

Workshop on “Preparing international students for their future careers”

Conference on Internationalisation of Higher Education CZEDUCON (18-20 November 2024, Prague)

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Workshop abstract

Following an overview of the EU policy objectives of the new Commission to attract international talent to Europe, the workshop spotlighted the German Academic Exchange Service’s (DAAD) *Campus Initiative for International Talents* ([link](#)), along with practical insights from an architect and lecturer on how international courses can better equip students for their professional and vocational careers. Participants then engaged in question-led small group discussions and shared their experiences and insights on the topic.

Outcomes of the participant discussions

Q1: What challenges do you face in terms of (labour market) integration of international students in your institution / country?

Language barriers

- International students often face challenges accessing companies where English is the working language for their role, but the rest of the organisation operates in the local language.
- For certain professions, legal regulations require advanced proficiency in the local language (e.g., in medicine).
- Employers in CZ sometimes assume that non-native English-speaking students lack the necessary language skills to perform a job in English.

Different capacities of higher education institutions

- Some HEIs, particularly newer ones, miss long-established connections with the local labour market, which reduces their capacities to liaise between students and companies.

Regional and sectoral disparities in job opportunities

- Job prospects for international students are higher in fields like IT and in metropolitan compared to smaller cities and rural areas.

Biases of employers

- There are sometimes biases related to the national origin of applicants, which has an impact on their success in accessing the labour market, and may be sceptical about hiring international talent.
- Some companies fear they could be held accountable if international students drop out of their studies after being employed by them.

Administrative and regulatory hurdles

- Companies are sometimes reluctant to hire international students due to the extra administrative work involved, such as processing visas and work permits.
- They are also sometimes reluctant to change established practices.
- Regulatory frameworks in some industries can also complicate the hiring process of international graduates.

Q2: What measures does your organisation / country take to support the labour market integration of international students?

Career guidance and application support in higher education institutions

- Some career centres provide tailored support to international students, including information about the national and local labour market and assistance with crafting HR-compliant CVs and application letters.

Holistic support incentivised through credited course for international students

- TU Ilmenau offers the credited course for international students Living and Studying in Ilmenau ([link](#)), covering a wide range of topics such as visa applications, counteracting harassment, and integration into the local community. The program involves collaboration with local stakeholders, including the Police Chief Superintendent, the mayor, and insurance representatives.

Supportive legal regulations for labour market access of international non-EU graduates in CZ

- Since 2019, the Czech Republic offers a 9-months business visa for job-seeking international students who graduate from a Czech university, providing them additional time to find a suitable employment.

Q3: What ideas do you have to further support the labour market integration of international students in higher education institutions?

Identifying, spreading and upscaling good practices

- Share successful initiatives and scale them up where relevant.

Fostering employer engagement

- Engage and encourage industry to hire international students and to recognise their potential.

Mentoring programmes throughout the cycle of accessing a study programme and finding a job

- Develop mentoring programmes where alumni assist international students throughout their journey from applying to HEIs to integrating into the labour market.

Enhancing university support and resources

- Expand social club offers to include English-language options, helping international students lacking local language proficiency to develop their soft skills.
- Increase career counselling services with exclusive offers tailored to the needs of international students.

Improving job fair accessibility and impact

- Include expert-led presentations at job fairs on the labour market needs, legal requirements, and how specific profiles of international student align with job opportunities.
- Create a dedicated section at job fairs for international students, potentially based on pre-matching to facilitate targeted interactions with employers.

Community integration

- Involve stakeholders such as local mayors and immigration offices in welcome sessions to showcase the community as a supportive and attractive place for international students to live and work.

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