



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS A MATTER OF INFLUENCE

A new study by Campus France analyzes the policies implemented by a variety of nations to attract international students. **“National Strategies for International Student Recruitment in Higher Education and Research”** reveals keen global competition to gain access to international talent and to extend national influence through “soft power.”

Read [the abstract](#) (in English) and [the full note](#) (in French).

FRANCE HOLDS A FAVORED POSITION—FOR NOW

5 million students (2.3% of the global student population) are enrolled in degree programs in postsecondary institutions outside their home country. Among this elite group, **343,000 students come to France, putting the country in fourth place for hosting international students** after the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia—and first among non-English-speaking countries. Important advantages make France a favored destination: prestigious postsecondary institutions; cutting-edge science and research; a central place in the European Union and the francophone world; a proud history; a rich culture; and a renowned quality of life.

BUT COMPETITORS ARE MOUNTING AGGRESSIVE STRATEGIES

France’s position is being hotly contested by the country’s neighbors (Germany, Russia), by powerful poles of attraction (China, Canada), and by new players (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the Netherlands). The number of mobile students worldwide is growing much faster than the number coming to France, threatening France’s status as the fourth-ranked host country.

The new players are developing **aggressive new strategies to enhance their appeal** and attract more students, particularly from Asia and, increasingly, from the African continent. Higher

education is an under-recognized instrument of **national influence**. The number of international students in a country is an indicator of its soft power, the appeal of its university system, its capacity to train tomorrow's leaders, and its ability to promote its values. International students also generate **income for the host country and for its institutions of higher education**, while strengthening economic ties and building a reserve of highly qualified professionals.

PINPOINTING THE ELEMENTS OF APPEAL

To continue to project influence, the competitors have implemented recruitment strategies to attract international talent. All those strategies employ the same basic tools, though to different degrees:

A **network of offices and representatives** abroad (United Kingdom, United States, the Netherlands, others)

- An ambitious, targeted **program of grant and scholarships** (Germany, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia)
- Facilitated access to **student visas** and employment authorization (Australia, Canada, the Netherlands)
- High-quality **support services** that include facilitated access to housing and assistance with integration (all countries)
- **Programs taught in English** (Germany, China, the Netherlands)
- Lively **campuses** that offer excellent cultural and athletic facilities
- **Overseas campuses** (Australia, United States, United Kingdom)
- **Global communication campaigns** (United Kingdom, Australia, Germany)

In this competitive context, France will have to strengthen its appeal in order to maintain its position among the major host countries.

CAMPUS FRANCE BY THE NUMBERS

- 220 staff in France and 256 Campus France locations in 123 countries (within French embassies and consulates) promote French higher education and research.
- More than 350 French postsecondary institutions are members of the Campus France Forum.
- 50 promotional events around the world draw 650,000 visitors each year.
- 30,000 students participate in mobility programs administered by Campus France.
- 80 websites in 32 languages draw 18 million annual visits.
- 1.5 million people and 200,000 active alumni participate in the France Alumni network.
- 30 reports and statistical studies are published each year.

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