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Wissenschaft weltoffen

Facts and Figures on the International Nature of
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data and figure files
(see notes on p. 4)

2022

DZHW German Centre for
Higher Education Research and Science Studies

This is an excerpt from the publication

“Wissenschaft weltoffen 2022”

Since 2001, the DAAD has been analysing data on the internationalisation of studies, research and higher education from Germany as well as from particularly relevant countries and regions such as the USA, the United Kingdom or Asia. The current edition presents the most important results and graphics.

These include figures on international students in Germany, data on mobility behaviour, an overview of students' countries of origin and host countries as well as developments in the field of doctorates. Special data analyses shed light on the status quo and trends at universities and research institutes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study integrates international data from OECD and UNESCO as well as national data from the Federal Statistical Office in Germany. In combination with other indicators, it provides a valid basis for long-term analyses.

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Internationally comparable student data (e.g. based on UNESCO statistics) are still not available for the 2020 reporting year that would enable a comprehensive global analysis of the international mobility of German students and the adverse effects of the pandemic.¹ However, several of the key host countries for German students seeking a degree abroad have published national student data for the year 2020 or, to be more precise, for the 2020/21 academic year. An initial assessment of the development in the international mobility of German students in the first year of the pandemic can be carried out on the basis of these data.

Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland: rising numbers of German students despite Covid-19

In the 2020/21 winter semester, approximately 42,500 German students were enrolled in the key² host country Austria, roughly 9% or 3,700 students more than the 2019/20 winter semester (38,900). There was an even more pronounced increase of 17% in German students enrolling for the first time in Austria in the 2020/21 winter semester (plus 1,600 first-year students). Accordingly, the number of German first-year students in Austria rose from around 9,600 in the 2019/20 winter semester to roughly 11,200 in the 2020/21 winter semester.

Data are already available on the total number of German students in the Netherlands for the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. After initial growth from some 23,000 in the 2019/20 academic year to approximately 24,600 in the 2020/21 academic year (+7%), they declined marginally to around 24,500 in the 2021/22 academic year (-1%). The number of German first-year students in the Netherlands showed a plus of 9% in the 2020/21 academic year, before dropping by 10% in the 2021/22 academic year.³ Particularly when compared with the trend in Switzerland, this development in the numbers in the Netherlands may suggest that Covid-19 affected the number of incoming international students to an enormous extent, depending specifically on how the pandemic evolved in the respective host country.

In the first year of the pandemic, some key host countries reported surprisingly robust increases in the number of German students.

In Switzerland, the total number of German students rose from roughly 12,500 in the 2019/20 academic year to approximately 13,100 in the 2020/21 academic year (+5%). Like in Austria, the increase in German students enrolling for the first time in Switzerland in the 2020/21

academic year was even more marked than that in the total number of students. During this period, the number of German first-year students went from around 3,700 to around 3,900, an upswing of approximately 8%. Switzerland has also released the data for the 2021/22 academic year. They indicate further growth in the number of German students, although at a slightly more moderate rate. The total number of German students increased to around 13,600 (+4%) and the number of first-year students to around 4,100 (+3%).⁴

The United Kingdom, the US, France and Hungary: from slight to significant declines for German students

In the United Kingdom, the total number of German students fell from roughly 12,900 in the 2019/20 academic year to approximately 12,300 in the 2020/21 academic year (-5%). The number of German first-year students also dropped slightly from around 6,400 in the 2019/20 academic year to approximately 6,000 in the 2020/21 academic year (-7%). However, this may also be attributed to the United Kingdom finally withdrawing from the EU in January 2021 and not merely to the impact of Covid-19.

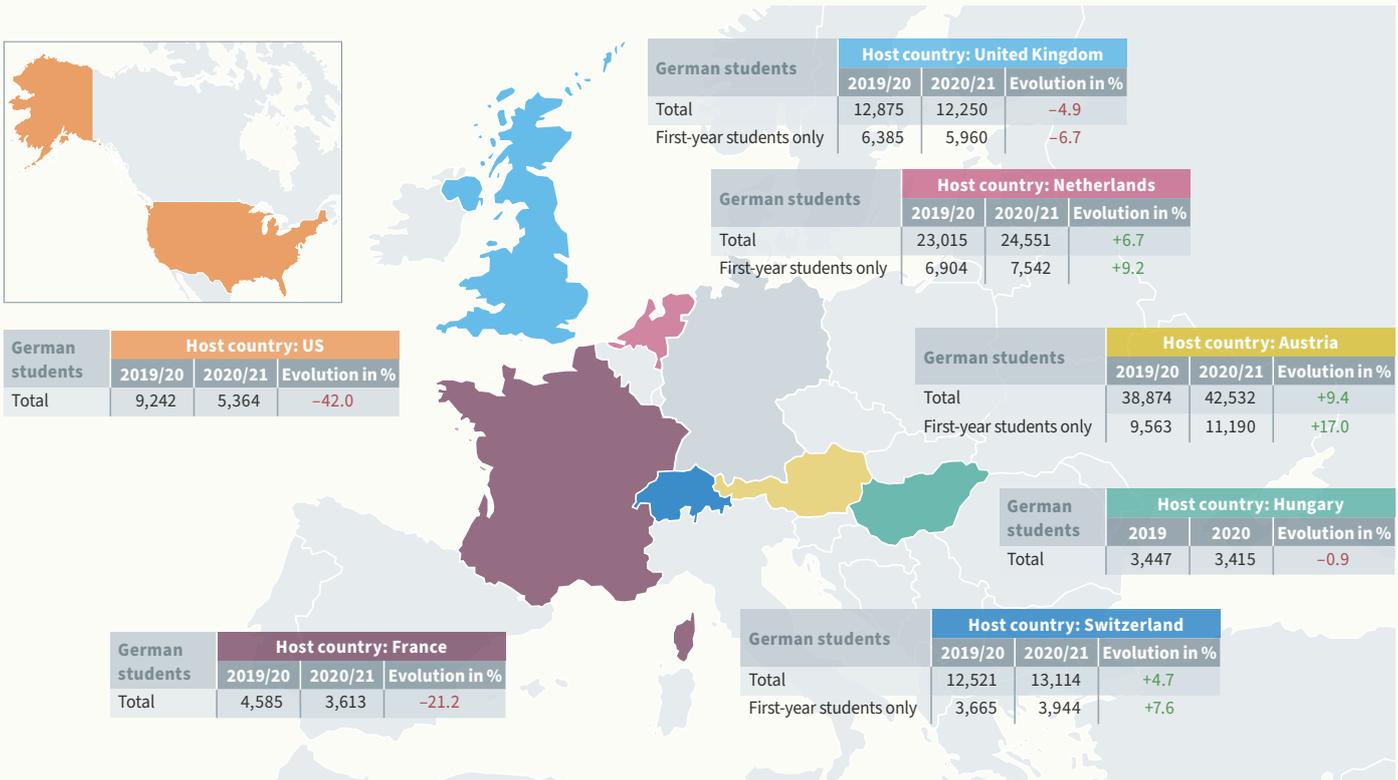
Among the key host countries, the US recorded the greatest reduction in German students by far. Total student numbers plunged from approximately 9,200 in the 2019/20 academic year to around 5,400 in the 2020/21 academic year, a slump of 42%. No data are yet available on German first-year students in the US.

In France, approximately 3,600 German students were enrolled at universities in the 2020/21 academic year. This represents a decrease of approximately 21% or 1,000 students, compared to the previous year. Here again, no data are yet available on German first-year students in the 2020/21 academic year.

* Footnotes

- 1 The UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat data on the 2020 reporting year are only being published shortly after this edition of *Wissenschaft weltoffen* went to press.
- 2 See also pp. 62/63 for the importance of the host countries for the degree-related international mobility of German students.
- 3 The exact number of German students in the Netherlands in the 2021/22 academic year was 24,534, that of German first-year students 6,787.
- 4 The exact number of German students in Switzerland in the 2021/22 academic year was 13,601, that of German first-year students 4,051.
- 5 See *Wissenschaft weltoffen* 2021, pp. 80–83 for an in-depth analysis of Erasmus mobility in the first year of the pandemic. At the time of going to press, no more recent Erasmus data than those presented there were available.

CS1 German students in major host countries, 2019–2020



Sources: Statistik Austria (Austria); Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (Netherlands); Federal Statistical Office (Switzerland); Higher Education Statistics Agency (United Kingdom); Institute of International Education (US); Directrice de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance (France); Federal Statistical Office, "Deutsche Studierende im Ausland" (Hungary); DAAD calculations

These data are not available for Hungary either. However, the total number of German students fell by 1% to roughly 3,400.

Summary and outlook

In summary, therefore, with regard to the degree-related international mobility of German students, it is clear that developments in the first year of the pandemic differed in the extreme, depending on the host country, and not all host countries reported a drop in numbers. Particularly worthy of note in this regard are the trends in Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland, with some unexpectedly significant increases in German students.

Comparing this to the development in the **Erasmus mobility**⁵ of German students, an initial tumble can be observed in 2020 of around 41,200 visits, which were carried out physically to some extent at

least (with hybrid visits involving a combination of physical and virtual mobility), to approximately 21,000 (-49%). In 2021, however, the number of these at least partially physical visits shot back up to approximately 31,700 (+51%). Consequently, although the pandemic-related downturn in Erasmus mobility clearly fell much more sharply than that of degree-related international mobility, it recovered relatively quickly.

At this point in time, it may be assumed that the degree-related international mobility of German students will continue to develop very differently, depending on the host country. Particularly in host countries in Europe, international mobility is expected to make a swift recovery, returning before long to pre-pandemic levels. With regard to non-European host countries, however, this recovery is likely to be a protracted process, especially in countries in which entry restrictions are still being enforced due to the pandemic, such as China and Japan.