



## Attracting and retaining international students in Luxembourg

## 1. Introduction

The inform presents the main findings of the study entitled « Attracting and retaining international students in the EU » carried out by the National Contact Point Luxembourg in the European Migration Network in 2018. This study provides an overview of policies and practices in place in Luxembourg in view of attracting and retaining international students. It is primarily based on the information collected until November 2018 and therefore covers only a limited number of developments that may have occurred after that date.

## 2. Political and legal framework

### 2.1 The European framework

Faced with demographic and economic challenges that the European Union (EU) will be confronted with in the long term, such as an ageing population, an economy increasingly dependent on highly skilled jobs and a shortage of skilled labour in certain key sectors, the European Commission has reiterated the importance of making the EU a more attractive destination for students, researchers and skilled workers.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, the Directive (EU) 2016/801 or Students and Researchers Directive<sup>2</sup> aims to advance the EU in the global race for talents and to promote Europe as a world centre of excellence for education and training. In particular, it aims to harmonise and simplify the minimum legal standards applicable to the reception and the retention of international students in the EU, to clarify the rules on admission and residence and to facilitate their mobility within the EU. It offers international students the opportunity to engage in an ancillary salaried activity during their studies and to integrate the labour market after their studies.

### 2.2 The national framework

In Luxembourg, the attraction of international students is not a political priority per se. The overall approach is rather to attract talent, regardless of nationality, in order to meet the needs to the economy.

While there is no national strategy specifically aimed at attracting international students to Luxembourg, some fields of study are however targeted to attract the latter, such as the information and communication technologies (ICT). The University of Luxembourg, the country's primary higher education institution, has a vocation to attract students exemplifying excellence and has identified research areas to be developed in the coming years as part of a comprehensive strategy.<sup>3</sup>

The conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies are set by the Law of 29 August 2008 on the free movement of persons and immigration (see 4.2.1).<sup>4</sup>

The legal framework regarding the status of students has been subject of two recent legislative changes:

The Law of 8 March 2017 amending the Immigration Law<sup>5</sup> by introducing the possibility for international students to change their status to 'employed' or 'self-employed' workers in view of facilitating their permanent integration into the labour market. This change of status is possible if the student has successfully completed a university degree of at least five years, or has completed a Doctorate's degree. The employment that the student intends to exercise must be related his/her diploma.

The Law of 1 August 2018<sup>6</sup> transposed the Students and Researchers Directive. It authorises

students who have completed their studies to stay in Luxembourg for a maximum period of nine months in order to find employment or establish a business (see 5.1). The intra-EU mobility of international students who follow a European or multilateral programme has been facilitated and the period of validity of the residence permit for these students is set at a minimum of two years (or equal to the duration of the studies if the period of mobility is inferior to two years). The third-country national that has been issued an authorisation of stay as a student by a first Member State is no longer required to introduce a new application for an authorisation of stay but only needs to inform the competent authorities of his/her intention to carry out part of his/her studies in Luxembourg. In that case, the student must provide proof that s/he has at least 80% of the guaranteed minimum income.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, the maximum duration that a student is authorised to exercise a salaried activity was increased from 10 to 15 hours per week (see 4.4).

### 3. Institutional framework

#### 3.1 Structure and governance of higher education in Luxembourg

Higher education in Luxembourg is under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (*'Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche'* - MESR). The organisation of higher education is regulated by the Law of 19 June 2009<sup>8</sup> and includes study programmes provided 1) by the University of Luxembourg, 2) in the short-term higher education and 3) by foreign public and/or private educational institutions.

Created by the Law of 12 August 2003<sup>9</sup>, the University of Luxembourg is the only University of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Multilingual, international and research focused, it is consti-

tuted of three faculties and three interdisciplinary centres, and offers 12 Bachelor's degrees, 42 Master's degrees as well as doctoral training. It has more than 6,300 students and hosts the large majority of international students in Luxembourg. The higher education system also includes approved study programmes awarding an advanced technician's certificate (*'Brevet de technicien supérieur'* – BTS) offered by secondary educational institutions. In 2018, 25 study programmes awarding a BTS were offered in 11 secondary educational schools and technical colleges (*'lycées et lycées techniques'*) in Luxembourg. In addition to these public institutions, a number of private institutions offer different types of study programmes in Luxembourg (economics, management, sports,...).

Private higher education institutions, their respective study programmes as well as study programmes awarding a BTS must be approved by the MESR in order to be able to award recognised diplomas and host international students. The University is exempted from this approval procedure.

Furthermore, the MESR is also in charge of the academic recognition of foreign higher education diplomas as well as the Centre for Documentation and Information on Higher Education (*'Centre de documentation et d'information sur l'enseignement supérieur'* - CEDIES), whose main tasks are to manage the financial aid for higher education studies of the State and to provide information on the higher education system in Luxembourg.

#### 3.2 Directorate of Immigration

The Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (*'Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes'* - MAE) is the competent immigration authority and is responsible for issuing authorisations of stay and 'stu-

dent' residence permits. It closely cooperates with the various higher education institutions in Luxembourg and in particular with the University, mainly in order to provide clarifications on the legal framework applicable to international students. Cooperation with the University has strengthened and intensified considerably in recent years. Regular meetings are held to improve the efficiency of the admission and arrival of international students in Luxembourg and to avoid any risk of fraud.

## 4. Attracting international students

### 4.1 Incentives and special measures

- Promotional activities

The Government websites [www.guichet.public.lu](http://www.guichet.public.lu) and [www.cedies.lu](http://www.cedies.lu) are the main sources of information on higher education in Luxembourg and provide all the relevant information on immigration processes, the various study programmes offered, the recognition of foreign diplomas, etc...

As the only university in the country and the main institution of higher education, the University of Luxembourg enjoys considerable visibility in the higher education system in Luxembourg. Its communication strategy is mainly based on the digitalisation of content and the use of social media, which allows interactivity with target audiences. It participates in certain economic and/or cultural missions abroad carried out by the Government as well as in a number of student fairs in Europe, North America and Asia, which contribute to increasing its reputation in a number of target countries as well as at the international level.

- Scholarships and financial aid

Scholarships and other types of financial aid are an important tool to strengthen the attractiveness of Luxembourg as a study destination. International students are eligible for financial aid offered at Government, ministerial, University and private sector level.

Scholarships and financial aid are mainly granted by the State, in particular through CEDIES, and may be granted to international students who have already been residing in Luxembourg for at least five years. Scholarships are awarded by the MAE to international students from partner countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, United States) before their arrival in Luxembourg and cover accommodation and tuition fees. The MESR offers scholarships to international students enrolled in a Bachelor's or Master's degree programme at the University on the basis of a merit scheme, which allows 100 international students per semester to benefit from a scholarship of €2,100. In addition, the University offers its students (independent of their nationality) mobility grants, mainly through European exchange programmes. Lastly, several private and philanthropic organisations provide scholarships and financial assistance to students both to reward academic excellence and to provide financial support to students in difficulty.

International students who have been in Luxembourg for a number of years have the possibility of taking out a student loan guaranteed by the State to finance their studies. The University offers other types of assistance, such as tuition fee reductions in some programmes or deferral of tuition fees (registration and accommodation).

- Study programmes and multilingualism

The University has placed multilingualism at the heart of its pedagogical approach: most of the study programmes offered are bilingual

(or even trilingual) and are taught either in French/English or French/German. Many Master programmes are taught in English only. The University of Luxembourg Language Centre offers a number of innovative ways to learn and practice several languages (English, French, German, Luxembourgish and Portuguese) free of charge. This linguistic offer has been complemented by the recent establishment of a Confucius Institute, which provides the opportunity for students to discover and learn about the Chinese language and culture. More generally, the linguistic and demographic situation in Luxembourg and the implementation of integration policies have seen the emergence of a whole series of measures and initiatives aimed at improving the linguistic skills of migrants in Luxembourg, such as the language courses offered by the National Centre of Languages (*'Institut National de Langues'*).

## 4.2 Admission conditions

### 4.2.1 General admission conditions for residence

Several conditions must be met in order to obtain an authorisation of stay for study purposes.<sup>10</sup>

Such authorisation may be issued to a third-country national who provides **proof that s/he has been admitted to an approved higher education institution** to pursue, as a main activity, a full-time study programme enabling him/her to obtain a higher-education qualification issued by that establishment. In the case of the University, an admission letter is sent to the student selected in a study programme which serves as proof in the migration procedure.

The following institutions are considered as higher education institutions: 1) the University of Luxembourg; 2) education institutions that

offer study programmes awarding a BTS; 3) approved higher education institutions. It should be noted that third-country nationals admitted to a study programme leading to a Doctorate's degree receive a 'student' residence permit (and not 'researcher').

The third-country national must provide proof of **sufficient resources** to cover his/her living costs and return-travel costs. The monthly resources must correspond to 80% of the current amount of the social inclusion revenue (*'Revenu d'inclusion sociale'* - REVIS), i.e. €1,161.60 on 1 January 2019. This proof can be provided by presenting a scholarship or student loan certificate, a bank statement, or a guarantee by a third person of Luxembourgish nationality (or who legally resides in Luxembourg). Material benefits, such as free housing or the income derived by the salaried activity of the student are also taken into account.

The applicant must be covered by health insurance. This condition is also reiterated in the Law of 27 June 2018 on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg.<sup>11</sup> An attestation must precisely indicate the period of coverage that must cover the duration of the semester for which the student is enrolled. In case of non-affiliation to a health insurance scheme, the student is required to pay his/her contributions (approximately €38 per month) at the same time as the registration fee directly to the University, failing which his/her registration will be cancelled.

### 4.2.2 Other conditions related to higher education institutions

Several criteria are decisive in assessing the eligibility of an international student for a study programme.

The application file for a study programme gen-

erally includes a **proof of sufficient language proficiency** in the language(s) of the study programme in question. For the University, this level is defined by the Director of the study programme and generally corresponds to level B2 of the CEFR in the languages of instruction of the programme. Some specific fields of study offered by institutions that award a BTS also require proof of sufficient linguistic knowledge of the languages of the country. Private higher education institutions are autonomous in determining their selection criteria and the procedures of assessing the candidates' language skills.

Any candidate holding a foreign certificate or diploma is required to have his/her diploma recognised in order to access the various higher education study programmes. **The recognition of foreign qualifications** is done on a case-by-case basis, under certain conditions.

An application for a recognition of a secondary school leaving diploma must be submitted to the Department for the Recognition of Diplomas of the Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth (*'Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse'* - MENJE). This procedure is mandatory in order to register in a Bachelor's degree programme at the University. A distinction is made according to whether or not certificates/diplomas are issued by countries that are signatories to the Paris and/or Lisbon Conventions on the mutual recognition of diplomas. Additional conditions apply for holders of a foreign diploma issued by a country that has not signed these conventions. A specific procedure is provided for students who wish to apply for a Bachelor's degree programme and whose secondary school leaving certificate is not recognised by the MENJE. This provides for an evaluation of the file, and in the event of selection, an entrance test. Registration of higher education diploma obtained abroad are recognised by registering them in the higher educa-

tion department of the register of certificates of academic education. This procedure is mandatory for any student holding a foreign diploma for final enrolment in a Master programme or in doctoral training.

#### 4.2.3 Tuition fees for international students

Tuition fees vary depending on the type of higher education institution and the study programme. At the University, they are set by the Council of Governance and submitted to the MESR for approval. The tuition fees for study programmes awarding a BTS are set by the Grand ducal regulation of 23 February 2010.<sup>12</sup> Approved higher education institutions are autonomous in establishing tuition fees for their study programmes.

For studies at Bachelor's level at the University, the tuition fees are €400 per academic semester in the first year and €200 per academic semester in the second and third year of the curriculum. The tuition fees for the majority of studies at Master's level amount to €200 per semester for the entire study programme, except for some professional Master programmes where the tuition fees can reach several thousand euros. The tuition fees for a Doctorate's degree amount to €200 per semester for the entire duration of the study programme. For educational institutions awarding a BTS, they amount to 100€ per semester. Lastly, tuition fees for private higher education study programmes are significantly higher than in the public sector. Some private higher education institutions also charge higher tuition fees for international students.

#### 4.2.4 Administrative fees

In addition to tuition fees, international students must pay administrative fees mainly in connection with the immigration procedure. An amount of €50 is to be expected for the long-

stay visa (Visa D), except for nationals of certain countries who can benefit from a reduced fee of €35. International students must pay €80 in order to be issued their residence permit. Other costs are applicable in regards to the academic recognition of a foreign secondary or higher education diplomas: €75 for a secondary education diploma issued by a country that is a signatory to the Paris/Lisbon Conventions (€125 for a diploma issued by a country that is not a signatory to these conventions). A fee of €75 is required for the processing of applications for a foreign higher education diploma.

### 4.3 Hosting international students

#### 4.3.1 Immigration process

In case of acceptance in an approved higher education institution, the international students can submit an application for an authorisation of stay as a student to the Directorate of Immigration of the MAE, or through the Luxembourgish diplomatic mission or the diplomatic mission representing Luxembourg in his/her country of origin. The application for an authorisation of stay must be submitted and granted before entering the territory.

In the event of a positive answer, which must in principle be given within 60 days, the student must, if applicable, apply for a Visa D to enter the Schengen area. S/he must enter the Luxembourgish territory no later than 90 days after the day of the issuance of the authorisation of stay and, within three days after the entry into the territory, declare his/her arrival at the administration of the municipality of residence. Within three months of arrival, s/he must apply for his/her residence permit at the Directorate of Immigration. To this application, s/he must attach a copy of the authorisation of stay and the medical certificate obtained following the medical check to which all third-country nationals

applying for a residence permit are subject to. Once the application is approved, the student is invited to present him/herself in person at the Directorate of Immigration where s/he will get his/her photograph and fingerprints taken in order for the biometric residence permit to be issued. The residence permit has a minimum validity of one year and can be renewed for the same period if the conditions for obtaining it are still fulfilled and in particular if s/he has been readmitted to continue his/her studies. A certain number of ECTS credits must be obtained in order to be able to re-register in the following academic year.

#### 4.3.2 Hosting initiatives and measures

- Information and hosting structures and measures

At the national level, there is no entity specifically dedicated to hosting international students. However, the University operates services dedicated to the orientation, hosting, support and accompaniment of students covering the period from the application stage until graduation. The Student Department (*'Service des Etudes et de la Vie Etudiante'* - SEVE) provides a one-stop access point to all services related to student life and informs students about the offered study programmes, the enrolment procedures and eligibility criteria for study programmes, the possibilities of student accommodation at the University, the possibilities of funding in regard to student mobility as well as about cultural and sporting activities organised for students. A SEVE unit specifically dedicated to student mobility supports students in their student mobility project to/from the University. EURAXESS Luxembourg, a member of a pan-European network of more than 260 service centres in 40 countries that aims to promote the mobility of researchers and doctoral candidates, is also located at the University and offers personalised support to the latter.

An information kit, providing information on the University's services and daily life on campus, is also provided to all new students as well as the access to a one-stop shop (the '*Guichet étudiant*') that provide information on practical and administrative matters.

Among the many hosting initiatives and measures implemented by the University, in collaboration with cultural partners, municipalities and local actors, one can mention: a 'Welcome Day' ('National PhD Welcome Day' for doctoral candidates) organised at the beginning of each academic year and consisting of a combination of academic, social and recreational activities; the 'Meet and Greet', which offers students arriving in Luxembourg as part the Erasmus programme to be picked up at the airport or the train station and brought to their new home; or the 'Wine and Dine' initiative, which invites an international student to a Luxembourg resident in order to make him/her discover the country. More recently, an International Summer School has enabled students to combine language courses and interdisciplinary exploration of Europe in a three-week programme. Lastly, the considerable contribution of the student association network in the integration of international students into the University should be highlighted. More than a dozen student associations are officially recognised by the University and benefit from administrative and financial support.

- Support with finding housing

The provision of affordable housing (a furnished single room can be rented from €365, including charges) is a priority for the University. Student accommodation increased from 550 units during the academic year 2012/2013 to 1,122 units in 2017/2018. It is at a service of SEVE that is specifically devoted to accommodation where students can obtain information and apply online for student accommodation according to their budget and needs. Some associations also

provide support to international students with finding and providing housing.

#### 4.4 Rights and duties of international students

Access to the labour market has been facilitated for international students following the provisions introduced by the Law of 1 August 2018. Thus, the maximum duration a student is authorised to exercise a salaried activity was increased from an average of 10 hours to 15 hours per week over a period of 1 month. This limitation does not apply for salaried activities exercised during school vacations or to research activities conducted by PhD students in an approved higher education or research institution. Students at all levels of higher education are now authorised to work, whereas previously, students enrolled in a study programme awarding a BTS or enrolled in the first year of a Bachelor's degree programme were not authorised to work. An international student can be hired on presentation of his/her residence permit, no work permit is required.<sup>13</sup>

The international students may benefit from access to Luxembourgish citizenship like any other foreign resident living in Luxembourg if s/he fulfils the required conditions, namely: legal residence in the country for at least five years (the last year of residence preceding the application for naturalisation must be uninterrupted), sufficient knowledge of the Luxembourgish language and participation in the course 'Living together in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg' ('*Vivre ensemble au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg*').<sup>14</sup>

The student cannot access long-term residence status. S/he must change his residence permit in order to be eligible. However, to calculate the five-year period of residency required for obtaining long-term residence status, the period of legal residency for the purpose of studies is counted by half.

International students, like all other regular students, are required to complete their studies within a certain timeframe. The maximum duration of studies to obtain a Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate's degree is governed by the Law of 27 June 2018 on the organisation of the University of Luxembourg. For a Bachelor's degree, the maximum duration of study for a full-time programme is 10 semesters for a full programme of 180 ECTS and 12 semesters for a full programme of 240 ECTS. In the case of a Master's degree, this duration is set at 8 semesters for a study programme of 120 ECTS. Doctoral candidates are required to submit their thesis no later than 48 months after admission to studies awarding a Doctorate's degree. In certain circumstances, a suspension of studies may be granted by the Director of the study programme.

#### 4.5 External factors contributing to Luxembourg's attractiveness

Certain external factors contribute to Luxembourg's attractiveness for international students, in particular the country's economic, geographical and cultural assets. Luxembourg is well known to be one of the most important financial centres in Europe and the seat of several European institutions, but also as a hub in several leading sectors of activity. In addition, the Grand Duchy has the highest average wage of all OECD countries and benefits from good macroeconomic indicators, in particular from strong economic growth that implies plenty of professional opportunities. Its advantageous geographical location in the heart of Europe is also a considerable strategic advantage. Lastly, the country's linguistic situation with three official languages and the composition of its population provide for a multilingual environment and an international openness appreciated by international students.

The University of Luxembourg enjoys a certain international recognition, gained in particular thanks to its international rankings, accreditations and certifications, guarantees of credibility for students and researchers from around the world. In particular, it is ranked among the 250 best universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education (THE) 2018-2019 and 12<sup>th</sup> in the ranking of the best young universities in the world (THE 2018). Its multilingualism and the offer of study programmes taught in English are also a powerful attracting factor for international students. Lastly, the affordable tuition fees with no additional costs, affordable student housing offered at rates well below the real estate market and the size/human dimension of the University of Luxembourg offer a privileged framework that contributes to the attractiveness of this environment for international students.

## 5. Retaining international students

### 5.1 Legal and institutional measures

The Law of 1 August 2018 introduced substantial changes relating to the retention of international students at the end of their studies. Thus, they may be authorised to stay in Luxembourg for a maximum period of nine months (non-renewable) in view of seeking employment or establishing a business.

This residence permit may be issued by the Minister in charge of Immigration if the student has obtained a Master's or Doctorate's degree in Luxembourg, has sufficient resources to cover his or her living expenses without recourse to the social assistance system, as well as his or her return-travel costs, and is covered by health insurance. To be eligible for this residence per-

mit, s/he must be able to prove that s/he has monthly resources corresponding to 80% of the social inclusion revenue (REVIS).

The application for the residence permit must be submitted at least one month before the 'student' residence permit expires. The Minister is required to take a decision within 90 days. In case of a positive decision, the person is issued a residence permit for 'private reason'. S/he may also subsequently be granted a 'salaried worker' residence permit under certain conditions: respect of the priority of recruitment enjoyed by certain workers under EU or national regulations, declaration of the vacant post at the National Employment Agency (*'Agence pour le développement de l'emploi'* - ADEM) and an activity as salaried worker corresponding to the person's academic training. This residence permit is granted for a maximum duration of one year and is limited to one sector and one profession with any employer (no access to the public sector). It can be renewed for a maximum period of three years without any occupational or sectoral restrictions (with the exception of the access to the public sector). Furthermore, the student may also be granted a residence permit as a self-employed person if s/he fulfils the legal conditions.

The University has also set up a number of measures to help international students to remain in Luxembourg. For example, the Career Centre offers a wide range of services (online platform bringing together recruiters and students, specific workshops, recruitment fairs, etc.) to improve the employability of students during and after their studies. A business incubator (University of Luxembourg Incubator) has recently been established and offers many services to students: office space, access to a complete infrastructure at low cost, administrative support, mentoring services, access to a business network and organisation of events. The

Internships Service advises students on their career choices and provides them with support in finding an internship. Students can benefit from partnerships with high-level private sector actors such as the prestigious audit firms that make up the 'Big Four'. Other initiatives with major private sector actors in Luxembourg also aim to strengthen the links between the University and the industry. Lastly, a network of former graduates has been created in order to cultivate a strong sense of belonging to the University community in Luxembourg.

## 6. Cooperation with third countries

### 6.1 Bilateral and multilateral agreements

Luxembourg has concluded a number of bilateral/multilateral agreements which are mainly aimed at promoting the mobility of researchers and students. International cooperation exists with several target countries through bilateral agreements established as part of the European Research Area (ERA) roadmap. One of the objectives is to strengthen research collaborations between Luxembourg and third countries, for example by increasing the percentage of international doctoral students.<sup>15</sup>

Under the bilateral agreement with Cape Verde, students from Cape Verde can stay in Luxembourg after they graduate from a higher education programme in order to gain a first professional experience. A temporary authorisation of stay for a maximum period of two years can be issued if the salaried activity is in relation to the students' academic training.<sup>16</sup>

The cooperation programmes (Indicative Cooperation Programmes – ICPs) with a limited number of partner countries (Burkina Faso, Cape

Verde, Laos, Mali, Nicaragua, Niger and Senegal) in the context of the development cooperation policy of Luxembourg provide, inter alia, for the award of scholarships to students from these countries and the financing of vocational training projects.

In order to avoid brain drain in the countries of origin, the bilateral agreement with Cape Verde provides for the implementation of incentives to enable Cape Verdean students to reintegrate into their country of origin after their first professional experience. More generally, Luxembourg's development cooperation policy provides for certain measures to stem the brain drain. In this context, one could mention the interuniversity cooperation project between the Universities of Luxembourg and Bamako in the fields of law and economics, with the creation of specific Master programmes in Mali within the framework of the current Indicative Cooperation Programme (ICP - 2015-2019).

The University benefits from a large leeway from the Government with regard to the development of its international strategy. The establishment of interuniversity agreements with partner universities in Europe and throughout the world is an important lever to attract international students to Luxembourg. These framework agreements provide for exchanges of students, researchers and joint research projects. In 2017, 288 international agreements were signed, 76 of which with third-country higher education institutions. The University intends to continue to develop key strategic partnerships with target countries and markets.

## 6.2 Challenges and best practices

Based on the input provided by various stakeholders consulted in the context of this study, a number of obstacles and challenges related to attracting and/or retaining international students in Luxembourg were identified. These include in particular:

- The languages of instruction for Bachelor level programmes (with a predominant use of French and/or German),
- The languages of the country and the labour market (with a predominant use of French and Luxembourgish),
- The costs of living as well as the costs/availability of housing in Luxembourg,
- Misuse of the purpose of the 'student' residence permit by certain international students,
- Difficulties related to the authenticity of foreign diplomas,
- A challenging procedure related to the entrance exam for international students who hold a high school diploma issued in a country that is not a signatory to the Paris/Lisbon conventions,
- A still limited international exposure of the University of Luxembourg,
- A lack of awareness among international students as well as employers of the opportunities offered following the transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive in regard to seeking employment or establishing a business,
- The implementation and the maintenance of an alumni database in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR),
- With regard to international cooperation, maintaining a balance between outgoing and incoming international students within the framework of interuniversity agreements.

The consulted stakeholders also identified several good practices relating to the attraction of international students. One could mention:

- A close and diligent collaboration between all stakeholders involved in the attraction of international students,
- The quality management of higher education institutions (public or private) by experts in view of guaranteeing the best interests of students,
- The implementation of more targeted and selective admission procedures (in particular by limiting the number of applications to prevent abusive practices and contribute to a better identification and selection of candidates),
- Affordable tuition fees,
- The development of international cooperation at interuniversity level through participation in the Erasmus Mundus programme, the participation of staff members in mobility agreements between partner universities and their role as multipliers and promoters of the country and the University as well as the offer of scholarships by the various stakeholders.

Among the good practices in regard to the retention of international graduates in Luxembourg, one could mention:

- The award of a significant number of employment contracts for Master graduates who want to enter a doctoral programme,
- Raising awareness among target audiences regarding the opportunities offered by the recent amendments to the Immigration law.

## 7. Conclusion

Attracting international students is a major issue at EU level in the face of major economic and demographic challenges. The Students and Researchers Directive aims to make the EU more attractive for international students and is the main legislative instrument regulating the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals. The most popular destinations for international students in the EU in 2017 were the United Kingdom, France and Germany. The main countries of origin of international students were China, the United States and India.

In Luxembourg, the number of residence permits (first issues and renewals) issued for the purposes of studies almost doubled between 2013 and 2018, from 343 to 667 permits issued. The main countries of origin of international students are China, India and Nepal.<sup>17</sup>

Attracting international students is not considered as a national political priority per se, but is part of a broader strategy to attract talent in order to meet the needs of the economy. According to the Government's coalition agreement following the 2018 parliamentary elections, immigration must continue to serve national economic interests and attract talent for the purposes of research and study.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the Government plans to develop a national strategy for attracting, developing and retaining talent for Luxembourg.<sup>19</sup>

The Student and Researchers Directive was transposed into national law by the Law of 1 August 2018. It improves the conditions of residence of students on the national territory, facilitates intra-EU mobility as well as the access to the labour market during and after graduation. Given the recent transposition into national law, it is still too early to assess the effects of the transposition of this Directive.

## Main countries of destination in the EU for international students in 2017

Country of destination	Number of first residence permits issued for 'students'
United Kingdom	180 000
France	80 000
Germany	40 000
Total at EU level	460 000

## Main countries of origin of international students arriving in the EU in 2017

Country of origin	Number of first residence permits issued for 'students'
China	118 830
United States	33 000
India	32 317
Ukraine	16 248
Morocco	13 472

Source: Synthesis Report of the European Commission, in course of publication.

Higher education in Luxembourg is characterised by the fact that the country has only one University. The higher education landscape is complemented by study programmes awarding a BTS as well as by a number of private higher education institutions. The University holds a hegemonic position in this environment and therefore hosts the vast majority of international students in Luxembourg. It closely cooperates with the Directorate of Immigration to improve the admission of international students. It has strong assets in attracting international students, in particular its multilingualism, its international openness, affordable tuition fees, personalised accompaniment and support as well as its international recognition. These assets are complemented by the country's particular economic, social and geographical context.

However, several challenges have been identified in regard to the attraction and retention of international students in Luxembourg, the most important of which are the cost of living (and in particular housing), which can be an insurmountable obstacle for a number of international students, as well as the linguistic situation in some study programmes and the labour market.

At European level, a number of Member States have set up mechanisms to facilitate the attraction and retention of international students. One could name the following:

- 'Study in Lisbon' is a project developed by the City of Lisbon that aims to provide a wide range of information and services, such as

support to find housing for international students.

- Estonia launched an international platform for the management of student applications to higher education institutions ('DreamApply') in 2011. This tool offers paperless solutions and is used by more than 200 educational institutions in 25 countries.
- 'Campus France' is a public organisation that offers an online platform and organises many events abroad to promote French higher education. A blog of e-ambassadors compiles testimonies from international students on daily life in France.
- 'France Alumni' is the global network of French higher education graduates (265,000 members in 105 countries and more than 3,000 partners). Its online platform offers many services: professional opportunities, guidance, encounters and events, etc...

All the information of this inform, including statistics, is taken from the study «Attracting and retaining international students in the EU» which is available in English at the following link:

<https://www.emnluxembourg.lu/?p=2991>

as well as the summary report of the European Commission, available in English at the

following link: [In course of publication.](#)

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