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2023 KEY FIGURES: EUROPE IS THE LEADING HOST REGION FOR MOBILE STUDENTS

Throughout the world, 6.4 million students were internationally mobile in 2020, Unesco data's most recent year. This number reached an all-time high due to a 32% growth over the last five years. Their first destination is the European Union. France also attracts an unprecedented number of more than 400,000 students, presenting an 8% raise compared to the previous year. Those figures attest that France has remained an attractive option for students, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting mobility issues. The 2023 edition of the Campus France Key Figures presents and analyses the new trends of student mobility that arose across the globe, resulting from crises and conflicts pushing students to exile, from Ukraine to Iran, Afghanistan to Syria.

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France 6th-ranked host country for mobile students

According to UNESCO's institute for statistics, France hosted the 6th highest number of international students. It was preceded by the major Anglophone countries – the US, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, which benefit from the appeal of their educational offerings in English – and Germany. Behind France, China, Japan and Turkey are implementing proactive strategies for attracting young, talented individuals from throughout the world. Even if the data only provides a partial picture, the pandemic has had an impact that varies from country to country: France, where the number of students continued to increase in 2020, was unaffected, unlike the United States, Australia, and even the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which are among the 20 top destinations worldwide for mobile students.

More mobile students come from Asia than from any other region

Three Asian countries continue to be among the world's top countries of origin for mobile students: China, India, and Vietnam. More than one million Chinese students study abroad, which is nearly two times more than the number of Indian students (520,000), and eight times that of Vietnamese students (130,000). **France is also the 6th-ranked country of origin for international students, and the number of French who go abroad continues to increase (+25% over five years).**

Due to its demographic weight, as well as a secondary education that is becoming more democratic and improving in quality, the Asia-Pacific region draws the interest of the top destination countries for global student mobility. The top host countries compete for the talented individuals who are from this region and employ their higher education as a tool of influence.

Europe, at the heart of student mobility

In 2020, Europe remained the **top host region, ahead of North America**, and the second region of origin for students, behind the Asia-Pacific region. 48% of mobile students in Europe are themselves European, 25% come from Asia-Oceania, 13% from North Africa and the Middle East, 7% from the American continent and 7% from sub-Saharan Africa.

A strong rebound in the number of international students in France

The number of international students enrolled in France grew by 8% in 2021-2022, and has now exceeded the 400,000 mark: It is the strongest growth recorded in more than 15 years, notably due to the increase in the number of European students (+21%) and exchange students (+46%). This strong rebound is confirmed by the recruitment prospects report for the year 2022-2023, which showed a 21% increase in visas issued for studies and internships compared to 2021, a year of decline due to the pandemic.

Who are the international students in France?

The most represented nationalities among the 400,000 students are **Morocco, Algeria, China, Italy, and Senegal**. **North Africa-Middle East** is the most important area of origin (**29%**), with the second being **Europe** (25%). Over five years, the strongest increase was among students coming from **sub-Saharan Africa (+40%)**.



In 2022, **French higher education was especially involved in supporting and integrating Ukrainian students in exile, 2000 of them have benefited from having an academic refuge in France.**

Two-thirds of international students are enrolled in a university (65%), followed by business schools (14%), engineering schools (7%) and high schools (notably, 5% in preparatory classes). Overall, **13% of students in France are from abroad**, a level that reached 38% among PhD students (-2 points over one year). **Île-de-France is host to more than one-third**, ahead of Auvergne Rhône-Alpes and Occitania

In 2021-2022, more than **9400 international students and interns** benefited from scholarships from the French government, **representing 22% more than the previous academic year.**

Campus France

The Campus France agency supports French higher education by ensuring that its strong appeal is promoted among international students. It is also administers scholarships granted by the French government and foreign institutions, assists mobile students and researchers, manages the France Alumni network and analyzes student mobility in France and throughout the world. The agency coordinates the Forum Campus France (more than 370 institutions). Worldwide, it supports more than 275 Espaces Campus France ("Campus France Spaces"), under the authority of the French embassies in 134 countries.

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Summary of 2023 Key Figures – Campus France

Throughout the world, student mobility continues to grow

- The global collection of data carried out jointly by UNESCO, the OECD and Eurostat indicates an international student mobility that was still growing in 2020: +4% over one year, and +32% over five years.
- The slowing effect caused by the COVID-19 pandemic appears for some countries (Australia, United States) but not for all of them. As a result, Australia slipped from second to third place among host countries, overtaken by the United Kingdom, which itself is behind the United States.
- The growth in mobility toward France is lower than growth throughout the world: +22% over five years, compared to a +32% global average. The country is ranked 6th globally with regard to number of international students hosted, behind Germany (4th) and Canada (5th). The publication of mobility data does not include Russia this year, due to a methodology judged inadequate, as well as due to the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.
- Other countries gaining significant ground in this ranking include China (7th, +89% over 5 years) – on the eve of the country closing its borders, the United Arab Emirates (9th, +194%), Turkey (10th, +156%), and South Korea (13th, +105%).
- The majority of the students leaving to study in other countries are from Asia. China has now passed one million students enrolled in degree programs throughout the world, double that of the next country of origin, India. Vietnam, only the 11th-ranked country of origin five years ago, is now in 3rd place, followed by Germany and the US. Mobility among Asian students is oriented first and foremost toward North America (37%), followed by the Asia-Pacific region (33%) and Europe (28%).
- France occupies the 6th place among countries of origin, with 109,000 mobile students in 2020. It fell one spot compared to its 2019 ranking, behind Germany (4th) and the US (5th), which is slightly ahead of it. The primary destinations for French students are Canada, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland.

A mobility affected by crises

- Student mobility also reflects crisis situations, such as conflict and war. Between 2015 and 2020, the number of mobile Syrian students more than doubled (+126%). In 2020, Syria was the 11th-ranked country of origin in terms of global mobility. France was the 5th-ranked host country for Syrian students, behind Turkey, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.
- In 2022, France implemented an emergency plan that allowed 2215 Ukrainian students to enroll in French higher education after the conflict began.
- In Europe, Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic had a clear impact on the Erasmus+ program: In 2021, the program's student mobility decreased by 20% in comparison with 2019-2020. Spain remains the top host country, followed by Germany and France, two countries in reverse order.

in comparison with 2019-2020. France once again became the program's top country of origin, ahead of Spain and Germany.

In France, a clear recovery in mobility

- In France, the benchmark of 400,000 international students was exceeded for the first time, bringing the country closer to its goal of having 500,000 international students in 2027. The annual growth in the number of students hosted is the strongest in 15 years: +8%. It is exchange student mobility – more than 7% of all international students – that is growing the most rapidly (+46%), which is explained by the previous year's postponed mobility plans. The mobility for degree programs grew by 6% the same year.
- Île-de-France has more than a third of all international students within the country (35), compared to a quarter of all students in France, French nationals included (27%). The following regions with respect to the number of enrolled international students are Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (12%), Occitania (9%), Grand Est (8%), and Hauts-de-France (7%). Between 2016 and 2021, student mobility increased in all of France's regions, between +11% in Grand Est and +102% in the overseas departments and regions of France (DROM), with a national average of +21%.
- The number of mobile students grew in all of the regions of origin over one year, from +2% from Asia and Oceania to 51% from North America, with +15% from the European Union
- North Africa-Middle East represents the first area of origin for international students enrolled in France (29%), ahead of Europe (25%), sub-Saharan Africa (23%), Asia-Pacific (13%) and North and South America (8%). The top 5 countries of origin remain identical to those from the previous academic year: Morocco, Algeria, China, Italy, and Senegal.
- Universities are the institution type that is most attended by international students, 65% of the latter were enrolled in them in 2021-2022, ahead of business schools (14%), engineering schools (7%), higher education courses at secondary schools (higher level technical training sections (STS) and higher education preparatory courses (CPGE), 5%), and schools of art and architecture (3%). Over five years, the mobility in each of these institution types increased, with gains that were above the average for business schools (+104%), high schools (+62%), and schools of art and architecture (+34%).
- At universities, every other international student is enrolled at bachelor's level (51%), 41% at master's level, and 8% at doctoral level. The disciplines of natural sciences on one hand and humanities, languages and social sciences on the other were among the most frequently studied by international students, with percentages of 32% and 30%, respectively.
- Mobility among business schools was especially atypical: the Asia-Pacific region is the first zone of origin for these institutions (30%, compared to 13% with all institution types grouped together). Among engineering schools, one notes the significant portion of students of Moroccan nationality (21%), the first-ranked country of origin, which is ahead of China (10%) and Tunisia (5%).

- France is an attractive destination at the doctoral level. Though Germany has moved ahead of it by one spot this year, it is the 4th ranked destination globally for international PhD students. This level of study is inherently international among French doctorate programs, with 38% of them consisting of doctoral students, compared to 13% with all levels grouped together. However, the doctorate level is the only one to experience a significant drop: -11% over five years.