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Attracting and Retaining International Students in Lithuania

2018/3

EMN STUDY



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**Attracting and Retaining
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Lithuania**

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VILNIUS, 2018

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Summary

Background. The number of third country students in Lithuania arriving for a full-study programme is constantly increasing. In 2013 there were approx. 3000 students and in 2017 the number reached 4000. The share of third-country students is approx. 4,2 percent while the total body of international students (including students from EU countries) makes up approx. 6 percent. Main nationalities of third country students in 2017 were: Belarussian (970 students), Indian (922 students), Ukrainian (514 students), Israel (226 students), Bangladeshi (203 students). During the last five years the share of students from the Commonwealth of Independent States was constantly decreasing while the share of students from Asian countries almost doubled. Main fields of studies: Business and administration (23 percent), social sciences (17 percent), engineering (17 percent), and medicine (14 percent). Even though Lithuania does not have a national strategy for attraction or retention of third-country students Ministry of Education and Science approves annual priorities of promotion internationalization in higher education. For 2017 – 2018 one of the objectives is to attract gifted international students and teachers capable of bringing about progressive changes in the study process.

Legal changes related to third-country students. Lithuania has completed the transposition of the Directive (EU) 2016/801 into national law on 30 June 2018. During the last years Lithuania also facilitated admission and residence conditions for third-country students including: set lower level (4 sq. m.) of suitable residence area (changes were adopted in 2014), exempted students from obligation to have work experience if they completed their studies in Lithuania and intend to work in a related occupation (in 2014); prolonged the validity of the residence permit from 1 to 2 years (in 2017), allowed students to take employment (up to 20 hours per week) from the first year of studies (in 2017), released students from the labour market test after completing studies in Lithuania if they apply for residence permit for employment (in 2017), prolonged the period in order to seek employment after completion of the studies from 6 to 12 months (in 2018), provided that the entire period of studies in Lithuania will be included when applying for permanent residence in Lithuania if he/she has graduated from the higher education institution in Lithuania.

Admission and residence conditions for third-country students. General admission conditions apply for third-country students who apply for a temporary residence permit with only minor facilitation (e.g. required residence area is reduced from 7 to 4 sq. meters, possibility to stay after studies to look for employment). Students have a right to work 20 hours per week (this restriction does not apply during summer holiday) and are exempt from the requirement to receive a work permit. On average, immigration procedures were evaluated by 7,42 points out of 10 by third country students participated in the survey commissioned by the EMN Lithuania in 2018 (in 2012 – they were evaluated by 6,57 points out of 10). In addition to immigration requirements, students must submit a letter of mediation from the university and demonstrate that university fees are paid. Even though there is no official requirement for knowledge of language, all universities require to submit a proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction. Majority of third-country students must pay for their studies and the cost of studies can vary between 1300 EUR to 12500 EUR per year. During the interviews students and university personnel working with third-country students mentioned that immigration requirements change often, and they are not properly informed about the changes. This may lead to misunderstandings and repeated visits to the immigration office.

Attraction of third-country students. The Education Exchange Support Foundation is responsible for implementation of visibility actions to attract international students to Lithuania. Main activities implemented by the Foundation are: a dedicated website (www.studyin.lt), participation in exhibitions, online marketing campaigns, including social media, foreign journalists' visits, cooperation with embassies. Most of visibility activities were implemented in Eastern Partnership and ASEM countries. All activities are carried out in close consultations with higher education institutions. Scholarships may be provided by the state to students from priority countries studying under a master's degree programme (scholarship ranging from EUR 380 up to EUR 500). In 2016 state supported the studies of 184 third-country students. Students have indicated following positive factors affecting attraction: good ranking of some study programmes (e.g. medicine), interesting culture, affordable living costs. According to the survey, 70 percent of international students are satisfied with the overall experience and life in Lithuania.

Retaining of third-country students. After completion of studies third-country students may apply for a residence permit up to 12 months to seek employment. It should be noted that this permit allows a graduate only to look for employment and therefore during this period graduates cannot work. After a graduate has found employment they must apply for a residence permit on the ground of employment. If a student has completed studies in Lithuania and intends to take employment in a qualification-related occupation, they are not subject to the general requirement to possess a 1-year work experience and no labour market test is implemented. The EMN Lithuania survey demonstrated that only 55 percent of students know about the possibility to stay after studies and look for a job in Lithuania. Analysis performed by the "Create for Lithuania" showed that only 7 percent of students stay in Lithuania after graduation, whereas 49 percent of students would like to stay.

Challenges. The Ministry of Education and Science is developing a Code of Quality which will outline quality conditions which need to be ensured by the higher education institutions in order for them to be promoted by the state internationally. One of the challenges remains low retention of students after graduation. During interviews university personnel indicated following challenges: scarce network Lithuanian embassies and lack of up-to-date and user-friendly information on admission conditions. Students indicated following challenges: 42 percent of students pointed out that immigration procedures are complicated (e.g. difficulties to open a bank account, customer-unfriendly services, immigration officers provide different answers depending on the employee), while 22 percent are satisfied with immigration procedures and did not meet any obstacles.

1.

National Legal and
Policy Framework in
Lithuania

Question (further – Q) 1a. What is the transposition status of Directive (EU) 2016/801 in Lithuanian national law?

- Transposition completed
- In process: completion of transposition expected by
- Other, please specify

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

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

Q1c. What are the main changes to: (a) law, (b) policy and (c) practice since 2012 with regard to international students?

The amendments to the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Legal Status of Aliens (further - the Law) passed in 2014 have facilitated the conditions of entry for third-country nationals entering for the purposes studies:

- the amendments stipulate that the aliens entering for the purposes of studies or training are exempted from the obligation to obtain a work permit if, during the period of studies and training, they participate in an internship (practical training) or take up employment with Lithuanian higher education and research institutions in the area of research or experimental development (the requirement to obtain a work permit previously applied in all cases);
- the amendments facilitated issue of a work permit to students wishing to take up employment in an occupation not related to studies: the employer can register a vacancy at a territorial labour exchange on the same day when applying for the issue of a work permit to a student; an application for recruitment of a student may be lodged by the employer or by the alien himself; documents must be examined not later than within 7 days from the receipt of the documents (from 1 November 2014);
- the amendments provided an alien who has completed training or studies to stay in Lithuania for another six months (previously aliens were under the obligation to leave after completion of training) (from 1 January 2014).

In subsequent years, the conditions for the entry of third country students continued to be facilitated:

- a lower state fee has been specified in the cases when a work permit is issued to a student (from 1 December 2014);
- it has been established that the residential area of suitable residential premises for each person intending to declare in his place of residence in these premises (including the persons who have already declared their place of residence in these premises) must be not less than 4 square metres while for other aliens it is 7 square metres (from 9 July 2015).
- In addition, in order to facilitate the retention of graduates in the Republic of Lithuania, the work experience requirement has been lifted with regards to the aliens who, after completing studies or training under a vocational training programme in the Republic of Lithuania, intend to work in a qualification-related occupation (from 1 March 2015).

Starting from 1 January 2017:

- students are issued a temporary residence permit valid for a longer period (up to 2 years, previously valid for 1 year);
- students are allowed to take up employment from the first year of studies without a work permit (previously – from the second year of studies upon obtaining a work permit);
- after completing studies or training under a vocational training programme in Lithuania and when staying to take up employment in a qualification-related occupation, the labour market test does not apply to the issue of a temporary residence permit on the ground of employment.

The amendments to the Law which entered into force on 30 June 2018 have transposed the provisions of Directive (EU) 2016/801. Major changes related to third-country students are as follows:

- applications for a temporary residence permit are examined within 3 months;

- aliens may enter to participate in a traineeship (unremunerated training) at higher education and research institutions, enterprises, agencies or organisations in the Republic of Lithuania;
- after completing studies in the Republic of Lithuania, aliens will be able to stay for another 12 months in order to seek employment or commence self-employed activities;
- aliens in possession of a temporary residence permit issued by another EU Member State will be able to enter the Republic of Lithuania and continue their studies for up to 360 days without applying for the issue of a temporary residence permit in the Republic of Lithuania;
- when applying for the issue of a permanent residence permit, the entire period of studies in the Republic of Lithuania (rather than half of the period of studies as previously) will be included.

Q1d. Are any changes planned to law/policy/practice regarding international students Lithuania?

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

Presently, the Ministry of the Interior is drafting an amendment to the Law which, among other amendments, proposes:

- to stipulate that an alien who has finished studies in the Republic of Lithuania and applies for the issue of a temporary residence permit on the ground of employment in the Republic of Lithuania would be exempted from the labour market test if he applies for the issue of the temporary residence permit within 2 years after graduation. It is planned to extend the scope of this derogation to include the aliens who intend to take up employment in an occupation outside their acquired qualifications (currently, only the aliens who have completed studies in the Republic of Lithuania and who intend to take up employment in a qualification-related occupation may make use of this derogation);
- to stipulate a ground for refusing to issue or renew a temporary residence permit to an alien if the alien, having enrolled in a higher education and research institution under a study programme/programmes, has collected less than 40 study credits during the last year of studies or when studying or training does not comply with the restriction on employment established by the Law (an alien has the right to work not more than for 20 hours per week during the period of studies or training, except for the period of summer holidays established by the educational establishment or the higher education and research institution);
- to supplement grounds for the withdrawal of a temporary residence permit by providing that a temporary residence permit issued on the ground of training or studies may be withdrawn if an alien has failed to appear for training, studies, traineeship or up-skilling, also if an alien enrolled in a higher education and research institution under a study programme/programmes has collected less than 40 study credits during the last one year of studies. It is proposed to stipulate that the Migration Department may take a decision refusing to issue or renew a temporary residence permit or withdrawing such a permit in respect of the alien who has collected less than 40 study credits during the last year of studies only after consulting the higher education and research institution at which the alien is studying.

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

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

There is no clearly defined well-documented national strategy, however there is an awareness of the need of promotion of internationalisation in higher education.

The attraction of third countries is mentioned in several documents:

- The Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines, approved by Resolution No 79 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 22 January 2014 on Approval of the Lithuanian Migration Policy Guidelines, provide for the main directions for development of migration policy. One of the directions for immigration is, "with a view to promoting research and innovation activities, a more attractive scheme of attraction should be developed also with regard to the aliens coming to conduct research or experimental development or to teach at Lithuanian higher education and

research institutions; the third-country students who study or complete higher education studies in Lithuania and who are among the sources of replenishment of highly qualified workforce, as well as those who seek to integrate into the Lithuanian society should be provided more favourable living and working conditions in Lithuania. The coming of both students and teachers and researchers to Lithuania is important, as it is in line with the orientations for and needs of development of studies in Lithuania”.

- The Priorities of Promotion of Internationalisation in Higher Education for 2017 – 2018 focus on the strengthening of academic ties and inbound academic mobility by attracting gifted international students and teachers capable of bringing about progressive changes in the study process.

Experts claim that Lithuania does not have a strategic document intended for third-country students. The preparation of such a document has been discussed for some time, however it has not been prepared yet.

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

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

Lithuania does not have a national strategy for attracting or retaining international students. However, there are several lower level policy documents aimed at promotion of internationalisation in higher education.

The Minister of Education and Science approves annual priorities of promotion of internationalisation of higher education. The Priorities of Promotion of Internationalisation in Higher Education for 2017 - 2018¹, approved by the Minister of Education and Science on 23 January 2017, set out the key priorities, namely, improving the quality of internationalisation in Lithuanian higher education; enhancing academic ties and inbound academic mobility by attracting gifted international students and teachers capable of bringing about progressive changes in the study process; enhancing outbound academic mobility; promoting centres of Lithuanian (Baltic) studies abroad; supporting Lithuanians living abroad. The main responsible authority is the Ministry of Education and Science. The executing authority is the Education Exchanges Support Foundation (EESF). When selecting the priority countries from which more students could be attracted to Lithuania, the EESF consults higher education institutions, reviews statistics, holds discussions with a group of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, which adopts a final decision.

The EESF takes the following key tactical steps to attract students from the priority countries:

1. Communication with embassies, participation in study exhibitions held in the priority countries;
2. Implementation of an online marketing campaign - attracting international students by means of online tools (social networking profile, the website www.studyinlithuania.lt).

Q1g. Does Lithuania target specific fields of studies/subject areas (outside bilateral/multilateral cooperation) as regards the attraction and/or retention of international students?

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

The Priorities of Promotion of Internationalisation in Higher Education for 2017 – 2018 indicate the priority groups of countries in raising the visibility of Lithuanian higher education, organising a targeted and consolidated presentation of Lithuanian higher education in Lithuania’s priority export markets, countries of the Eastern Partnership and countries of the Asian region within the framework of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) (no specific countries are listed). As regards priority fields of study, only one field is identified as a priority, namely, Lithuanian (Baltic) studies.

¹ Approved by Order No V-32 on Approval of the Priorities of Promotion of Internationalisation in Higher Education for 2017-2018

According to representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Education and Science is guided by an internationalisation programme, which defines the need for good students from certain regions in certain areas of study. Good students are defined as those possessing knowledge, gifted, motivated, and meeting certain requirements. The focus is on the areas of study related to Lithuania, culture, also the areas in which Lithuania needs more breakthrough and progress.

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

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

There is a debate only among experts. The Ministry of Education and Science is currently drafting a document on the code of the quality of internationalisation in higher education, and the EESF is conducting a student satisfaction survey to review the current situation in Lithuania, to start educating Lithuanian residents about the reasons for the arrival of international students to Lithuania, their benefits to the country, etc. There is no significant public debate on this issue.

Q3. What is the structure and governance of the national higher education system in Lithuania?

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

There is no such organisation. The Ministry of Education and Science shapes policy and sets priorities of promotion of internationalisation in higher education. The EESF, together with universities, is responsible for publicising the internationalisation of studies. Third-country students are received by autonomous institutions, i.e. higher education institutions that take care of them (consult, provide information, mediate in obtaining a residence permit / visa).

Experts point out that the Ministry of Education and Science is currently developing a code of the quality of internationalisation in higher education, which will outline the conditions to be ensured by a higher education institution for the national authority to promote the higher education institution, to offer and claim that the university can receive students and is capable of ensuring that the students will receive a service for which they pay money.

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

- Yes, migration authorities cooperate with HEIs
- No, migration authorities do not cooperate with HEIs

There is no clearly defined institutionalised cooperation mechanism, however, according to university representatives, cooperation with migration institutions is carried out on a daily basis and is defined as a permanent working relationship / consultation, both as regards written correspondence and communication over the phone on various issues (e. g., updating of the a student's status, preparation of documents for the issue of a visa / temporary residence permit in Lithuania, preparation of letters of mediation). In general, universities attempt to systematise the information received from migration services / institutions and required by students and subsequently provide it to the students, therefore cooperation and mutual communication are highly important.

The following areas of concern are identified:

- scarce network of Lithuanian embassies abroad: a part of prospective students 'drop out' solely due to the lack of embassies (8 out of 8 universities participated in the survey);
- lack of consistency, stability and information on changes: legal acts, conditions and requirements are often modified, and universities are not informed about this in a timely manner, therefore students are forced to waste time by repeatedly going to migration services until their documents are accepted. In such situations, the students become disappointed, annoyed and dissatisfied (4 out of 8 universities);

- lack of information in the English language: on the website of the Migration Department, not all information is provided in English or is not up-to-date; a notice of the issue of a visa / residence permit in Lithuania is delivered in Lithuanian, and only a brief summary / paragraph is provided in English (4 out of 8 universities).

Q3c. Is there an approval procedure² in place in Lithuania for public/private HEIs for the purpose of hosting international students? If so, are international students only allowed to study in those HEIs?

Yes

No

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

Yes, higher education is state-sponsored for third-country nationals

No, higher education is not state-sponsored for third-country nationals

Other (e.g. state support depends on the student's country of origin)

Third-country nationals enrolling in Bachelor's and Master's degree studies cannot compete for state-funded study places and may study only in paid places. In the meantime, those who enrol in studies of the third cycle may be admitted to state-funded student places at Lithuanian higher education institutions by way of competition³.

However, the Ministry of Education and Science provides financial support in the form of a scholarship and reimbursement of tuition fees for the best third country students in the Master programme from the priority regions. In 2017, 70 third country students received support. 40 of our 70 places were given to students from Ukraine while the rest to students from other priority states (e.g. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, China, Japan and Moldova). In 2016 state support was provided for 67 third country students. In total in 2012 – 2017 state support was provided to 254 third country students in Master's degree studies.

² Article 15 of the Students and Researchers Directive

³ Sub-point 4.4 of the Description of the Procedure for the Competition of Graduates of Foreign Institutions or Educational Programmes of International Organisations for Admission to State-funded Student Places at Higher Education Institutions approved by Order No V-9 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 4 January 2017 (as last amended by Order No V-609 of 28 July 2017).

2.

Measures and Incentives
to Attract International
Students

2.1. ADMISSION CONDITIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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

Article 26 of the Law stipulates general conditions of issue of a temporary residence permit to aliens:

- 1) fulfils the conditions of entry set out in the Schengen Borders Code;
- 2) is in possession of a valid document evidencing health insurance coverage or holds a verified letter of commitment of a resident to cover the costs of the health care services provided to him during the period of his residence in the Republic of Lithuania;
- 3) has sufficient means of subsistence and/or receives regular income which is sufficient for his stay in the Republic of Lithuania;
- 4) possesses by the right of ownership the suitable residential premises in the Republic of Lithuania in which he intends to declare his place of residence⁴. It needs to be noted that according to paragraph 3¹ of the same Article, when a temporary residence permit is issued to an alien who intends to learn or study, or where a temporary residence permit is renewed for such an alien, the residential area of the suitable residential premises per person intending to declare his place of residence at the said premises (including the persons who have already declared the place of residence at the premises) must be not less than 4 square metres.
- 5) produces a list of his visits and stays in foreign states;
- 6) provides detailed information about himself, (former and/or current) relations with persons residing in the Republic of Lithuania (including citizens of other foreign states residing in the Republic of Lithuania), as well as relations with intelligence, security and/or military institutions of foreign states;
- 7) third-country nationals entering the country are subject to the requirement to submit a criminal record certificate⁵.

Q4b. Is a proof of acceptance by HEI required in Lithuania in order to obtain the visa/residence permit?⁶

Yes

No

A temporary residence permit may be issued to an alien who has already enrolled in studies. The alien must submit a letter of mediation from a higher education and research institution confirming that the alien has enrolled in this institution under a study programme/programmes or in doctoral studies⁷.

⁴ The residential area per each adult person who has declared the place of residence at it would not be less than seven square metres (4 square metres for students), or uses the said residential premises under a lease or loan for use contract, provided that the duration of the relevant contract is not shorter than the period of validity of the temporary residence permit and has been registered in accordance with the established procedure, or presents a letter of commitment of a natural or legal person, verified in accordance with the procedure laid down in legal acts, to provide him with suitable residential premises at which he will declare his place of residence and which will meet the requirements for residential area per person for the period of validity of the temporary residence permit.

⁵ The description of the procedure stipulates that if an alien (over 14 years old) lodges an application for the issue of a permit, he must submit a valid certificate/certificates issued by a foreign country/countries in which the alien resided before entering the Republic of Lithuania or has resided for the past 2 years (except for the cases when residence in a foreign country lasts for less than 6 months within a 12-month period) and certifying that in this/these country/countries he did not have/had a conviction, and such a certificate must be issued not earlier than 6 months before the date of application for the issue of the permit. If the alien, while staying in the Republic of Lithuania, submits a valid national visa of the Republic of Lithuania under which he has entered the Republic of Lithuania and intends to remain in the Republic of Lithuania, he may, along with the application for the issue of the permit, submit a valid criminal record certificate/certificates issued not earlier than 1 month before the date of receipt of the national visa of the Republic of Lithuania. If the alien has previous convictions, the criminal record certificate must state when and for what criminal act the alien was convicted, what sentence he was issued and whether it was served. It should be noted that the alien needs to submit data on his criminal record only once in order to reside in the Republic of Lithuania. In addition, it is possible to assess a case individually (if the alien submits a reasoned explanation and indicates the factual circumstances preventing him from meeting such a requirement, a decision may be taken not to apply it).

⁶ Article 11 (1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

⁷ Based on sub-point 24.29 of the Description of the Procedure for Issuing to Aliens, Renewing and Withdrawing Temporary Residence Permits in the Republic of Lithuania, Also Assessing Whether a Marriage or a Registered Partnership of Convenience has been Contracted or a Fake Adoption has been Effectuated or an Enterprise is Fictitious approved by Order No 1V-329 of the Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania of 12 October

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

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

Recognition of acquired qualifications is carried out in accordance with the description of the procedure⁸. The description of the procedure stipulates that the academic recognition of foreign qualifications in Lithuania is carried out by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and the higher education institutions authorised by the Minister for Education and Science. The higher education institutions authorised by the Minister of Education and Science and independently carrying out the recognition of academic qualifications are the following: Klaipėda University, the public establishment LCC International University, Aleksandras Stulginskis University, Kaunas University of Technology, ISM University of Management and Economics, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences.

Q4d. What are the level of tuition fees for third-country nationals in Lithuania?⁹

On average, Bachelor's studies cost approximately EUR 1 300 – 5 300 per year, Master's studies – EUR 2 300 – 6 500, and doctoral studies – EUR 8 400 – 8 500¹⁰. As regards medical studies, the mentioned rates are higher and range from EUR 3 500 to EUR 12 500.

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

According to Article 83(1) of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Science and Studies, the cost of studies is determined by a higher education institution. When a joint study programme is carried out or the right to carry out doctoral studies is granted to several higher education and research institutions, the cost of the joint study programme or doctoral studies is determined by these institutions subject to mutual coordination. Tuition fee rates are indicated in rules for admission to a higher education institution.

- Is evidence of payment an admission condition?

- Yes
- No

4 out of 8 universities participate in the survey request to pay annual tuition fees, in exceptional cases it is allowed to pay per semester. Such exemptions are most often applied to priority countries of the universities, such as Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and, in general, to the students who, for certain well-founded reasons, are not able to pay the full amount of an annual tuition fee. These exemptions do not apply to students from high-risk countries (e.g., African countries, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh), they are requested to pay for an academic year in advance due to the concerns related to irregular migration.

- Are the fees capped in Lithuania (i.e. is there a higher/lower threshold limit imposed)?

- Yes
- No

- Are the fees for international students the same as those for domestic students?

2005 on Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Issuing to Aliens, Renewing and Withdrawing Temporary Residence Permits in the Republic of Lithuania, Also Assessing Whether a Marriage or a Registered Partnership of Convenience has been Contracted or a Fake Adoption has been Effected or an Enterprise is Fictitious (as last amended by Order No 1V-705 of 27 September 2018)

⁸ Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations approved by Resolution No 212 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 29 February 2012 on Approval of the Description of the Procedure for Recognition of Education and Qualifications Concerning Higher Education and Acquired under Educational Programmes of Foreign States and International Organisations

⁹ See Article 11(1)(b) of the Students and Researchers Directive

¹⁰ Based on the information provided at http://www.studyinlithuania.lt/en/how_to_apply/tuitionfees

Yes

No

Third-country students cannot apply for state funded places and must pay fees for studies. Only permanent residents (including third-country nationals) and PhD students can apply for state funded places.

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

Yes

No

Only third country students enrolled in studies of the third cycle may be admitted to state-funded student places at Lithuanian higher education institutions by way of competition¹¹. Other students must pay for the studies but can apply for state support if they come from priority countries for Master's or PhD studies.

Q4e. What is the level of administrative fees for third-country nationals in Lithuania?

The fee for the examination of an application for the issue of a temporary residence permit is EUR 86 (as a matter of urgency – EUR 172), for the personalisation of a temporary residence permit – EUR 28, while a multiple-entry national visa is issued for a consular fee in the amount of EUR 60.

Some fees (approx. 1500 EUR) are charged by intermediates if the student arrives with the assistance provided by the intermediates.

Q4f. Are international students required to provide a proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course?¹²

Yes, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is required in general

A proof is required for specific courses

No, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is not required

To apply for the visa or residence permit there is no requirement to provide a proof of sufficient knowledge of language. However, all the universities participated in the survey have confirmed that they require a document evidencing the level of English language proficiency.

All 8 universities indicated that they request to submit an IELTS or TOEFL certificate, while 4 out of 8 universities mentioned that a Cambridge English certificate could also be submitted in addition to TOEFL and IELTS. If a student does not hold TOEFL, IELTS or Cambridge English certificates, 2 out of 8 universities allow him to demonstrate his English language proficiency by taking an English language test organised by a university.

If a student, before coming to Lithuania, graduated from a higher education institution in English, it is sufficient to provide a relevant documentary proof, such as a Bachelor's diploma. Representatives of 4 out of 8 universities have mentioned that for a student who does not possess a documentary proof of his knowledge of English, his English language skills are checked live or during an interview on Skype.

Level of English language proficiency required for Bachelor's studies (CEFR):

- B1 – 1 out of 8 universities
- B2 – 6 out of 8 universities
- C1 – 1 out of 8 universities

¹¹ Sub-point 4.4 of the Description of the Procedure for the Competition of Graduates of Educational Programmes of Foreign Institutions or International Organisations for Admission to State-funded Student Places at Higher Education Institutions approved by Order No V-9 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of 4 January 2017 (as last amended by Order No V-609 of 28 July 2017)

¹² See Article 11(1)(c) of the Students and Researchers Directive

Level of English language proficiency required for Master's studies (CEFR):

- B2 – 6 out of 8 universities
 - C1 – 2 out of 8 universities
 - The student has to provide an attestation
- Yes, an attestation is required for all courses
- An attestation is required for specific courses
- No

Q4g. Are international students automatically qualified for health insurance?¹³

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

Q4h. Is there a pre-determined level of sufficient resources for international students at national level?¹⁴

- Yes
- No

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

The amount of resources set for an alien applying for the issue of a residence permit is 0.5 of the minimum monthly wage (currently EUR 400 per month for students)¹⁵. A student must submit proof of the amount available for a year, irrespective of whether an application is lodged for the issue of a residence permit valid for one year or for two years. This can be a bank account statement, a letter from a higher education institution confirming that a third-country national possesses sufficient resources to cover the costs of studies and a return travel or that he has been granted a scholarship. A list of documents accepted as proof of sufficient resources is not exhaustive, and the situation may be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

- What type of resource(s) are accepted by Lithuania? Please check all applicable boxes.

- Bank statement
- Guarantee by a third person
- Other, please specify

A letter from a higher education institution can also be submitted as proof of possession by a third-country national of sufficient resources to study and to cover the costs of a return travel.

Q4i. Other admission conditions

Third-country nationals are required to provide proof of the residential premises held by them (by the right of ownership or under a lease contract). According to Article 26(31) of the Law, when a temporary residence permit is issued to an alien who intends to learn or study, or where a temporary residence permit is renewed for such alien, the residential area of the suitable residential premises per person intending to declare his place of residence at the said residential premises (including the persons who have already declared the place of residence at the premises) must be not less than 4 square metres.

The universities under study have also indicated the following additional conditions:

¹³ See Articles 7(1)(c) and 11(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

¹⁴ See Articles 7(1)(e), 7(3) and 11(1)(d) of the Students and Researchers Directive

¹⁵ Based on sub-point 17.6 of the Description of the Procedure for Issuing to Aliens, Renewing and Withdrawing Temporary Residence Permits in the Republic of Lithuania, Also Assessing Whether a Marriage or a Registered Partnership of Convenience has been Contracted or a Fake Adoption has been Effectuated or an Enterprise is Fictitious, an alien must submit a documentary proof that he has sufficient resources to reside in the Republic of Lithuania for at least one year (this amount is calculated on the basis of Order No A1-22 of the Minister of Social Security and Labour of 29 January 2007 on Determination of the Amount of Means of Subsistence to be Considered Sufficient for an Alien Applying for the Issue of a Residence Permit to Reside in the Republic of Lithuania).

- motivational letter;
- letters of recommendation;
- when enrolling in Master's degree studies, some areas of study are strictly subject to possession of a relevant Bachelor's diploma, for example, when enrolling in the Master of Law studies, a Bachelor's degree in Law is required;
- the qualification assessment procedure/the current level of education to be equivalent to that in Lithuania. For example, if a student completes studies abroad, his grades are converted and compared against the Lithuanian system of higher education;
- grade point average: when enrolling in Bachelor's degree studies, a secondary education certificate is required and a grade point average is calculated; when enrolling in Master's degree studies, the grades of the Bachelor's diploma are taken into account;
- entrance examinations: knowledge of relevant subjects is checked when enrolling in medicine and technology studies, for example, examinations in biology, chemistry or mathematics are taken.

2.2. SPECIAL INCENTIVES FOR ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Q5. Please indicate which of the incentives listed below (Q5a-Q5i) are in place in Lithuania and please provide a brief description. What are the incentives/measures carried out 'centrally' or by individual HEIs.

Q5a. Does Lithuania carry out promotional activities and dissemination of information in the countries of origin?

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

EESF is implementing the project entitled "Study in Lithuania", which aims at presenting higher education and studies in Lithuania, improving their visibility, promoting the trademark of Lithuanian higher education among international students (including Lithuanians abroad), among partner institutions and organisations. The implementing measures in relation to of this project include participation in higher education exhibitions abroad, organisation of events presenting Lithuanian higher education, products, publications, a web portal and online marketing campaigns promoting it, social networks and a representative virtual application designed for the international students who have come to study in Lithuania.

According to EESF, target countries are determined through consultations with universities. Currently, a variety of promotional campaigns are carried out and a number of measures are applied in such target countries as China, Georgia, Azerbaijan, India: internet and press communication, foreign journalists' visits to Lithuania, cooperation with embassies, participation in events / study exhibitions held in foreign countries. The application of measures depends on the country in question. For example, in India a successful means of dissemination of information is radio and television. As regards China, the means that work well in Western countries, such as the Internet, Facebook, need to be abandoned. In the latter country, articles in magazines, participation in study exhibitions, participation in national TV shows, cooperation with the embassy have proved to be effective.

Universities also participate in educational exhibitions held in foreign countries.

Q5b. Are scholarships and bursaries available?

- Yes, provided by the state/regional authorities
- Yes, provided by HEIs
- Yes, provided by private entities

No.

The EESF provides to the best students from priority countries studying under a master's degree programme an opportunity to receive a scholarship (ranging from EUR 380 up to EUR 500) and reimbursement of tuition fees. In 2017, 70 third country students received support. 40 of our 70 places were given to students from Ukraine while the rest to students from other priority states (e.g. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, China, Japan and Moldova). In 2016 state support was provided for 67 third country students. In total in 2012 – 2017 state support was provided to 254 third country students in Master's degree studies.

Universities also may grant scholarships to third-country students in the form of funding of studies:

- exemption from tuition fees (studying for free). For example: 1) if there are very good academic achievements, the most active and the best students in the first year can receive a scholarship which covers the remaining tuition fee and study free of charge for the remaining 3 years; 2) when entering a university, top-rated third-country students may be offered a possibility of free studies at the university;
- reduction of tuition fees. For example: 1) when students from priority countries enrol in a university, their tuition fee is automatically reduced to the normative cost of studies; 2) having achieved good academic results, the tuition fee is reduced by 30-50 per cent.

In exceptional cases, universities pay monthly scholarships (e.g., from the Senate), lump-sum scholarships (e.g., social assistance, Patron, Talent), however they may be granted not only to international students.

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

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

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

- Do family members of international students have access to family reunification in Lithuania?

- Yes
- No

According to Article 43 of the Law, only doctoral students may exercise the right to family reunification.

- If yes, do family members have the right to work in Lithuania?

- Yes
- No

Under Article 58 of the Law, family members are exempt from the obligation to obtain a work permit.

Q5e. Is any support targeted at spouses and other family members of international students offered in Lithuania?

- Yes, support for spouses available
- Yes, support for children available
- Yes, support for other family members available
- No

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

- Yes
- No

There are many study programmes offered in English (509 study programmes). International students study in 220 different study programmes in Lithuania. However, it should be noted that 38 percent of programmes had less than 5 students.

For some fields (e.g. medicine) there are separate groups for international students. Lithuania also hosts the European Humanities University, which provides students from Belarus and the region with an education in the European liberal arts tradition.

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

- Yes
- No

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

- Yes
- No

At the request of an alien, an application for the issue of a temporary residence permit may be examined as a matter of urgency. In this case, the term is shortened by half, and the fee for the issue of a temporary residence permit is twice the amount of the standard charge.

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

No.

2.3. HOSTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: PREPARATION, ARRIVAL AND HOUSING

Q6a. What is the nature of the document issued (long-stay visa or residence permit)?

- Long-stay visa issued in the third country
- Short-term visa issued in the third country
- Residence permit issued
- Other

Most third-country students enter under a D-type long-stay national visa. A multiple-entry national visa is issued for the period of 1 year. The visa issuing procedure takes a short time. During the visa validity period, the students may apply for the issue of a temporary residence permit while already staying in Lithuania.

Students may also apply for the issue of a temporary residence permit while staying in a third country. In this case, the procedure takes a longer time. Having obtained a decision on the issue of the temporary residence permit, the students receive a single-entry national D-type visa, which gives them the right to enter the Republic of Lithuania and receive the temporary residence permit. Temporary residence permits are issued for the period of studies, but not longer than for 2 years.

If Lithuania issues a residence permit, is this issued in the territory of Lithuania or in the third country?

- Residence permit issued in the third country
- Residence permit issued in the territory of the Member State

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

Multiple-entry D-type visa. A decision on the issue of a national visa is taken not later than within 15 calendar days after the lodging of an application and submission of all other duly executed documents to a visa service. Students may apply for the issue of a temporary residence permit while already staying in the country.

Temporary residence permits. Students may also apply for the issue of a temporary residence permit to a consular post in a third country. In accordance with Article 33(11) of the Law, an application for the issue of a temporary residence permit must be examined within 3 months from the lodging of the application. Having obtained a decision on the issue of the permit, the students receive a single-entry national D-type visa, which gives them the right to enter the Republic of Lithuania and receive the permit in the country.

At the request of an alien, the application may be examined as a matter of urgency. In this case, the term is shortened by half and the fee is doubled.

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

Pursuant to Article 46(2) of the Law, a temporary residence permit may be renewed if the alien fulfils the conditions laid down in Article 26(1) of the Law, has not discontinued studies and when studying works for not more than 20 hours per week. The same requirements apply as at the time of issue, i.e. the same procedure applies as when applying for the issue of the permit for the first time.

Q7. Please indicate if the hosting initiatives and measures listed below (Q7a-Q7c) are in place in Lithuania.

Q7a. Is induction and orientation support provided in Lithuania (incl. opening a bank account, registering in the healthcare system, etc.)?

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place

Yes, support provided by HEIs

No

All universities provide orientation support for international students. Upon arrival of students to Lithuania, an introductory week is organised at the universities introducing the university, the university's academic arrangements, the city (the location of stores, banks, outpatient healthcare institutions), conducting excursions, inviting representatives of migration, police, healthcare institutions, the municipality, transport services, who provide students with information on relevant issues. Every international student also has a mentor/senior friend who helps him on various issues (both provide information and accompany to an outpatient healthcare institution, a migration institution, etc.).

Q7b. Is support with finding housing and accommodation provided in Lithuania?

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place

Yes, support provided by HEIs

Yes, support provided by other organisations

No, support is not available

6 out of 8 universities participated in the survey offer an opportunity for incoming students to stay at a university dormitory. 2 out of 8 universities do not have their own dormitory but help to find a place to live: one university provides residential premises in another university's dormitory, and another university provides a list of university partners indicating where students can stay at a cheaper rate.

If a student does not want to live in a dormitory, they must search for available housing on their own. In such cases, the greatest help comes from mentors, who help to check housing rental ads, to talk with landlords.

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

- Yes, state-organised measures for courses in place
- Yes, courses provided by HEIs.
- Yes, support provided by other organisations
- No

4 out of 8 universities organise multicultural / intercultural awareness classes / lectures. These classes usually take place during the introductory week (introducing cultural differences, presenting the cultural norms which exist in Lithuania, for example, "it is not a norm to be late").

2 out of 8 universities claim to offer preparatory courses during which a student can improve his knowledge of English / mathematics and physics if his level of proficiency is not sufficient when enrolling in a university.

2.4. RIGHTS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Q8. Right to work.

Q8a. How many hours are international students allowed to work per week or months per year?¹⁶

A third-country student may work for not more than 20 hours per week. This restriction does not apply during summer holidays. Based on the EMN Lithuania survey approx. 1/3 of third country students work while studying. Majority work as foreign language teachers or online for their native countries.

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

- Yes, restrictions in place
- No

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

- Yes, prior authorisation required
- No

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

- Yes, self-employment possible
- No

The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Income Tax of Individuals stipulates a self-employed activity, as well as the procedure for imposing income tax on the income of individuals.

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

- Yes, deferral of studies possible
- Yes, carrying out a training/job in parallel to studies possible

¹⁶ See Article 24 of the Students and Researchers Directive.

No

According to Article 62 of the Law on Science and Studies, students have the right to take an academic leave once during the study period for personal reasons, but for a period not exceeding one year, without losing the status of a student and the right to continue their studies after the academic leave in a state-funded student place if they held such a place before taking the academic leave; the students also have the right to carry out volunteers' practical training or participate in a traineeship not being a part of the study programme. The practical training which is a part of the study programme is carried out without deferring studies.

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

Yes

No

Q10b. In accordance with Directive 2016/801 Article 21(3),¹⁷ Member states may withdraw a visa/residence permit in case of a lack of progress in the relevant studies. Has Lithuania transposed this provision?

Yes

No

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

Yes

No

Based on Article 53(9) of the Law, when issuing a permanent residence permit, the period of residence in the Republic of Lithuania includes only half of the time of residence in the Republic of Lithuania with a temporary residence permit issued on the ground of studies (in accordance with the provisions of Article 40(1)(6) and Article 46 of the Law). This provision does not apply to the aliens who have completed studies in the Republic of Lithuania and have acquired higher education qualifications.

External factors affecting attracting international students

Q12. Based on existing national sources (evaluation reports, media reports, etc.), what are the external factors affecting the attraction of international students in Lithuania?

HEI rankings

Lithuania is a hub for specific fields

Language in which courses are taught

Culture

Socio-economic factors (e.g. living costs)

Other (please specify)

University representatives and interviewed students list the following external factors:

- opportunity to study in the EU;
- diploma recognised in the EU;
- high-quality studies at an affordable price;
- high university rankings;

¹⁷ See Article 21(2)(f) of the Students and Researchers Directive

- safe country in terms of terrorism;
- Lithuania is strong in the area of medicine (when choosing medical studies);
- somewhat familiar / culturally close country (especially for Ukrainians, Belarusians);
- small distance from the home country (relevant for Ukrainians, Belarusians).

2.5. CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Q13. What are the (a) challenges and (b) good practices that have been observed in Lithuania on attracting international students and for whom is it considered a challenge/good practice?

Q13a. Please describe challenges that have been observed in Lithuania.

One of the challenges is threat of irregular migration - upon issuing a temporary residence permit on the ground of studies, an alien departs to other EU Member States. Higher education and research institutions do not always timely inform about non-attending students, as they are not removed from student lists as long as they pay for their studies.

Main challenges indicated by university staff and students:

- Immigration: 22 per cent of incoming students are satisfied with the conditions of and requirements for immigration to Lithuania, while 42 per cent point out that immigration requirements are complicated. Main problems: rapid change of immigration legislation; requirement to translate all documents into Lithuanian; customer-unfriendly service at migration institutions and rather long queues; depending on an employee, answers to questions may differ; for some students from particular states it is complicated to open a bank account in Lithuania ("This year we faced the problem that banks do not open bank accounts for Iranian students, because they are from high-risk countries"); not all necessary information has been translated into English; it is difficult to integrate into Lithuanian society;
- Scarce network of Lithuanian embassies abroad ("We could bring a lot of students from Uzbekistan, but there is no Lithuanian embassy in Uzbekistan [...] in order to study in Lithuania, they need to go to Moscow to get a visa. We have now negotiated to allow students to go to Kazakhstan, but still it is an additional country, additional costs"; "There was one girl from the Philippines, she came here, but she had to fly to Japan first, because there is a Lithuanian embassy in Japan. When someone starts to consider Lithuania as an opportunity but finds out that it is necessary to travel somewhere far away to get a visa, then they choose Hungary for studies, because it has more embassies"; "Students from India, China, Japan must travel to Australia");
- There is absolute lack of knowledge of Lithuania ("As regards Indonesia and Iraq, the biggest challenge is to 'sell' the country, because no one knows about Lithuania, it is necessary to visit those countries and invite to visit Lithuania, then everything is okay"; "There is no such thing in Asia as Lithuania, first of all, one must begin with explaining what is Lithuania");
- Low employment opportunities / fear of "What's next?" ("When people enter a university, they always ask if they will be able to stay after graduation [...] ask what comes after that, because they will not be able to go back, but we do not know"; "Employment has much influence, as students from third countries come to search for a better life and prospects for the future");
- Students' fears of cold Lithuanian weather ("Our seasonality, those very cold winters are very frightening for them").

Q13a. Please describe good practices that have been observed in Lithuania.

- Promotion of good recommendations, word of mouth / invitation of alumni to exhibitions ("Recommendations 'mouth to mouth' matter a lot in Eastern countries, so if an agency recommends us to the local population, it is much more important for the locals than some university rankings"; " We always invite graduates who have already returned to their country to help us in an exhibition. This is the best advertising possible when a student can tell from his own experience how his studies were going, what kind of studies they were, what issues he was facing");

- Establishment of contacts with students' parents ("When you go to fairs, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, many students come together with their parents, and if you speak Russian with their parents, which sounds close for them and dear to their hearts, then the parents really like it, and they have a strong say");
- Emphasis on the model of a university ("In Indonesia, in other countries where Lithuania is not known, we are selected purely for the American model of a university and the fact that studies are carried out at European prices, we do not sell the country, but the university, and the country later adds its own advantages or not").

3.

Measures and Incentives
to Retain International
Graduates

3.1. MEASURES AND INCENTIVES FOR THE RETENTION OF INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES

Q14. Measures and incentives to retain international graduates in Lithuania.

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

After completing studies, a third-country student may apply for the issue of a temporary residence permit in order to seek employment. Such a temporary residence permit is issued for a period of 12 months. This permit is valid only for the purposes of job search, therefore during the period of its validity the student is not entitled to work. After the student has found employment, they must apply for the issue of a new temporary residence permit on the ground of employment.

- For what period of time does Lithuania allow students to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?¹⁸ What happens after this period?

The amendments to the Law which came into effect in 2018, a student after completing studies may apply for a temporary residence permit for the purposes of job search. Such temporary residence permit may be issued once for a period of 12 months. Before this new provision, students could extend their last temporary residence permit for additional 6 months and look for employment. After having found employment, a person has to apply for a new temporary residence permit.

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

Yes

No

An alien who, after completing studies in the Republic of Lithuania, applies for the issue of a temporary residence permit on the ground of employment is not subject to the requirement to possess a 1-year work experience and to the labour market test, but only if he intends to take up employment in a qualification-related occupation.

- Does the international student require a minimum level of degree in order to be allowed to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?¹⁹

Yes

No

No, however a student must have completed a study programme in Lithuania.

Q14b. Are there any other policy measures or incentives to retain international students in place?

Lowered salary requirement for a work/residence permit

Unrestricted access to the labour market

Other incentive(s)

No

After completing studies, a third-country student may apply for the issue of a temporary residence permit in order to seek employment up to 12 months. If the student has completed studies in the Republic of Lithuania and intends to take up employment in a qualification-related occupation, they are not subject to the requirement to possess a 1-year work experience and to the labour market test.

¹⁸ See Article 25(1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

¹⁹ See Article 25(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

Q15. Are there initiatives of HEIs or the private sector whereby support is provided to students following the completion of their studies?

- Yes, initiatives implemented by HEIs
- Yes, initiatives implemented by the private sector
- Other initiatives
- No

University representatives welcome the recent opportunity for students to extend a residence permit in Lithuania for another year after completing their studies to seek employment. Higher education institutions attempt to assist students as much as possible to enter the labour market upon graduation in various ways: by organising career days, teaching how to prepare a CV, participating in job interviews, providing opportunities for practical training both in Lithuania and abroad.

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

- Yes, strategy implemented by HEIs
- Yes, strategy implemented by the government
- No

3.2. CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN RETAINING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Q17. What are the (a) challenges and (b) good practices that have been observed in Lithuania on retaining international students and for whom is it considered a challenge/good practice?

Q17a. Please describe challenges that have been observed in Lithuania.

Meeting with university staff and survey of third-country students demonstrated following challenges:

- Low retention of third-country students. The Overview of Lithuanian Higher Education, Research and Innovation Status demonstrated that few as 7 percent of third-country nationals stay in Lithuania after graduation whereas in other OECD countries around 25 percent of students stay after graduation. EMN Lithuania survey demonstrated that 49 percent would like to stay after graduation but only half of the interviewed students knew about this possibility;
- The main challenges hindering the stay of foreign students in Lithuania after completing studies are the following: language barrier, unattractive salary, immigration difficulties;
- Low employment opportunities: "Students 'drop out' also for the reason of difficulties of finding a job, very low salaries, lack of part-time jobs. We only have full-time jobs, and they can work for a maximum of 20 hours per week";
- It is difficult to study according to the set study quality standard: "It is rather difficult for third-country nationals, especially for Africans, to study under our programmes, they claim that it is difficult for them"; "Most of the challenges are linked with studies, students simply do not stand up to the quality standard"; "Not everyone is up to the level of studies";
- Financial challenges: inability to pay for studies ("Some encounter challenged related to finances, do not pay for their studies"; "Some study for a year, and parents are not able to continue paying");
- Lack of information in English: "Take a look at all the state institutions, there is no English anywhere [...] how will an alien find a job if there is no information in English provided by SoDra (State Social Insurance Fund), by the Labour Exchange [...] Students, when they become sick, travel home to stay at a hospital, because here nobody speaks English [...] Migration services send a summary in English informing you that you have been issued a visa, but only a summary,

but the documents which are to be brought are listed in Lithuanian, students then refer to the university staff and ask them to translate”;

- Unsuitable climate: “For someone the challenge is the weather. They look like children who, having arrived from warm lands, become so much depressed that they want to go back home, and there is nothing you can do about it”;
- Cultural differences: “They sometimes do not understand that what they did in their own country could not be done here [...] they must be explained that speed cannot be exceeded when driving, they need to have a ticket stamped on the bus, to come to lectures on time”.

Q17b. Please describe good practices that have been observed in Lithuania.

- A survey of international students conducted by „Create for Lithuania“ in 2018, during which 300 students were interviewed, has showed that 70 per cent of students are satisfied with the overall experience and life in Lithuania and only 12 per cent are dissatisfied;
- In the event of encountering difficulties in studying, individual attention is paid to a student, additional consultations are provided, students are allowed to retake an examination or repeat a course: “We allow to retake examinations, we provide additional consultations”; “We suggest searching for additional courses or repeating a course”;
- If a student is experiencing financial difficulties, payment conditions are facilitated: “If a student is unable to pay for studies, we attempt to retain him by allowing to pay in instalments or to postpone payment”;
- Psychological assistance is provided: “We provide psychological assistance, we always propose to not take hasty decisions and in all cases we suggest coming to the faculty for a talk”.

4.

Bilateral and Multilateral
Cooperation with third
Countries

Q18. Has Lithuania concluded and/or intends to conclude any bilateral and/or multilateral agreements with countries of origin concerning international students?

Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with industrialised countries.

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

Agreements have been concluded with Israel, Canada and New Zealand. An agreement on youth exchanges has been signed with Canada, and with New Zealand – an agreement on working holidays. The latter agreements specify the age of the persons who are eligible to exercise the opportunities provided for in the agreements (from 18 to 35 years for Canada and from 18 to 30 years for New Zealand). In both cases, the persons intending to make use of the mentioned agreements must comply with the host country's general entry requirements. An agreement of a general nature has been signed with Israel providing for placements and scholarships in the agreed fields of study for second- and third-cycle studies.

Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with developing countries.

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

Agreements usually provide for the promotion of student exchanges by establishing that specific cooperation conditions are stipulated in bilateral agreements of the institutions and organisations concerned. Most agreements have been concluded with the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine) and other Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Uzbekistan). Agreements on cooperation in the area of education have also been concluded with Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, as well as India and China. Specific fields of study or categories of persons are not provided for, as agreements contain only general provisions.

No bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned.

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

Yes, measures related to brain drain in place

No

Q20. Do HEIs in Lithuania have initiatives and cooperation agreements with HEIs in third countries in place? If so, what types of agreements and for which purpose (e.g. student exchange programmes)?

Yes

No

Q21. What are the (a) challenges and (b) good practices that have been observed in Lithuania with regard to bilateral and multilateral agreements and for whom is this considered a challenge/good practice?

Information is not available.

European Migration Network (EMN) is a network composed of migration and asylum experts from EU Member States, Norway and the European Commission. Its main objective is to collect, analyse and provide up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum to policy makers at EU and Member State level and the general public.

The EMN National Contact Point (NCP) in Lithuania is composed of representatives from the Ministry of the Interior, the Migration Department, the State border guard service as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Vilnius office which acts the national co-ordinator for the EMN activities in Lithuania. EMN NCP in Lithuania also collaborates with other entities from governmental as well as non-governmental institutions working in the area of migration.
