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November 2014

Beyond Influence: the Economic Impact of International Students in France



Introduction

This study is the first of its kind in France

To better understand the economic impact of international students on the country, Campus France conducted an online survey with a representative sample of 4,200 students. Institut BVA conducted the survey.

While extensive data exists for the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Germany and some other European countries, France did not have accurate data, with the exception of some large statistical aggregates through the Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

This study makes an original contribution and will allow us to debate with our European partners.

An economic impact mostly positive for France:

While the report estimates that international students cost the state around 3 billion euros, these students contribute 4.65 billion euros to the French economy, as follows:

- € 3,250 million in daily consumption of goods and service
- € 563 million in tuition fees
- € 364 million in French airline operators
- € 466 million spent by relatives visiting international students.

International students have to make financial sacrifices to cover for the cost of living and studying in France:

- Monthly expense is estimated at about 920 € per month, with housing accounting for 40% and food (including university restaurants) 26%
- Overall cost of a stay exceeds € 20,000 (based on an average stay of 22 months)
- 82% of students say that the cost of studying in France is very high and half of them indicate that they or their families had made heavy financial sacrifices
- But at the end of their stay nearly 70% consider that this financial investment was worth it

Most of them (65 to 85%) develop a positive view of the country and would buy and recommend the following:

- French products
- studying in France
- working with French companies
- tourism in France

At the end of their stay, most non-French speakers have significantly improved their language skills and they wish to maintain contact with France.

All things considered, hosting international students clearly benefits France thanks to a positive financial balance generated by financial flows into the country. Hosting international students not only generates financial benefits for France in the short term, but also represents a source of economic revenue and diplomatic influence in the longer term.

Key figures on international student mobility

Key figures

International student mobility is going up, + 15% in 3 years, + 100% in 12 years.

295,084 international students in France in 2014¹ (+ 11% in 5 years).

Students from all around the world: France welcomes students from 190 countries every year. 54 of these countries send more than 1,000 students every year. (43% from Africa, 26% from Europe, 19% from Asia, 8% of America, 4% from the Middle East).

France is the third most-popular study destination and the leading non-English-speaking destination in the world. (7% of the 4 million internationally mobile students)².

1- Source: Ministry of Higher Education and Research 2014 ;
2- Source: UNESCO 2014 latest data from the year 2012.

Survey Methodology

▶ Sampling methods:

The survey was conducted online from 26 September 2014 to 27 October 2014 **by market research firm Institut BVA**. Students were either invited to participate via personal email (2/3 of participants), or they were invited to log on to a website via a public link (1/3).

▶ Quality checks:

To make sure the **sample was representative**, two precautions were taken:

- ➔ **Data collection: a wide variety of data sources.**
 - Students who used Campus France services in the past 3 years
 - Students who participated in the 2013 Campus France survey and who agreed to be contacted again (already a diverse sample)
 - Students contacted by Campus France member institutions (300 institutions)

The questionnaire was available in **4 languages**: French, English, Spanish, and Chinese.

- ➔ **Data processing: the final sample was adjusted.**

To correct the population standard deviation, we adjusted 4 main criteria: geographical origin of students (9 zones); type of higher education institution (6 types); level of education (4 levels); recipients of scholarships awarded by the French government (2 profiles).

Quality control: In order to have a reliable sample, we excluded participants who had spent less than 3 months in France (they lack the necessary distance), and those who came to France more than 3 years ago (their answers might be approximate).

Validation and coherence checks: To ensure that the data was correct and reliable, every questionnaire was read carefully and the participants who provided inconsistent responses were excluded.¹ Even when only one response was inconsistent, they were excluded as a precautionary measure. This represents 8% of the initial sample. This is a low rate considering the very technical nature of the survey; it reveals the overall good quality of the responses, and thus their reliability.

▶ A strong final sample:

After going through these strict quality controls, we analyzed **4,200 questionnaires answered by a representative sample of the international students who had studied in France** for at least 3 months in the past 3 years, or who had started their study programs more than 3 months ago.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Results

1. General data on international students in France
2. Financial benefits of international students for France
3. Public cost of training international students
4. Overall cost of a study program in France for international students
5. Financial burden of studying abroad
6. Beyond direct economic benefits: why France should host international students
7. Do students see this financial investment as profitable?

1- For example, monthly expense of € 1, 000 and total annual expense of € 5,000.

► 1. General data on international students in France

How many are they? How long do they stay in France?

Over the last three years (reference period of the survey), the number of international students in France increased by 3.2% and went from 285,000 (2010/2011) to 295,000 (2013/2014).

31% of international students had already come to France in the past: half of them for educational purposes (other study abroad programs, language courses etc.).¹

The term of study for international students is 26 months on average, 12 of these months are spent while they are enrolled in their current program, but some of them (a minority) say that they are likely to return for another program. Newly arrived students predict that they will spend a total of 30 months in France.

According to our estimates, international students spend an average of 28 months in France—spread over one or more stays.

Where do they live?

Paris and the surrounding Ile-de-France region hosts 28% of international students, followed by the Southeast 26%, the East 19%, the Southwest 13%, and the West 14%.²

They tend to live in densely populated areas: half of them study in cities with over 200,000 inhabitants and 45% in towns where the proportion of students exceeds 15% of the population.

Nearly 3 out of 4 students attend French universities, half of them are in Master's or PhD programs. 14% are enrolled in engineering or business schools.

What is their housing situation?

1 in 2 international students live in community housing (this rate rises to 60% for students coming from countries with low per capita income) and 63% of them live in university housing. Therefore, this type of accommodation is chosen by a third of all international students.

The other half find a place on their own and 73% of them do not share accommodation.

Regardless of the type of accommodation, 69% of students live alone. 42% of students from countries with high purchasing power live with a roommate or a partner, but only 23% of students from countries with low purchasing power choose this option.

What is their experience in France?

45% say that living alone increased their feelings of loneliness and indicate that they found it hard to be away from their families. The longer they stay and the higher the difference with the standard of living in their home country, the lonelier they feel. Students from Africa and the Middle East have the hardest time being away from their families (62%). This is less the case for students from the European Union, but also for students from Asia (30%) even though they are quite far from their home countries.

Integrating French society is a positive experience for 62% of students, especially those from North Africa (77%), Central America and the Caribbean (73%). In contrast, 47% of Asia-Oceania students and 44% of Middle Eastern students say that they had a hard time adapting. While most non-EU European students feel that they integrated well, a record number of them characterize their experience as very negative (17%).

► 2. Financial benefits of international students for France

This impact includes living expenses (accommodation, daily life...) as well as occasional expenses such as trips taken on French airlines or tourism related benefits generated by relatives during visits to France.

► Daily expenses

The diversity of our sample makes estimating an average amount very difficult. It is difficult, for example, to combine the answers of both the students who have completed their programs, and therefore have records of their expenses, and those who are still in France and whose budgets are in flux.

▶ MONTHLY EXPENSES of international students having just returned from France (since 2010)

1. Housing + utilities	€ 383.15	41.60%
2. Daily living expenses (meals excluding resto U, clothing)	€ 202.84	22.00%
3. Entertainment (sports, social activities...)	€ 100.07	10.90%
4. Transportation	€ 60.08	6.50%
5. Resto U (university cafeteria)	€ 55.99	6.10%
6. Miscellaneous expenses	€ 45.97	5.00%
7. Phone / Internet services	€ 29.34	3.20%
8. Health insurance	€ 25.90	2.80%
9. Other health-related expenses	€ 17.32	1.90%
Monthly total	€ 920.66	100%

1- When they answered the survey, 44% had already completed their programs (82% sojourning in 2013 or 2014; between 2010 and 2012 for the others) et 56% were still enrolled.

2- Ministry of Higher Education and Research

Students who have just completed their programs are probably the most reliable reference group: we use their responses to estimate monthly expenses.

Even before they started detailing their expenses, the students estimated their monthly expenses at € 835. This bias occurs quite frequently in these surveys: students are likely to remember spending slightly less than they actually did. The differential is limited to 10%, which confirms that **the real amount is probably very close to our estimates.**

This average conceals a **wide range of situations**¹: while 10% of students spend less than € 500 per month, 20% spend more than € 1,100. Housing, which accounts for 42% of all expenses, eats up the largest percentage of the students' budgets. Some international students also receive financial support from their families and sponsors (parents, scholarships, etc.), making each situation different.

**International students
spend an average
of € 11,048 per year in France
(excluding tuition fees)**

Just based on the categories surveyed by our report, and knowing that there are 295 000 international students in the country², international students contribute an estimated **3,260 billion euros to the French economy every year.**

► **Tuition fees:**

Tuition fees vary widely across institutions and programs; they range from a few hundred euros for an undergraduate student at a university to more than € 13,000 for a senior student in a prestigious business school. According to students who have completed their programs, tuition fees average € 1,910 per year³, or **563.5 million euros annually** for all international students.

► **Tourism benefits:**

To the benefits generated by international students, we should add the travel expenses for the visiting family and friends of 53.8% of international students (158,750 students every year). Relatives and friends spend an average of 28 days in France per student concerned, or a total of 4,445,000 days per reference year.

Foreign tourists in France spend an estimated daily average of € 105 (2011 Senate report⁴), therefore, tourism-related benefits reach **466.7 million euros per year.**

According to the estimates given by the Senate Report, the money spent by relatives visiting international students translates into **12,000 jobs created in the tourism industry.**

► **Financial impact for French airline operators:**

Respondents estimate that they spend about € 1,234 on French airline operators, or a total of **364.133 million euros** for 295,084 students.

Conclusion

**Direct global economic benefit
generated by international students
or their relatives during their stay in
France = 4,654 annual billion euros**

The French language training that students take before stepping into a French classroom is also beneficial to the economy.

36.4% are enrolled in French language courses: 52.6% through French organizations (or 56,500 students) for an average amount of € 1,204 = 68 million euros. These fees are paid to French institutions. However, since these courses can also be taken outside of the territory, we decided to exclude them from the overall benefits generated within France.

To estimate net economic benefit, two budget items should be subtracted from the previous estimate:

Government scholarships (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development) = **55 millions euros.**

Part of the expenses is covered by the students' earnings: 41% of students work during their stay and earn an average of € 6,976 over 28 months. This represents 120,984 students earning € 2,990 per year, or a total income of **362 million euros.**

It should be noted that students' earnings cover daily consumption of goods and services in France. Student workers also contribute to public health and pension funds, while rarely benefitting from these programmes themselves.

1- Standard deviation = 463

2- Statistics provided by MENESR-DGSIP 2013-2014

3- Average fees quoted by the students in the survey (significant differences between universities and the grandes écoles)

4- Report n°684 June 2011

► 3. Public cost of training international students

Note: This chapter is not really part of our study and could probably be improved with the statistical services of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, and the Ministry of Finance and Public Accounts. Nevertheless, this chapter seems a useful addition; it looks at the economic impact of international students from a couple of different points of views.

► Higher education spendings and international students

This section needs to be fleshed out. However, since training international and French students require the same investment (classrooms, teachers, supervision, equipment...), we can come up with a realistic annual estimate.

Since annual state spending on higher education is 23 billion euros with 2,387,000 students, a student “costs” € 9,635 on average.

Proportionally: 2,843,000,000 euros in annual costs for 295,084 international students.

But this estimate likely overstates the real extra cost of international students who study in France, because the real cost is not the total cost, is the marginal cost, which corresponds to extra expenses and not regular –and hardly expandable– expenses.

In other words, without international students, state spending on higher education would decrease only slightly since the French government would still be responsible for managing the facilities, paying for professors, financing the research centers, etc.

► Government scholarships awarded to international students (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development): 55 million euros

Only a minority of international students, 1 in 25, receive these scholarships estimated at approximately € 12,000.

Financial aids allocated by the Ministry add up to 65 million euro, including short-term fellowships (under 3 months) that fall outside the scope of this report. The public financial cost of supporting international students can be therefore estimated at 55 million euro per year.¹

► Other sources of financial assistance:

- **Housing grants: 210 million euros²**
- **CROUS and university cafeterias:** included in the MENESR budget. (cf. Higher education spendings and international students)
- **Grants and aids from local authorities (Collectivités Territoriales)**
- **Grants and aids from institutions of higher education**

Financial summary:

Even putting aside the fact that French public aids and grants are reinjected into the economy every time students pay for foods and services in France, **it is clear that hosting international students translates into a positive financial balance for France while also generating significant financial inflows.**

Overall spendings of international students and their families in France, including registration fees (4.654 billion euros)

Direct and indirect aids for international students (2843 billion euros + € 55 million + various other aids)

The net economic benefit is approximately 1.7 billion euros per year.

► 4. What is the overall cost of a study program in France for international students?

► Total cost of study program: students' estimates

Sample: 4,241	%
Less than € 10,000	31.5
€ 10,000 to € 20,000	23.3
€ 20,000 to € 30,000	13.2
€ 30,000 to € 50,000	14.9
More than € 50,000	10.2
I cannot give an estimate	5.3
I do not want to answer	1.6
Average	19,927

This estimate of almost € 20,000 probably understates the real cost.

Indeed, when we compare this estimate to all monthly expenses combined with, on the one hand, the cost of traveling between the country of origin and France and, on the other hand, French

1- Nb : Our estimates exclude aids from local authorities and some institutions of higher education, but they are still few and far between for international students.

2- Calculation base= 1,7 million euros a year for all 2,387,000 students x 12,32% of international students.

language classes taken prior to the beginning of the program, we observe a differential that varies between 10% to 20% across all the groups we studied.

Therefore we can realistically estimate that an international student coming to study in France will spend an average of € 23,000. This number is just an indicative average: according to the type of study programs, the major pursued, the housing situation etc. the average cost of the stay can go from less than € 12,000 (for a third of the students) to more than € 30,000 (for a quarter of them).

► 5. Financial burden of studying abroad

► **As far as mandatory expenses are concerned (accommodation + food + transportation), a majority of students (55%) indicate that the costs are difficult to bear and 18% characterize them as very difficult.**

About 6 in 10 African students are concerned with the cost of living, 1 in 4 characterizing it “very difficult”. 62% of the responses from European students are mostly negative. Conversely, the majority of student from Asia-Oceania (62%) and from North America (59%) responded positively to this question. There is apparently no direct correlation between the standard of living in the students’ home country and their difficulties in meeting the financial commitment of a study-abroad program

► **School-related expenses (tuition fees, books, supplies, and other expenses directly related to education) are considered easy to bear** for 67% of the students; only 10% characterize them as “very difficult”.

Students from North Africa are the harshest critics when it comes to the cost of living and studying in France, but this is still a minority (46%).

NB: To be better prepared before coming to France, 36% enroll in language classes and about half of them choose French organizations (Alliances Françaises, French Institutes, other schools teaching French as a foreign language...) and they pay € 1203 on average, with some very high variations (22% <250 € / 13% > € 2,000).

► **Traveling between the country of origin and France is a significant expense.**

Depending on the distance, we estimate the average trip at € 771 but 20% of the students spend over € 1,000. Since students take between 2 and 3 trips home, we can put their average travel budget at € 2,000, 60% of which is spent on French transportation companies.

• **8 of every 10 students indicate that studying in France requires a significant financial effort.**

• **4 of every 10 students indicate that their families had to make major financial sacrifices.**

The image of international students as carefree tourists is misleading: our study shows that studying abroad is not a decision taken lightly and involves serious financial planning. Only 1 in 6 students see this financial aspect as of secondary importance, and even so, the family supporting them might not share this view ...

To have a better sense of this “financial sacrifice,” the students were asked to guess how many months of their parents’ income would cover the cost of their study programs in France. The figure speaks for itself: roughly **19.3 months on average**. If we think of this investment not only in terms of monthly income, but also in terms of saving capacity, a study-abroad program requires heavy financial sacrifices by many families. This is a huge financial burden for them.

This figure is validated by the fact that **87% of international students in France come from low and lower-middle-income countries.**¹

NB : A French equivalent for a € 19,927 budget would be 14 months of income for an average French family (€ 17,564). In terms of savings capacity (15%), a French family would have to save for 7 and a half years.

Several factors explain how international students are able to finance their stay:

• **Upper or middle class background:** 61% of them have a parent who went on to higher education, which means, especially in poorer countries, that they come from an upper or middle class family. Therefore, international student mobility is a socially selective process.

80% of the respondents indicate that relatives support them and give them € 10,600 on average, or about half of the total cost of their stay.

• **Access to grants:** grants are awarded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, local authorities (Territorial’s Collectivities), foreign governments, the European Union, private institutions (schools, businesses, foundations...), and only benefit a small minority of students.²

► Q. Would you say that your and/or your family’s financial effort was:

Sample: 3,715	%
It required a very significant financial sacrifice	41.8
It required a significant but not excessive financial sacrifice	41.1
It did not particularly require a financial sacrifice	17.1

1- 2014 IMF classification of countries by income in four categories : 33 in the high income group, 33 in the upper-middle-income group, 65 in the lower-middle-income group, 62 in the low-income group.

2- Scholarships vary greatly and evaluating their importance for the students’ budgets is pretty difficulty: it probably ranges from 10% to 15%.

According to our survey, scholarship students estimate that the total amount of their grants cover about half of their daily expenses.

- **Work in France:** 41% take up a job, even though only 45% of them think that they need it to live

and 36% do it to help their parents offset the cost of their education. On average, students earn € 6,975 when they work in France, that is about € 317 per month or € 132 on average for all international students.

► 6. Beyond direct economic benefit, why should France host international students?

International students have a number of additional impacts beyond direct inflows and outflows of money.

► A significant and long-term economic impact:

▶ IMPACT SURVEY AT END OF STAY: Do you think that your experience in France will have a positive impact on your desire...

	Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	Sub-total YES	I don't know	NO
to buy French food products	36.6%	36.5%	73.1%	12.2%	14.7%
to buy French luxury goods	20.9%	28.1%	49.0%	14.7%	36.3%
to buy French manufactured goods	30.1%	38.2%	68.3%	14.4%	17.3%
to work with French companies	39.3%	38.1%	77.4%	13.1%	9.5%
to work with French people	37.0%	39.6%	76.6%	11.5%	11.9%
to come back to France for tourism	58.5%	26.8%	85.3%	9.9%	4.9%

9 of every 10 students indicate that their study experience in France will have a positive impact on at least one of the options listed in the survey:

- Their stay had a positive impact on **their desire to buy** French products in the future (73%), French manufactured goods (68%), including luxury goods (49%).
- **Their experience also increased their interest in working with French companies or French nationals (77%)**
- Finally, **85% plan to return to France as tourists; 58% are certain that they will come back.**

► A very positive impact on the image of France and the French abroad:

the respondents are seven times more likely to leave France with a positive rather than negative view of the country, and four times more likely to have developed an improved perception of its people.

▶ Q. What impact did your experience have on...

	Very positive	Rather positive	Subtotal positive	No impact N/A	Negative
your image of France in general	22.2%	48.3%	70.5%	20.3%	9.2%
your image of French people	17.4%	45.8%	63.2%	22.8%	14.0%

► A significant and long-term impact on students' willingness to recommend France:

▶ RECOMMENDATION SURVEY: Do you think that your experience in France will encourage you to recommend France for the following categories:

	Yes, definitely	Yes, probably	Sub-total YES	I don't know	NO
Vacation	59.5%	27.3%	86.8%	10.0%	3.2%
Study	49.9%	31.6%	81.5%	9.8%	8.7%
Work	28.7%	37.6%	66.3%	14.8%	18.9%
Live	26.9%	34.0%	60.9%	15.1%	24.0%
Investment	16.5%	28.2%	44.7%	23.6%	31.6%

Only 1 out of 10 students leave France unwilling to recommend the country in at least one of five categories listed in the survey.

After their experience, few respondents would not recommend France as a place to live, visit, or study. 66% would recommend the country for work and 19% would not.

61% would recommend France as a *place to live* while 24% do not agree.

Investing in France is the only category that divides respondents. But, even then, 45% respond positively and 32% negatively.

► A significant and long-term impact on Francophonie:

▶ Q. What impact did living in France have on your language skills?

	%
Subtotal: Improved	66.4
Significantly improved	50.9
Slightly improved	15.4
No answer	8.9
Did not improve, because I was already proficient	23.8
Did not improve, I still do not speak well	0.9
Subtotal: No improvement	24.7

For 2 in 3 students, their stay gave them the opportunity to improve their French and half of them think that their language skills have drastically improved.

If we exclude those who already had a good grasp on the language before coming to France, only 1 out of 13 students saw absolutely no improvement.

Becoming fluent in French will probably prove to be a lifelong commitment since most students would like to work with French companies or French nationals.

► **Participation in local activities:**

Nearly 1 in 2 student regularly participate in college activities, cultural associations, and sports clubs.

<i>I participate...</i>	Regularly	Sometimes	Total Participate
In at least one social activity regularly	46.3%		
In sports and/or cultural activities at your institution	20.4%	40.2%	60.6%
In sports and/or cultural activities outside of your institution	14.2%	37.5%	51.7%
In social gatherings at your institution	17.8%	45.3%	63.1%
In cultural or sports events organized in your city	23.0%	50.9%	73.9%
In cultural or sports events organized in your region	14.1%	46.8%	60.9%

Sample: 4,241

► **A window to the world:**

▶ **Q. Through your interactions with French people during your stay, do you think that you...**

	Yes, I saw it	Yes, I think so	Total YES
Encouraged some French people to travel and see the world	32.5%	39.1%	71.6%
Encouraged French students to go and study abroad like you did	23.2%	38.2%	61.4%
Gave French people a better sense or a better knowledge of your country of origin	42.2%	37.9%	80.1%

The vast majority of students believe that they helped broaden the perspectives of their French friends and acquaintances, their understanding of world events, cultural differences, and the advantages of studying abroad.

To better understand this impact, we must remember that few French students decide to study abroad, even if employers put significant value on an international educational experience. About 62,000 out of the 2,093,000 of French students study abroad every year (that is 1 in 32 French students).¹

► **7. Do students think that this financial investment was profitable?**

1 in 2 students, before coming to France, listed their decision to invest in a study abroad program as a motivating factor, and only 1 in 6 listed it as the primary motivating factor. This response was true for students across all colleges and institutions but it rises to 60% among students who enrolled in an expensive program.

At the end of their stay, students overwhelmingly rate their experience as positive. While 18% of them had no opinion when this survey was conducted (including those who had recently arrived in France), **68% indicate that their experience in France was worth the investment and 14% are not sure. Based on survey results, the positive ratio is 80/20.**

1- Source UNESCO 2014 for the year 2012

Q. Do you think that your study abroad program was an investment for the future?

	%
Sub-total: worth it	68.3
Really worth it	22.3
Worth it	46.0
I don't know	17.6
Not really worth it	11.9
PaReally not worth it	2.3
Sub-total: not worth it	14.2

Sample: 4,241

While clearly positive, this ratio shows that studying abroad is such a financial burden that 1 in 5 students are not sure whether it was a good financial decision. However, the positive outweighs the negative and 9 out of 10 students are satisfied with their experience in France.¹

Key findings of the survey

An evaluation of the overall costs and benefits of international students shows that these students have a positive economic impact on many sectors of the French economy. These sectors were already aware of this contribution but the survey further confirms it.

What is more surprising, and what the study reveals, is that the expenses connected to international students are more than repaid immediately: these students spend in excess of **half billion euros while they are living in France.**

Public financial aids are immediately reinvested into the French economy and help create employment.

International students coming to France for higher education are excellent ambassadors. Each year more than 250,000 new students promote France in all areas (education, tourism, trade...). They also contribute **€ 4 billion to the French economy and 11,000 jobs to the tourism industry; 41% of them are doctoral students etc.**

The study confirms that the students develop a positive, lasting attachment to France. More than 3/4 of the students maintain strong ties with their host country and 94% (58% with certainty) consider joining the **network Alumni France, launched on November 2014.**

Finally, these students have an active social life. They help shape the local economy and they bring international perspectives to the French classrooms and are a **window to the world.**

Benefits end up outweighing costs. International students produce a net positive economic benefit for France, even in the short term. Attracting international students is an investment that will greatly benefit France in the future.

Other countries have reached the same conclusions and are competing to attract new foreign talents.

¹ - For example, quality of life, intercultural exchanges, discovering French culture, tourism etc. (Campus France Survey Nov. 2013)

Synthesis report of studies by other host countries

Awareness is growing in host countries

The governments of the top host countries have become increasingly aware of the importance of the economic impact generated by the growing international education market.

In the United States, NAFSA (Association of International Educators) conducts, since 2003, an annual survey on the economic benefits of international students based on various official sources. Many other countries have since started to follow suit: Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia... and even countries in mainland Europe that conduct more ad hoc research. Most of these surveys are conducted by public actors.

Campus France chose and analyzed five major studies. These five major studies cover ten countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and a German comparative study on six European countries.

Methodologies

All these surveys define international students as enrolled in tertiary education (Bachelor's or Master's) in a country that is not the one where they received secondary education. Methodologies vary from one survey to another, reminding us to be cautious of any comparative approach. For example, a year is defined as either a calendar or an academic year; some surveys are national while others focus on a region or a cluster of higher education institutions etc. The economic impact is usually measured by three indicators, taken in isolation or together:

- day to day expenses of the students during their stay
- tuition fees
- jobs generated directly or indirectly

Assessing the economic impact of international students is such a complex task that most research reports point out that their estimates of these economic benefits remain partial and likely fall short of reality.

What we learn from these studies

These studies estimated the contributions of international students very differently but they all considered these contributions as crucial for the commercial transactions and the economies of the host countries. This explains why the governments of these host countries are trying to measure more accurately the impact of this international mobility and want to attract a greater number of these

students who are seen as a source of revenue. This subject is under greater scrutiny since students now tend to spend more and more in the countries where they go to study. This upward trend can have two simultaneous causes: an increase in fees paid by students (for example, the sharp rise in tuition fees in the UK) and a gradual increase in the average purchasing power of students, a result of the expanding middle class in emerging countries.

Beyond the pleasure of discovering the world, students increasingly feel that studying abroad is a professional asset, especially with large international companies. International students in host countries not only generate direct financial benefits through day-to-day expenses and tuition fees but they are also a source of job creation, with the tens of thousands jobs generated.

In some countries, hosting international students is a source of funding for higher education institutions, often faced with the stagnation of public funding. In 2011, Australia estimated that the fees paid by international students finance 10% of the study expenses for domestic students.

Finally, beyond the expenses directly related to the daily lives of students, many studies stress the expanded impact of international students. Tourism, for example, generates benefits thanks to family and relatives visiting international students and taking the opportunity to discover the host countries.

However, these studies focus on the economic impact of international students and are less interested in other benefits, admittedly more difficult to quantify, but still significant, for the host countries. These other benefits, sometimes called soft power, give prominence to the broader value and benefits international students bring. Learning the language of the host country, understanding its culture, its history, its people, forming friendships etc. are all factors that build strong ties and loyalties. These experiences also help international students expand their knowledge and leverage their job prospects. Many of these students will become top executives, politicians, journalists, lobbyists, writers... If they have fond memories of the country where they did their study abroad programs, they turn into excellent ambassadors. These relationships can facilitate the commercial, cultural, and political bonds between the economic and political actors in the host and home countries.

For all the top host countries, hosting international students not only represent direct financial benefits in the short term, but also a source of economic revenue and diplomatic influence in the long term.

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Publishing director: Antoine Grassin, Directeur général

Editorial committee: Antoine Grassin, Directeur général; Béatrice Khaiat, Directrice générale adjointe; Anne Benoit, Directrice des Études et de la Communication; Didier Rayon, Responsable Études & Recherches; Sylvie Danon, Attachée de presse.

Data methodology and interpretation:

dider.rayon@campusfrance.org

Press Contact for Campus France:

sylvie.danon@campusfrance.org

Didier Rayon, Supervisor in the Research and Survey Department, oversaw this study from beginning to end, including its methodology, its interpretation, and its conclusions. He also wrote the Note with the help of Mathieu Oui, consultant, for the documentary section on other national surveys.

Translation by Vanessa Mongey for Campus France

This document is an extract from the report « *Au-delà de l'influence : l'apport économique des étudiants étrangers en France* » (Beyond Influence: economic benefits of international students in France). As the *Observatoire Campus France de la Mobilité étudiante* continue their research, a more detailed report will complement this study and provide more perspectives: type of institutions (Universities, Business schools, Engineering schools etc), sociodemographic profiles of international students, education levels, geographic origins etc.

Editing: Anne Benoit, anne.benoit@campusfrance.org

Formatting: Studio Boss - Paris

Printing and Distribution: Desbouis Grésil Imprimeur

Campus France

The French Agency for the promotion of higher education, international student services, and international mobility

28 rue de la Grange aux Belles

75010 Paris

www.campusfrance.org

Campus France Notes are printed on PEFC-FSC certified paper from responsibly managed forests.

November 2014

ISSN 2117-8348

Under the supervision of the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Higher Education, Campus France aims at promoting higher education worldwide, welcoming foreign students in France, and managing scholarship programs from foreign and French governments.

