

INFORM # 2 – IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN EU AND OECD MEMBER STATES

SERIES OF EMN-OECD INFORMS ON THE IMPACT
OF COVID-19 IN THE MIGRATION AREA

2020



1. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- The global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made it more difficult for international students to complete the administrative procedures necessary to enrol in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) abroad and to travel to that country to take up studies. Most EU and OECD countries have closed their national borders – with exceptions for some groups – in an effort to contain the spread of the virus in their territory, and many universities were also closed for periods during the pandemic.
- In response to these developments, some EU and OECD countries modified or adapted their admission processes for immigration purposes at the national level, often in cooperation with HEIs. Many HEIs also adapted their enrolment and admission procedures.
- Some countries have issued guidelines to HEIs in order to facilitate, to the extent possible, international student flows, respecting safety measures in place to combat the pandemic. EU and OECD countries have taken varying approaches to the issue of whether international students are to be admitted to the territory if their studies are pursued fully online. Some encouraged students to apply for visas so as to be able to enter immediately once admission restrictions were lifted.
- Many consulates and administrative services have closed or reduced their usual capacity as a result of COVID-19, which has delayed processing of visa and permit applications for study purposes. These situations have been addressed partly by extending deadlines, offering application procedures online, introducing temporary concessions and prioritising the processing of student visas once offices have begun to reopen.
- At the time of writing this Inform, data on the number of student applications for the academic year 2020/2021 were not available, or where data were available, such data were not precise and/or comparable. Several EU and OECD countries expect a drop in the number of international students who wish to enrol in HEIs due to COVID-19.
- Many countries introduced temporary measures to mitigate the financial impact that COVID-19 was having on international students, for example by increasing maximum working hours, opening access to national funds or through financial programmes managed at the local or HEI level. Some of the latter specifically benefit international students.
- The travel restrictions imposed in many countries could compromise the ability of international students to be physically present at the institution in which they were enrolled or were planning to enrol. This has prompted some EU and OECD countries to put in place exceptions aimed at preventing visas or permits from being withdrawn for such reasons and to give international students additional time to finish their studies in such cases.
- Typically, international students are allowed to stay in their country of study for a certain period of time after graduating for the purpose of seeking employment or starting a business. However, the pandemic may compromise the international students' ability to attain such goals within the usual timeline given its negative effects on the labour market. In the timeframe of this Inform, few EU or OECD countries had extended the maximum time allowed on graduate schemes.



2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1. AIM AND SCOPE OF INFORM

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the substantial measures taken by EU and OECD countries to prevent the spread of the virus are having both direct and indirect impacts on international students coming to those countries. While the long-term consequences are difficult to predict, the immediate impacts are already visible, for example, where processing of new applications or renewal of residence permits has in many cases been hindered or suspended, with consequences for international students already present in the host country. In addition, the abrupt downturn in economic activity has had a significant impact across many sectors, with international students facing the loss of their part time jobs or reduced or lost incomes, which could have an impact on their ability to continue their studies or find a job or start a business following their graduation.

The following factors have contributed to putting (prospective) international students in EU and OECD Member States in a vulnerable situation:

- Many international students are unable to return to their countries of origin due to travel restrictions, potentially leaving students in an uncertain legal situation. Worries over an inability to return to the country of origin could inhibit future flows: 84 % of prospective international students are concerned about restricted travel options according to an online Studypartals survey;¹
- National administrations and universities have reduced capacity to implement the necessary procedures to facilitate international students' mobility (student visas, residence permits, admission procedures) due to the safety measures implemented to control the spread of the virus. These include the partial or complete closure of national administrative bodies, universities and other institutions, making the admission process uncertain for international students. In some instances such restrictions may compromise students' ability to pursue an international education;

- The crisis has impacted the ability of international students to support themselves financially during their studies, since many are often dependent on student jobs. The ability of a student's family in the country of origin to support the student may also have been negatively impacted due to COVID-19. This situation affects both prospective international students and also international students already in the host countries who are required to demonstrate sufficient resources to support themselves throughout their studies, e.g. as specified by the EU Students and Researchers Directive.²

This joint EMN – OECD Inform reports on the impact of COVID-19 on international students in EU and OECD countries, between February and June 2020. It covers both the admission of new international students who are not yet residing in EU and OECD countries, as well as the situation of those already physically present.

The Inform is based on information collected by the EMN National Contact Points (NCPs) through a common questionnaire via the EMN Ad-Hoc Query (AHQ) tool on responses to COVID-19 in the international students area;^{3 4} and on information collected from non-EU OECD countries via the OECD Working Party on Migration (March to June 2020) and in the OECD policy brief on managing international migration under COVID-19 in OECD countries.⁵ Information regarding EU Member States, Norway and the United Kingdom has been sourced from the EMN, while information on OECD Member States outside of the EU has been provided by the OECD.

For the purpose of this Inform, international students are defined as foreign nationals (third-country nationals for EU Member States) who are granted or are applying for a residence permits or long-stay visas for the purpose of study (Bachelor, Master or PhD level), whilst higher education is defined as comprising tertiary education programmes at levels 6 (Bachelor or equivalent), 7 (Master or equivalent), and 8 (Doctoral or equivalent) of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). This Inform is concerned both with students who are applying to study in the EU and OECD countries and those who are already resident, and focuses only on full-time students. It covers developments during the

¹ <https://studypartals.com/blog/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-international-students-perceptions/>

² Article 21 of Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing (recast), 21.5.2016, OJ L 132.

³ EMN Ad Hoc Query, '2020.44 -Impact of COVID-19 on International students (Part 1)', launched on 24 July 2020. Responses were provided by the EMN National Contact Points (NCP) from the following countries: BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SI, SE, SK and NO, UK, and EMN Ad Hoc Query, '2020.45- Impact of COVID-19 on International students (Part 2)', launched on 24 July 2020. Responses were provided by the EMN National Contact Points (NCP) from the following countries: BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, SK, SI, SE and NO, UK.

⁴ Following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union on 31 January 2020, the EMN National Contact Point of the United Kingdom is participating in selected EMN outputs during the transition period.

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/managing-international-migration-under-covid-19-6e914d57/>

time-period February – June 2020, unless indicated otherwise; for example, a few measures taken by OECD countries in July have also been included.

This Inform is part of a series of Informs addressing further topics exploring the impact of COVID-19 in the migration area. These include other topics such as:

- Residence permits and migrant unemployment (July 2020);
- Maintaining key legal migration flows in times of pandemic (October 2020, tbc);
- Impact on remittances (November 2020, tbc); and
- Impact on return procedures (November 2020, tbc).



3. NATIONAL POLICY RESPONSES TO MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE ADMISSION AND STAY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN EU AND OECD COUNTRIES

Restrictions to travel due to the COVID-19 crisis as well as the limited capacity or even closure of consulates and other administrative bodies (such as ministries and other public bodies with competences in migration matters) have had an impact on the ability of international students to enrol and study in HEIs. The Council of the European Union, in its Recommendation from 30 June 2020 on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction,⁶ included third-country nationals travelling for the purpose of study in the group of travellers with an “essential function or need” for which entry should be allowed.

This section focuses on how national authorities and HEIs amended their policies and procedures in relation to the admission of international students in response to the necessary restrictions in place due to the pandemic. It also addresses the responses to delays in the application procedures for visas or residence permits for international students, the measures put in place by countries to check the health status of international students upon arrival, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the number of international students wishing to enrol in HEIs.

3.1. CONTINGENCY MEASURES RELATED TO THE ADMISSION PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Several EU and OECD countries reported on policy and legislative changes in their approaches to managing the admission of International Students to the territory during the pandemic.⁷ In few cases, guidelines on how to implement these changes were also issued to HEIs (see also section 3.2 below).⁸ This section covers national actions related to admission for both immigration purposes and enrolment in a HEI, i.e. measures taken by the state, those taken by HEI and those that the state facilitated HEIs to take.

A few countries reported the implementation of policy measures giving international students alternatives to in-person registration or attendance⁹ and others extended the deadlines for registration in HEIs.¹⁰

- The Netherlands, for example, reported that all its HEIs were accepting the TOEFL IBT Special Home Edition Test (which could be taken online) for admission and visa purposes¹¹, and that, under certain circumstances, international students could be admitted into HEIs without having fulfilled some of the requirements for a master’s programme, on condition that these requirements will be met within a year. There are different requirements, depending on the university and study programme. The government provides flexibility for universities to make (temporary) exceptions. For example, universities now have the option to accept students for a Master programme without a Bachelor degree. BA students also

6 Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9208-2020-INIT/en/pdf>.

7 Among EU MS, NO and UK: CZ, LU, NL, PL, SI. Among non-EU OECD countries: e.g. CA.

8 Among EU MS, NO and UK: CZ, LU, NL, PL, SI and UK. Among non-EU OECD countries: e.g. AU, NZ US.

9 Among EU MS, NO and UK: LU, NL, SK, and NO, UK. Among non-EU OECD countries: e.g. CA.

10 Among EU MS, NO and UK: BE, FR, HR, LU, NL, PL, SK, and UK.

11 <https://www.internationalstudy.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Guidelines>

have time to conclude their Bachelor programme alongside their Master programme, deadlines depending on the HEI they attend. Dutch students were granted the same options when applying for a Master programme, and similar provisions for a Bachelor programme. Finally, international students following education programmes on-line from their home country for the first few months were advised to request the issuance of their provisional residence permits (mvv) as soon as the prospect of travel to the Netherlands to follow the programme in situ was reintroduced.

- The United Kingdom implemented temporary policy concessions for international students introducing a number of flexibilities. These included amongst others, pragmatism when considering applications for courses with start dates significantly different from those stated on valid or expired Certificates of Acceptance of Study and acceptance of digital copies of documents where sponsor sites were closed or where social distancing measures made submission in person unsafe. All policy changes were being kept under review and subject to withdrawal once the situation returned to normal.

In some cases, new measures introduced applied to all students, not only international students. The Czech Republic, for example, passed new legislation to enable HEIs to change their admission procedures for all students, inter alia by establishing online entry examinations, rescheduling examination dates or alternatives to other traditional forms of admission to university.¹²

However, over half of the countries that responded to the EMN AHQs for this Inform reported that national policies concerning the admission of international students on the territory were not specifically changed as a result of COVID-19.¹³

Procedural changes were introduced at state level to ensure that international students already on the territory were given legal certainty. Following the introduction of legislation in Luxembourg from 18 March 2020, which restricted entry of third-country nationals due to the pandemic, including international

students, the government approved an annex to the Study regulations of the University of Luxembourg, dealing with the COVID-19 situation. The measures aimed to prevent students already enrolled at the University of Luxembourg from being penalised due to the partial suspension of studies in the 2019 / 2020 summer term: for example, no definitive failure was permitted during the summer semester; examination juries planned for July 2020 were delayed until 4 September 2020; and a temporary suspension of the maximum duration of studies (at the discretion of the rector) was introduced. These regulations were applied to all the students of the University including international students.

Similar to the approach adopted for other categories of migrants, countries generally extended the visas and residence permits of international students in response to changed working arrangements of the administrative authorities due to the crisis.¹⁴ This was the case for example in Ireland (see Box 1 below).

Box 1. Automatic extension of student residence permits and online registration renewal in Ireland

In Ireland all residence permits, including those of students, which expired between 20 March 2020 and 20 July 2020 were automatically extended for a period of two months, on the same conditions as the original permission. Individuals were required to register in person once the office re-opened. The Department of Justice and Equality Immigration Service Delivery launched on 22 June 2020, an online registration system for residence permits for all third-country students renewing permission for the coming academic year and who were residing in Dublin, with those students living outside Dublin continuing to renew their registrations at local registration offices. Under the online system, students submit their application, supporting documentation and pay the fee, and send their original passport and original Irish Residence Permit card via registered post for verification.

Source: EMN Ireland

¹² Act No. 188/2020 Coll., on Special Rules for Education and Decision-Making at Higher Education Institutions in 2020 and on the Assessment of Study Period for the Purposes of Other Acts, was published in the Collection of Laws on 24 April 2020. The Act responds to the emergency situation in connection with the crisis measures which were adopted by the Government of the Czech Republic due to the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/tertiary-education/the-new-act-no-188-2020-coll-on-special-rules-for-education-1?lang=2>

¹³ BE, CY, EE, ES, FR, EL, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, PT, SK, SE and NO.

¹⁴ e.g. CZ, ES, FR, IE, IT, LV, LU, PL, and SK

3.2. GUIDELINES ISSUED TO HEIs DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Several EU and OECD countries developed guidelines to support HEIs in the implementation of changes to national policies as a result of the pandemic.¹⁵ Some examples are presented below:

- In the Czech Republic, for Act No. 188/2020 Coll., on Special Rules for Education and Decision-Making at Higher Education Institutions in 2020 which responded to the emergency situation in connection with the crisis measures, the Ministry prepared a Methodology Interpretation¹⁶ explaining the individual paragraphs of the Act.
- The Netherlands provided a 'service document for Higher Education Institutions' containing all agreements and exceptions to regular rules that would apply for the duration of the period in which COVID-19 measures apply. This included a few guidelines for application.¹⁷
- The United Kingdom's Home Office developed updated guidelines¹⁸ available on the Home Office website, setting out temporary concessions for Tier 4 sponsors, Tier 4 migrants (general student visa), and Short-term study migrants.

Four EU countries and Norway reported there had been no change to their national policies related to the admission of international students as a result of COVID-19, but still provided guidelines to support their respective HEIs on admission issues during the pandemic.¹⁹ In Ireland the published guidelines on the immigration service website were the basis of any information provided to HEIs. In France, whilst national policies did not change, various circulars were published by the General Directorate of Higher Education and Vocational Training (DGESIP) between May and early July 2020 to prepare HEIs for the organisation of the upcoming academic year and for the process for visa applications for international students. As from May / June 2020 Campus France has also disseminated several videos from directors of universities and other HEIs to attract international students and promote online courses.

Whilst Italy also did not change its procedures, the government updated the document regulating entry, residence and enrolment at HEIs for international students for the academic year 2020-2021 in line

with guidelines to contain the spread of the virus.²⁰ HEIs were invited not to interrupt their international student recruitment procedures and international students themselves were encouraged to promptly arrange visa applications for planned study at diplomatic consular missions so that visas could be available for use as soon as conditions permitted. A date of 30 November 2020 was set to conclude visa issuance procedures and to allow the effective enrolment of international students and the payment of university fees.

The remaining EU Member States that participated in this Inform as well as Norway neither changed national policies related to the admission of international students nor provided HEIs with related guidelines as a result of COVID-19.²¹

Box 2. Dialogue between Government and HEIs in Belgium

In Belgium where the Communities are responsible for education, frequent consultations took place between the respective Ministers of (Higher) Education, HEIs and the umbrella organisations for higher education institutions. Concertation covered several aspects of the higher education organisation impacted by the sanitary crisis, including the shift from face-to-face to distance learning and teaching, the organisation of the learning and teaching activities for the end of the academic year 2019-2020, the assessment and evaluation of teaching activities, the organisation of the academic year 2020-2021 and the management of international mobility. Travel recommendations made by the Belgian Federal Government have been the reference for decisions on international mobility taken by HEIs, subject to a risk assessment.

Source: EMN National Contact Point for Belgium

As regards guidance provided to HEIs in OECD countries outside the EU, in Australia, the Department of Education, Skills and Employment has a body, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), overseeing standards for HEIs. With entry to Australia limited, HEIs offering online courses risked failure to meet quality standards. TEQSA drew up exceptions to the usual regulatory requirement and published an information sheet for providers on flexible arrangements and online learning for

15 Among EU MS, NO and UK: CZ, DE, FI, LU, LV, NL, PL, SI and UK. Among non-EU OECD countries: e.g. AU, NZ, US.

16 <https://www.msmt.cz/areas-of-work/tertiary-education/the-new-act-no-188-2020-coll-on-special-rules-for-education-1?lang=2>

17 <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2020/05/01/servicedocumenten-hoger-onderwijs-ho-aanpak-coronavirus-covid-19>

18 Covid-19: Guidance for Tier 4 Sponsors and Migrants and for Short term students: Temporary concessions in response to Covid19 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tier-4-sponsors-migrants-and-short-term-students>

19 BE, FR, IE (publicly available information on immigration), IT.

20 https://www.studiare-in-italia.it/studentistranieri/moduli/2020/Circolare_2020_2021_EN.pdf

21 CY, EE, HR and NO.

international students, to help HEIs from failing to meet minimum quality standards.²²

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education provided guidance to HEIs primarily in terms of how to provide support specifically to international students during COVID-19 related lockdowns and the consequent stress and isolation.²³

In the United States, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is responsible for the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) which manages international student residence in the United States. HEIs must report to SEVP on student oversight. Following emergency COVID-19 related changes in rules for international students in SEVP, ICE provided guidance and templates to make it easier for HEIs to report their changes in procedural and operational plans.

3.3. CONTINGENCY MEASURES TAKEN IN THE EVENT OF DELAYS IN THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR VISAS OR RESIDENCE PERMITS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Due to the complete or partial closure of many immigration offices and consulates during the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent suspension of some services, most EU and OECD countries reported delays in the application process for students.²⁴ Only four EU Member States declared that they did not experience such delays between March and June.²⁵

Several EU and OECD countries adopted measures in order to mitigate the negative effects produced by these delays. Seven EU Member States and the United Kingdom reported to have extended deadlines²⁶ and in four EU Member States, online admission procedures for immigration were made available, or, in Ireland, online renewal of residence permits.²⁷ In Ireland, renewal of immigration registration would generally result in a new residence permission. Spain and France reported that priority was given to processing the applications of international students in order to ensure that they could meet admission deadlines.

Turning to the situation in some OECD countries outside the EU, in Australia, following an announcement by the government on 20 July, additional time was to be given to applicants to provide English language test results

where COVID-19 had disrupted access to commercial testing services. More time was also to be provided to undertake biometric collection and health checks where COVID-19 disrupted access to services.

In Canada, as a temporary measure, persons already in the country and applying for a study permit did not need to provide biometric information.

In Switzerland, international students must normally provide proof of language ability with their visa application. If students were unable due to COVID-19 restrictions to take the language tests, the institutions accepting the student (universities and other educational institutions) were granted the possibility to certify their language ability in a document to be included with the visa application; language skills were then subject to confirmation during the visa interview.

3.4. MEASURES TO CHECK THE HEALTH STATUS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS UPON ARRIVAL

Many EU and OECD countries have taken new measures to check the health status of international students in relation to COVID-19 at departure from the country of origin / residence or upon arrival on the territory.²⁸ Such measures were in general not targeted solely at international students and included (for those aged over 13 years old) completing a health screening form,²⁹ temperature checks,³⁰ registration with public health agency, and compulsory 14-days quarantine provided by HEIs.³¹ In Luxembourg, for entering the country, international students coming from countries other than Australia, Canada, China (subject to confirmation of reciprocity at EU level), Georgia, Japan, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Korea, Thailand, Tunisia and Uruguay had to present the negative result of a biological test for COVID-19 before boarding. This did not apply to members of the flight crew and to passengers on a stopover waiting for a connecting flight and who were not leaving the transit area. The test must have been carried out less than 72 hours³² before the flight.

The Slovak Republic allowed international students to enter its territory for the purposes of taking an admission test, final and other exams, to enrol in school in the Slovak Republic or to collect their personal belongings. However, students were asked to provide at

22 <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/53248>

23 <https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/advice-for-schools-with-international-students/>

24 Among EU MS, NO and UK: BE, CY, CZ, DE, FI, FR, HR, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, SI, SK (individual cases at consulates abroad) and UK. Among non-EU OECD countries: e.g. AU, CA, CH.

25 EE, ES, PT, SE.

26 BE, CY, HR, IT, LU, NL, PL and UK.

27 BE, FR, IE, PL.

28 Among EU MS, NO and UK: EE, ES, FR, LT, LU, MT, NL, PT, SI, SK. Among non-EU OECD countries: e.g. KR, IL.

29 E.g. ES, FR (depending on country of origin), NL.

30 E.g. ES, MT, PT.

31 Among EU MS, NO and UK: EE (also the HEI ensures that the TCN student (with some exceptions) undergoes two COVID-19 tests, one upon arrival and the second on the 14th day after their arrival), LT, LV. Among OECD countries outside the EU: IL.

32 See Grand-Ducal Regulation of August 21, 2020 amending the amended Grand-Ducal Regulation of June 20, 2020 concerning the duration of the ban and the scope of the exceptions established in Article 2 of the Law of 20 June 2020 introducing certain measures temporary provisions concerning the application of the amended law of 29 August 2008 on the free movement of persons and immigration.

the border a negative result from a COVID-19 test taken within the previous 96 hours. A similar requirement was reported by Slovenia, where international students at the external border were obliged to provide both a certificate of enrolment at their faculty of destination plus a negative test result for COVID-19 taken within the previous three days (when coming from designated areas).

Several EU Member States, Norway and the United Kingdom³³ reported that they had not undertaken or were not planning any new measures to specifically check the health of international students due to COVID-19. A few countries referred to quarantine arrangements for arrivals from specific countries and other general measures in place.³⁴ Ireland required arrivals to complete a passenger locator form and requested arrivals to restrict their movements for 14 days.

For non-EU OECD countries, Korea required new incoming students to quarantine for 14 days in a facility designated by the government, at their own expense. Students who were returning could self-quarantine at the address listed on their Alien Registration Card and were subject to checks. Israel opened to international students for the 2020/2021 academic year, requiring self-isolation for 14 days. The Ministry of Health must approve each HEI, which is responsible for oversight of quarantine, with students in groups of up to 6 isolating together.

3.5. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WISHING TO ENROL IN HEI

When reporting on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the numbers of international students interested to enrol in HEIs, EU Member States, Norway and the United Kingdom generally based their responses on indicators such as the number of applications to HEIs and the number of applications for visas or residence permits for educational purposes, among others.

Six EU Member States and Norway reported to have noticed a negative impact of the pandemic on the numbers of international students wishing to enrol in an HEI;³⁵ while six EU Member States did not observe such a negative trend.³⁶ For example, in Belgium HEIs had not yet noticed the effects of COVID-19 on the number of applications from international students, although the applications for long-stay visa (D visa) for study reasons have decreased sharply. The decrease in permit applications was very steep in Spain (see Box 3 below).

Box 3. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on international student applications in Spain

In Spain, the impact of the COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a significant drop in permit applications, from 64 992 during the whole of 2019 to 5 669 in the first six months of the current year. However, in spite of the declaration of a state of emergency, authorisations for higher studies have continued to be requested and granted.

Regarding visas, a similar trend was observed during the crisis: for the same period in 2020, Spain received 13 777 visa applications for studies (> 6 month-duration, < 6 month-duration, minors and students' family member visas), whereas in Q1 and Q2 2019 Spain had received 92 306 applications. If students' family members are not taken into account, the difference is 13 332 to 89 765.

Finally, the figures just for Q2 show a drop from 11 568 applications (2019) to 2 268 (2020).

Source: EMN Spain

In Portugal, the number of international students registered decreased between 5 and 10 % in relation to 2019, although many of the registrations were expected to be concentrated in the second semester.

More than half of EU Member States and the United Kingdom reported that it was still too early to assess the full effects of COVID-19 on the number of students wishing to enrol in HEIs.³⁷ However, in France, Campus France noted a 20 % increase of the applications through the specific 'Studies in France' procedure (specific procedure involving students from an established list of 44 countries).

Due to widespread consular closures and entry bans, declines in applications for student visas in many OECD countries outside the EU could not be attributed necessarily to changes in intentions. It is difficult to disentangle restrictions on admission and applications. The decline in potential international students taking standardised admission tests such as the SAT or ACT may have been related to closed testing centres rather than lower interest. Nonetheless, international surveys of potential international students suggest that many were considering deferring their enrolment or studying in their home country.

The United States saw a decline in applications for the annual year 2020/2021, according to HEIs responding

³³ BE, CY, CZ, FI, HU, IE, IT, LU, SE and NO, UK.

³⁴ ES, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, SK.

³⁵ BE, ES, LT, NL, PT, SE and NO.

³⁶ CY, EL, FI, FR, MT, SK.

³⁷ BE, CZ, DE, EE, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LV, LU, NL, PL, SE, SI and UK.

to the Open Doors survey.³⁸ 52 % reported a decline, and 26 % reported that applications were stable, with only 22 % reporting increase. 18 % reported substantial declines. These figures follow a decade of constant increase.

In Australia, years of rising enrolment have also been ended by the crisis; commencements (new enrolments) in HEIs were down 16 % in the year to June 2020, compared with increases of 12 % and 9 % in the previous two twelve-month periods. The English-language sector has seen even sharper decreases in new enrolment.



4. FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ALREADY RESIDING IN EU AND OECD COUNTRIES

EU and OECD economies began contracting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as businesses in many sectors had to temporarily suspend or substantially reduce their activities and the working hours of their staff or resort to redundancies.³⁹ Many international students rely on part time work to supplement their income whilst studying, which makes them vulnerable in relation to job loss or income reduction due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This section summarises the measures implemented by EU and OECD countries to improve the situation of those international students who lost their student jobs or experienced a loss in income due to the economic consequences of the pandemic. Such measures included adjustments to the working time available for paid employment for international students, funds available for disadvantaged international students, and other alternative support mechanisms at the local and HEI level.

4.1. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE WORKING TIME AVAILABLE FOR PAID EMPLOYMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

For EU countries, other than Ireland and Denmark, this issue is regulated by the Students and Researchers Directive, which establishes in its Article 24(3) that international students should have the right to work at least 15 hours per week during their studies.⁴⁰ Ireland also applies a work concession for international students in its national rules.

Three EU Member States reported that they adjusted the working time for international students to engage in paid employment to address the impacts of the pandemic.⁴¹ This approach was also applied in the United Kingdom. France and the United Kingdom increased the maximum amount of working time for

international students, while Ireland allowed students to work for the maximum time normally permitted during holiday periods (up to 40 hours per week) if classes were not running due to COVID-19. This was conditional on the students completing the course online, if that option was offered by the college. In the case of France, the legal annual working duration increased from 60 to 80 % full-time equivalent (FTE) for international students legally residing in France as of 16 March 2020 and this measure should apply until HEIs re-open and courses with physical presence start again. The United Kingdom allowed Tier 4 students who had the right to work and were employed by a National Health Service (NHS) Trust within any of the professions established in government guidance⁴² (e.g. biochemist, biological scientist, dental practitioner etc. amongst others) to work for longer than 20 hours per week.

Belgium decided that the hours worked by both national and international students between April and June 2020 would not be taken into account for the calculation of the yearly maximum of 475 working hours during which students can work at reduced social security contributions. This measure applied to all working students and was not limited to one particular branch of industry.

For OECD countries outside the EU, in Australia, the 40-hour limit (per 14 days) on international students working was lifted for work in supermarkets (until 1 May), aged care, and nursing, to allow them to work full time. In Canada, international students already in the country were allowed to work full-time (beyond 20 hours) in federally recognised essential services (health care, critical infrastructure, or the supply of food or other critical goods) until 31 August. In New Zealand, visa restrictions on employment for some student visa holders were relaxed exclusively to work at a supermarket when a region is in COVID-19 Alert Level 3 or 4, the highest alert levels, from 20 August 2020 to 31 July 2021. This applied only if a student was

³⁸ <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/COVID-19-Effects-on-US-Higher-Education-Campuses-Report-3>

³⁹ According to this the May forecast issued by the European Commission. See: European Commission, European Economic forecast: Spring 2020, Institutional paper, May 2020, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip125_en.pdf, last accessed on 23 July 2020

⁴⁰ Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing (recast), 21.5.2016, OJ L 132, p. 21.

⁴¹ BE, FR, IE.

⁴² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tier-4-sponsors-migrants-and-short-term-students>

employed by a supermarket on the day immediately prior to the region entering Alert Level 3 or 4; if so, they were able to work for more than 20 hours. Students were still required to meet the study requirements of their student visa.

4.2. FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS DISADVANTAGED BY THE PANDEMIC

Six EU Member States reported to have put in place funds that could help disadvantaged international students whose financial situation had been negatively affected due to COVID-19;⁴³ however, in all cases, these were not limited to international students in need. For example, for students in initial training, France established exceptional aid for those in need, accessible both to scholarship and non-scholarship holders, regardless of their nationality. This targeted students who had lost a paid job/internship due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Germany modified and extended its student loan programme of € 650 per month; this programme was opened to all international students (who were explicitly referred to as a target group of the new measure) and paid as a monthly zero-interest loan until the end of March 2021.

In Ireland, international students that became unemployed due to Covid-19 were entitled to access the COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment without breaching their immigration conditions, which normally permits no recourse to public funds.

Four other EU Member States reported that there were no such measures in place at the national level, although subnational administrations or HEIs might have implemented similar measures.⁴⁴

Turning to OECD countries outside the EU, Japan offered general support programmes for university students, for which international students were fully eligible. Examples include a cash payment up to JPY 100 000 (approximately € 790) for all residents and a loan of up to JPY 200 000 (approximately € 1 587) to university students, including international students. Additional funds are made available for universities to disburse on an individual basis. In Australia, some regional governments offered support. Victoria established an International Student Emergency Relief Fund with AUD 45 million (approximately € 27.3 million) and administered by HEIs. It provided aid to pay rent and utilities. The Study Melbourne Student Centre also

provided free counselling and support to international students. In New Zealand, a general programme for foreign nationals experiencing temporary hardship due to the effects of COVID-19 was also open to international students. Support was decided on an individual and means-tested basis and can include rent relief, food or household goods, utilities relief and pre-paid phone cards, medical costs, winter clothing and domestic travel costs. The programme, which ran from July 2020 through September, was administered by the Department of International Affairs (DIA) and delivered by the New Zealand Red Cross.

4.3. OTHER SUPPORT MECHANISMS AT THE LOCAL AND HEI LEVEL

Nine EU Member States and Norway reported having implemented support mechanisms for international students at the local level.⁴⁵ Five out of these eight EU Member States⁴⁶ established that such support mechanisms were available to all students, international and local, regardless of their origin.

- In Belgium, the NGO “*Ontmoeting Buitenlandse Studenten Gent*” (Meeting Foreign Students Ghent) has taken action to help international students in need by offering them access to a food bank and by providing financial aid to students coming from the Global South.
- In France, the city of Paris took forward local initiatives aiming at helping students both financially and psychologically. In the same line, the University of Paris provided international students with emergency aid and other types of aid (for example, by donating computers).
- In Finland, higher education students were eligible for discounted meals at participating student restaurants.
- In Sweden, Lund University used private donations to support international students who find themselves in hardship due to COVID-19. Priority was given to those students who were unable to return home due to the pandemic.
- In Norway, the University of Oslo as well as other Norwegian universities offered an emergency supplement to international students who could document lost pay due to Corona and who did not have the money to go home. They received a one-time emergency grant of NOK 10.000. The Faculty of Medicine offered a few scholarships.⁴⁷

⁴³ BE (no measures from the competent Communities), DE, FI, FR, IE, PL.

⁴⁴ IT, LT (HEIs), LV, PT.

⁴⁵ BE, EE, FI, FR, IT, LV, PL, PT, SE and NO.

⁴⁶ EE, FR, LV, PL, PT.

⁴⁷ Emergency fund for international master's degree students at UiO, <https://www.uio.no/english/about/hse/corona/news/solution-in-place-for-international-students.html>, <https://partner.sciencenorway.no/crisis-epidemic-students/corona-scholarships-to-international-students-in-norway/1673430>

Many HEIs across EU and OECD countries also introduced initiatives to support international students through hardship funds. Twelve EU Member States and the United Kingdom reported that HEIs had established additional mechanisms aimed at helping international students financially.⁴⁸ The support provided was generic (available to all students regardless of their origin) in ten EU Member States⁴⁹ while specifically targeted at international students in Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. The University of Luxembourg took a more lenient approach to the payment of the apartments for students managed by the University and distributed laptops to the students who did not have their own. In Poland, most universities offered a range of relief measures, such as a 50 % reduction in the cost of accommodation, psychological help and the possibility to apply for a reduction in tuition fees if a series of criteria were fulfilled (although nationality was not one of them).

In OECD countries outside the EU, a number of universities in Australia provided discretionary emergency funding to international students from specific hardship funds. In Japan, some universities also supported international students directly: Kobe University provided JPY 100,000 JPY (approximately € 800) for up to 50 self-funded international students who needed help due to COVID-19; Utsunomiya University offered half as much, but to twice as many international students. More broadly, Japanese HEIs offered exemptions from tuition or offer loans of devices for on-line classes. Tuition exemption or increased loan or scholarship as well as loan of devices for on-line class were also common. For example, Tokyo University waived tuition for some international students in difficulty; Gakushuin Women's College was sending textbooks to international students unable to return and provided JPY 60 000 (approximately € 476) per person to help students purchase necessary material to attend classes online. In New Zealand, where international students are an important part of total enrolment, the government established a NZD51.6m (€29.2) long-term strategic recovery plan⁵⁰, backed by the national COVID recovery and response fund, to help stabilise the international education sector. About half of the funds went to ensure ongoing "pastoral care" for international students in New Zealand. In the United States, 42 % of HEIs responding to the July Open Doors survey reported that they offered emergency funding for international students during the summer of 2020. 57 % allowed them to stay in dormitories or in alternative housing.

4.4. EXCEPTIONS PUT IN PLACE TARGETING STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT ABLE OR REQUIRED TO BE PHYSICALLY PRESENT FOR THEIR STUDIES DUE TO RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic has created a situation where international students have been or will be admitted to a course of study during 2020, but are not required (due for example to the introduction of on-line learning) or are not able to be physically present to participate in their studies. This section explores what changes to policy and procedures were implemented by EU and OECD countries to grant, extend or renew residence permits for international students confronted by this situation, and whether international students were offered exemptions from the requirement to be physically present on the territory to maintain a permit.

4.4.1. MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT A PERMIT WOULD BE GRANTED OR WOULD NOT BE WITHDRAWN

Measures aimed at ensuring that permits that had already been issued to international students would not be withdrawn were in general accommodated within existing or emergency measures introduced to protect wider categories of third-country nationals/ international students from falling into an irregular situation. However, exceptions were introduced in several EU and OECD countries,⁵¹ to address these specific circumstances for international students both on the territory of the host country or in their home country. Some examples are given below, relating both to protection against withdrawal for those international students already on the territory or had to return to their home country, and to first applicants:

- In Germany residence permits were not withdrawn where teaching presence at universities were temporarily restricted. In addition, the proof of subsistence was waived under certain conditions, for example with regard to the possibility of applying for student loans.
- Italy introduced the replacement of conventional education delivery with distance learning activities, at least until the end of 2020. International students in their home countries requiring a visa for Italy were encouraged to promptly arrange for a visa application for study purposes in order to have the

EEA / EFTA nationals with residence permits related to family members in employment in Norway and attending HEIs in Norway are eligible for educational support programs available to Norwegian members of the National Insurance Scheme.

48 BE, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, IT, LV, LU, NL, PL and UK.

49 BE, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, IT, LT, NL, PL.

50 <https://enz.govt.nz/news-and-research/recovery-plan-for-international-education-sector/>

51 Among EU MS, NO and UK: ES, IT, PT, SK, and NO. Among non-EU OECD countries: e.g. AU, CA, JP.

visa in place as soon as conditions permitted. The procedure for issuing these visas must be concluded, *ceteris paribus*, by 30 November 2020, to ensure the effective enrolment of international students and the subsequent payment of university fees.

- In Lithuania, residence permits/visas were not withdrawn if students failed to arrive due to lockdowns or were undergoing temporary online studies.
- Portugal also foresaw the need for flexibilities to allow international students who have returned home to continue attending HEI classes online instead of travelling back to Portugal for the start of the autumn 2020 semester. Furthermore, a simplified procedure has been implemented and is applicable to international students already in the Portuguese territory, along with all other third country nationals, requiring only limited on-site attendance to complete the procedure and receive the renewal.
- In the Slovak Republic, international students who were not present in the territory of the Slovak Republic were able to apply for a renewal of their permit at the diplomatic mission abroad, while their previous permit was still valid.
- In Spain, any international student who left Spain and returned to their country of origin was allowed to re-enter the country, including those with an expired residence permit. Moreover, under rules in Spain, international student residence and stay permits were extended in any case, for six months.
- Norway made exceptions to their general rules for granting a residence permit for study purposes specifically for international students attending classes during the autumn semester 2020. The residence permit was normally conditional on the purpose of the stay being fulltime education and the student being present at the educational institution. Due to the conditions of the pandemic, Norway implemented a 'digital semester', and the exception allowed students to be granted a residence permit even where the lectures and courses were to be held online. The exception applied both to first time applicants to study in Norway in autumn 2020 plus applicants applying to renew their study permit. Other requirements, such as proof of admission to a programme and of study progression, in accordance with the Immigration regulations, remained in order for the residence permit to be granted or renewed. The immigration services (UDI) cooperated with Norwegian HEIs in order to document admissions and study progression in the context of the application for a study permit, and further agreed on a later date

of arrival for new students. The UDI also took into account any reasons for delay due to the pandemic in fulfilling requirements and in applications for renewal of the study permit.

- In Australia, the Government announced on 20 July a number of changes to student visa arrangements to support international students. Eligible graduates affected by travel restrictions were able to apply for and be granted a Temporary Graduate visa outside Australia.
- In Canada, students with visas issued prior to 18 March 2020 were only admitted if they were able to demonstrate that their travel was "non-discretionary" or "non-optional". This was included cases where online study was not possible in their home country due to technical or political restrictions, or for example when the student had to do laboratory work. The decision was made by the border officer.
- In Japan, a general entry ban was in place with no exceptions for international students and visa issuance was suspended. International students who were in Japan prior to lockdown were able to remain, and their visa remained valid regardless of whether their university resumed in-person instruction. However, they were not allowed to re-enter if they departed.

In those countries that did not report that they had implemented specific changes, international students' permits were protected under more general provisions to extend residence permits terminating during the period of COVID-related restrictions, which included international students in the categories eligible for extension.⁵²

The Czech Republic deemed existing procedures in place between national authorities and HEIs to be sufficiently flexible to respond to the needs of students in this situation, as visas and residence permit were granted and extended on the basis of confirmation of the enrolment/continuation of studies issued by schools and universities. Visas/residence permits could therefore be extended, provided that students' universities allowed them to enrol in the next semester. Applications for an extension did not need to be submitted in person and visas/permits were not withdrawn if students failed to arrive in the territory due to lockdowns, entry/exit bans or other pandemic-related restrictions (where students were temporarily unable to comply with the approved purpose of stay), provided that their university did not cancel their status as students.

⁵² Among EU MS, NO and UK: BE, BG, FR, HU, IE, LT, LU, LV, PL, PT, MT, NL.

4.4.2. ADMISSION FOR ONLINE COURSES

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, international studies that were fully pursued online were quite rare and generally did not provide grounds for admission to EU and OECD countries. As online studies have gained prominence with the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of granting admission for full online studies has emerged and countries have taken different approaches to the matter.

- In Germany, for example, international students were not admitted if their study was fully online. International students also had to provide proof that their studies required some physical presence.
- In France the Ministry for Higher Education and Research and related agencies promoted on-line courses programme during the lockdown to attract international students reluctant to come to France for studies because of the pandemic.
- The Finnish Immigration Service processed applications for residence permits on the grounds of study on campus and granted a residence permit also to those applicants whose tuition was be carried out as “teletuition/-study” in the autumn semester of 2020. “Teletuition/-study” did not prevent the granting of an extended permit on the grounds of study, and the residence permit was not cancelled due to a shift to “teletuition/-study” because of COVID-19. If an applicant for an extended permit made reference to COVID-19 as having slowed down the student’s studies, and the studies had progressed normally before COVID-19, the Finnish Immigration Service decided in favour of the applicant, even where the studies had not progressed according to the existing requirements.
- In the United Kingdom, guidance on distance learning and student absences for students and sponsors was published on 20 April 2020.⁵³ Under the guidance, for Tier 4 students who were not normally permitted to undertake distance learning courses, enforcement action would not be taken against sponsors who offered distance learning to existing Tier 4 students in the UK, or who had chosen to return overseas but wished to continue their current studies, or students absent from their studies due to COVID-19. New international students in third countries who had not yet applied for a visa but wanted to start a course which would wholly be studied overseas by distance learning did not require sponsorship under Tier 4 because no travel to the UK is required. The distance learning concession was planned to remain in place for the duration of the 2020/2021 academic year.
- In Australia, existing and new student visa holders who undertake online study outside Australia because of COVID-19 were able to count this towards the Australian Study Requirement.
- In Canada, international students whose university was fully on-line were generally not to be admitted, although their visa remained valid. Exceptions were possible even in the case of on-line study. Students with visas issued after 18 March were not admitted. Furthermore, international students were able to begin their classes while outside Canada, without affecting eligibility for the Post-Graduation Work Permit Programme.
- Israel decided on 22 July to admit international students for the 2020/2021 academic year, whether classes were on-line or not.
- In the United States, student visas required a minimum level of in-person instruction; online study could not exceed one class or three credits per session. F-1 visas were not being issued to students enrolled in programmes not meeting minimum in-person instruction requirements. For the academic year 2019-2020, students already in the U.S. were allowed to maintain their visa status even in the event of fully on-line instruction. On 6 July, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which manages F-1 student visas, announced that visa-holders in the U.S. would be required to depart if their university did not offer sufficient coursework in person. Following court challenges, on 14 July this was rescinded.

4.4.3. MEASURES TO ENABLE AN EXTENSION OF STAY WHERE STUDIES COULD NOT BE COMPLETED DURING THE TIMEFRAME FORESEEN

International students benefited from the general permit extension measures that were implemented across EU and OECD countries. In general no specific additional measures were implemented to enable an extension of stay to allow the studies to be completed at a later date where the pandemic meant that the original timeframe could not be respected. Existing measures in place between national authorities and universities, in combination with the general permit extension measures, proved in most cases to be sufficiently flexible to cater for the needs of international students without recourse to new measures. For example, in Belgium, where HEIs extended the academic year by a few months because of COVID-19, the need for change was not foreseen, as the Immigration Office was able to extend the residence permit for international students.

53 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tier-4-sponsors-migrants-and-short-term-students>

No changes or exemptions were foreseen in Ireland to procedures to accommodate students who were obliged to continue their studies as a condition of their permission, including where the provision had moved to online classes. HEI courses of one to four years were deemed to grant sufficient time for completion of studies within HEI guidelines, with the Immigration Service Delivery registration office taking a pragmatic view where the conditional seven year overall stay for students risks being impacted. The longstanding policy in this area is that attending an online course is not a valid reason to be present in the State. The only exception to this was during the COVID-19 restrictions where language schools physically closed, and such schools were allowed to conduct online courses for continuing students only.

In Sweden, international students whose residence permit was about to expire but were unable to finish their courses were encouraged to apply for either a visitors residence permit (for shorter stays) or to renew their student residence permit before the previous residence permit expired. In cases where the extended stay was only due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in Sweden, the applicant was not required to pay the normal application fee.

Korea does not normally allow first-year students to take a leave of absence, or to opt for on-line instruction; leaves of absence are normally limited. Due to COVID-19, both were opened to first-year students. Exemptions to the restrictions on the number and duration of leaves of absence were possible for other students too. Leaves of absence however needed to be authorised by individual HEIs.



5. MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED IN 2019 AND 2020 IN EU AND OECD COUNTRIES

EU and OECD countries typically grant international students a period of stay following graduation to look for a job or start a business. Under the EU Students and Researchers Directive, after the completion of research or studies, international students shall have the possibility to stay on the territory of the EU Member State that issued their visa or residence permit for the purpose of study for a period of at least nine months to seek employment or set up a business (Article 25). This section explores the situation of international students who graduated in 2019 or in 2020 and the degree to which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, countries modified the period of time during which international graduates were able to stay on the territory following completion of their period of study. Overall, countries reported that they did not make any specific changes to their policies in this area due to the COVID-19 crisis. The response was rather to extend the validity period of residence permits of international students in line with general measures applied to wider categories of migrants.

Whilst no changes were made to the period during which international students were allowed to stay after their graduation for the purpose of seeking employment or starting up a business in the Netherlands, here the lower salary criteria to find a job as a highly skilled migrant was extended for all recent graduates (and academic researchers) up until three years after graduation. In practice this meant that an international student who could not find a job within the validity of the visa, benefited from additional time to look for a job at the lower salary level.

Ireland is not bound by the Student and Researchers Directive; however, international graduates with an honours Bachelors or post-graduate degree may stay in Ireland for up to 12 and 24 months respectively (subject to a maximum stay of respectively 7 / 8 years covering time spent both as a student and on the Third Level Graduate Programme). Procedural changes were introduced to enable eligible students to apply for the Third Level Graduate Programme during the period of office closures, including those students who had to return to their country of origin due to the crisis. Electronic applications were being accepted until at latest 30 September 2020, with individuals required to register in person once the Registration offices had re-opened.

In the United Kingdom, the maximum length of time that a Tier 4 graduate was able to stay remained unchanged; however, discretion may be applied by UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) in the future where any period of leave due to the COVID-19 restrictions would cause someone to exceed their time limit. The maximum time limit for a Tier 4 student under normal circumstances is five years with some exemptions.

The above measures have provided some flexibility regarding the post-graduation stay compared to what was possible before the crisis in order to mitigate its impacts but were in general implemented without the need for overall policy changes in this area.



6. CONCLUSIONS

International students are not only a driver of cultural exchange and internationalisation of the education system but also an important source of revenue in some countries.⁵⁴ More importantly, as students will be seen to have integrated in the host society to a certain extent and have a host-country degree upon graduation, foreign students are also a particularly attractive future workforce, and status changes account for a significant proportion of labour migration flows in many countries.⁵⁵ As a result, international students are considered an essential group for host countries and some have in some cases been exempted from travel restrictions.

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on international students. While data are not yet available on international student flows, in general migration has been restricted globally. Some countries have reported a decline in the number of international students wishing to enrol in an HEI.

Those already in the country of study now often experience more difficulties to finance their study and find a job post-graduation. As a result, some countries have enhanced financial support and work possibilities during studies.

Admissions for new international students have been impacted through the lock-down of consulates and visa offices, as well as by health considerations. In parallel, the question of admissibility for online courses has moved to the front of the policy agenda. In the past, online studies were rare and did not provide the grounds for admission. As many universities have moved to online studies, countries are assessing whether to admit international students for such studies, and under which conditions.

⁵⁴ OECD (2019). Education at a glance 2019: OECD indicators. Paris: OECD Publishing. OECD (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

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