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Internationalization of the Higher Education Institutions in Germany

Strategy of the Federal and Länder Ministers of Science (2024–2034)



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Introduction

Eleven years ago, the science ministers of the Federal Government and the Länder adopted the first Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions in Germany. Since then, the internationalization of our higher education system has progressed significantly. Germany now ranks third in the list of the most popular countries to study in worldwide, behind only the USA and the UK.¹ What is particularly pleasing about this is that Germany retains its appeal after students complete their studies. In a comparison of OECD countries, together with Canada it has the highest rate of international students staying on there.²

The higher education institutions have expanded their international study programmes significantly in the past ten years. The European University Networks have added dynamic momentum to the expansion of strategic partnerships and networks and helped quicken the internationalization of Germany's higher education institutions overall.

Not only international students but also increasing numbers of international doctoral candidates, researchers and administrative staff are making our higher education institutions places of vibrant international diversity, which has a positive impact on their respective local regions. At the same time, large numbers of German students, academics and non-academic staff at higher education institutions are making use of the possibility to gain experience of internationalization. The Erasmus programme alone has funded foreign stays for around half a million German students, academics and administrative staff since 2013. Germany also plays a leading role in the mobility measures of relevant EU research funding programmes. According to the German Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI), Germany was also able to improve its position regarding internationally mobile scientists.³

A look back at the past decade also shows that the global conditions for exchange and academic cooperation have changed considerably since the first Federal-Länder Strategy was adopted. Whether in technological, political, societal or labour-market terms, the developments of the past years have brought new possibilities and opportunities, but also new challenges and risks for the internationalization of higher education institutions. It is against this backdrop that the science ministers of the Federal and Länder governments see the need for a new strategy for the internationalization of higher education institutions in Germany. They intend for it to set priorities and show how to further increase the attractiveness of German higher education institutions to international students and researchers over the next ten years. They also intend for it to show how the internationalization of higher education institutions in Germany and their international collaborations can be developed further in terms of quality, crisis resilience, fairness, diversity and sustainability

The adoption of the Strategy followed a wide consultation process with the relevant actors from the higher education institutions and science organizations. The Strategy describes four fields of action, shared objectives and corresponding options for action. It requires consultation and agreement with institutions and authorities outside academia, in particular discussions with the authorities responsible for residence and security matters.

- 1 Cf. DAAD/DZHW: Wissenschaft weltoffen 2023: With around 368,000 students in the winter semester 2022/23, Germany ranked above Australia for the first time in third place among the most important host countries for international students worldwide, behind the USA and the UK
- 2 Cf. International Migration Outlook 2022: In a comparison of several member countries, Germany (with 45 percent) and Canada (44 percent) have by far the highest rates of international students remaining in these countries ten years after commencing their study programmes there.
- 3 Cf. Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI): Research, innovation and technological performance in Germany – EFI Report 2024 Berlin: EFI.

Many of the options for action are of a strategic nature or are aimed at optimizing existing structures. Since it must be assumed that not all measures can be implemented simultaneously, it will be important to allocate resources wisely, set priorities and exploit synergies as well as to take new approaches to financing. Where the objectives and measures require additional funds, these will be subject to budgetary proviso.

The shared internationalization objectives will be implemented by the Federal Government and the *Länder* according to their respective responsibilities and taking account of the autonomy of higher education institutions. This process will be accompanied by indicator-based reporting.

Guidelines – Shaping internationalization strategically

Our society faces complex challenges. Whether it is the climate crisis, artificial intelligence, protecting our health or demographic change, solutions based on the results of international cooperation in research and development are absolutely necessary for tackling the pressing issues of our time. International cooperation in higher education and science also has a decisive role to play in safeguarding national interests such as innovative strength and prosperity – specifically securing an adequate skills supply.

At the same time, system rivalries and opposing interests, isolationism and war are having an increasingly adverse effect on international academic and science cooperation. The Federal Government's China Strategy published in 2023 and the National Security Strategy illustrate the tensions and risks that also affect international academic and science cooperation.

The scope for cooperation narrows where academic freedom is limited, where there is a threat of knowledge drain and illegitimate use of research results or where students and academics are subject to persecution. At the same time, academic exchange precisely in such conflictual contexts may play a decisive role in transborder communication and confidence building. Through their collaborations, German higher education institutions can gain new partners to help strengthen the freedom and security of science and research.

In the face of the changed geopolitical situation for the internationalization of higher education institutions in Germany, the strategic response of the science ministers of the Federal and *Länder* governments is not isolationism, but a strengthening of the resilience of higher education institutions and a conscious weighing up of opportunity and risk. The aim is to make use of the great potential of internationalization and at the same time to reconcile the freedom of science we cherish with security policy interests.

At the same time, the Federal Government and the *Länder* want to take up and address the social, economic and technological developments of the past years that are relevant to the internationalization of higher education institutions from a strategic perspective. The Agenda for Sustainable Development and the growing socio-political pressure for more equal opportunities and diversity are creating new expectations and demands including on the internationalization of research and teaching. Furthermore it is important to make the most of the potential of digitalization for the internationalization of higher education – in particular the virtual and hybrid formats of exchange and mobility. There are innovative new possibilities for making student exchange and cooperation across national borders accessible to greater numbers of people including from socially and geographically more diverse groups and also on a more climate-friendly basis.

From the point of view of the Federal Government and the *Länder*, supporting the internationalization of Germany's higher education institutions is an investment simultaneously in science, society and the economy:

Added value for academia and science

An international approach is both a fundamental prerequisite and a key element of excellence in research and teaching. Exchanges of people and ideas as well as cooperation across national borders increase the generation of research findings and enable participation in global knowledge gain.

Added value for society and the economy

The internationalization of science and research helps drive society's progress. It is the key to evidence-based solutions for current and future challenges and for sustainable development in line with the UN 2030 Agenda. Scientific cooperation has a key role to play at the intersection of the economy and society, particularly for complex transformation processes such as the mobility transition or the energy transition. Securing Germany's innovative strength, creativity and technology development is unthinkable without international scientific cooperation.

With regard to society and the labour market, the training of intercultural skills among students and researchers plays an important role in ensuring that citizens and skilled professionals and managers act responsibly in globally networked learning, working and living environments and provide new impetus with their international experiences. Furthermore, higher education institutions act as bridges to their local communities where internationalization enables them to enhance intercultural dialogue.

Against this background, the Federal Government and the *Länder* aim to:

1. Further increase the **attractiveness of Germany as a location for higher education and research** for international students and researchers and to further reduce the obstacles to their recruitment, integration and retention in order to recruit more people with qualifications for science and industry. 'Brain circulation' is in the interest of both Germany and its partners; it strengthens Germany's global networking and also supports capacity building and the development of structures outside Germany. In this context, the Federal Government and the *Länder* are pursuing a cooperation model based on partnership that accommodates the partners' interests and reacts to them in a flexible way.

'Brain gain', as pursued around the world by science and research stakeholders is a legitimate interest of Germany if at the same time the opportunities and risks for the countries of origin are addressed, in particular the negative consequences of skilled emigration.

2. **Enable as many students, researchers and other higher education staff as possible to gain high-value internationalization experience** – through wzsupport for physical and virtual mobility as well as through internationalization at home. The Federal Government and the *Länder* emphasize the great importance of foreign experience for professional and personal development. With regard to measures to promote mobility, the aim is to pay closer attention to the diversity of the target groups and to design programmes to be more inclusive, including by using digital formats, in order to make high-quality experience of internationalization accessible to previously under-represented groups.
3. Work towards expanding and deepening the quality of **European and international** collaborations in research and teaching **between higher education institutions**, ranging from smaller projects right up to larger collaborations and strategic alliances, while maintaining the autonomy of the higher education institutions and the distribution of responsibilities within the EU in the higher education sector. The further implementation and development of the common Education and Research Area at EU level and of the European Higher Education Area are regarded as essential prerequisites for this. In view of the challenging geopolitical context, the aim is also to strengthen cooperation with partners who share the values of academic and scientific freedom and to make international cooperation between higher education institutions more geographically diverse and to take greater account of national interests.

Higher education institutions as drivers of international mobility – Strengthening individual experiences of internationalization and taking account of societal contexts and impacts

Higher education institutions are bridges between their international students and researchers and the local society, culture and economy. In view of this societal function, the Federal Government and the *Länder* support the higher education institutions in their efforts targeted at the recruitment, integration and retention of international students and researchers. Priority is given to strengthening the welcoming culture at the higher education institutions as well as at the relevant authorities, particularly local authorities. The aim is for international students and academics to feel welcome here in this country and encouraged to develop a lasting and sustainable attachment to Germany. The development of the relevant language and intercultural skills at the higher education institutions and public authorities is an important prerequisite in this regard.

Another important step for the Federal Government and the *Länder* is the expansion of study courses offered in foreign languages in order to attract greater numbers of qualified lecturers and international students, particularly at bachelor's level. In addition, the systematic teaching of good German language skills is essential for the purposes of integration and possible later transition into the labour market.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need for action with regard to the rate of successful completion of studies: The Federal Government and the *Länder* welcome the activities of higher education institutions aimed at supporting the integration and academic success of international students through increased provision of programmes targeted at specific groups and study phases.

Interested and qualified international students, doctoral candidates and researchers are to be provided with perspectives for taking up a career in Germany. The Federal Government and the *Länder* welcome all activities by higher education institutions and their cooperation partners aimed at providing advice and help in entering the German labour market. Cooperation with industry should be an important component in this regard.

The Federal Government and the *Länder* are working towards making experience of internationalization available to a wider range of domestic students. The aim is to reverse the declining trend in physical mobility of domestic students and also to make systematic use of the digital possibilities for experiencing internationalization.

At the same time, a greater focus on diversity is recommended where the provision of advice and the design of programmes are concerned: In the interests of equality of opportunity, students with particular needs (e.g. those with care responsibilities or with health impairments) as well as under-represented groups (e.g. first-generation students, teacher trainees, students at universities of applied sciences) should be addressed in a more targeted way.

Higher education institutions are called upon to address the conflict between mobility and sustainability in their internationalization and sustainability strategies and to strike a balance in terms of ecological, academic and social responsibility.

Overview of shared objectives of the Federal Government and the *Länder*:

- » Work towards increasing the share of courses taught in foreign or multiple languages and increasing the share of foreign-language modules within courses taught in German especially at bachelor's level, as well as increasing the foreign language skills of the administrative staff and adaptation of the administrative processes and documents to a growing international target group;
- » Strengthen cooperation between higher education and/or research institutions and local authorities;
- » Expand the possibilities for at least low-threshold experience of internationalization for all students and researchers;
- » Increase the academic success rate of international students, for example through a greater focus on the roles of the higher education entry and orientation phase and the culture of welcome;
- » Encourage successful international students to remain in Germany after graduation by means of a holistic approach that combines recruitment, preparation, support for study success and transition into the labour market.

Legal and structural framework – Further improving the conditions for successful internationalization:

Improving the legal and structural framework focuses the regulatory and infrastructural prerequisites that are essential for quantitatively and qualitatively progressive internationalization of Germany's higher education institutions.

For example, the Federal and *Länder* governments want to send out a strong welcoming signal to international students and researchers through Germany's visa procedures and residence law. They are responding to the urgent request by the higher education institutions and asking the relevant agencies at federal, *Land* and local level to speed up the procedures for granting visas and residence permits.

The European Universities alliances provide a great example of how the higher education institutions' internationalization activities are developing further in terms of quality and intensity. Some new approaches come up against regulatory obstacles or legal restrictions. The Federal Government and the *Länder* support the adaptation of the framework conditions to current developments (such as the digital transformation) in order to provide the higher education institutions with

more legal certainty and greater scope in planning and testing intensive structural cooperation.

The Federal and *Länder* governments also aim for greater flexibility with regard to higher education access. Higher education institutions are to be given greater scope to grant admission to international students on a more targeted basis in line with specific institutional requirements (e.g. language requirements) alongside the regular admission procedures. An expansion of the reformed admission to higher education with a stronger focus on individual competences and qualifications would appear helpful in view of the global competition to attract talented students.

A further diversification of higher education staff as well as an increase in the share of international professors, would appear a logical development as part of a comprehensive internationalization of higher education institutions. The Federal Government and the *Länder* will support the process with analyses and recommendations. The promotion of Germany's higher education institutions, including in their role as employers, makes an important contribution to this as part of the marketing of study and research in Germany.

Overview of shared objectives of the Federal Government and the *Länder* (legal framework conditions):

- » Facilitate the residence of international students and researchers in Germany: Accelerate the granting of visas and residence permits, implement legal measures decided in 2023 and conduct a procedural examination of further legal and/or structural adjustment needs;
- » Make higher education access more flexible for international students in respect of language requirements and with a stronger orientation to individual competences and performance;
- » Work towards speeding up and standardizing the procedures for recognizing foreign higher education qualifications and study credits for the purpose of commencing or continuing studies;
- » Explore possibilities to optimize the legal basis in order to provide scope for innovative new cooperation formats and improve legal certainty with regard to the internationalization activities of higher education institutions;
- » Examine the possibility of enabling internationally competitive budget rules and funding instruments that facilitate worldwide university and research collaborations through the possibility of financing the project shares of the respective higher education institutions in other European countries and around the world.

Overview of shared objectives of the Federal Government and the *Länder* (structural framework conditions):

- » Target provision of funding to higher education institutions so that they can use internationalization for strategic profile building – with greater involvement of international partners and expanded mobility offers for incoming and outgoing students and staff;
- » Provide sufficient and affordable accommodation for international students, including accommodation suitable for shorter stays;
- » Increase the attractiveness of Germany as a location for study and research by means of German higher education marketing abroad;
- » Implement significant diversification of staff at German higher education institutions while preserving the principle of the selection of the best candidates, for example by improving the conditions for recruitment, admission and integration of international academic staff.

International cooperation in a changing global context – Shaping cooperation in a goal-oriented and sustainable way:

The opportunities offered by international academic and research cooperation are numerous: More research excellence, more intercultural understanding through dialogue and exchange, more efficiency in the solving of problems of global significance. But growing geopolitical tensions and conflicts also reveal the risks associated with international research cooperation.

Against this background, the aim must be to pave the way for a balanced internationalization of higher education institutions which takes account of both the researchers' own motivation for cooperation and the wider socio-political conditions. Resilience in the face of crisis is one of the priority goals. The Federal Government and the *Länder* support the higher education institutions with expertise and dialogue at system level so that they can remain capable of action within the scope of their autonomy even in challenging times and protect themselves from undue interference and knowledge drain. At the same time, they call on the higher education institutions to expand their institutional risk management. Academic freedom is a politically and scientifically important asset; but it also entails a special responsibility for the higher education institutions and individual researchers.

It is in the interests of Germany as a location for study and research to encourage cooperation with the world's leading academic and science systems. A strong and competitive Europe is of particular importance in this: The Federal Government and the *Länder* support the German higher education institutions in further shaping the European Higher Education Area and are working towards linking it more closely to the European Research Area.

At the same time, they also see the necessity to strengthen cooperation with democratically oriented countries as well as to seek greater geographic diversification in cooperative relations. The establishment and expansion of science relations on an equal footing with partners in the Global South is also a strategically relevant field of action: It contributes substantially to achieving the goals of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development and to more global knowledge equity

In the face of enormous geopolitical challenges, it is particularly important to utilize the role of science cooperation for communication and networking and Germany's exchanges with the world about values and interests. Science cooperation can also contribute to societal transformation processes around the world through cooperation on an equal footing and talent transfer.

Overview of shared objectives of the Federal Government and the *Länder*:

- » Strengthen systematic structures and processes for dealing with challenges of internationalization in a resilient way;
- » Strengthen the European Higher Education and Research Area as the basis for achieving greater sovereignty and global competitiveness while retaining respective competences;
- » Strengthen the German science and higher education system through greater cooperation in research and teaching with the leading science nations and universities around the world;
- » Work towards the development of research and teaching particularly in and with countries of the Global South in order to enable high-quality collaborations on an equal footing;
- » Support the higher education institutions in the initiation and design of higher education and science cooperation in challenging contexts;
- » Stand up for academic and scientific freedom and protection of students and academics worldwide, especially in crisis situations.

Digital transformation – Making use of the opportunities offered by digitalization for academic exchange:

Digitalization offers valuable ways to facilitate, supplement and intensify academic exchange and research cooperation. At the same time, it makes it possible to design internationalization activities to be more ecologically sustainable and more socially inclusive. It is important to the Federal Government and the *Länder* that higher education institutions exploit the potential of digitalization for international science cooperation, the flexible design of study and to improve the quality of teaching and also of research and knowledge transfer.

The strategic combination of digitalization and internationalization is an important task in higher education development. In addition to closer interlinkage in the concept and structures of higher education institutions, the Federal Government and the *Länder* see the need to adapt the legal framework to the specific requirements of international digital higher education. As such, IT security, digital sovereignty and data protection have a central role in this as does the status of students in digital exchange formats.

The connectivity of the various digital systems of the higher education institutions is both a challenge and a prerequisite for international cooperation. The aim is to establish common data and process standards for the digital exchange of data, particularly in the

context of mobility. The European Universities alliances are proving to be important testbeds for this. At the same time, the Federal Government and the *Länder* see the need to better coordinate the different activities and projects for digitalization at university, *Land* and federal level as well as across Europe and thus to make optimum use of the resources deployed.

Virtual exchange formats provide a major opportunity for achieving the internationalization of higher education institutions. For example, they can provide a low-threshold path towards subsequent study stays abroad, supplementing them but not replacing them as such. An integrative concept of mobility can prove useful that includes hybrid and physical mobility in addition to digital formats, comparing their respective limits and possibilities.

The successful combination of digitalization and internationalization also requires the further development of teaching and study organization. In this context, the higher education institutions are called upon to develop the relevant skills among their administrative staff and among their students and lecturers

Overview of shared objectives of the Federal Government and the *Länder*:

- » Combine internationalization and digitalization in higher education development;
- » Create data- and information-secure interoperable infrastructures and processes in the area of internationalization and digitalization and digital mobility;
- » Work towards skills development for students, lecturers, researchers and scientific support staff in the context of digitalization and internationalization.

Annex 1) Options for action

This Annex sets out options for action for the four fields of action of the Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions in Germany which can help towards achieving the objectives formulated jointly by the Federal Government and the Länder.

Concerning the chapter: Higher education institutions as drivers of international mobility – Strengthening individual experiences of internationalization and taking account of societal contexts and impacts

Work towards increasing the share of courses taught in foreign or multiple languages and increasing the share of foreign-language modules within courses taught in German especially at bachelor's level, as well as increasing the foreign language skills of the administrative staff and adaptation of the administrative processes and documents to a growing international target group

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Demand-based expansion of study courses taught in foreign or multiple languages as well as targeted increase of the share of foreign-language modules in courses taught in German especially at bachelor's level;
- » Systematic flanking of the expansion of multilingual offerings with German and English courses at higher education institutions and consideration of the introduction of incentives (e.g. on the basis of ECTS credits);
- » Expansion of the English-language skills of the relevant administrative staff, e.g. through continuing education and training and relevant incentives;
- » Establishment of central translation or coordination offices for higher education institutions.

Strengthen cooperation between higher education and/or research institutions and local authorities

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Encouragement of the establishment and development of support staff in relevant and local authorities as designated contact persons for the higher education institutions and better exchange with these contact persons;
- » Strengthening of the international and intercultural skills of administrative units in public authorities.

Expand the possibilities of at least low-threshold experience of internationalization for all students and researchers

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Drawing-up of an information handout on internationalization experience including a uniform national definition which takes account of physical mobility abroad as well as hybrid and digital formats;
- » Efforts to be made by the Länder and higher education institutions within the framework of their respective responsibilities to fully record study-related physical mobility abroad in the higher education statistics in accordance with the German Higher Education Statistics Act;
- » Continuation of strategic data monitoring at institutional level and system level (HSI-Monitor) complemented by nationwide, independent academic reporting based on the "Student Survey in Germany" (Studierendenbefragung in Deutschland);
- » Promotion of experience of internationalization via integrated mobility/internationalization windows and the expansion of hybrid and digital offerings; special focus on study courses with a low level of internationalization (e.g. teacher training);
- » Continuation of European, national and regional mobility programmes (e.g. of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the DAAD and individual Länder programmes);
- » Stronger incorporation of diversity in the design and promotion of mobility and cooperation by the higher education institutions, for example in the case of advice provision and programme design;
- » Stronger prioritization of ecological sustainability in the planning of the higher education institutions' internationalization strategies, particularly regarding foreign mobility.

Increase the academic success rate of international students, for example through a greater focus on the roles of the higher education entry and orientation phase and the culture of welcome

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Examination of the possibility of creating digital Studienkolleg programmes for the preparation of prospective foreign students (including an assessment test for admission to higher education in Germany, where required under individual Länder law) or digital preparation in the home country for studying in Germany;
- » A structured higher education entry and orientation phase with attention given to the diversity of the international target groups (to support the acquisition of linguistic, subject and study-related competence); provision of information, advice and mentoring services specific to different study phases;
- » Sustainable support for the provision of intercultural sensitive social and psychological advice;
- » Provision of programmes and relevant incentives for higher education staff for the further development of international skills and integration of onboarding processes for new staff;
- » Establishment of anti-discrimination contact and complaints offices and corresponding further training programmes.

Encourage successful international students to remain in Germany after graduation by means of a holistic approach that combines recruitment, preparation, support for study success and transition into the labour market

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Improvement of the transition of international graduates into the labour market by means of targeted information, advice, application training, mentoring, expansion of careers advice services, etc;
- » Provision of German language courses also as part of foreign-language study programmes for the purpose of better linguistic preparation for the labour market (cf. objective relating to the expansion of multilingual study programmes);
- » Intensification of cooperation between higher education institutions and employers with a view to: practical phases during the study programme, networking measures, mentoring programmes, development of transition structures and onboarding management, development of joint programmes such as German courses including specialist language.

Concerning the chapter: Legal and structural framework – Further improving the conditions for successful internationalization

Facilitate the residence of international students and researchers in Germany and accelerate the granting of visas and residence permits

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Implementation of the federal legal measures decided in 2023 (concerning e.g. greater flexibility regarding part-time work for students and prospective students taking preparatory courses or applying for study places; access to statutory health insurance for researchers on scholarships; choice of residence title for doctoral candidates: in accordance with section 16 b or in accordance with section 18 d of the Residence Act (AufenthG); accelerated visa procedures and procedural examination of further legal and/or structural adjustment needs;
- » Design of efficient and transparent processes, e.g. through digitalization of application processes for visas at German diplomatic missions abroad and of residence application procedures at foreigners authorities in Germany;
- » Examination of the possibility to expand capacity in foreign missions/visa offices and foreigners authorities with particularly high application volumes.

Make higher education access more flexible for international students in respect of language requirements and with a stronger orientation to individual competences and performance

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Creation of a legal basis at Länder level for higher education institutions to employ their own procedures for the admission of international students to undergraduate first-degree courses in addition to the regular admission procedures (as is already the case in some Länder) and the use of quality-assurance suitability tests in regular admission procedures, particularly for master's programmes;
- » Depending on the conditions laid down in the higher education laws of the different Länder: Establishment of own admission procedures by higher education institutions; discussion and, where possible, agreement at Länder level to enable synergies and to facilitate transparency regarding admission procedures in Germany.

Work towards speeding up and standardizing the procedures for recognizing foreign higher education qualifications and study credits for the purpose of commencing or continuing studies

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Further standardization and digitalization of recognition procedures by the higher education institutions;
- » Examination of the possibility of establishing central, digitally enabled one-stop shops at institutional level for the recognition and crediting of qualifications and study credits from abroad;
- » Examination of the possibilities for integrating micro-credentials into course curricula as well as the possible recognition and crediting of a given share of micro-credentials in academic continuing education while complying with quality aspects and the fundamental principle of full degree programmes.

Explore possibilities to optimize the legal basis for internationalization activities of higher education institutions and to provide scope for innovative new cooperation formats

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Standard definition of short-term and online study phases, clarification of student status in all Länder and examination of the need for health insurance;
- » Accreditation of joint programmes: Full implementation of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the Musterrechtsverordnung (MRVO – legal instrument of the Länder for the comparison of undergraduate degrees from the different Länder);
- » Consideration of legal improvements for structurally established international cooperation, e.g. examination of how and to what extent teaching carried out abroad in structured joint study programmes can be counted as part of the required teaching hours.
- » Examination of whether specific opening clauses in higher education legislation would be useful in the context of European Universities alliances;
- » Proactive and constructive critical engagement with the initiatives of the EU Commission in connection with the further development of instruments for closer structural and organizational cooperation among the European Universities alliances.

Examine the possibility of enabling internationally competitive budget rules and funding instruments that facilitate worldwide university and research collaborations through the possibility of financing the project shares of the respective higher education institutions in other European countries and around the world

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Examination of the possibilities for adapting the bases for research funding in order to be able to use budgetary resources abroad for the funding of international research collaborations; if necessary, development of new instruments.

Target provision of funding to higher education institutions so that they can use internationalization for strategic profile building with close involvement of international partners and expanded mobility offers

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Regular updating of higher education institutions' own internationalization strategies based on evaluations and addressing the themes of geopolitics, sustainability, diversity and digitalization and recruitment of qualified professionals;
- » Strengthening of the internationalization structures at small and medium-sized higher education institutions taking account of the special conditions at universities of applied sciences and at music and art colleges; synergy effects can be achieved through cooperation;
- » Exploitation of the potential, both qualitative and quantitative, of the current Erasmus+ programme by strengthening the structures responsible for Erasmus at the higher education institutions;
- » Improvement of the possibilities for transnational education (TNE) colleges and courses to be part of the German accreditation system;
- » Examination by higher education institutions of the possibility to charge fees for particular programmes or services.

Provide sufficient and affordable accommodation suitable for international students, including for shorter stays

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Provision of new and modernization of existing student residences within the framework of social housing construction;
- » Conclusion for the first time of a special administrative agreement ("Junges Wohnen" – accommodation for young people) in the 2023 programme year; examination of the possibility of continuation;
- » Increase in financial support for social housing to a total of 3.15 billion euros in the 2024 programme year (2024 Budget Act).

Increase the attractiveness of Germany as a location for study and research by means of German higher education marketing abroad

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Expansion of multilingual external presentation of Germany's higher education institutions targeted to specific groups;
- » Attracting of new international target groups – potential exists in regionally networked higher education marketing for certain target regions abroad as well as for regions and/or higher education networks in Germany;
- » Targeted marketing of higher education institutions and science institutions in their role as potential employers for international academic target groups.

Implement significant diversification of staff at German higher education institutions while preserving the principle of the selection of the best candidates, for example by improving the conditions for recruitment, admission and integration of international academic staff

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Strategic orientation of the higher education institutions' personnel policies to include the recruitment, development and management of international staff;
- » Examination of the possibility of facilitating or creating greater flexibility with regard to the recruitment requirements and employment conditions at the level of both the Länder and the higher education institutions particularly when it comes to international careers (e.g. with respect to language proficiency, pay grading, simplification of procedures to assess equivalence);
- » Expansion of dual career offers at institutional level;
- » Development of recommendations to increase the share of international professors in higher education institutions: Increased focus on appointments of international staff and the transition of international researchers in early career phases.

Concerning the chapter: International cooperation in a changing global context – Shaping cooperation in a goal-oriented and sustainable way

Strengthen systematic structures and processes for dealing with challenges of internationalization in a resilient way

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Development of guidelines and regulations by the higher education institutions (e.g. on the basis of the guidelines of the German Rectors' Conference – HRK) for international collaborations in demanding contexts;
- » Development of institutional policies for opportunity and risk management by the higher education institutions: e.g. establishment of check routines, partnership management, training activities and advice, central points of contact and coordination;
- » Creation of synergies between higher education institutions – in particular to strengthen small and medium-sized institutions with limited capacities (networks etc.);
- » Examination of the possibility of establishing and developing structures for systematic opportunity and risk management in support of the higher education institutions by higher-level entities; advice and information e.g. from the German Competence Centre for International Academic Collaborations (KiWi), establishment of coordination platforms for risk management in academia;
- » Examination of possibilities to accelerate decision-making by the Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA)

Strengthen the European Higher Education Area and the EU's Education and Research Area as the basis for achieving greater sovereignty and global competitiveness while retaining respective competences

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Active promotion of strong education and research programmes at EU level by the Federal Government and the *Länder*;
- » Active promotion at EU level of the sustained further development of the European Universities alliances making use of synergies between EU programmes;
- » Strengthening of the research dimension of the European Universities alliances; strengthening of the role of higher education institutions in the next EU research framework programme;
- » Proactive engagement with the further development of the European Strategy for Universities; as such the Federal Government and the *Länder* will work to achieve a EU higher education policy that is compatible with what has been agreed in the European Higher Education Area while maintaining respective competences;
- » Active promotion within the bodies of the European Higher Education Area of the consistent implementation of the Bologna instruments in all member states.

Strengthen the German science and higher education system through international cooperation in research and teaching with the leading science nations and universities around the world

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Targeted support for collaborations in the context of knowledge transfer, innovation, startups (e.g. through funding programmes for innovation and knowledge transfer, including in teaching; stronger support for cooperation with industry and NGOs). In this context, a particular focus is placed on collaborations with science systems which share the values of academic freedom and the autonomy of higher education institutions.

Work towards the development of research and teaching particularly in and with countries of the Global South in order to enable more high-quality collaborations on an equal footing

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Gender-equitable orientation of support programmes to strengthen the participation, resources and representation of women researchers in all their diversity in collaborations, research and teaching;
- » Examination of possible supporting measures, particularly for early-career researchers who are interested in cooperation including with the Global South, and continuation of support for early-career researchers from e.g. the Global South under existing programmes;
- » Programmes with e.g. the Global South that look at further dimensions of diversity, knowledge equity and higher education for sustainable development;
- » Strengthening of the relevant regional competence at the advising or funding institutions.

Support the higher education institutions in the initiation and design of higher education and science cooperation in challenging contexts

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Strengthening of foreign cultural and education policy and science diplomacy and recognition of the international science policy function of higher education institutions;
- » Active promotion of a rules-based order in international academic and science cooperation, particularly with regard to academic freedom, security and integrity of research and teaching in a broader sense;
- » Maintenance of support for students and researchers even under politically challenging circumstances taking into account the basic political orientation of the Federal Government with regard to regions directly affected by war or crises.

Stand up for academic and scientific freedom and protection and support for students and academics worldwide, especially in crisis situations

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Ensuring the high standards of the freedom of academia and science in Germany;
- » Addressing the topic of the academic and scientific freedom in contacts and collaborations particularly with partners in difficult contexts;
- » Participation in the discussions at European level about monitoring academic freedom in accordance with the relevant competences and working towards compatibility of the monitoring instruments at EU level in the European Higher Education Area while maintaining respective competences;
- » Active support by the Federal Government and the Länder for the long-term establishment and expansion of (funding) programmes for refugee students and academics at EU level;
- » Creation of protective spaces at German higher education institutions and in transnational education (TNE) projects for students and academics subject to persecution (including permanent points of contact) and strengthening of existing protection programmes such as the Hilde Domin Programme or the Philipp Schwartz Initiative;
- » Strengthening of research and teaching on critical topics or critical contexts e.g. through context-sensitive funding.

Concerning the chapter: Digital transformation – Making use of the opportunities offered by digitalization for academic exchange

Combine internationalization and digitalization in higher education development

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Systematic integration and conceptual linking of internationalization and digitalization in the strategic development plans of the *Länder* and higher education institutions;
- » Structural strengthening and dovetailing of the organizational units responsible for internationalization and digitalization and relevant governance processes at the higher education institutions;
- » Clarification/creation of specific legal bases in higher education law (e.g. for digital exams, digital credentials) and work towards standardization of the digital law basis and consideration of the conditions and requirements of higher education in digital law projects (data protection, eGovernment, IT security, regulation of digital services) by the Federal Government and the *Länder*;
- » Development of a strategic plan for the statistical recording and consideration of digital experience of internationalization in the context of higher education funding as well as integration of digital, hybrid and physical forms of internationalization in the development of curricula (in connection with the definition of internationalization experience, p.13);
- » Examination of the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence in the context of international cooperation (e.g. for student recruitment and orientation, in selection and registration processes, and language-learning contexts).

Create data- and information-secure interoperable infrastructures and processes in the area of internationalization and digitalization and digital mobility

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Exchange and cooperation between relevant actors with regard to national and international activities/good practice examples (government/administration; higher education institutions; EdTech sector; other actors such as the Hochschulforum Digitalisierung [German Forum for Higher Education in the Digital Age – HFD]; DAAD; German Rectors' Conference [HRK]; German Foundation for Innovation in Higher Education [Stiftung Innovation in der Hochschullehre]; AI Campus; "Mein Bildungsraum"; communities of practice; etc.) concerning digitalization in the context of mobility with the aim of a networked system to promote interoperability in the European Education Area;
- » Support for higher education institutions' activities for technical interoperability by the Federal Government and the *Länder*, where possible utilizing European funding;
- » Support of central inter-institutional online services for the digitalization of relevant higher education processes in the area of mobility by means of configurable administration workflows;
- » Ensuring of access for students, lecturers, researchers, scientific support staff to digital mobility and removal of administrative obstacles by the higher education institutions;
- » Systematic networking of the structures created as part of the National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) to open up, secure and render accessible data stocks with (inter) national and particularly European research data management structures.

Skills development for students, lecturers, researchers and scientific support staff in the context of digitalization and internationalization

The following measures can contribute towards the achievement of the objective:

- » Personnel development strategies and measures for the development of competences in the area of digitalization and internationalization for the academic and administrative activities at higher education institutions;
- » Establishment and development of advice and further training in the field of digitalization and internationalization as well as training offers for digital teaching and digital literacy courses for students and lecturers;
- » Strengthening of the (e-)learning/teaching centres and their interlinkage.

Annex 2) Reporting indicators

The implementation of the Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions in Germany from 2024 to 2034 will be accompanied by indicator-based reporting by the Federal Government and the *Länder*. Taking account of the availability and meaningfulness of the data on the internationalization of higher education institutions in Germany, it seems appropriate to use indicators which focus on the Strategy’s three overarching goals). Their development will be observed for example on the basis of sample indicators as set out in the table below. The possible inclusion of further indicators in the reporting will be examined and then discussed by the Federal Government and the *Länder* again in 2026, taking account of the latest developments and the availability and quality of relevant data.

In order to provide a better picture of the quality of the development of internationalization in higher education institutions in Germany, the reporting will not only consider the three overarching goals but also

selected objectives within the different fields of action and analyse their development in separate chapters. For the purposes of illustrating progress and enabling better visibility of model approaches, the reporting will also contain examples of good practice.

The reporting will proceed from a baseline (of actual values) from the start of the Strategy period in 2024. A report on the overall progress of the Internationalization Strategy for Germany will be issued every three years on this basis. For the interim reports (in 2027 and 2030) and the concluding report (in 2033–34) the Federal Government and the *Länder* are planning a reporting form that will include interpretations and analyses of the results (e.g. in the publication *Wissenschaft weltoffen* published by the German Academic Exchange Service – DAAD and the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies – DZHW).

Goal 1: Increase the attractiveness of Germany as a location for higher education and research		
Indicators	1.1 Proportion of international students compared to all students at German higher education institutions	1.2 Proportion of international researchers compared to all researchers at German higher education institutions
Sample indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number of international students aiming for a degree and with temporary study-related stays » Number of new first-year students » Subject fields » Types of degree and higher education institution » Gender » Country of origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Types of staff » Gender » Country of origin
Secondary indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Perception of the stay Germany’s position in the global ranking of host countries with the highest numbers of international students » Number of international graduates » International student dropout rates » Rate of international students staying on in Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Foreign doctoral candidates » Doctorates obtained in Germany by students who qualified for higher education abroad

Goal 2: Enable as many students, researchers and other higher education staff as possible to gain high-value internationalization experience		
Indicators	<p>2.1.a) Proportion of all graduates of German higher education institutions with study periods abroad (at least 3 months or 15 ECTS credits or in accordance with the EU mobility benchmark)</p> <p>2.1.b) Proportion of domestic students with study periods abroad compared to all students at German higher education institutions</p>	2.2 Number of researchers with funded foreign stays
Sample indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Subject fields » Types of degree and higher education institution » Gender » Educational background* » Immigration background* » Care responsibilities* » Employment* » Health impairment**4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Funding organizations » Host countries » Subject fields
Secondary indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Number and host countries of the Erasmus+ stays » Study periods abroad by host country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Erasmus+ guest lecturers » Periods abroad during and after gaining of doctorate

Goal 3: Expansion and deepening of European and international collaborations between higher education institutions	
Indicators	3. Performance of German higher education institutions and science institutions within the European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation
Sample indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Share of German higher education institutions/research institutions in all European grants/participations » Proportion of ERC grants going to German higher education institutions/research institutions compared to all ERC grants
Secondary indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » "Permeation rate"⁵ of German higher education institutions/research institutions in European collaborative projects

4 The features marked * go beyond the standard higher education statistics and are collected only as part of the student survey, meaning that they can only be shown for 2.1.b.

5 Proportion of collaborative projects with the participation of at least one German higher education/research institution compared to all collaborative projects.

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