applicant has been continuously employed during this period. With a permanent residence permit, there is no need to apply for a work permit in order to work. After five years of legal and continuous residence, the worker may be granted EC long-term resident status. To change employer or move jobs during the first two

years of the permit, international workers must first apply for a new work permit. If the residence and work permit is renewed after two years, it is restricted to a certain profession and a new work permit must be sought if the holder wishes to change profession. If the worker becomes unemployed and does not get a new job within three months, the work permit may be withdrawn. The spouse/partner of international graduates working in Sweden and any children under 21 may also be granted residence permits. If a graduate worker has the right to work for more than six months, family members may also be granted work permits. Individuals must pay SEK 2,000 (EUR 220) when applying for a work permit for the first time.

4. Results of the online survey of international students

Between July and November 2011, international students at 25 universities across the five countries under study were asked to participate in an online survey. The target group of the survey was international students from non-EU countries, enrolled in degree programmes at the master's or PhD level, and in the final two years of their studies. Students in shorter-term exchange programmes or at bachelor level were not asked to take part. Moreover, the focus was on institutes with 'full' university status, i.e. those offering doctoral degrees.

The survey was made up of 35 questions and was available in French, English and German. Students were asked a range of questions about their socio-demographic characteristics, current situation and opinions on studying abroad, in addition to the factors underlying their choice of study destination and their plans after the completion of their studies. It also included three optional open questions allowing respondents to add additional comments. Before administering the online survey, qualitative and quantitative pre-tests were performed and the survey was adapted where necessary and re-tested. The main aim of the survey was to comparatively assess:

- (1) international students' propensity to stay in their country of study;
- (2) the reasons behind their decision to stay or to leave;
- (3) their understanding of the related legal framework.

A selection of differently sized universities in varying geographical locations and with different focuses was invited to take part in each country. Communication with the participating universities took place mainly through the universities' international offices. After agreeing to take part, universities were provided with instructions for inviting students from the target group and a standardised text to use in the e-mail invitation.

Students' participation in the survey was voluntary and all information was gathered anonymously.

The survey was administered at the participating German universities between July and August 2011 and at the universities in the other four countries between September and November 2011.⁴² In interpreting the resulting data, note should be taken of the comparatively small sample size in Sweden. Due to an overlapping timeframe with other national and international surveys and the desire to avoid over-surveying students, in addition to the relatively small number of universities in Sweden (i.e. 14), it was difficult to recruit Swedish universities for the survey.⁴³ The Swedish results have therefore been included in italics in the tables below but are generally not discussed in the text.

Response rates were calculated for all universities providing the total number of students receiving the survey invitation. Due to technical limitations, a small number of universities were unable to filter out the exact target group for the sending of the survey invitation, and could only send the invitation to all international students (i.e. EU and non-EU students) or those studying at all levels (i.e. bachelor's to PhD). For these universities no accurate response rate could be calculated. The overall response rate for the survey was 25 per cent for the 19 universities that supplied the data needed to calculate the rate. Prior to analysis, the dataset was checked and cases not falling in the target group (e.g. bachelor's students and respondents with EU citizenship) were filtered out. The final sample consisted of 6,239 respondents.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using the statistical software package SPSS. The answers to the open questions were analysed by identifying common themes and coding the responses;⁴⁴ this was done in order to give a better understanding and appreciation of the quantitative results. The quotes that are included below serve to illustrate common themes in the survey responses. As they were not selected on the basis of a statistically representative weighting, however, they

42 The earlier timing of the survey in Germany should be kept in mind when interpreting the survey results for Germany in comparison to those of the other countries. The timing of the survey in Germany was more likely to coincide with the end of respondents' studies and respondents in Germany are on average slightly older than respondents in the other countries.

43 After inviting all 14 full universities to take part and receiving only one agreement, a number of universities of applied sciences (*högskola*) were invited to take part. Moreover, the Swedish institutes were unable to create an e-mail list specifically for the survey target group, as they do not officially record students' nationalities. The participating Swedish institutes therefore used a more general e-mail list maintained by the international office, but this list does not contain all international students. The results from Sweden must therefore be interpreted with caution.

44 The survey contained two open questions that gave respondents the opportunity to add additional comments in relation to their motivations for staying or leaving after graduation, as well as a third open question at the end of the survey in which respondents could add any comments. The space for comments was unlimited. The analysis of the responses focused on factors related to either the intention to stay or leave, based on the following themes that were identified: integration-related factors (e.g. discrimination, climate of welcome, language, cultural differences), work-related factors (e.g. job chances, work culture), family and personal factors (e.g. obligation to care for parents, family reunion, desire to go home) and factors related to the legal framework (e.g. perception of legal opportunities).

cannot be taken as direct evidence of the importance of these issues to all international students in the sample. In comparing the dataset to the best available information on international students in each of the countries surveyed, the German, Dutch, French and UK samples can be seen to be fairly representative in terms of fields of study and countries of origin.⁴⁵ The exact degree of representativeness of the dataset is difficult to assess, however, due to discrepancies between the target group of this survey (i.e. master's and PhD students from non-EU countries) and the data available on international students in each of the countries under study (which often group together EU and non-EU international students and all levels of study).

4.1 The respondents: Sample size and background characteristics

The largest number of respondents were studying in Germany (N = 2,607), followed by the UK (N = 2,210), the Netherlands (N = 742) and France (N = 561) (Tab. 3). The average age of the respondents ranged from twenty-six in France and the Netherlands to twenty-eight in Germany. There were more male than female respondents in all countries except for the UK, reflecting the overrepresentation of engineering students in the sample due to the inclusion of sev-

eral large technical universities. The majority of the respondents were pursuing a master's degree, while between 17.9 per cent (Netherlands) and 42.1 per cent (UK) were pursuing a PhD.

The language in which the respondents completed the questionnaire reflects the growing internationalisation of higher education in Europe. For example, a full 69.3 per cent of the respondents in Germany took the survey in English, while only one third took it in German. The use of French was more common in France, where 62.7 per cent of the respondents took the questionnaire in French and only 37.1 per cent in English.

Respondents were pursuing degrees in a range of study areas, with engineering being the most popular discipline overall. Economics, law or business administration, and mathematics or natural sciences were the next most common fields of study (Fig. 2).

Regions of origin

The countries and regions of origin of the respondents reflect well-known linguistic and historical ties between countries, as well as broader trends in international student migration. China (23.5 %) is the most popular sending country overall for international students in the sample, followed by India (9.4 %), the

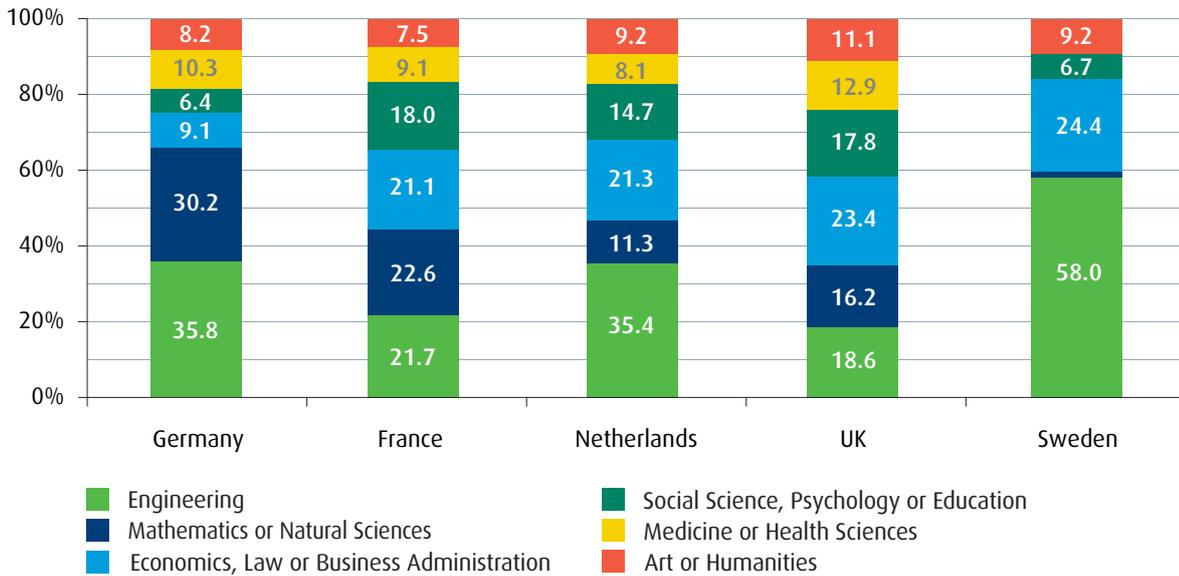
Tab. 3 Sample size and characteristics, by country

	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Sample size	2,607	561	742	2,210	119
Age	28	26	26	27	27.5
Female	41.2 %	48.3 %	47.1 %	53.3 %	21.2 %
Married	24.3 %	14.1 %	13.1 %	21.6 %	20.4 %
Children	11.3 %	7.6 %	5.2 %	11.4 %	8.4 %
Master's level	61.6 %	63.5 %	82.1 %	57.9 %	93.3 %
Survey language					
English	69.3 %	37.1 %	99.9 %	99.7 %	100 %
German	29.6 %	0.2 %	0.1 %	0 %	0 %
French	1.1 %	62.8 %	0 %	0.3 %	0 %

Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

⁴⁵ Comparison is made with national statistics provided by DAAD/HIS (2011b), HESA (2011), Ministère de l'éducation nationale (2011) and Nuffic (2011).

Fig. 2 Areas of study

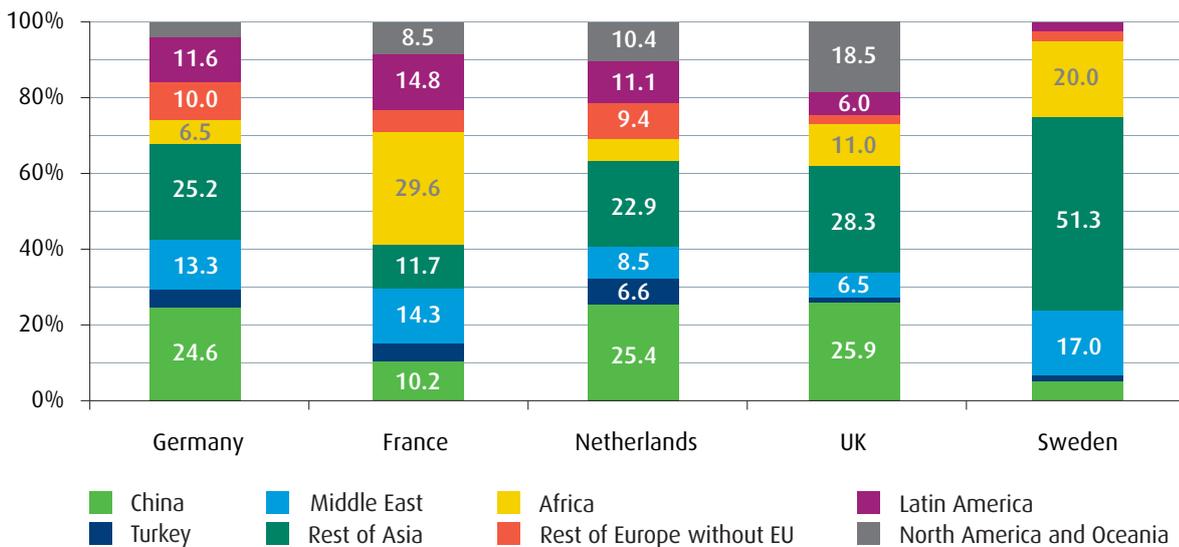


Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

US (6.8 %) and Iran (3.5 %). As seen in Fig. 3, approximately one in four students in the German, Dutch and UK samples came from China. In each of the countries surveyed, between 41 per cent (France) and 75 per cent (Sweden) of the sample originated from an Asian county. The popularity of France as a destina-

tion among students from Africa is reflected in the French sample, where they make up nearly one third of the respondents. The UK sample contains the largest number of students from North America, Australia and New Zealand (18.5 %), followed by the Dutch sample (10.4 %). Data limitations restrict the extent to which

Fig. 3 Respondent's region of origin



Source: Value Migration Survey 2011



Tab. 4 Proficiency in official language of host country

	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
A1 (basic or beginner)	22.6 %	4.8 %	79.8 %	0.4 %	65.5 %
A2 (elementary)	14.5 %	3.6 %	8.5 %	0.9 %	10.9 %
B1 (intermediate)	13.5 %	11.8 %	5.0 %	8.8 %	11.8 %
B2 (upper intermediate)	11.9 %	18.7 %	3.4 %	26.7 %	7.6 %
C1 (advanced)	25.4 %	26.4 %	1.5 %	30.4 %	4.2 %
C2 (mastery or proficiency)	12.1 %	34.8 %	1.8 %	32.8 %	0.0 %

Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

the characteristics of the target group of this survey can be compared with those of the general population in each of the countries under study. It can nevertheless be noted that the sample generally reflects country and region of origin patterns in all countries except for Sweden, where the sample size is small and not entirely consistent with broader patterns in international students' countries of origin.

Students' language skills (self-assessment)

Students assessed their proficiency in the host country's official language using a six-point scale based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ranging from A1 (basic or beginner) to C2 (mastery or proficiency) (Tab. 4). Turning to the last two rows of the table, it can be seen that while around 60 per cent of the French and UK samples rated their level of proficiency in the official language as advanced or proficient, this was the case for only just over a third of respondents in Germany. As expected,

very few respondents in the Netherlands or Sweden spoke these countries' official languages beyond a basic or elementary level. A substantial proportion of respondents in Germany also assessed their German language skills as only beginner's or elementary level.

4.2 Motivating factors when choosing a study destination: Educational quality and reputation

Across the full sample, 71.0 per cent of respondents indicated that their current country of study was their first-choice study destination. This was highest for France (79.0 %) and lowest for the Netherlands (59.4 %) (Tab. 5). The most commonly cited second-choice destination in each of the countries was the US. English-speaking countries – the main players in the international education market – clearly dominate the list of students' alternative study destination choices. Germany was the most common fourth choice among respondents in France and the Netherlands.

Tab. 5 Top choices of study destination

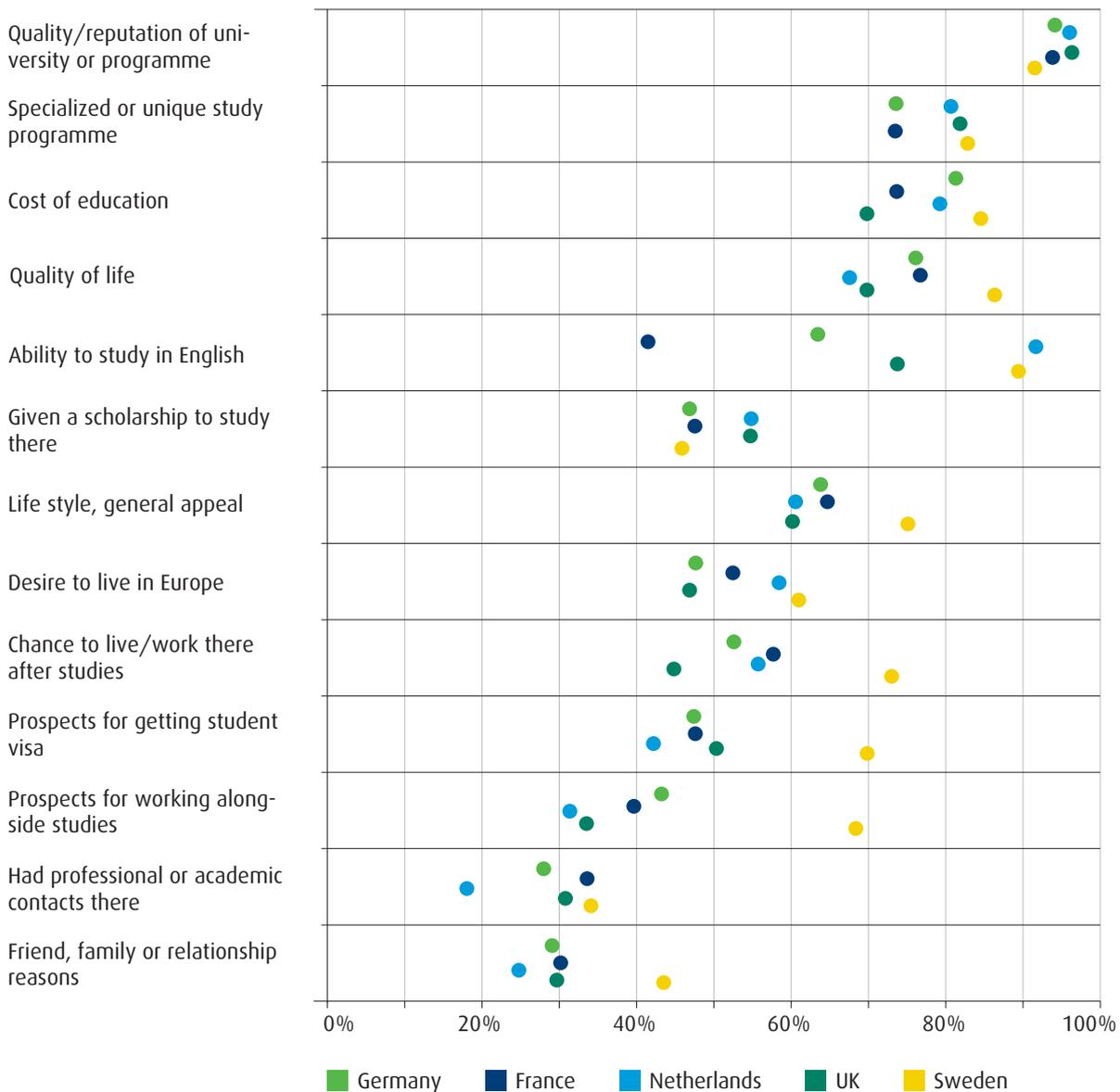
	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Current country was first-choice study destination	67.7 %	79.0 %	59.4 %	77.0 %	65.5 %
Second most common choice	USA	USA	USA	USA	USA
Third most common choice	UK	UK	UK	UK	Canada
Fourth most common choice	Canada	Germany	Germany	Canada	Australia

Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

Choosing a study destination is a multidimensional decision in which a number of factors play a role. These include the academic reputation of the university, tuition fees, personal relationships, and future work and migration opportunities. Survey respondents in all of the countries indicated that the quality or reputation of the university or study programme was the most important factor in their choice of study destination (Fig. 4). Across the full sample, 96.0 per cent of re-

spondents indicated that this was an important or very important factor in their decision to choose that study destination. Accessing a 'specialised or unique study programme' is the second most important factor, with 79.7 per cent indicating that it was important to their decision. In third place across the full sample is the cost of education (79.4 % indicated that it was important). The least important factors are having professional or academic contacts in the country (important for 42.7 %

Fig. 4 Factors influencing choice of study location



Note: This figure shows the number of respondents indicating that this factor is 'important' or 'very important'. The basis is a five-point scale, where the middle value is 'neither important nor unimportant'. Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

of the sample) and 'family, friend or relationship reasons' (important for 33.3 % of the sample).

Around half of the respondents indicated that the chance to live in the country *after* their studies was an important factor in their choice of study destination. This suggests that some students had post-study migration prospects in mind when originally choosing a study destination, and corresponds to the findings of other studies on international student mobility (Wilkinson et al. 2010; Jansen 2012). As discussed below, these students were also more likely to express the intention to stay on after graduation when compared to other respondents. Interestingly, the chance to live and work in the study destination after graduation was more commonly indicated as an important factor than the chance to work while studying.

In terms of the factors underlying the choice of study destination, some differences are apparent across the five countries. The cost of education was more commonly cited as an important factor for respondents in Germany than those in the other four countries, and was least important for respondents in the UK, who pay considerably more for their education. The ability to study in English was an important draw for respondents at Dutch universities, even more so than those at UK universities, and as expected was least important among students in France.

4.3 Staying on after graduation: Strong interest in gathering career experience

The survey asked students how likely they were to remain in their country of study for at least six addi-

tional months after graduation. Responses were to be given on a five-point scale, ranging from 'very likely' to 'very unlikely'. The scores at both ends of the scale were grouped together, resulting in three outcomes:

- (1) likely or very likely to stay (hereinafter the 'stayers'),
- (2) neither likely nor unlikely to stay (the 'undecided'),
- (3) unlikely or very unlikely to stay ('the leavers').

The staying intentions of master's and PhD students are shown separately in Tab. 6. A relatively high percentage of respondents expressed the intention to stay on after graduation, ranging from 51.4 per cent in the UK to 79.8 per cent in Germany for master's students, and a somewhat lower percentage for PhD students. Although the proportion of students intending to stay is relatively high, particularly in comparison to the stay rates published by the OECD, it is important to keep in mind that the target group of interest here is different to that used in the calculation of the OECD rates – it only includes master's and PhD students, who are known to have higher stay rates than bachelor's students. Moreover, while this question gauges students' intentions to stay, their actual plans may of course change. Nevertheless, it provides a good indication of how many students aim, at this stage in their studies, to stay on after graduation.

The comparatively high share of stayers in Germany is likely to be due, at least in part, to the timing of the survey there; students were surveyed during the summer term rather than at the beginning of the year. The respondents in Germany were therefore more likely to be at the end of their studies; they had also resided in Germany for a longer period of time, which,

Tab. 6 Students' staying intentions, by degree type

	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Master's students					
Stayers	79.8 %	65.4 %	64.0 %	51.4 %	75.7 %
Undecided	10.9 %	14.3 %	19.5 %	20.6 %	9.9 %
Leavers	9.3 %	20.2 %	16.4 %	28.0 %	14.4 %
PhD students					
Stayers	67.0 %	59.5 %	61.7 %	48.8 %	–
Undecided	17.7 %	13.2 %	18.8 %	24.2 %	–
Leavers	15.3 %	27.3 %	19.5 %	27.1 %	–

Note: Due to the low number of PhD students in the Swedish sample, staying intentions are calculated for master's students only.

Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

as discussed below, is related to the propensity to stay on. The implications of the earlier timing for the comparison of the results will be discussed further below in the section ‘Predicting students’ intentions to stay’.

Intended length of stay in the study destination

While between 35.4 and 43.4 per cent of the stayers were unsure of how long they expected to stay, the largest group are those that indicated that they would like to stay for one to two years (Fig. 5). A relatively small share, between 5.3 per cent in the UK and 12.5 per cent in Germany, planned to settle for the longer term (longer than five years).

Reasons for planning to stay on

Employment opportunities and the desire to gain international work experience are the two most important reasons for wishing to stay on after graduation (Fig. 6). The results indicate that career-related factors are much more important in the decision to stay on than reasons related to friends, family or personal relationships, or factors such as feeling a connection to the place. Combined with the fact that most of the stayers would like to stay on for just a few years, the results suggest that many are motivated by the desire to gain international work experience before eventu-

ally returning home or migrating to a non-EU country. This sentiment was reflected in students’ comments in the open questions of the survey. While plans can and do change, it appears that, at this stage of their studies, most of the students interested in staying on were motivated mainly by career-related factors as opposed to the desire to settle on a long-term basis.

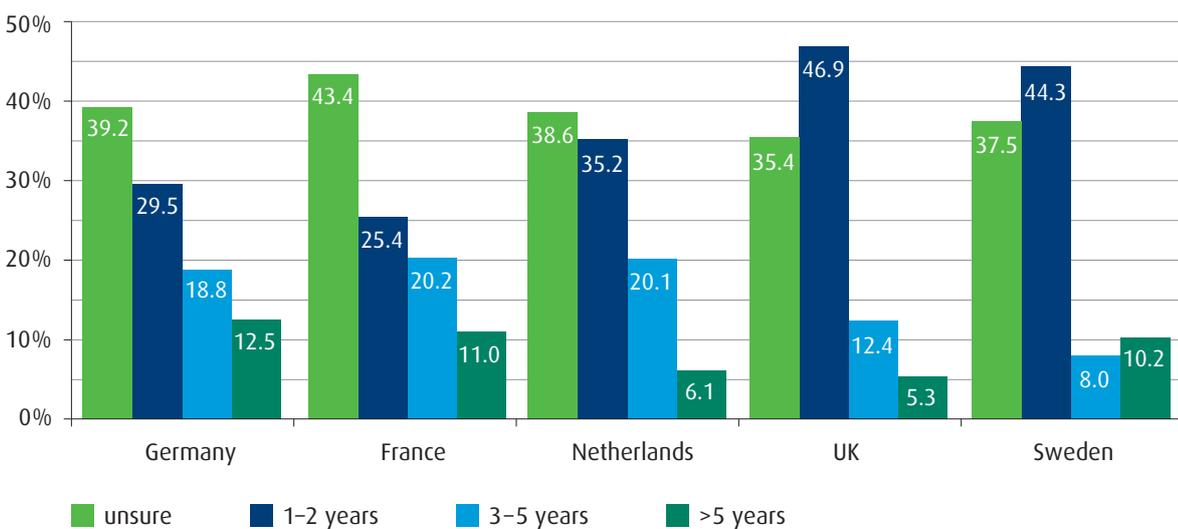
‘There are many big German companies in my home country. It would be a great opportunity to stay a bit longer to gain experience in a German company before permanently moving back home. It would of course raise the chance of getting good job offers later on, especially with German companies in my home country.’ *32 year-old Thai male studying engineering in Germany*

‘My ultimate aim is to get back to my home country after gaining good international experience in the Netherlands.’ *28 year-old Indian male studying economics/business in the Netherlands*

Having expressed a desire to stay on, respondents then used the open questions to comment on the factors that make this a complex decision, such as family considerations and uncertainty about employment chances:

‘I do not make my migration decisions alone. We are a family of four. Both my partner and I have studied

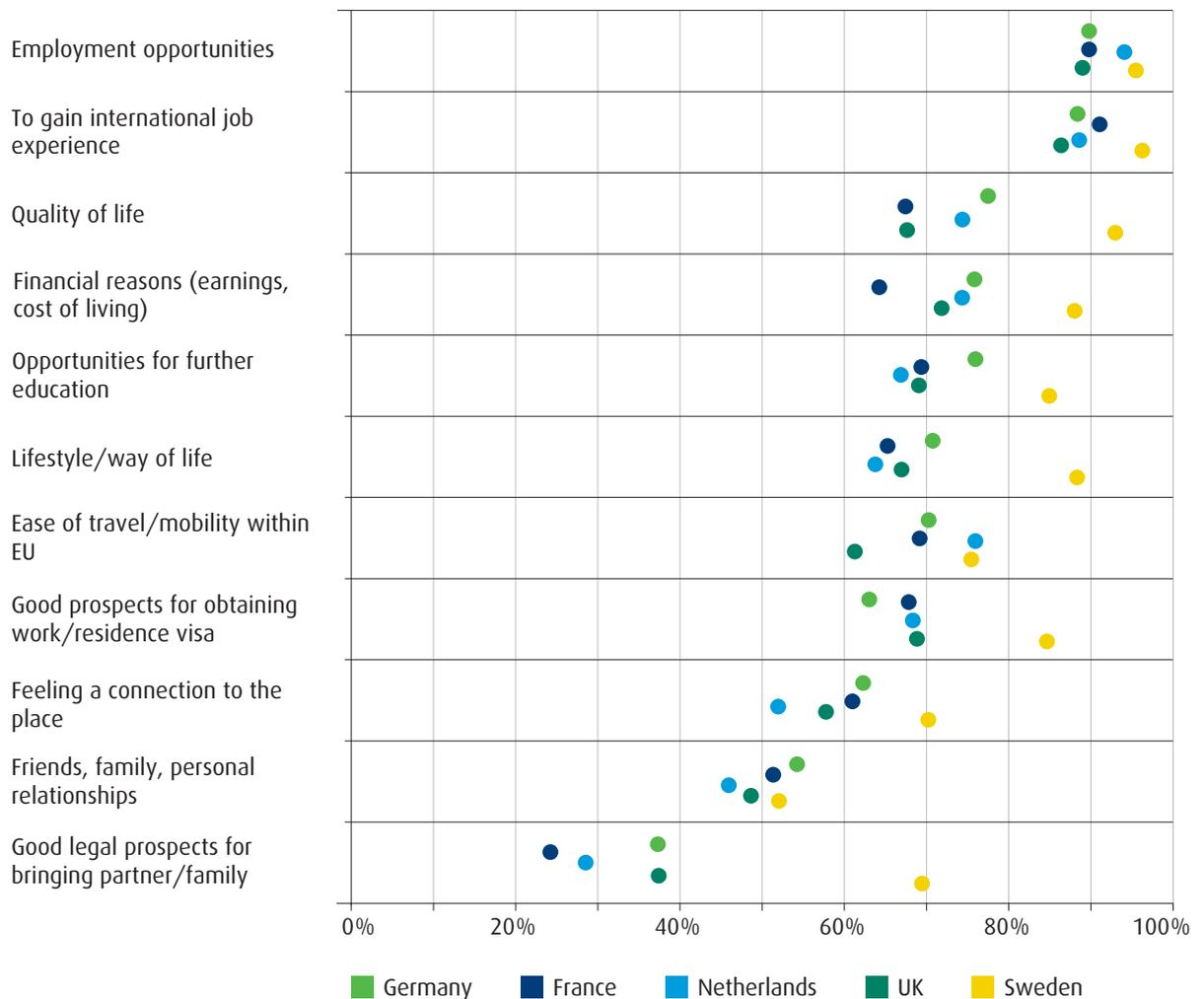
Fig. 5 Expected length of stay in country of study



Source: Value Migration Survey 2011



Fig. 6 Importance of different factors in students plans to stay on



Note: This figure shows the number of respondents indicating that this factor is 'important' or 'very important'. The basis is a five-point scale, where the middle value is 'neither important nor unimportant'.
Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

here and are responsible for this decision. We worry principally about access to money, quality of life and relocating the children. Both my children were born here. There are times it really feels like home, but then I am reminded by something (visa restrictions, distance of family, small cultural differences) that it is not.' *32 year-old American female studying social sciences in the UK*

'Whether I stay depends on the job prospects for my husband and me in the next few years. I have my first postdoctoral position lined up...but it depends

if we can secure permanent positions in the coming years. Otherwise, we will look in Europe. We also have a toddler so school is very important in our decision, as is the cost of living...' *30 year-old Guyanese female studying mathematics/natural sciences in the UK*

'For finding a job in Germany or the EU, the issue that concerns me the most is the language. For example, for me, I have to focus on my PhD project so much that I don't have too much time left for learning German, however, that will definitely strongly influence my job hunting opportunities. So I think the

government or university should have an organisation or agency that supports those English-speaking international students who would like to stay and work in the EU.' *27 year-old Chinese male, studying natural sciences/mathematics*

Characteristics of the 'stayers'

A number of characteristics are associated with the intention to stay on after graduation. Across the full sample, the stayers tend to be younger and are more likely to have resided in the country longer, to have work experience in the country, and to have indicated that their current country of study was their first-choice study destination. Significant differences in staying intentions can also be observed in relation to degree level, field of study and region of origin. Those studying at master's level and those pursuing engineering, mathematics or natural science degrees tend to be more interested in staying on, while there is less interest among respondents studying social sciences, art or humanities, and medicine or health sciences (Tab. 7). The staying intentions are therefore lowest among respondents in disciplines that require more culturally-specific knowledge and language skills (e.g. social sciences, humanities) and highest in those that are more technically oriented (e.g. engineering, mathematics). The economic situation in the country and the job prospects for certain occupational sectors, as well as the innovativeness of the sector, are also presumed to play a role.

The desire to stay was highest among respondents from China, Eastern Europe and Turkey. Respondents from English-speaking countries, namely the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, were the least interested in staying on. Somewhat surprisingly, the level of proficiency in the language of the host country is only significantly related to the propensity to stay for the respondents at German universities. In France, the Netherlands and Sweden, there is no association between language ability and the likelihood of staying on, while in the UK a negative relationship can be observed. This appears to be driven by the fact that students from English-speaking countries (e.g. US and Canada), which make up nearly one fifth of the UK sample, are relatively less interested in staying on. There are no differences between men and woman in terms of the propensity to stay. Whether the respondent had already obtained a prior degree abroad – an indicator of transnational mobility – is also unrelated to the intention to stay.

Several survey questions assessed students' experiences in and perceptions of their study destination. On the whole, the stayers are more satisfied with their experience of studying abroad and feel better informed about the legal procedures for obtaining a residence and/or work visa after graduation. They are also significantly more likely to view international students as being welcome to stay and look for work after they graduate and have a more positive perception of their job opportunities in the study destination. Among the stayers, the chance to stay and live or work in the country *after* their studies was more likely to be an important reason for choosing that country as a study destination in the first place. This shows that post-study plans and motivations certainly precede the stay abroad.

Predicting students' intentions to stay

While Tab. 7 shows the factors that are correlated to students' staying intentions, a logistic regression model enables us to identify those factors that are significantly associated with the likelihood of staying on by holding all other relevant factors constant. It therefore gives a more precise view of the factors that independently predict propensity to stay.

Three sets of explanatory variables were used in the model predicting the dichotomous outcome of 'intends to stay' or 'intends to leave': (1) personal characteristics, (2) education-related variables, and (3) perception- and experience-related variables.⁴⁶ The results generally correspond to the table described above; there are, however, a number of differences.

In a model with all of the variables included, the only respondents that were significantly less likely to stay on than the reference group (students of engineering) were social sciences, art and humanities students; there were no significant differences between respondents pursuing master's degrees as compared to PhD degrees. Respondents from North America, Latin America and Africa were significantly less likely to stay on than those from China (the reference group). Staying intentions did not differ significantly between students from China on the one hand, and those from Eastern Europe, Australia and Oceania, Turkey, the Middle East and the rest of Asia on the other. Older respondents and those with children were less likely to stay on, while those with work experience in the study country and who had resided there longer were more likely to do so. Indicating that the current country of

46 Dummy variables were also included to control for the university and the country of study.

Tab. 7 Factors related to the staying intentions of students, full sample

Characteristic	Propensity to stay
Age	-
Length of time in country	+
Work experience in country	+
Country was first choice study destination	+
Master's level (as compared to PhD level)	+
Area of study	
Engineering	+
Mathematics and natural sciences	+
Social science, psychology and education	-
Art and humanities	-
Medicine and health sciences	-
Advanced skills in host country language (<i>only in Germany</i>)	+
Level of satisfaction with study experience	+
Level of knowledge of post-study visa procedures	+
Agree that international students are welcome to stay and look for work after graduation	+

Note: Only significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) shown.

Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

study was the first-choice study destination or that a prior degree had been obtained abroad had no effect on the intention to stay.

Respondents who felt better informed about the legal opportunities for remaining in the country of study and those who expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the study experience were more likely to indicate that they intended to stay on. The extent to which respondents perceived international students as being welcome to stay on and look for work was not significantly related to their intention to stay.

4.4 Reasons for planning to leave after graduation: Family and personal relationships

In contrast to the stayers, the leavers indicated that family, friends and personal relationships played an important role in their decision to leave after gradu-

ation. Other important factors included accessing job and study opportunities elsewhere, financial considerations, language barriers (in Germany and the Netherlands) and not feeling welcome (especially in France). Relatively less important reasons for leaving included difficulties with the lifestyle of the host country and poor legal prospects for bringing family members or their partner to live with them. Consistent with the results described above for the 'stayers', a number of characteristics were associated with the intention to leave after graduation: being older, having a child, studying social sciences, art or humanities, and coming from North America, Latin America or Africa. Those who planned on leaving were less likely to have acquired work experience in the study destination and, as could be expected, felt less well-informed about the legal opportunities for staying on after graduation.

In the open comments, several respondents expressed their desire to use their skills and education to serve their home countries:

'Finishing my master's and demonstrating my willingness to use the acquired knowledge in my country is important for my country, where the knowledge is required.' *29 year-old Kenyan male studying humanities in Germany*

'Kosovo has a very severe environmental situation and lacks professionals in the field of both environmental policy and engineering. It is very important for me to contribute to my country's development in the field of environmental governance.' *27 year-old Kosovar female studying engineering in Germany*

'I have a job in my home country through which I can contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the youth who will, in the future, be leaders of my country. I am needed more in my country than anywhere else. And also, east or west, home is always the best.' *27 year-old Nigerian female studying art/humanities in the UK*

Many respondents also expressed general frustration with being a foreigner, in particular the need to comply with the associated regulations and the level of scrutiny to which they are subject. Some also complained that they had been the victim of discrimination:

'It is actually quite a hassle to get a residence and work permit here. I could understand the scrutiny the first time around, but to go through it every six months is absolutely intolerable. I agree we came here for better opportunities but it doesn't give anybody the right to question my integrity and constantly put me under the sword for having made the decision to come to Germany...' *33 year-old Indian male studying natural sciences in Germany*

'Lately the circulaire Guéant⁴⁷ confirmed that international students, even when they are pursuing well-recognised studies, are not welcome to stay in France after their studies. I have friends who are studying in Canada and United States, they earned a scholarship exactly as I did in France and at the end of their studies they will be naturalised American/Canadian citizens, have a well-paid job, be integrated ... and I will have a degree that I cannot even add value to with work experience in France.' *22 year-old Moroccan female studying economics in France*

'Daily racism is not uncommon in Germany, especially towards people with certain ethnic and religious backgrounds; that's the first reason why I am

not considering staying in Germany after I complete my studies. If I had known this was the case, I would have considered going to another country to study.' *30 year-old Uzbek female studying social sciences in Germany*

'People talk about integration measures and also the need for a skilled workforce in Germany and many other EU nations, but they are not ready to treat foreigners as equals. I, for example, am a scientist and whenever I go to the visa office, I have to bow down in front of them to get my residence permit granted. There are some officers who are extremely nice and friendly, but, in general, they are rude and arrogant. All of these surveys, write-ups, interviews about integration will not help. Definitely not when there is a rise in right-wing parties across the continent. If this continues, the EU will look like an old people's home with nobody to boost its economy.' *29 year-old Indian male studying medicine/health sciences in Germany*

Language barriers were a much more important reason for intending to leave among the respondents in Germany than in the other countries, although they were also cited to a lesser degree by respondents in the Netherlands. In the open questions, many students commented about the importance of language for future employment chances in Germany, but at the same time their struggle with finding enough time to learn the language alongside their studies or PhD research:

'I think the biggest hindrance for a foreigner when deciding whether to stay in Germany is the language. It is easier to blend into an English-speaking society which is probably why the US is the top destination for Indian students. I find people are inconvenienced and sometimes irritated by the fact that I can't speak German.' *25 year-old Indian female studying natural sciences/mathematics in Germany*

'For South Asian students, the biggest hurdle to finding a job in Germany is their inability to speak German. Since the Goethe-Institut in their home country does not have sufficient capacity, students are often not able to learn the language before their departure from home.' *25 year-old Indian male studying engineering in Germany*

'I am a PhD student. To work in Germany after graduation, advanced German language skills are important. However, as a full-time PhD student in the university I do not have the time or the energy to study

47 As noted above, the *circulaire Guéant* refers to the ministerial decree issued on May 2011 that directs the relevant immigration authorities to more rigorously control requests for status change from international student to employee.



German. As a foreigner, your visa is tightly related to your stay purpose. To stop working for several months to study German is usually difficult.' *27 year-old Chinese male studying natural sciences/mathematics in Germany*

Finally, family-related reasons were another common motivation for planning to leave after graduation:

'I am unable to get my parents to live with me here. It is this big cultural gap that makes it imperative for me to leave. Indians and many Asians feel obliged to take care of their aged parents. It is a sense of duty that we have. But unfortunately, that is in complete contrast to the way of life here. That makes it hard to convince [the authorities] that getting my parents here is crucial for me. Unlike in the US, we cannot have our parents here for more than six months. Even this entails a very hefty fee.... For this reason alone, I plan to leave the Netherlands very soon.' *33 year-old Indian male studying medicine/health sciences in the Netherlands*

These results point to the importance of offering students more assistance with acquiring the language of the country of study, as well as the need for generating ideas for how students might effectively do so alongside their studies. Students' comments also point to the desire to receive more assistance and support with visas from universities, as well as a better reception and improved service from the immigration authorities. At the state level, making family reunification regulations more inclusive of international students would also be to the benefit of some of those wishing to stay on, and could send out a positive signal to current and prospective international students.

4.5 International student perceptions: Diverse assessments of job prospects and the openness of the labour market to non-EU graduates

Respondents in the Netherlands agreed most often with the statement that international students are welcome to stay there and look for work after graduation (46.6 % in agreement), while those in France agreed the least (22.3 % in agreement) (Fig. 7). Nearly half of the respondents in France and the UK disagreed with the statement that international students are welcome to stay and look for work after graduating, indicating a much more critical perception than those held by respondents in the Netherlands and Germany.

In terms of assessing their own post-study employment chances in the country of study, respondents in

Germany were most positive about the likelihood of finding a job that fits their qualification level (nearly half in agreement), while those in France were the least optimistic (31.5 % in agreement). Clear differences exist across fields of study, with those pursuing engineering degrees rating their job prospects the best, followed by students of medicine and health sciences. Least optimistic about their employment prospects in the host country were those studying in art or humanities, slightly preceded by those studying social sciences, psychology and education. Across all countries, between one third and nearly half of the respondents rated their chances of gaining suitable employment there as good. Again, respondents in France and the UK were less positive about their job chances than those in Germany or the Netherlands, which is likely to be related to the current and highly publicised tightening of regulations for international students in the UK, and to some extent France:

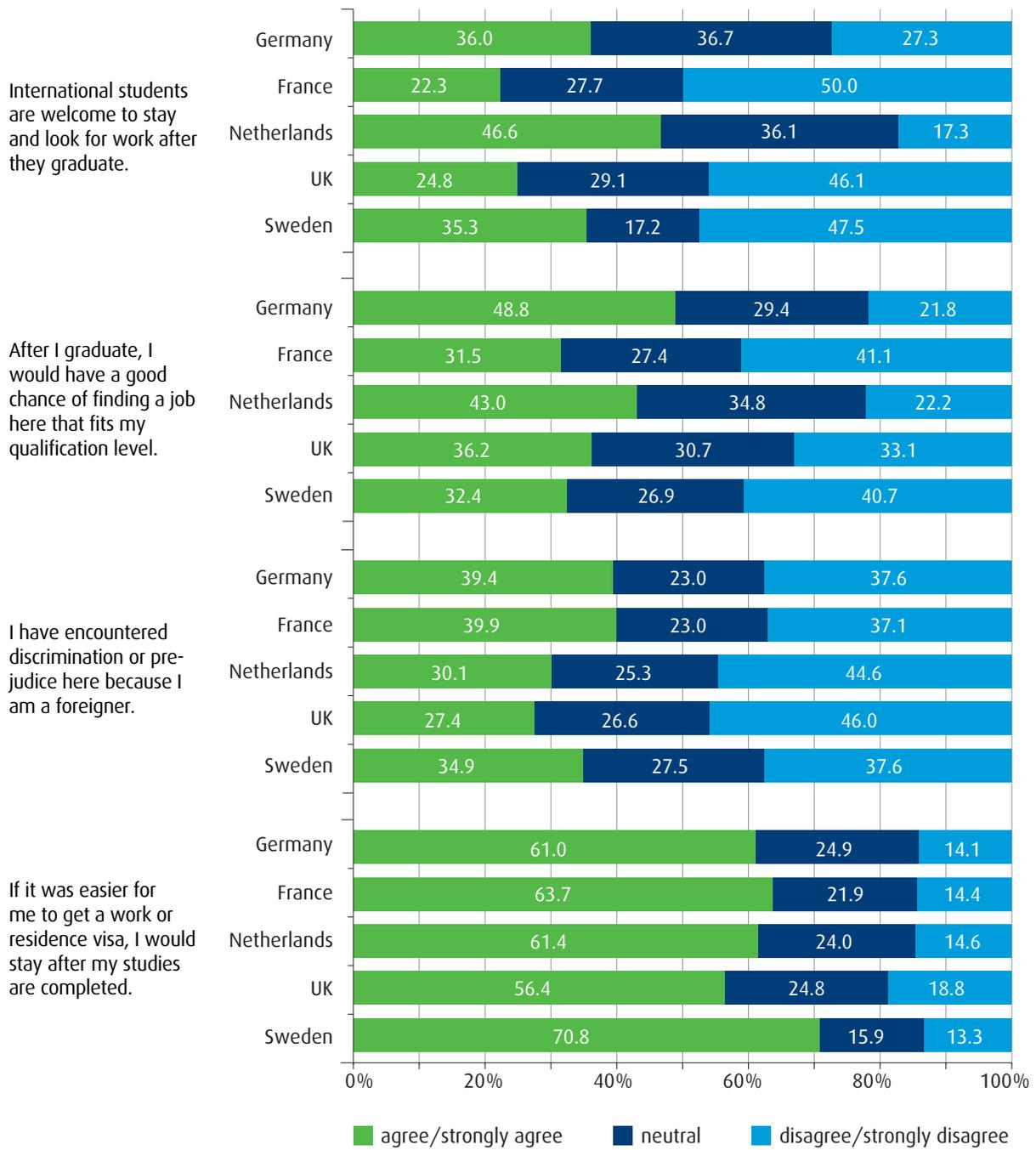
'The current political climate in the UK makes me think that seeking employment after graduation is strongly discouraged. Politicians and commentators seem to believe it is a good idea to prevent highly skilled foreigners from remaining in the UK.' *26 year-old Argentinian male studying natural sciences/mathematics in the UK*

'The possible French Senate approval of the *circulaire du 31 mai* proposed by the current Minister Claude Guéant will certainly condition my future as a foreign professional in France. It will become more and more difficult to obtain legal work authorisation, and therefore I will more likely be constrained to leave French territory. It is very sad to see the large quantity of brilliant students, having acquired degrees from prominent and top French universities and schools, being forced to leave France...The students lose out in the short term, but all the negative effects of this *circulaire* will make France lose in the long term. It's a shame.' *23 year-old Bolivian female studying economics in France*

'The current government policy does not seem to appreciate foreigners working in the UK. The statements being made by the Prime Minister and others are at the risk of spreading xenophobia in the UK. It is likely that this will discourage intelligent talent from joining UK universities and institutions.' *32 year-old Zimbabwean male studying natural sciences/mathematics in the UK*

Overall, approximately one third of respondents in each of the countries agreed that they had encountered discrimination because of their foreign background. Respondents in France and Germany reported

Fig. 7 Assessment of career and staying opportunities for international students



Source: Value Migration Survey 2011



most often that they had encountered discrimination, while this is the least so for respondents in the Netherlands. Several of the comments in the open questions express students' feelings about discrimination:

'To tell the truth, the only reason that I am unsatisfied about my stay in Germany is the discrimination against foreigners. I can't say all of course, but many German people do not welcome foreigners. Really, when I say foreigners what I mean is Muslims. In daily conversations people talk to me really nicely until they ask about my home country. When they learn which country I come from, the looks and the way of speaking change.' *25 year-old Turkish female studying engineering in Germany*

Across all countries, around 59.8 per cent of respondents agreed that if it was easier to obtain a work or residence visa after graduation, they would stay on. As the next section shows, students do not perceive it to be easy to obtain a visa after graduation or to access relevant information on visa procedures.

4.6 Awareness and assessment of legal rules and regulations: Few feel well informed

Respondents in the UK were most aware of the existence of a post-study scheme or special regulations for international students to access work after graduation, followed by those in the Netherlands (Tab. 8). These are the only countries surveyed in which post-study schemes are actual immigration categories in themselves with relatively well-known titles (e.g. Post-Study Worker in the UK). This could partly explain why students are less aware of the existence of the scheme in Germany (compare 25.2 % awareness in Germany with 42.4 % awareness in the UK), despite the fact that the German scheme also provides international graduates the option of prolonging their stay for up to one year in order to find a job.

In general, respondents do not feel well informed about the legal procedures for obtaining a residence visa and/or work visa after graduation. Less than one fifth of the respondents in each country felt well informed, while over 37.0 per cent (reaching 45.8 % in Germany) felt poorly or not at all informed. Respondents are most informed about legal procedures in the UK and France and least informed in Germany and the Netherlands (Fig. 8). Moreover, students do not feel that it is easy to access helpful information on post-study visas (Fig. 9). No more than 25 per cent of respondents in any country found it easy to access this kind of information. Respondents, almost exclusively from Germany, often complained about the lack of legal information available in English and therefore the difficulty of navigating their legal options:

'It's really hard to find information on visas and work permits in English. So, providing some information about visas or any chance for residency in Germany as an immigrant would be very helpful.' *30 year-old Iranian male studying engineering in Germany*

Many of the students in France and the UK expressed frustration at what they perceived as frequent or confusing changes in the rules and regulations for international students, and said that they struggled to stay on top of the current situation. Respondents in the UK were disappointed by the upcoming closure of the Post-Study Work scheme, which will limit their prospects for staying on after graduation:

'One of the main reasons I originally decided to come to UK to do my master's degree was the Post-Study Work visa. I now know that it has been cancelled, which is not fair.' *32 year-old Egyptian male studying social sciences*

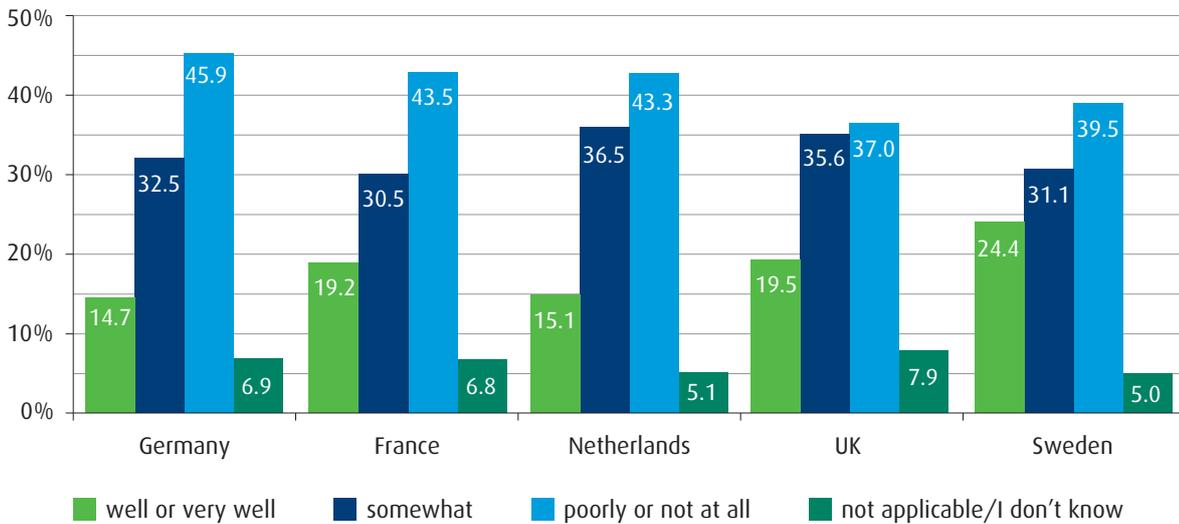
'One of the hardest things about determining visa rules etc. is that the system keeps changing. This makes it very hard to trust that any information, even that coming from government offices, is correct and up

Tab. 8 Awareness of schemes or special regulations that allow international students to work after graduation

	Germany	France	Netherlands	UK	Sweden
Aware	25.2 %	28.3 %	37.9 %	42.4 %	24.4 %
Unaware	46.4 %	53.1 %	36.4 %	32.4 %	52.1 %
Not sure	28.5 %	18.5 %	25.7 %	25.2 %	23.5 %

Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

Fig. 8 How well-informed respondents feel about legal procedures for staying on



Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

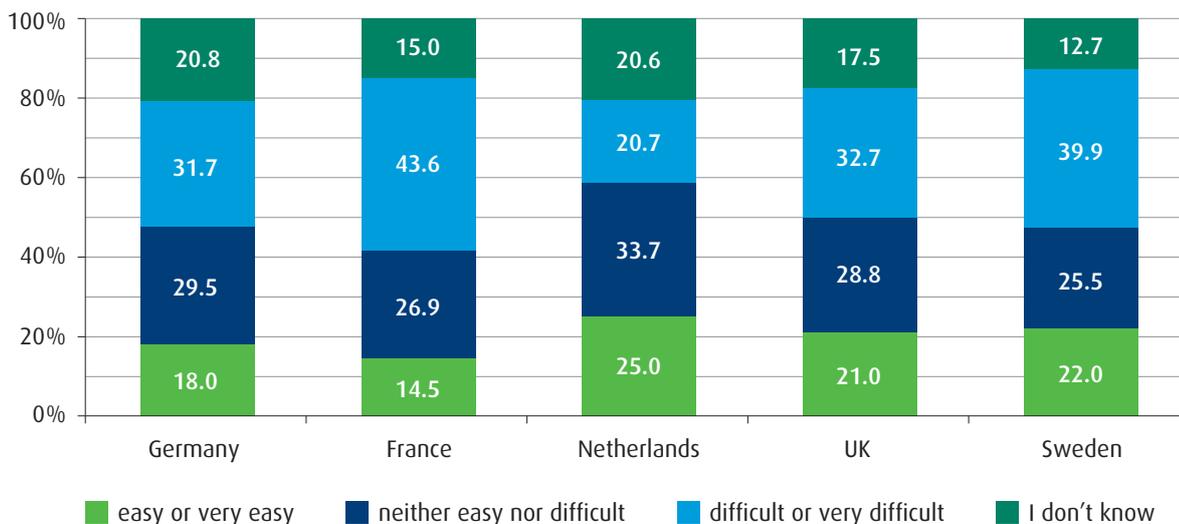
to date. It is also very difficult if the time that is given to graduates to find a job is curtailed to under a year, as it often takes some time for businesses to process applications, etc. and in the current economic climate, job-hunting is simply a lengthy process.' *26 year-old American female studying art/humanities in the UK*

happen after April 2012. Even the university staff have no idea.' *30-year old Turkish male studying engineering in the UK*

'The ambiguity about the Post-Study Work visa is so annoying; no one knows what exactly is going to

Although students in the UK lack concrete information on how to obtain post-study visas, they tended to assess the legal opportunities for non-EU international students to stay and look for work after graduation as good or fair (Fig. 10). This is not the case for respond-

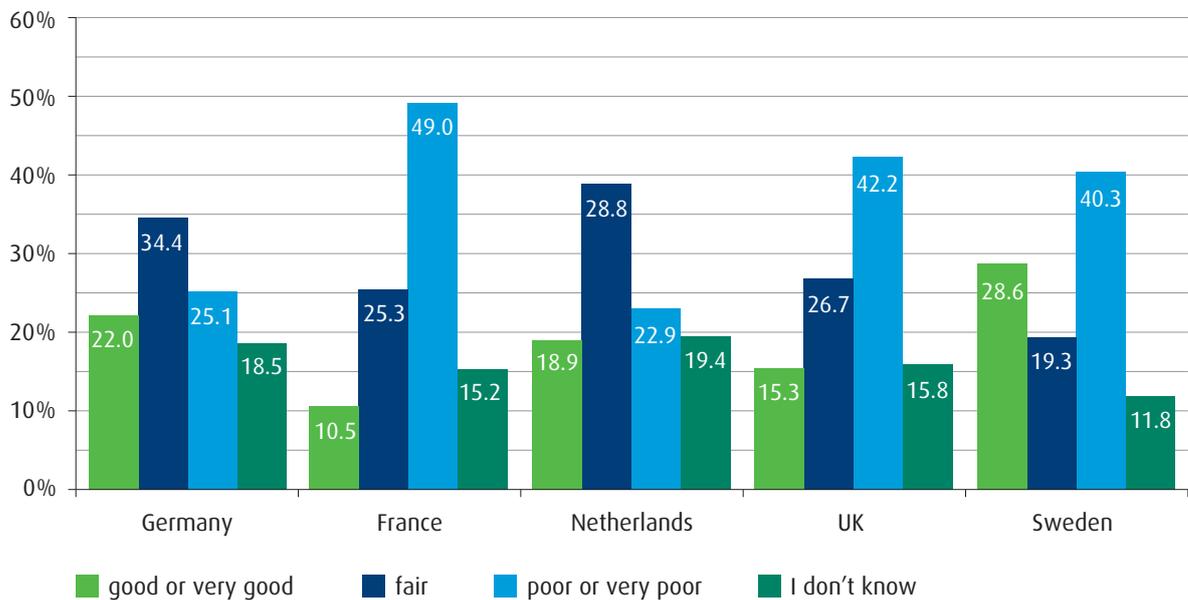
Fig. 9 Assessment of access to information about work and residence permits



Source: Value Migration Survey 2011



Fig. 10 Assessment of the legal opportunities for international students to stay on



Source: Value Migration Survey 2011

ents in France, however, where a full 49.0 per cent rated the legal opportunities for international students to stay as poor. The UK is not far behind France, with 42.2 per cent of respondents rating the legal opportunities for non-EU students poorly. This echoes the relatively critical perception noted earlier among the respondents in these countries, which reflects the move towards more restrictions and controls in those countries.

4.7 Summary: Strong interest in staying on, but international students still require support

The survey set out to investigate three main questions: (1) the propensity of international students to stay in the country of study after graduation, (2) the factors motivating them to stay on or to leave, and (3) their knowledge and assessment of the related legal framework.

Staying on, for a while

The interest among international students in staying on after graduation is strong. Almost two-thirds of the respondents indicate that they would like to stay on,

most for a relatively short period of time (one to two years). A minority of the respondents wishing to stay intends to stay in the country for more than five years (from 5.3 % in the UK to 12.5 % in Germany), possibly those who considered permanent migration from the outset. The intention to permanently migrate, therefore, is clearly not the desire for the majority of the respondents. The intention to stay is most common among respondents in Germany and least common in the UK. The responses to the open questions suggest that the lower staying intention among international students in the UK may be related partly to their awareness of the closure of the Post-Study Work scheme and the general tightening of restrictions for international students and migrants. Students in the UK are also relatively less likely to feel that international students are welcome to stay and look for work in the UK after graduation.

Career-related factors the main motivation for staying on

Career-related factors are the clear front runners when it comes to the reasons for wishing to stay in the country of study after graduation. The results indicate that many students would like to gain several years of international work experience after graduating, before

returning to their home country or moving elsewhere. Factors related to personal relationships or lifestyle are of relatively less importance.

The stayers differ from the non-stayers in a number of ways. Those expressing the desire to stay on are, on average, younger, more likely to be in technically related fields of study such as engineering or mathematics, and more likely to come from countries in Asia (e.g. China, India, Iran and Sri Lanka) and Eastern Europe (e.g. Ukraine and Serbia). Students in social science, art and humanities programmes, and those from North America, Latin America and Africa, are generally less interested in staying on. While career-related factors are the primary motivation for staying on, those related to family or personal relationships were most commonly cited as reasons for planning to leave after graduation.

Low awareness of legal rules among international students

Overall, students do not feel very well informed about the legal opportunities for obtaining a post-study work or residence visa. Respondents in the Netherlands and the UK are most aware of the existence of special regulations for international students to transition to work after graduation, and respondents in these countries also find it easiest to access information on legal procedures for post-study visas.

The results suggest that, in order to increase awareness of post-study schemes among current or prospective students, it is helpful for such schemes to have clear titles. Respondents in the UK, for instance, demonstrate a higher level of awareness of the post-study scheme, which is a relatively well-known immigration category and confers a new status on participants. Respondents from Germany most often complained that the relevant legal information was not available in English; this was not often cited as problem in the other countries surveyed.

The results suggest links between the current political climate for international students and immigrants in general in the UK and France, and respondents' relatively critical perceptions of the legal and employment opportunities for international students and the extent to which international students are welcome on the labour market. Respondents in France and the UK expressed frustration and even resignation at the recent changes in the regulations for international stu-

dents and graduates and were less likely to agree that international students are welcome to stay and look for work after graduation when compared to respondents in other countries. Students in France and the UK were also most negative about the employment prospects in the country of study. The results indicate that international students are certainly aware of and responsive to the political discourse on immigration and recent changes in immigration policies. The most positive view of employment prospects and the extent to which international students are welcome on the labour market was held by respondents in Germany and the Netherlands. In these countries, around one third and half of the respondents respectively felt that international students are welcome to stay and look for work after graduation.

Challenges faced by international students

International students are often praised for their proficiency in the language of the host country and their high levels of acculturation, two of the characteristics that contribute to their attractiveness as prospective skilled migrants from the perspective of the host country. Nevertheless, the increasing internationalisation of higher education means that a growing share of international students and scholars at universities in non-English speaking countries are studying and undertaking research in English.

Respondents' assessments of their proficiency in the official language of their country of study reveal that many speak the language at basic or elementary level only. While this may not pose a problem in some sectors of the labour market and at some firms, many of the respondents, particularly in Germany, pointed to a 'language dilemma': the desire to learn the language and the knowledge that this will affect their chances on the labour market, but the lack of time to do so alongside their English-taught studies. The challenges related to multilingualism at universities and the increasing use of English as the *lingua franca* in research and science have received growing attention in Germany (e.g. Hochschulrektorenkonferenz 2011).⁴⁸

It is thought that international students are able to avoid a number of the socio-cultural, political and economic barriers that other immigrants face in integrating into the labour market and society, in addition to possessing the necessary language skills, such as credential recognition, social integration and accultura-

48 The *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* calls on German universities to, among other things, integrate language learning into the courses of study and equip language centers with the respective resources.



tion, and familiarity with locally relevant practices and regulations. Nevertheless, the results of the survey, as well as other research findings, suggest that international students do encounter many of the same challenges that other immigrants face, such as lack of language skills, insecurity of visa status and social integration issues. Understanding and accessing information on the legal regulations for post-study employment and residence is often perceived by international students as difficult and discouraging, especially where there has been a move towards more restrictive measures. Students in Germany were unsatisfied by the lack of information available in English. Some respondents also cited difficulties linked to discrimination and unfair treatment because they are immigrants. That between one fifth and almost 45 per cent of respondents found it difficult or very difficult to access helpful information on their post-study legal opportunities suggests a problematic situation. This is of particular significance given that this is a group of resourceful individuals studying at advanced levels, many of whom are at top European universities.

This is not to suggest that these students will not succeed on the labour market, but rather to point out that, despite their attractive qualities, international students still require immigrant-related services and assistance with many of the same activities as other migrants, such as navigating the legal system and labour market and improving language skills. Sidhu (2011) points out that because international students are often regarded as guests or temporary visitors, the state does not safeguard their inclusion and integration into the host society, which could have implications for their ability to succeed or maximise their future outcomes there. Emerging research results demonstrate that the difficulties that migrants face in integrating into a host society cannot be overcome simply by studying in that country (Hawthorne 2010; BMBF 2010; Sidhu 2011; Baas 2007 and 2010). In other words, completing a degree in a particular country does not guarantee language fluency, integration, security of visa status, and so on.

Links between the legal frameworks and the survey results

The results of the survey show that international students are aware of legal and political changes and take them into account when making decisions. Overall, the more critical perception of employment opportunities for international students and legal opportunities for non-EU students to stay on after graduation in the UK and France corresponds to the move towards more restrictions for international graduates and students in those countries, and the associated trend in the public

debate on this issue. Although not reported above, the respondents in France and the UK were also less satisfied with the level of service provided by the immigration authorities than respondents in the other countries. The relatively low staying intention among respondents in the UK when compared to the other countries also appears to be a reflection of students' knowledge of their weakened opportunities for staying on, due to the closure of the Post-Study Work visa. Students' responses to the open questions support this thesis.

Students in France indicated that they experienced the most difficulty in obtaining information on post-study visas, while those in the Netherlands and the UK had the least difficulty and were also more aware of the study-to-work regulations for international students. This may correspond to the fact that the post-study schemes in these countries confer a more concrete (working) status, rather than essentially a prolongation of the student status. The difficulty cited in France is also likely related to confusion surrounding the recent '*Circulaire du 31 mai*', which was also specifically mentioned by a number of respondents in their responses to the open questions.

Among the students planning to leave, 'language barriers' were much more commonly cited as a motivating factor by respondents in Germany and the Netherlands than those in France and the UK. While other factors are certainly at play, the UK and French governments do enforce more rigorous language requirements for potential students when compared to the other countries surveyed, in which proficiency in the official language is not a formal tested requirement for studying there. This points to the role that the state (and in some cases universities) plays in defining the factors that 'select' or filter out international students and potential immigrants.

More broadly, this issue points to a policy challenge and contradiction for non-English and non-French speaking countries: in order to be more competitive and attractive on the international education market, these countries need to offer courses and degrees taught in English and ensure that the language requirements for prospective students are not too stringent. This approach, however, evidently creates the expectation among some students that information, opportunities and even jobs will also be available for English-speaking international students. There appears to be a sense of frustration among some students who realise that this is not the case when they try to access information or wish to prolong their stay after graduation. English- and French-speaking countries, on the other hand, by virtue of their competitive advantage on the international market and the fact that many international students follow courses in the official language of the country, are in a better position to enforce more rigorous language standards.

5. Conclusion

The rapid growth and expansion of international student migration has become an issue of some importance, attracting the attention of policy-makers, migration researchers and the higher education sector. International students are seen by many as a sort of 'ideal' or 'designer' immigrant due to the attractive qualities that they possess, such as recognisable credentials, foreign language abilities and direct experience in the host country.

International students are in a privileged position in comparison to regular economic migrants when it comes to accessing the labour market after graduation, as they benefit from several regulations specifically targeting them which facilitate their transition to post-study work. While all of the countries surveyed except for Sweden have post-study schemes in place that enable international students to work or seek work after graduation, there are notable differences in the timeframes and nature of these schemes. The post-study schemes in the UK (to close in April 2012) and the Netherlands allow graduates to work on a full-time basis and provide practically open access to the labour market for the duration of the scheme (two years in the UK and one year in the Netherlands). Moreover, graduates have 12 months and up to three years respectively to access these schemes. In France and Germany, on the other hand, the schemes are intended mainly for job-seeking and only permit students to work a very limited amount of time. As already stated, in Germany these regulations will be liberalised. Students also must apply upon or before graduation in order to qualify for these schemes. The UK post-study scheme and the Dutch admission scheme for highly educated persons (which is open to graduates of Dutch universities) clearly offer students a more flexible and generous timeframe and working conditions.

A broad distinction can be made between the regimes relating to international students in the UK and the Netherlands and those in France and Germany. The former apply stricter selection criteria at point of entry, and, particularly in the Dutch case, undertake more rigorous monitoring throughout the course of study (e.g. education institutions will soon need to become recognised sponsors of international students, obliged to monitor their immigration status and academic progression; employers of international students must obtain a work permit). These countries, however, offer students a comparatively more generous and flexible post-study scheme. This means that, while the selection criteria are restrictive, students can take advantage of relatively generous conditions for staying on if they successfully complete their studies. The regime in the UK will soon change, however. In France and Germany, on the other hand, the nature of the respective legal

regimes and higher education sectors means that it is relatively easier for students to gain entry (e.g. much lower tuition fees, no requirement for universities to act as sponsors or register with the immigration authorities in order to host students). In terms of post-study opportunities, however, a somewhat more limited scheme is available for students wishing to prolong their stay after graduation. Nevertheless, while the UK regime is enacting more restrictions for international students and graduates, the trend in Germany is clearly one of liberalisation. In comparison with the other four countries, Sweden is a slow mover in providing legal opportunities or special regulations for international students to stay on. The dynamic nature of immigration policy means that the legal frameworks in these countries will continue to change and are likely to fluctuate according to trends in political and public opinion on immigration and specifically the need for controls to be increased or lessened.

Almost two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated that they would like to stay on after graduation, most for a relatively short period of time (one to two years). Employment opportunities and the desire to gain international work experience are the main reasons for wishing to stay on, supporting the idea that professional experience is increasingly regarded by students as a key aspect of the 'study abroad package'. Indeed, some respondents indicated that they specifically chose the UK as a study destination because of their ability to access the labour market after graduation through the Post-Study Work scheme. While career-related factors are the primary motivation for staying on, those related to family or personal relationships were most commonly cited as the reasons for planning to leave after graduation. The desire to permanently migrate is clearly not the intention for the majority of the respondents, as only around ten per cent indicated, at this stage in their studies at least, that they plan to stay on for more than five years. International students who intended from the outset to use their study abroad experience as a stepping stone or springboard to permanent migration appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Overall, the main tendency among the respondents is the desire to stay on for a few years to gain international work experience before eventually returning to their home countries or moving elsewhere.

A recent EU directive (COM(2011) 587: 11) suggests that access to work in a country after graduation may be a 'decisive factor' in students' choice of study destination. Post-study work and residency options appear to be relevant for around half of the students surveyed, with around 50 per cent indicating that this played an important role in their choice of study destination, although factors such as institutional reputation and quality, the cost of education, and quality of life rank



higher in importance. The legal framework is, however, a factor that can be influenced by the state directly and relatively quickly.

A number of characteristics are associated with the intention to stay on after graduation. Those who are interested in staying on tend to be younger and already have work experience in the study country, and are less likely to have children.

Clear differences are also apparent across fields of study, with those pursuing degrees in science and technology (i.e. engineering, mathematics and natural sciences) more likely to express the desire to stay on than those studying social or humanities. Respondents from countries in Asia (e.g. China, India, Iran and Sri Lanka) and Eastern Europe (e.g. Ukraine and Serbia) were more interested in staying on than those from North America, Latin America and Africa. As could be expected, those who plan to stay on also claimed to be better informed about the legal opportunities for prolonging their stay after graduation.

The results show that international students are aware of and responsive to changes in the legal framework governing their stay in the country as well as the general public debate on immigration. Many respondents commented on what they perceived as frequent or confusing changes to regulations and expressed frustration at the recent tightening of regulations in the UK and to some extent in France. Moreover, respondents felt that they could not easily access helpful information on post-study visa options, even from university or government offices. Improving the clarity of and access to legal information and building a more stable legal framework would be to the benefit of international students who may wish to stay on. Students also pointed to the need for a better level of service and reception from the immigration authorities and more security in their status. Clearer or more accessible information for students on the changes taking place in the UK and France is needed, and improving the availability of information and services offered in English would be beneficial for international students in Germany. In Germany in particular, it would be worthwhile to better prepare international students for what to expect in terms of the language competencies required for university and the labour market, and the conditions needed to acquire the language. Because students can study and receive a student permit without a very high level of German language proficiency, many expect that they will be able to navigate university and the world of work without knowledge of the language. Preparing students for what to expect can have an important impact on their levels of satisfaction later in the process.

The survey results also show that a number of factors related to the propensity to stay are directly or indirectly influenced by actors in the higher education sector. For example, the responses from international

students in Germany reveal that the intention to stay on is associated with better German language skills, German work experience, high levels of satisfaction with the study experience, familiarity with the legal regulations for international students and having the view that international students are welcome to stay and look for work after graduation. These are all areas which could theoretically be supported by higher education actors (e.g. running courses to support language acquisition, facilitating work experience, providing career services for international students, distributing information about immigration law and visa access, and improving the overall study experience). In admitting students, the state also of course plays a role, for example, in the language requirements it sets and the general conditions that applicants have to meet.

The growth in study-related migration implies a new, albeit indirect, role for the higher education sector: the selection of future immigrants. As the country reports reveal, this role appears to have been acknowledged in the Netherlands and the UK, where immigration officials place more rigorous controls over which educational institutions can admit international students. The relationship between policies and practices in the higher education sector and those in the realm of immigration is likely to become increasingly relevant. The implications of this role for educational institutions and the extent to which such a development is desirable are important topics for further research and debate.

While international students possess a number of qualities that make them an attractive group of skilled migrants, they still require services and support to safeguard their integration into society and the labour market. Emerging research findings suggest that many of the difficulties migrants face, including gaps in language proficiency, visa insecurity, concerns about family migration, navigating the legal framework and discrimination, cannot be overcome simply by studying in that country.

Because international students are generally regarded as temporary migrants, there is a danger that the state will not directly support their integration, which could have implications for their future success in the country. Crucial to the development of policies and services to support the successful transition of international students into work and possibly longer-term settlement, however, is the better tracking of international students in order to monitor their labour market performance, social integration and other outcomes.

There are several issues that are and will continue to be important topics of research and debate which fall outside of the scope and focus of this report. To what extent do international students contribute to processes of brain drain, brain gain and brain circulation (e.g. Robertson 2006)? What are the implications of the new role of the higher education sector in selecting

migrants? How does the internationalisation of higher education and the attendant growth in the use of English at universities in non-English speaking countries contribute to language challenges for international students when entering the labour market of these countries, and what could or should be done to address this issue? This report will hopefully help provide a basis for the further exploration of these questions.

In all of the countries surveyed, the share of survey respondents that expressed the desire to stay on is clearly higher than the share that actually do, pointing to a discrepancy between the intentions or aspirations of students and what occurs in reality. Identifying the factors that contribute to this discrepancy – for instance, the extent to which they are related to individual, structural or push/pull factors – is an im-

portant topic for future research. This report points to a number of opportunities for better supporting international students and graduates and suggests that the five countries under study are not fully making use of the skills and potential of their international students. Given that family and personal relationship factors were one of the most important reasons cited for leaving, and as many students expressed concern about the insecurity of their status in the country, improving access to long-term residency and family reunification for international students could send a positive signal to current or prospective students. If countries are keen to encourage international students to stay on after graduation, policies on these and other issues will have to become more inclusive of students and better tailored to their needs.

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