



PRESS RELEASE

Address Obstacles to Employment – Retain More International Students as Skilled Migrants

International students are 'model immigrants' for the labour markets of their host countries. But although the majority would like to stay and work after graduation, many international students fail to find adequate employment. SVR's Research Unit presents the results from the first international mapping of local support structures for the study-to-work transition of international students in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. The study was based on a representative sample of 238 public higher education institutions in the four countries. It identifies shortcomings and issues recommendations for higher education institutions, employers and policy-makers.

Berlin, 9 June 2015. International students are increasingly regarded as 'ideal', 'model' or 'designer' immigrants for the labour markets of their host countries. Young, educated, and equipped with host country credentials and experiences, international students are presumed to mitigate future talent shortages, especially in technical occupations. In an effort to retain more international students for their domestic workforce, many host countries have passed legislation to improve post-study work and residency options for the 'educational nomads': In Germany, international graduates are permitted to stay for 18 months to search for employment. In Canada, international graduates can extend their stay by up to 36 months. However, despite these reforms and students' high willingness to stay, many international students fail to find adequate employment.

„When it comes to entering the labour market in their host country, international students face more obstacles than their domestic counterparts“, said Dr. Cornelia Schu, Director of the Research Unit at the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR). „Many international students require intensive career support, but instead, they encounter a poorly coordinated patchwork of occasional career fairs, job application training and chance acquaintances with service staff and company representatives which may or may not be able to help them“, added Simon Morris-Lange, author of the comparative study at SVR's Research Unit.

In its latest study, "Train and Retain. Career Support for International Students in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden", SVR's Research Unit conducts the first international mapping of local support structures for the study-to-work transition of international students. The results of the four country comparison are two-fold: On the one hand, some higher education institutions, local businesses and public service providers have already begun to actively support the labour market entry of international students. On the other hand, these isolated activities are not enough to retain more international students in the local and national workforce. "Every second company in Germany needs international university graduates to cover the lack of qualified employees", said Dr. Volker Meyer-Guckel, Deputy Secretary-General of Stifterverband. „And the demand will continue to rise. Especially SMEs in Germany should do more to open their doors and networks for foreign students before graduation.“ Dr. Felix Streiter, Director of the Centre for Science and Humanities of Stiftung Mercator, explained: "Germany needs its international university graduates. Ensuring that they are well integrated into German society and the world of work is a challenge that needs to be tackled jointly by universities, municipalities and business."



In Canada, international students are very likely to find job application training, networking events and other job entry support throughout their entire academic careers. In addition to their alma mater, local employment offices, settlement services and other public service providers also offer career support at about one in every two university or college locations. Furthermore, small businesses in Canada are more interested in hiring international students than similar size companies in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, which are often unaware of the international talent training on their doorstep.

In Germany, universities and universities of applied sciences focus their career support on the later stages of study programmes, partly due to unfavorable student-to-staff ratios and short-term funding of career services. Striving to retain more international students for the local workforce, public service providers are also pushing for international student retention in 41 percent of locations surveyed. Germany's large and medium-sized businesses and research institutes rank among the most active recruiters of international students. At the same time, international students are still a blind spot in the human resource strategies of the country's small companies.

In the Netherlands, 80 percent of career services develop international students' career readiness skills during all phases of their study programmes, often with the help of international alumni. International students in the Netherlands have a realistic chance of landing an internship or a full-time position with large or medium-sized businesses or at one of many research institutes. In contrast, smaller companies are hardly hiring international students, partly because of the substantial processing fees collected by Dutch immigration authorities.

In Sweden, the majority of universities and university colleges provide career support early on, but only 30 percent of the institutions tailor their services to the needs of international students. Furthermore, students' labour market entry is further complicated by the overall low level of assistance provided by employment agencies, chambers of commerce and other local actors. In addition, international students thus far appear to be off the radar of most human resource managers in Swedish businesses. Only large companies and research institutes show signs of interest at one in every three locations surveyed.

The four-country comparison found that today, some international students can already find a job application training, a diversity-friendly employer, or a knowledgeable and devoted public service employee on or off campus. However, so far only a few higher education institutions coordinate their career support with local businesses, public service agencies and other local actors. „In order to systematically retain more international students, local actors need to break out of their organisational silos and start sharing information in order to coordinate their individual career support“, concluded Dr. Cornelia Schu. Summing up the study's recommendations, Dr. Schu encouraged local actors to exchange information regularly, develop and pursue shared goals and to communicate joint achievements in order to rally support for further coordination. Given their long-term interest in talent retention, municipalities should play a central role in the local coordination of job entry support for international students.

The study and graphics can be downloaded [here](#) free of charge.

For media inquiries please contact:

Dorothee Winden, Communication Manager
SVR GmbH, Neue Promenade 6, 10178 Berlin, Germany
Phone +49 30-288 86 59-18 and presse@svr-migration.de



About the Expert Council's Research Unit

The Expert Council's Research Unit conducts independent, practice-oriented research projects in the field of integration and migration. The project-based studies focus on emerging trends and issues with education as one of the main research focal points. The Research Unit complements the work of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration. The core funding is provided by the Stiftung Mercator.

The Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration is based on an initiative of the Stiftung Mercator and the Volkswagen Foundation. The initiative includes seven member foundations. In addition to the Stiftung Mercator and the Volkswagen Foundation, the member foundations are: Bertelsmann Stiftung, Freudenberg Foundation, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft and Vodafone Foundation Germany. The Expert Council is a non-partisan advisory council of nine experts which provides research-based and actionable policy advice. With its Annual Report the Expert Council shapes the public debate on integration and migration in Germany and beyond.

More information: www.svr-migration.de/en/research-unit