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Abstract

Under the wave of globalization, the internationalization of higher education has become a development trend. The number of international students in a university is a direct reflection of the degree of internationalization of higher education in a country. Postgraduate education plays a pivotal role in tertiary education. As the starting point, this paper selects the entrance preconditions of the Austrian public universities for their master programs and analyses the existing disparities in requirements for European Union and non-European Union citizenship. Through comparison with other countries, the advantages and disadvantages of the entrance policies for higher education in Austria can be understood in many aspects.

The European Union System, development of the Bologna Process, and various cooperations among European countries facilitate academic mobility to a great extent. In contrast with those in the non-European or third world countries, Austrian public universities focus merely on the scholarship programs and cooperation projects (Musil & Reyhani, 2012). These limited cooperations have created barriers to the influx of third world students' mobility. Furthermore, the unnecessary entrance admission policy for the master program has complicated the application procedure as well. As a consequence, most of the international students enrolled in Austrian universities are from European regions.

The international students contribute not only to the host country's economy but also to the cultural and academic development. Especially the postgraduates could be the primary qualified workforce resource in the future. The selection process or policy for international students should, therefore, focus on the quality of applicants instead of their origins. Redundant admission prerequisites could hinder students' global mobility on the one hand and intensify the pressure of the admission department on the other side. Higher education reform is a process that requires time and experience to verify. Learning from other countries' policy achievements in the field of higher education enrollment and combining this with the local specific situation could be an effective way to achieve sustainable development.

Abstrakt

Im Zuge der Globalisierung ist die Internationalisierung der Hochschulbildung zu einem Entwicklungstrend geworden, und die Zahl der internationalen Studierenden spiegelt unmittelbar den Internationalisierungsgrad der Hochschulbildung in einem Land wider. Die postgraduale Ausbildung spielt eine zentrale Rolle in der Hochschulbildung. In dieser Arbeit werden die Zulassungsvoraussetzungen der österreichischen öffentlichen Universität für Masterstudiengänge als Ausgangspunkt ausgewählt und die bestehenden Unterschiede in Bezug auf die Zulassungsvoraussetzungen für die EU- und nicht-EU Bürgerschaften analysiert. Die Vor- und Nachteile der österreichischen Hochschulzugangspolitik können sich im Ländervergleich in vielen Aspekten widerspiegeln.

Das System der Europäischen Union, die Weiterentwicklung des Bologna-Prozesses und verschiedene Kooperationen zwischen europäischen Ländern erleichtern die akademische Mobilität in hohem Maße. Im Gegensatz zu den außereuropäischen Ländern oder Drittländern beteiligen sich österreichische öffentliche Universitäten derzeit lediglich an Stipendienprogrammen und Kooperationsprojekten (Musil & Reyhani, 2012). Diese begrenzten Kooperationen haben die Mobilität von Studierenden aus Drittstaaten behindert. Darüber hinaus hat die unnötige Zulassungsregelung für das Masterstudium das Bewerbungsverfahren intensiviert. Infolgedessen ist der größte Anteil der eingeschriebenen internationalen Studierenden an österreichischen Universitäten aus europäischen Regionen.

Die internationalen Studierenden tragen nicht nur zur Wirtschaft des Gastlandes bei, sondern auch zur kulturellen und akademischen Entwicklung. Insbesondere die Postgraduierten könnten in Zukunft auch primär qualifizierte Arbeitskräfte sein. Das Auswahlverfahren oder die Auswahlpolitik für internationale Studierende sollte sich auf die Qualität der Bewerber und nicht auf deren Herkunft konzentrieren. Redundante Zulassungsvoraussetzungen könnten einerseits die weltweite Mobilität der Studierenden beeinträchtigen und andererseits den Druck der Zulassungsabteilung erhöhen. Die Reform der Hochschulbildung ist ein Prozess, dessen Überprüfung Zeit und Erfahrung erfordert. Aus den politischen Errungenschaften anderer Länder im Bereich der Hochschulrekrutierung zu lernen und sich mit der örtlichen spezifischen Situation zu verbinden, könnte ein wirksamer Weg sein, um eine nachhaltige Entwicklung zu erreichen.

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1 Introduction

The topic of the master thesis is concerned with the prerequisites for the master program for EU (European Union) /EEA (European Economic Area) students and non-EU/EEA students at Austrian public universities.¹ In the context of internationalization, educational communication and exchange between countries are becoming frequent and interactive. A highly developed digital environment and closely connected global cooperation make the transnational study much more convenient. According to Statistic Austria, the total number of international students in Austrian public universities is 76.265, which accounts for almost 27% total student population.

The first step for a student to study abroad is to fulfill the admission requirements. On the application page for master programs at the Vienna University and the Vienna University of Economics and Business, it says: “At the University of Vienna, non-EU/EEA citizens with a bachelor degree from a non-EU/EEA country may only study the same degree program which they are allowed to study in the country that issued their degree” (Admission master other university, n.d.). What should be noticed in this sentence is the difference between EU/EEA - and non-EU/EEA citizens in terms of the prerequisites for the master program in these two universities. Additionally, there is a special decree, named “certain groups of persons”, which means that “the members of the specific groups are exempted from the special university entrance qualification”.² However, not all non-EU/EEA students can fulfill these conditions.

My master thesis is based on the above issue and intends to discuss and analyze the reasons for these existing differences and their potential influences on non-EU/EEA students. Furthermore, the relationship between internationalization and higher education will be illustrated. Although one of the most critical indicators for internationalization at universities is the total number of foreign students (Wächter, 2005, p. 24), a study with the subject “Die Wissensbilanzierung an österreichischen Universitäten” points out that more than half of Austrian universities are unable to provide all the statutory data (Schröder & Sehl, 2010, p. 112). The percentage of foreign students at Austrian universities is not only an indicator of openness but also for competence and thus of relevance for competition policy (Aichinger & Gaunerstorfer, 2005, p. 89). Hence, another objective of the thesis is to analyze, if

¹ The Austrian higher education industry includes mainly three types: Universities, *Fachhochschulen*, and colleges of Art and Music. This paper focus on the University sector.

² Decree of certain groups of persons. Retrieved July 20, 2019 from: <https://slw.univie.ac.at/en/studying/decreed-of-admission-of-certain-groups-of-persons/#c152704>

those individual requirements could handicap Austria's openness and further have a negative impact on education.

1.1 Outline

This paper consists of two parts: the theoretical part and the empirical part. The tangible differences in admission policy at the Austrian public university for EU- and non-EU country will be introduced. Additionally, the explanation of the EU system establishment, as well as the origins of the 'third country' term, can be found in the second chapter. The following two sections will focus on the legislation and cooperation between Austria and other countries, including European and other countries. These three chapters form the theoretical foundation for understanding the frictionless student mobility within the EU. Asian international students play a pivotal role, as they account for more than 50% of the whole international student population enrolled abroad (UNESCO, 2013). According to the OECD statistics, China was the most extensive international student exporting country (ibid.). This is why the fifth chapter describes Chinese students' situation, where the readers will be informed about the additional admission requirements for Chinese applicants, like the APS (Akademische Prüfstelle) and 'besondere Universitätsreife'. The last chapter of the theoretical part emphasizes the relationship between the host country's development and international students. By comparing four countries in terms of their admission policy for master's programs at public universities, similarities, differences, advantages, and disadvantages of the Austrian admission system are revealed. In the empirical part, the second researching question of the paper, the influence of the Austrian entrance policy to a master's program on students and Austria itself, will be answered through the collection of interviews.

1.2 Motivation

I came to acknowledge the admission requirements of the University of Vienna and Vienna University of Economics and Business when I was trying to apply for a master's program six years ago. At that time, I had already received my bachelor's degree in China but did not attend any Chinese post-graduate entrance examination. Thus, I was unable to prove my qualifications for further studies in a master's program in China.

Under these two universities' application stipulations,³ I did not get any opportunity for a master's program offer. Until three years ago, I realized that I could fulfill the special decree "certain groups of persons" and applied again. After half a year of verification, rejection, appeal, and further verification processes, I got permission to study International Development⁴ at Vienna University. During studying and exchanging with other foreign students, I noticed that they had had a similar experience with the admission process.

Furthermore, the comments on this university policy are usually controversial. Hence, I decided to combine my interests and other students' experiences and to try to analyze the reason for the particular prerequisites for Non-EU/EEA students. Hopefully, my research results can provide more detailed information and suggestions regarding application requirements for Non-EU students.

1.3 Methodical Approach

I applied a qualitative research method for this study. To prevent the research topic from digression, but to keep the interview flexible, I deployed semi-structured interviews combined with content-focused questions for my research. Five interviews were held, including three of the interviewees from China and another two from Japan and Iran. All the necessary personal information of the interviewees, for instance, age, gender, nationality, or their current majors, has been accumulated at first. Moreover, all the interviews are anonymized. Through semi-structured interviews, a unique perspective and different experiences were revealed. The reader can learn from the interviews, students' comment on this university admission policy, and their experiences during the application period.

To collect professional and the most relevant information on my topic, two expert-interviews were also conducted in my study. The interviewees work at the admission department for Austrian public universities. From their expert opinion, information on more specific and in-depth explanations as well as the influences on students of resulting from the individual requirements could be expected.

³ Ibid.1

⁴ The original name of the major in German named "Internationale Entwicklung".

Theoretical Part Literature Review

2 The European Union and the Non-EU countries

Since the difference of application prerequisites is categorized by countries, namely, by the EU and the non-EU countries, it is essential to analyze the European Union's system first. Except for the differences mentioned above, another point that will be discussed is the general rule for tuition fees, which is distinguished by geographical location. To study at the University of Vienna, students from the 'third countries' need to pay a fee of 726,72 Euro plus the Students' Union fee of 20,20 Euro per semester.⁵ Therefore, the relevant concepts of 'third countries', including its definition and the impact of this definition will be illustrated.

2.1 The European Union System

The European Union was officially founded on November 1, 1993. It has grown from six founding members, namely Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg, to now 28 member states. The foundation of the EU facilitates the development of EU member states in terms of the economy, politics, and culture. It is the establishment of the EU that provides a policy background for the classification of Austrian's present university admission regulations.⁶ Hence, this part will introduce the history of the EU's integration briefly and its relevant policy, which could help us to understand the Austrian University Law.

Although the EU is officially only about 26 years old, its history goes back to at least the 14th century. The aim of earlier efforts to form unions during that time was to stabilize existing orders of domination but not to realize ideal goals (Pollak & Slominski, 2012, p. 13). After the First World War, a large number of casualties caused by the war in Europa made the ideas of European integration gradually stronger. During the 1930s, "fascism seemed unstoppable in Germany, Spain, and the faltering democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, having already taken root in Italy" (Dinan, 2004, p. 4). Hence, during the Second World War, plans for a post-war order were made mainly

⁵ The original statement in German: "Ordentliche Studierende aus einem **Drittstaat** zahlen ab dem Sommersemester 2018 pro Semester 726,72 Euro plus 20,20 Euro ÖH-Beitrag, außer sie fallen unter eine der nachfolgenden Ausnahmen". Retrieved July 20, 2019 from:

<https://slw.univie.ac.at/studieren/studienbeitrag/hoehoe-nicht-euewr-buergerinnen/>

⁶ This regulation refers to Austrian university admission prerequisites are categorized by EU/EEA citizens and non-EU/EEA citizens.

with the aim of anti-fascist resistance groups and exile governments (Pollak & Slominski, 2012). After the Second World War, Europe was in an almost hopeless circumstance, even the most necessary supplies for the population could not be guaranteed (ibid.). Under the pressure of being economically dependent on the United States, and the fear of Soviet expansion, Winston Churchill pleaded in a speech at the University of Zurich for the creation of a sort of “United States of Europe”, which was regarded as the first active step towards the integration of EU (ibid., p. 14). However, this initiative had no chance to be accepted in the context of an American dominated western Europe and a Soviet-dominated eastern Europe. On May 9, 1950, French foreign minister Robert Schuman proposed the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which came into force on July 23, 1952 (ibid.). The six founding countries (Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands) established common coal and steel markets. Behind the economic integration, it was a political goal. The objective was to ensure the peace between the victorious and defeated powers after the Second World War and unite them.

Moreover, enormous economic advantages benefited from the ECSC, including the living and housing situation of workers in the steel and coal regions as well as trade between the six founding states, which soon surpassed the trade with third countries by far (ibid., p. 24). On March 25, 1957, contracts for the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) were signed in Rome by the foreign ministers of the six founding countries. The European Community has established a broader common market covering goods and services. This common economic space was based on the principles of ‘four freedoms’, namely the free movement of goods, persons, services, and capital. It was characterized by the freedom of customs duty in trade between member states and the establishment of a common customs tariff for third countries (ibid., p. 28). The great success of the community prompted Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom to join in 1973. The member states expanded from six to nine countries. The collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 brought significant changes to the political landscape in Europe. In October 1990, Germany reunified, and the countries of central and eastern Europe, which were controlled by the Soviet Union, adopted a democratic government. Simultaneously, the EEC member states negotiated a new treaty, the Maastricht Treaty, which became effective on November 1, 1993. It has promoted intergovernmental cooperation in the

areas of diplomacy and internal security and created the European Union (Fontaine, 2010, p. 14). Until today, the EU has undergone six expansions⁷ and thus become a national consortium of 27 member states, which has the most influential economic power and the highest degree of integration in the world.

The impact of the establishment of the European Union on member states is multifaceted. It has strengthened the economic relations between European countries, enhanced the EU's external economic competitiveness, and raised the level of international economic cooperation, which consequently made the global economic competition more intense. On the political level, the influence of EU countries in the world has been enhanced as well. The formation and development of the world's diversification trend have been increased, which is conducive to curbing the United States' single-world plot.

Stefan Griller (Griller, 1997, pp. 57-58) claimed that an international organization could be called supra-nation, when it has at least two of the following characteristics: lawmaking with penetration effectively, decision making by majorities, independent legislative bodies or, own legal jurisdiction. Since the EU fulfills all the above features, its supra nationality is not only indisputable but also unique compared to other international organizations (Pollak & Slominski, 2012, p. 113). Article 18 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) postulates that: "within the scope of application of the Treaties, and without prejudice to any special provisions contained therein, any discrimination on the grounds of nationality shall be prohibited" (CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2012). Moreover, according to Article 165 of TFEU, Union action shall be aimed at encouraging the mobility of students and teachers, by supporting among other things, the academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study (ibid.). Cultural and linguistic diversity is preserved while promoting the integration of national cultures. European countries have jointly established a higher education sector in Europe through the Bologna process. This enables all university courses in the member states will be mutually recognized, including undergraduate, graduate, and

⁷ Greece joined the Community in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986; Austria, Finland, and Sweden joined the European Union in 1995; In the mid-1990s, it entered the most massive expansion preparation in the history of the European Union. Six former Soviets Countries in the United Control Region (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), three former Soviet Union Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania); a Slovenia belonging to the former Slavic Republic and two Mediterranean countries (Sepu Road) Both Sri Lanka and Malta) applied for membership (Fontaine, 2010).

doctoral courses (Fontaine, 2010, p. 55). Hence, this is one of the reasons for the prerequisite for EU citizens to enroll in a master's program at Austrian public universities.

2.2 The 'Third Countries'

The division of countries can be traced back to the modernization theory. This theory refers to "a body of theory that became prominent in the 1950s and 1960s concerning understanding issues of economic and social development and in creating policies that would assist economic and social transitions in poorer countries" (Gwynne, n.d.). Modernization theory played a crucial role in the postwar period and described how a modern society should look like (Klinger, 2017). In this context, it is essential to introduce the historical background briefly. After World War II, the United States economy and military strength have expanded and become the dominant power in the capitalist world. The political and military force of the Soviet Union gradually grew due to the victory of the anti-fascist war, thereby becoming the only country in the world that could compete with the United States. The differences and confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union regarding social systems, ideologies, and values intensified. The United States, Western Europe, and their allies became known as the 'First World', and the world's less developed countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia became the so-called 'Third World' (Gwynne, n.d.). The modernization theory divided the global system into two parts, namely into "centers of modern progress and peripheries of traditional backwardness", considering that the US or the western industrialized countries as models for development, which should be achieved by other countries (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 104). One of the most representative social scientists Walt Whitman Rostow argued that according to the analysis of industrialized countries' (the First World countries) history, every economic society should experience five stages: "the traditional society; the preconditions for take-off; the take-off; the drive to maturity; the age of high mass consumption" (Rostow, 1959, p. 1). Talcott Parson illustrated that "the democratic association with elective leadership and fully enfranchised membership" is "a necessary prerequisite for the development", while in contrast, "the communist totalitarian organization will probably not fully match "democracy" in political and integrative capacity in the long run" (Parsons, 1964, pp.

353-356). Hence, the modernization theory would be labeled “anti-communist” (Klinger, 2017, p. 697).

One of the major influences of the classic modernization theory is the emergence of global division in ‘the West’ and ‘the Rest’, or ‘the First World’ and ‘the Third World’. ‘The West’ stands for a society that is described as developed, industrialized, urban, capitalistic, secularized, and modern (Hall, 1994, p. 138). This society was able to provide knowledge and analyze the formation of a particular pattern of thought and language, which were the reasons for the European society to be considered of the most advanced community on earth (Hall, 1994, pp. 139-140). Thus, Europeans were seen as the culmination of human achievement (ibid.). Later, the modernization theory was criticized by many scientists. For instance, Walter D. Mignolo argued ‘modernity’ “is a concept inextricably connected with the geopolitics and body-politics of the knowledge of white European and North Atlantic males. ‘Modernity’, in other words, is not the natural unfolding of world history, but the local narrative of the Eurocentric worldview” (Mignolo, 2008, p. 13).

Moreover, Stuart Hall confirmed the value of ‘the Third World’. Without ‘the Rest’, ‘the West’ would not have been recognized as the culmination of human history, ‘the Third World’ was, therefore, crucial for the formation of the western enlightenment (Hall, 1994, pp. 173-174). Although the modernization theory is controversial, it provided substantial theoretical support for policymakers. Nowadays, the so-called ‘third countries’ mainly refer to developing countries in the world.

2.3 Different Prerequisites for EU/EEA Students and Non-EU/EEA Students

In this part, the consequences of different prerequisites for EU/EEA - and non-EU/EEA students will be discussed through an expatriation of these special requirements.

2.3.1 Concrete Requirements for Non-EU/EEA Citizens

(1) Admission Preconditions

The website of the University of Vienna concerning the admission procedure to a master's program for students with a certificate from another university indicates clearly the requirements. At one instance the site states, “At the University of Vienna, non-EU/EEA citizens with a bachelor degree from a non-EU/EEA country may only study

the same degree program which they are allowed to study in the country that issued their bachelor degree (= the special university entrance qualification, “admission statement”).⁸ By clicking on the link “special university entrance qualification”, several exemptions could be found among others that students from non-EU/EEA countries do not need to provide this “admission statement”.⁹ (See Figure 1)

Exemptions of the special university entrance qualification

You do not have to provide a certificate of special university entrance qualification if one of the following exemptions applies to you:

- You hold citizenship/a secondary school leaving certificate from a country of the EU/EEA or Switzerland.
- You hold a completed degree from an at least three-year postsecondary degree programme from a country of the EU/EEA or Switzerland and apply for a bachelor or master programme.
- You are among the persons mentioned in the “[decree of certain groups of persons](#).”
- You have completed a bachelor programme in the USA and apply for a bachelor or master programme.
- You hold a completed degree from an at least three-year postsecondary degree programme from a non-EU/EA country AND have completed a master programme in a country of the EU/EEA or Switzerland and apply for a master programme.
- You hold a secondary school leaving certificate or a completed degree from an at least three-year postsecondary degree programme from Peru.

Figure 1: Exemptions of the special university entrance qualification at the University of Vienna.

Similar information can be found on the website of Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU): “If relevant and required: proof of special university entrance qualification (Studienplatznachweis) or proof that the ordinance governing admission of ‘Personengruppenverordnung’ (certain groups of potential students)”¹⁰. This also includes additional exemptions of this proof. (See Figure 2)

Proof of special university entrance qualification is not required for:

- Citizens of EU and EEA countries
- Non-EU/EEA citizens who completed their relevant previous degree program in an EU/EEA member state
- Applicants who belong to one of the groups specified in the [ordinance governing admission of certain groups of potential students \(Personengruppenverordnung\)](#)

Figure 1: Exemptions of the special university entrance qualification at WU.

⁸ The special university entrance qualification, “admission statement” refers to Nachweis der besonderen Universitätsreife, “Studienplatznachweis” in German. Retrieved July 24, 2019 from: <https://slw.univie.ac.at/en/studying/admission-master-other-university/>

⁹ Exemptions of the special university entrance qualification. Retrieved July 24, 2019 from: <https://slw.univie.ac.at/en/studying/special-university-entrance-qualification/>

¹⁰ Admission of WU. Master’s Program, example selection of major in Finanzwirtschaft und Rechnungswesen, non-Austrian degree program. Retrieved July 24, 2019 from: https://www.wu.ac.at/en/programs/application-and-admission/next-steps?tx_wuapplicationguide_guide%5Bcountry%5D=0&tx_wuapplicationguide_guide%5Bcourse%5D=31&tx_wuapplicationguide_guide%5Brequirement%5D=16&tx_wuapplicationguide_guide%5Bstep%5D=3&tx_wuapplicationguide_guide%5Btype%5D=2&cHash=d71fdb909cb010da59773dbf84e72df

Both universities state the exemption “certain groups of potential students”. As long as students meet one of the requirements,¹¹ and submit relevant documents to prove they belong to this certain group, even if they come from non-EU/EEA countries, this proof of special university entrance qualification is not necessary. These individual requirements, including the exemptions, facilitate some students from non-EU/EEA countries the university entrance while it increased bureaucratic effort, which may lead to a longer inspection period.

Additionally, the bachelor certificate and transcript of non-EU/EEA countries should be legalized by the issuing state, which is named in German “vorgeschriebene Beglaubigungen”.¹² There are three types of legalization, namely apostille, full legalization, and translation, which depend on the country of the issuing document.¹³ For full legalization of materials, the student needs validation of the documents from their national Ministry of Education or Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or in some countries of the Ministry of Justice).¹⁴ This validation needs then to be validated by the Austrian representative authority (embassy or consulate) additional. Applicants with documents from China (People's Republic) must submit, a confirmation from the Academic Testing Center (APS¹⁵) of the German Embassy in Beijing. The type of legalization depends on the documents issuing country, including apostille, full legalization, or translation.¹⁶ This renders the verification process more complicated, especially for applicants from China (People's Republic), Iran, or Indonesia, as these countries are neither a member state of “Haager Beglaubigungsabkommen”, nor have a bilateral agreement with Austria. In this situation, the duration of documents' full legalization for those countries

¹¹ Every case is combined with relevant documents. For instance, persons, who have had their main place of residence in Austria during five consecutive years or who are legally entitled to maintenance towards a family member (parent, husband/wife, registered partner) has to current confirmation of the main place of residence in Austria, excerpt of insurance details and etc. Retrieved July 24, 2019 from: <https://slw.univie.ac.at/en/studying/decreed-of-admission-of-certain-groups-of-persons/#c152704> Or persons entitled to reside in Austria pursuant of the Austrian Asylum Act have to provide Asylum identity card or official notification of refugee status. Retrieved July 24, 2019 from:

<https://www.wu.ac.at/en/programs/application-and-admission/persgrvo>

¹² Required documents at University of Vienna. Retrieved July 24, 2019 from:

<https://slw.univie.ac.at/studieren/zulassung-zum-masterstudium-mit-abschluss-einer-anderen-universitaet/>

¹³ Legalization and translation Retrieved July 24, 2019 from:

<https://slw.univie.ac.at/en/studying/legalisation/>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ APS refers to Akademische Prüfungsstelle in German, comes from Germany initially, Austria took part in in 2006. More details will be discussed in the 5th chapter.

¹⁶ See footnote 14.

has no guarantee and varies from country to country, even though the apostille can usually be obtained within 24 hours at the Regional Court of Law.¹⁷

(2) Tuition Fee

In general terms, the tuition fee is € 363.36 per semester and € 726.72 per semester for third-country nationals. All students of Austrian public universities, regardless of their citizenship, need to pay € 20.20 for Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft (ÖH) fee. When it comes to schools specifically, a more detailed division is made. For instance, an EU/EEA/CH citizen only needs to pay the ÖH fee € 20.20 for the minimum duration of the study program and two additional semesters of tolerance (exemption for a limited period¹⁸). People from certain poor third countries¹⁹ (general exemption) can enjoy the same welfare as EU/Austrian citizens. Students from other regions have to pay the highest tuition fee of € 726.72 (plus ÖH fee). According to Article 91 of Österreichisches Universitätsgesetz 2002, further provisions regarding the collection of tuition fees are to be determined by the ordinance of the Federal Minister. Hence, the tuition fees of universities could be different in other federal states. Eight Austrian universities that have a large number of students are selected for showing the difference between universities in terms of the tuition fee regulation.

University	Exemption for a Limited Period	General Exemption	Other Countries
Universität Wien	√	√	√
Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien	√	√	√
Technische Universität Wien	√	√	√

¹⁷ nhp (notare huppmann, poindl, pfaffenberger & partner): Beglaubigung. Retrieved July 25, 2019 from: <http://www.nhp.at/de/beglaubigungen/>

¹⁸ Exemption for a Limited Period: refers to Austrian/EU/EEA/Switzerland citizens; recognized refugees; people granted subsidiary protection; people with settlement permits; students belong to Personengruppen-Verordnung; citizen of Turkey if they currently live with the parents and those are or were properly employed in Austria.

¹⁹ Exemption of tuition fee for third-country students apply for the students who participate in mobility programs, for recognized refugees and for the origins of students where there are respective mutual agreements, also for who are citizens of certain poor countries (Musil & Reyhani, 2012, p. 27). More details see: Amount of the tuition fee/Students' Union fee non-EU/EEA/CH citizens – Exception 1: Students from developing countries. Retrieved December 10, 2019 from: <https://slw.univie.ac.at/en/studying/tuition-fee/amount-non-eueeach-citizens/>

Medizinische Universität Wien	√	√	√
Universität für Bodenkultur Wien	√	√	√
Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien	√	×	√
Universität Salzburg	√	×	√
Universität Graz	√	Valid from summer semester 2020	√

Figure 3: Tuition fees regulation in different Austrian public universities

From Figure 3, we can see a noticeable difference of €20.20 to €745.92 in tuition fees between EU (including Switzerland) - and third countries citizens. Furthermore, the majority of Austrian public universities have made or will make (like Universität Graz) another division within the third country-category dividing developing countries and other third countries.

2.3.2 Influence of Special Prerequisites

In this part, I will try to explain the influences of the precise requirements for non-EU/EEA citizens.

Due to individual prerequisites and complicated bureaucratic preparations for the application process, the first influence on the non-EU/EEA students is time costs. For example, the preparation for document legalization and translation in German or English, and the APS confirmation for Chinese applicants can take several weeks or even months. From online upload over an interview appointment to the final confirmation of the institution, the duration of the verification process is hard to estimate. Tristan Aichinger and Peter Gaunerstorfer pointed out that the procedure at the Austrian representation authorities often leads to wrong assessments and doubts regarding the qualification of the applicants (Aichinger & Gaunerstorfer, 2005, p. 102). This makes the procedural time hardly estimable so that timely entry at the beginning of the semester is by no means guaranteed (ibid.). Notably, at university like the WU,

the enrollment for the master's program in German is only held once a year. Since the students from most non-EU/EEA countries need visas, delay of any verification procedure may cause an increase in time costs. What comes with it are high financial expenses and mental pressure. In one of the expert interviews, the interviewee explained the difficulties for students from 'third countries' as follows,

Es ist schwieriger für die Studenten aus dritten Ländern in Österreich zu studieren als jemand, der in Deutschland sein Bachelor Zeugnis gemacht hat. Diese Personen sind natürlich einfacher. Aber das ist im Universitätsgesetz so geregelt. Da können wir nicht anders als dieses Gesetz auszuführen. Das ist schwieriger natürlich. Der in Deutschland sein Bachelor Studium gemacht hat, muss das Bachelorzeugnis nicht beglaubigen lassen. Dann kann man das Zeugnis einfach auf u:space hochladen. Wir schauen uns an und schicken den der Programmleitung, die überprüft die inhaltliche Gleichwertigkeit. Wenn es in Ordnung ist, ist es ein positiver Zulassungsbescheid. Für die dritten Ländern Studenten, müssen Sie zuerst alle Unterlagen beglaubigen lassen, müssen übersetzen lassen. Das kostet doch viel Geld. Der muss nachweisen, dass die Deutsch Kenntnisse auf A2 Niveau sind und er muss einen Sprachtest machen. Das kostet auch Geld. Dann muss er sich bemühen, dass der Nachweis der besonderen Universitätsreife. Das heißt, er muss ein Hochschulauftahmetest machen in seinem Land. Dann erst wenn die alle Dokumente hat, kann der Antrag auf Zulassung gestellt werden. Das heißt es sind sehr viele Vorbereitungen erforderlich. Meistens wird es wahrscheinlich zwischen 6 Monate und 1 Jahr sein, die man benötigt, damit man alle Dokumente in einem schönen Paket hat, um dann den Antrag vollständig einreichen zu können. (Interviewee 1)

Moreover, interviewee 1, as an expert, gave an apparent comparison between the EU and non-EU students' application process duration. For a student from Germany, if he/she can finish a bachelor's degree in August or September, the student can begin studying in October. However, for students from the 'third country', even after they received an offer, application for a visa would take another 4, 5, 6 months. For example, a student from Iran waited nine months until he got an appointment at the Austrian Embassy (Interviewee 1). Another problem was pointed out by students concerned. They stated that although the entire state administration in Austria is only exercised based on the laws, there is not enough transparency in foreign law (Aichinger & Gaunerstorfer, 2005, p. 101).

Furthermore, why the foreign law authority in a federal state makes other demands on different international students is also difficult to understand or explain to consulting organizations (ibid., p. 102). The third problem for students from 'third countries' is the availability of the so-called 'special university entrance qualification'. Due to political and religious reasons, the effort for obtaining this qualification in the homeland is sometimes futile (ibid., p. 103). In terms of the shown differences in tuition fees for EU/EEA - and non-EU/EEA citizens, the lack of transparency and the uncertainty among international students have massively affected Austria as a location for studying

(ibid., p. 104).²⁰ For international students from ‘the third countries’, these policies are hardly considered equal for all applicants.

Although “The European Year against Racism” was declared by the EU in 1997, the institutionalized racist practices towards migrants, refugees, and members of minorities are considered little (Ressler & Krenn, 1997). Dictionaries of Sociology define the definition of institutional discrimination as: “discriminatory policies and practices favorable to a dominant group and unfavorable to another group that is systematically embedded in the existing structure of society in the form of norms” (Institutional discrimination definition, n.d.). Institutionalized discrimination often occurs within the governmental, religious, and educational system. It represents prejudice and denies equality to specific groups in society. The sufferer of institutionalized discrimination is not just an individual discriminatory person, but an entire organization which makes this form of discrimination even more dangerous (Borkar, 2017).

Conclusion

This section focuses mainly on the historical background of the existential differences between EU- and non-EU citizens in the field of preconditions for master programs’ at Austrian public universities. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the establishment of the EU system, in which all member states have certain obligations in this issue. Also, the definition of ‘Third Countries’ from a scientific aspect and its influences on the later understanding of countries’ classification were analyzed. Last but not least, the impacts of particular prerequisites on EU- and non-EU students are critically inspected. In the following part, I will make a summary of related regulations and agreements in the legal dimension.

²⁰ Compare with the statistics in chapter 6.

3 Legislation and Agreements of Austria Tertiary Education System

This section consists of two main parts, the Austrian University Law 2002 and several Exchange Programs/Projects between EU countries.

3.1 Austrian University Act (2002)

The most crucial change in higher education policy in the 2000s was the reform of university governance through the University Act (2002), which separated universities from state sovereignty and constituted them as public companies (Wroblewski & Pechar, 2011, p. 6). Specific articles in the Austrian University Act (2002), which are closely connected to the current entrance preconditions, can be found very clearly.

According to Article 63, six preconditions need to be fulfilled for an admission to ordinary studies. The second one of them is “die besondere Universitätsreife²¹ für das gewählte Studium” (Kasparovsky, 2013, p. 76),

Zusätzlich zur allgemeinen Universitätsreife ist die Erfüllung der studienspezifischen Zulassungsvoraussetzungen einschließlich des Rechts zur unmittelbaren Zulassung zum Studium nachzuweisen, die im Ausstellungsstaat der Urkunde, mit der die allgemeine Universitätsreife nachgewiesen wird, bestehen. (ibid., p. 83)

Additionally, there is a footnote with further explanation: “Diese Bestimmung ist auf Antragsteller und Antragstellerinnen mit Staatsangehörigkeit eines EU-Staates nicht anzuwenden”(ibid., p. 83). This article explains why EU citizens/students do not need to provide ‘*besondere Universitätsreife*’.

In terms of another exemption of ‘*besondere Universitätsreife*’ is stated in the Article 63, Section (4),

Die Bundesministerin oder der Bundesminister ist berechtigt, durch Verordnung Personengruppen festzulegen, deren Reifezeugnis auf Grund deren besonderer persönlicher Nahebeziehungen zu Österreich oder deren Tätigkeit im Auftrag der Republik Österreich für die Ermittlung des Vorliegens der besonderen Universitätsreife als in Österreich ausgestellt gilt. (ibid., p. 84)

The *Österreichisches Universitätsgesetz 2002*, Article 61, Section (3), Subsection 4 gives a definition of ‘Personengruppen’,

²¹ ‘besondere Universitätsreife’ = special university entrance qualification.

Personengruppen, welche die Bundesministerin oder der Bundesminister auf Grund deren besonderer persönlicher Nahebeziehungen zu Österreich oder deren Tätigkeit im Auftrag der Republik Österreich durch Verordnung 205 festlegt. (Kasparovsky, 2013, p. 75)

The above-listed articles are the most relevant laws for this thesis's discussion topic.

3.2 Austrian Convention and Multilateral Cooperation Program with other Countries

Frictionless student mobility within the EU is not only possible thanks to legal regulations but also to many reciprocal agreements between the EU-Members. These cooperations facilitate not only educational exchange between member states but also benefit many European countries that not belong to the EU. Moreover, in section 3.2.5, I will introduce cooperations between Austria and non-European countries in order to understand the main difference of Austria policies for student mobility between European and non-European countries.

3.2.1 The Lisbon Recognition Convention

The Council of Europe and UNESCO initiated the Lisbon Recognition Convention in Lisbon April 8-11, 1997, later in 1999, it became effective (OeAD, 2016). It is a convention on the recognition of qualifications in higher education among the EU member states. As of August 2016, the Lisbon Recognition Convention has 53 members, when the initial monitoring of the implementation was carried out (ibid.). The main statements of this Convention are the following (Council of Europe, 2014):

- “Holders of qualifications issued in one country shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another country,
- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, color, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin,
- Each country shall recognize qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought,
- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another country shall have one or more of the following consequences:

- access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
- The use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought;
- Besides, recognition may facilitate access to the labor market” (Council of Europe, 2014).

Austria participates actively in this multilateral convention from its recommendations to implementation in order to use the existing recognition tools to improve academic mobility (Wadsack & Kasparovsky, 2007, p. 39).

3.2.2 EU-Education Program for Lifelong Learning

On January 1, 2007, the Lifelong Learning Program was launched. With a budget of nearly seven billion euros, this European education program supported the European exchange of teachers and learners of all ages from 2007 to 2013, as well as cooperations between educational institutions (SCHNEIDER, 2007). The Lifelong Learning Program brought the previous programs Socrates and LEONARDO DA VINCI under one conventional roof, which led to the individual programs COMENIUS (school education), ERASMUS ²² (higher education), LEONARDO DA VINCI (vocational training), and GRUNDTVIG (adult education) (ibid.).

The Lifelong Learning Program has the following objectives:

- “developing the European dimension of general education at all levels,
- facilitating broad transnational access to education in Europe and promoting equal opportunities in all areas of education,
- promoting cooperation and mobility in education, in particular by encouraging exchanges between educational institutions,
- enhance the exchange of information and support the removal of existing obstacles,
- internships for apprentices, pupils, students, young workers, graduates and trainers in any of the 30 European countries participating in the program” (Wadsack & Kasparovsky, 2007, pp. 39-40),

²² More details see chapter 5.2.1.

- “to strengthen the role of lifelong learning in developing European citizenship based on raising awareness and respect for human rights and democracy, and in promoting tolerance and respect for other people and cultures,
- to enable the participation of people of all ages and lifelong learning regardless of their origin” (SCHNEIDER, 2007).

The program contributes to the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities for women and men and equal opportunities for people with disabilities and is actively involved in the fight against social exclusion, racism, and xenophobia (Wadsack & Kasparovsky, 2007, p. 40).

3.2.3 Cooperation with Central- and Eastern Europe

The cooperation between Austrian, central- and eastern European universities is multifarious and has been financially supported by the BMBWF for many years (ibid.). Among the various cooperation projects, the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS) plays an active role in promoting regional cooperation. As regional cooperation between central and eastern European countries cannot be replaced by cooperation at the European level, many historical, cultural, economic, and ecological issues are to be dealt with jointly, especially in the regional area (ibid., p. 40). Here, students and teachers can apply for a sponsored stay in one of the 16²³ CEEPUS member states. Both short stays (excursions over three days) and more extended stays (up to ten months) can be supported (OeAD Programs²⁴).

3.2.4 Cooperation with South-East Europe

The political situation in the south-east European region is not stable anywhere. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) supports regional integration of the southeastern European countries with concrete reform projects; for example, the improvement of their educational system is an essential objective of ADA.²⁵ Austrian Development Cooperation promotes South-South cooperation and the establishment of networks

²³ CEEPUS member countries are: Albania, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Kosovo*.

²⁴ OeAD, Our programmes from A to Z. Retrieved December 18, 2019 from: <https://oead.at/en/the-oead/our-programmes-from-a-to-z/>

²⁵ AUSTRIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, Länder, SÜDOSTEUROPA. Retrieved December 18, 2019 from: <https://www.entwicklung.at/laender/suedosteuroopa>

between universities in Austria and its partner countries. In this sense, the Austrian Partnership Program in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR) strengthens the institutional capacity of universities in the areas of teaching, research, and management.²⁶ The amplification in the fields of approaches for an impartial world and diminution of poverty is further supported (Musil & Reyhani, 2012, p. 68). There are individual cooperations between universities, e.g., Cooperation of the University of Graz with the University of Shkoder (Albania) or the collaboration between the University of Vienna in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Tirana (Albania) (Wadsack & Kasparovsky, 2007, p. 41).

3.2.5 Cooperation with non-European Areas

In addition to universities, the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (OeAD, Österreichischer Austauschdienst) with its Centre for International Cooperation and Mobility (ICM) is one of the leading actors in the funding of individual mobility and bilateral or multilateral cooperation, while also being engaged in third-party scholarships (Musil & Reyhani, 2012, p. 24&63). In this section, the Austrian cooperation projects and public or national grants with non-European countries, which are organized by the OeAD and funded by the BMBWF, are outlined beneath.

- Ernst Mach-Grant includes four sub-programs. Different non-European nations categorize them: The Ernst Mach Grant for studying at an Austrian university of applied sciences (Fachhochschule) is established for international students from non-European countries who want to study at an Austrian university of applied sciences with the duration of 4 to 10 months; The Ernst Mach Grant ASEA enables graduates or postgraduates students from Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines to stay in Austria (duration 1 to 36 months); The Ernst Mach Grant EPU (Eurasia Pacific Uninet) targets students from member institutions of EPU, specifically, China and Mongolia; The Ernst Mach Follow-up Grant (Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, EZA) is a program for former scholarship holders from non-European developing countries. Applications can be handed in by people who research or teach at a university in a developing

²⁶ AUSTRIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, Themen, BILDUNG. Retrieved December 20, 2019 from: <https://www.entwicklung.at/themen/bildung>

country and who have already received a grant administered by the OeAD GmbH.²⁷

- The cooperation between Austria and Japan consists of two central grants:²⁸ The Scholarship of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science is funded by the Japanese government and promotes young scientists and university lecturers from Austrian universities to conduct research in Japan with a maximal stay of 2 years; Monbukagakusho Grant (Incoming) / (Outgoing) is intended for candidates who are studying, researching or teaching in Japan at the time of the application and would like to complete their work in Austria. This grant further allows Austrian graduates and postgraduates to complete their research master or Ph.D. degree at a Japanese university.
- Oman Scholarship Program enables Omani scholars to complete a bachelor's degree in Austria and to attend the pre-study course. Its duration depends on the program's progress.²⁹
- Pakistan Scholarship Program aims at Pakistani students who want to do a doctorate at an Austrian university and who meet the admission requirements with a duration of up to 3 years.³⁰
- Vietnam-Austria Scholarship Program: Vietnamese students are eligible to join the Vietnam-Austria scholarship program if they want to do a doctoral degree at an Austrian university and meet the admission requirements or participate in an Austrian-Vietnamese joint master's program.³¹

The above cooperation programs related to scholarships for non-European nationals support the mobility of individuals and provide financial support for living and travel costs (Musil & Reyhani, 2012, p. 66), so that the researchers or students can fully concentrate on their study which, in turn, could play a more active role in the development of scientific research and academic exchanges.

²⁷ OeAD, Our programs from A to Z. Ernst Mach-Grant. Retrieved December 20, 2019 from: <https://oead.at/de/der-oead/unsere-programme-von-a-bis-z/#ernst-mach-stipendium-zum-studium-an-einer-oesterreichischen-fachhochschule-international>

²⁸ Ibid. Our programs from A to Z. Japan Society for the Promotion of Science-Stipendium, Monbukagakusho-Stipendium (Incoming) & (Outgoing).

²⁹ Ibid. Our programs from A to Z. Stipendienprogramme Oman.

³⁰ Ibid. Our programs from A to Z. Stipendienprogramme Pakistan.

³¹ Ibid. Our programs from A to Z. Stipendienprogramme Vietnam-Österreich.

Conclusion

This section summarizes principal legal regulations, agreements, and cooperation projects between Austria and other countries and explains the difference between the EU member states and non-EU countries in the field of students' international or regional mobility. In comparison to the EU states or European countries, Austria has not made bilateral or multilateral agreements with third countries in terms of migration law but offers on scholarship programs and cooperation projects which are perceived as a universal tool to promote the international student' mobility (Musil & Reyhani, 2012, p. 62).

4 Bologna Process in Austria

The significance of the Bologna Process for Austrian higher education reform deserves a separate chapter.

4.1 Introduction

Among all Austrian higher education reforms of the past decades, the ‘Bologna Process’ plays the most pivotal role. This chapter begins with an introduction of the ‘Bologna Process’ and then demonstrates its influence on Austrian tertiary education. Through an analysis of the Bologna Process in Austria, a better understanding of the reason for mutual recognition of higher education degrees among all the EU member states is expected.

The ‘Bologna Process’ is a project between European countries to ensure that the standards of higher education in participating countries are equivalent. The system is named after the Bologna Declaration signed by 29 European countries in Bologna, Italy, in 1999. Subsequently, the system is open to all European countries that are willing to participate. Until 2015, 48 countries have joined this project. With the main aim of bringing more coherence to the higher education system across Europe, the European Higher Education Area was established, “facilitating student and staff mobility, making higher education more inclusive and accessible, and enabling higher education in Europe being more attractive and competitive” (European Commission). In general, the sub-goals of Bologna Process include (Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, pp. 17-18):

- the creation of a system of easily understandable and comparable degrees,
- a three-level study system (Bachelor, Master, Doctor / Ph.D.),
- the introduction of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System - ECTS,³²
- promoting the mobility of students, lecturers, and scientists by removing obstacles to mobility,
- Lifelong learning,

³² This credit-system contains two reform elements: First, transparency should be created about the student work and learning effort, which is not only an indicator of the study ability of a given curriculum, but should also facilitate the transfer and accumulation of achievements and acquired qualifications. Second, this implies a credit system exams during the course (Alesi, Bürger, Kehm, & Teichler, 2005, p. 58).

- the promotion of European cooperation in quality development,
- the development of the European dimension in higher education,
- the strengthening of social aspects in higher education,
- Employability.

The main framework of the Bologna Process is a three-cycle higher education system, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies (ibid.). To facilitate professors, researchers, and students to study and work abroad, study programs and research institutions must be internationalized, standardized, and compatible; thus, education ministers from 29 countries, including Switzerland and Austria, accepted the Bologna agreement to 'harmonize' the degrees (Hoefele, 2005, p. 14). This is another reason why students from EU countries can apply directly for a master's program without having to fulfill special university entrance qualifications. Here the mutual obligations of all participating countries to "ensure the mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad completed at other universities" also (The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area, n.d.) also come into action.

4.2 Influence of the Bologna Process on Austrian Higher Education

Although the Bologna reform has facilitated student and faculty mobility, improved cross-border academic communication, and cooperation, fostered mutual recognition, and created a profound impact on many European countries, the influence of the Bologna Process on Austrian higher education is still controversial.

The first transformation of the Bologna Process is a two-stage study instead of the single-stage study. In general, a bachelor's program consisted of four years before, and now is divided into two stages: a shortened degree program with a bachelor's degree (three years) and a post-graduate master's degree program (two years), namely, most students should finish a bachelor study in three years (Hoefele, 2005, p. 15). The acceptance of a bachelor's degree in the labor market is doubtful. Even ten years after the Bologna reform, a large number of HR managers believe that graduates with a bachelor's degree are not sufficiently qualified (Wroblewski & Pechar, 2011). For implementing this new program, Austrian institutions have experienced difficulties in the transition from the two-tier program³³ to this new three-tier system for national

³³ The old Austrian higher education system named diploma usually consists of 8 to 10 semesters. Nowadays, some majors in university still provide this option, for example, medicine.

higher education. Besides, the Bologna Process has brought a paradigm shift in professors: the academic teaching and the input are no longer in the foreground, but the output: what a student is able to do in the end has to be in line with the market; investments in education that exceed what the market immediately needs are not in demand (ibid.). From this aspect, knowledge, and education are represented as a product, “the researcher as a manufacturer, the student as a consumer, and ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits as the ‘currency of exchange’” (Keeling, 2006, pp. 209-210). The Bologna Process seeks to improve employability and mobility through an identical framework of comparable degrees in all participating countries, however, the over 50% drop-out rates and the on average 7.5 years of studies make much more challenging for graduates to enter the labor market (Pechar & Pellert, 2004, pp. 324-325). The ECTS program and open access policy have facilitated students' mobility because of a common higher education system. This, however, has increased the risk of unqualified students enrolling and further created challenges for the Austrian university educational resources.

Under the obligation of the European Commission, Austria has to recognize the foreign degrees of the other member countries moreover. When the number of foreign applicants increases, this obligatory equal treatment policy brings Austrian universities into a dilemma. Even in some individual studies such as medicine, Austria has to accept a large number of foreign applicants from the EU countries without strict preconditions, like students from Germany. Due to the German *numerus clausus*³⁴ system for certain subjects and since there is no language barrier between Germany and Austria, German students who cannot enroll at German universities usually turn to Austrian universities to seek an alternative (ibid., p. 319). As a consequence, the Austrian university has to deal with an increased number of applicants and insufficient educational resources. Bologna and other structuring measures of the degree program reduced the laissez-faire elements that had previously characterized the teaching and learning culture at Austrian universities, and the loss of laissez-faire leeway was accompanied by increased compatibility problems for certain groups of students (working students as well as students with health issues or students with children), reform steps were insufficiently accompanied by the development of specific support offers (Pechar & Wroblewski, 2011, p. 3-10).

³⁴ Numerus Clausus (NC) refers to admission restriction, which is understood as restricting admission to schools, colleges, and universities. Medicine, pharmacy, veterinary medicine and dentistry are so popular that they have an NC at all German universities.

Other academics pointed out that the underlying assumptions for implementing the Bologna Process were not well discussed. On the one hand, the proportion of worldwide students who study in non-English-speaking European countries has not been decreased, and on the other hand, there was no particular evidence that could prove structural convergence measures to be the most pivotal ones to bring European higher education more attractiveness (Teichler, 2012, p. 3). The primary objective of the Bologna Process was to make European higher education more attractive through the two-stage structure of the study program, with the target group of both students within- and outside Europe. Numerous survey results indicated that the implementation of the Bologna Process has increased the number of students from other parts of the world coming to Europe to study; Nevertheless, its influence on the pace of promoting student mobility within Europa during the first decade of the 21st century seemed to be not ideal, as it happened to be even lower than in the 1990s (Teichler, 2012, pp. 2-8). In comparison to the success of the ERASMUS program contributing to dynamic student mobility intra-Europe (Teichler, 2012, p. 11), the burden of accommodating the Bologna's new structure in other European countries (like Austria) brings the Bologna Process into a controversial situation. Furthermore, Austria expected shortening of the study period in the bachelor-master structure, but this combination made the study period even longer in some subjects than the previous diploma courses (Alesi, Bürger, Kehm, & Teichler, 2005, p. 33).

Conclusion

The Bologna Process facilitates students' mobility on a large scale. Its primary purpose is to make European higher education more attractive to the world. However, the above statements show that the Bologna Process has mostly profited Europe. The countries outside of Europe need to be given more attention because of their large capacity in the field of exporting international students.

5 China as an Example of a 'Third Country'

Increasing transnational cooperation and multinational companies blurred the border between different countries and provided more opportunities for transnational connections.

This year is the 48th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Austria. China has created a new way of diplomacy, the so-called 'Panda-Diplomatie'. China "leased" a panda pair (Yang Yang and Long Hui) to Austria in 2003, which has become the "friendly ambassador" of the Chinese people (Halbartschlager, 2010). They live in the Tiergarten Schönbrunn in Vienna and have numerous fans. This particular way of diplomacy contributes in part to a positive impact on the diplomatic relationship between the two countries. In 2013, a project named 'One Belt One Road' (or Belt and Road, BRI), which seeks co-prosperity and regional connectivity, was initiated by China's President Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan for the first time. This initiative invests in infrastructure and economic integration of countries along the route of the historic Silk Road, and China has signed 173 "One Belt, One Road" cooperation documents with 125 countries and 29 international organizations in April 2019 (Li, 2019). From April 7 – 12, 2018, a 250-member delegation, which was the most exceptional state visit in the history of Austria, led by President Alexander Van der Bellen, and Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, on a state visit to China. During their visit, China and Austria formally signed the "Joint Statement on Cooperation in developing the 'One Belt, One Road' Initiative in the Future", supporting the enterprises of the two countries to exchange and jointly promote specific project cooperation under the framework of the "Belt and Road" framework. Economic cooperation will ultimately encourage the exchange of education and culture. The largest international student group comes from China (UNESCO, 2013). In terms of third world countries, China's status cannot be underestimated, regarding its economic, political, or cultural status. This part will focus on the educational cooperation between Austria and China, summarize the relevant legal provisions for Chinese applicants, and try to analyze the influence of the special preconditions for Chinese students and the educational cooperation between these two countries.

5.1 Educational Cooperation between Austria and China

Due to common economic and political interests, Austria and China have been having a diplomatic relationship for over 40 years (Halbartschlager, 2010, p. 1). These two countries signed an agreement in the field of science and technology in 1984, which enabled a regular exchange of students (ibid., p.16). Moreover, on October 18, 2004, the government of the Republic of Austria and the government of the People's Republic of China signed an agreement on the mutual recognition of equivalence in higher education in Peking, intending to promote scientific cooperation in higher education and facilitate the admission to universities for students of both countries.³⁵ In the following part, I will summarize the academic cooperation and agreement between Austria and China.

5.1.1 Sinology Department and Confucius Institute in Austria

A significant contribution to the scientific cooperation between the two countries is the Eurasia Pacific-Uni-Net, which has existed since 2000 and brings Austrian universities into contact with Chinese universities and colleges (ibid.). At the University of Vienna, the Department of Sinology has been existing in the Institute of East Asian Studies since 1973, and the University of Vienna is the only university in Austria where students can study Sinology as a Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degree (ibid.). Moreover, this program does include not only the Chinese language but also Chinese history, economics, society, politics, and Chinese law (ibid.). Sinology is not limited to Chinese science but explicitly deals with the worldwide Chinese migration in research and teaching (Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, pp. 23-24). Young people with a Chinese immigrant background can receive a profound education during their studies and use for their later professional activities, and also, this study promotes the integration of Chinese people with a migration background into Austrian society (ibid., p. 24). At the Johannes Kepler University Linz, Chinese can be chosen as a foreign language, and a few schools in Austria already offer Chinese as a school subject (Halbartschlager, 2010, p. 17).

Another example is Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Students can study TCM in Austria, for instance, at the Medical University of Vienna and the Danube University

³⁵ Österreich – China: Abkommen über Gleichwertigkeiten im Hochschulbereich. Retrieved August 26, 2019 from: https://bmbwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/wissenschaft/naric/oe_china_abk_gwhs.pdf

Krems. Additionally, the establishment of the Confucius Institute at the University of Vienna in 2006 offers a more diverse way of cultural exchange (ibid.).

5.1.2 Österreichische Austauschdienst – Gesellschaft (OeAD) and Erasmus+

The *Österreichische Austauschdienst* (OeAD) is an Austrian agency promoting cooperation in education, science, and research. The owner of the OeAD GmbH is the Republic of Austria, representative of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research (BMBWF³⁶). In 1961, the *Österreichische Auslandsstudentendienst* was founded and later renamed the *Österreichische Akademischer Austauschdienst*. Until 2008, the OeAD worked in the legal form of an organization whose members were Austrian universities. In 2009, the organization was converted into the *Österreichische Austauschdienst-Gesellschaft* Limited Liability (OeAD-GmbH) (Dippelreiter, 2011). The OeAD-GmbH has been engaging in international mobility and cooperation programs in education, science, and research for almost 60 years (OeAD, 2018). It monitors developments in international research, education, and training, and is involved in discussions on future concepts of cooperation in these areas.

The OeAD can not only support the educational policy reforms, for example, “fostering policy dialogues with partner countries and international organizations”, but also by providing students and researchers various choices in terms of international exchange and cooperation (ibid.). The programs contain “topic-oriented scholarships [...] to individual study and research areas” (ibid.). One representative of the topic-oriented scholarship programs for students who want to study in Austria is Ernst Mach grants. This scholarship program is funded by the BMBWF and is an offer to students and teachers of foreign universities to complete a study or research stay in Austria. One subprogram within this scholarship program named Eurasia Pacific Uninet (EPU) has close cooperation with China. The EPU is aimed at young postgraduates and postdocs of all majors who wish to conduct research in China or Mongolia and to carry out a research project in Austria. Apart from the support of the scholarship, EPU organizes association summer projects as well as summer camps for the people interested in China, holds regular plenary sessions, and promotes scientific exchanges through the establishment of research centers and schools (Eurasia-Pacific Uninet, 2019). Additionally, one of the three cooperation branch offices³⁷ of the OeAD locates in

³⁶ BMBWF is the abbreviation for Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung.

³⁷ The three OeAD Cooperation Offices: Lviv (Ukraine), Shanghai (China) and Baku (Azerbaijan).

Shanghai. Scholarship and summer school guidance, as well as the initiation of exchange programs, will be supported by the OeAD cooperation office Shanghai. They provide assistance for institutional cooperation from Austria to China and facilitate the programs' implementation in Shanghai, vice versa, representatives from China can also get support in Austria for their research (OeAD, n.d.).

The most well-known educational program to contribute to student mobility was initiated in 1987 and is the EU Education Program Erasmus+ Education. This program includes the cooperation "in the fields of school education, higher education, vocational education, and training as well as adult education" (OeAD, 2018), which has motivated millions of students and teachers to participate. In the area of higher education, the Erasmus+ program distinguishes four cooperation possibilities: Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Capacity Building in Higher Education, and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD). At least three higher education institutions developed EMJMD programs from three different Erasmus+ Program countries. They offer an international Master's program, during which students complete their training at several locations in Europe and worldwide. Other facilities, such as higher education institutions from partner countries, companies, NGOs, or research institutions, can participate in this partnership as well (OeAD, n.d.). This program is an excellent option for all students who are interested in receiving an international education and wishing to experience various cultures. Through the study in different member states, the EMJMD program will increase students' worldwide visibility, and improve their competences and skills (European Commission, 2018, S. 95).

Thanks to the cooperation through the OeAD and its subordinated programs, efficient mobility of educational resources and personnel has been achieved. These educational networks have shortened the distance between China and Austria while providing more educational opportunities for students of both countries.

5.2 Akademische Prüfstelle (APS) in China

In July 2001, an Akademisches Prüfstelle (APS) was founded in Beijing, which is a service organization of the Cultural Department of the German Embassy in Beijing in cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Germany initiated APS in 2001. At the beginning of 2005, Austria joined the organization. In the following year, Belgium joined as well. It is the gateway to study in Germany, Austria, Belgium,

and Switzerland for Chinese applicants.³⁸ This organization is responsible for validating all certificates earned in China (Denisova-Schmidt, 2016) and conducts a 15 minutes interview with applicants to check if their level of knowledge corresponds to the documents submitted by them.³⁹ This interview can be performed in German or English, depending on the applicant's wishes. It is not a language test.

However, the applicant must be able to communicate with the examiners about the subjects they studied and should, therefore, have an excellent level in German or English and thus should also know the basic vocabulary of their field of study.⁴⁰ After the student passes these two examinations, the agency will issue a certificate, which is one of the indispensable admission preconditions for German or Austrian universities. Students who have the qualification to enroll directly in Germany and have not started the seventh semester (four-year undergraduate) or ninth semester (five-year undergraduate) in China do not have to have an interview. Such students should submit materials to the Audit Department for review and then take the TestAS exam without an interview.⁴¹ Generally, applicants have to go through four processes: Online registration, transfer of the fee 2500,- RMB (approx. 313€) for an interview, sending the documents and issuing the certificate after a successful interview. Since each applicant has three chances for an interview, and if he/she has not passed the interview for the first time, he/she can apply for the other opportunity. In principle, the second interview needs to be taken within three months after the last one. The duration from the first step to the final certificate cannot be estimated. Most applicants have to wait at least 2 or 3 months or even longer. APS is - to a certain extent one expense in terms of money and time.

On the official website of APS, a general explanation for the purpose of APS is given,

Grundsätzliches Ziel der APS ist es, chinesischen Studienbewerbern den Weg für ein Studium in Deutschland möglichst einfach und transparent zu gestalten, indem formale Überprüfung und auch das Visumverfahren unter einem Dach in einem einheitlichen und unkomplizierten Verfahren angeboten werden.⁴²

³⁸ In July 2006, the APS institution was founded in Ulan Bator. Additionally, since 01.01.2007, the APS has been checking the university entrance qualification and the academic performance records of applicants with Vietnamese certificates who are aiming to study in Germany.

³⁹ Akademische Prüfstelle Kulturreferat der Deutschen Botschaft Peking. Interview. Retrieved September 02, 2019 from:

<https://www.aps.org.cn/verfahren-und-services-deutschland/chinaverfahren/interview>

⁴⁰ Akademische Prüfstelle (APS) in Vietnam. Retrieved September 02, 2019 from:

<https://vietnam.diplo.de/vn-de/themen/kultur/aps/1236800>

⁴¹ Akademische Prüfstelle Kulturreferat der Deutschen Botschaft Peking. Chinaverfahren. Retrieved September 02, 2019 from:

<https://www.aps.org.cn/verfahren-und-services-deutschland/chinaverfahren>

⁴² Akademische Prüfstelle Kulturreferat der Deutschen Botschaft Peking. Über uns. Retrieved September 02, 2019 from: <https://www.aps.org.cn/uber-uns>

The other reason for why this organisation has been established can be found in the field of “Häufige Fragen zum China-Verfahren”: “Es handelt sich nicht um einen Sprach- oder Wissenstest, sondern dient der **Feststellung der Plausibilität** der eingereichten Unterlagen”.⁴³ Other reasons were pointed out by Elena Denisova-Schmidt, as an education website named Sdaxue.com published a report that in China there are over 400 phony colleges (until 2016). These colleges attract usually unqualified students through imitating well-known existing Chinese universities with almost identical names. A degree can even be purchased for only 300 RMB (about 37 €) (Denisova-Schmidt, 2016). In order to prevent academic misconduct, the DAAD cooperated with the Germany Embassy in Peking and established APS. Moreover, an official from the BMBWK explained the implementation of APS in Austria (Chen, 2009) as the following:

Der Hauptgrund bestehe in der Kontrolle über die Qualität eigenfinanzierter chinesischer Studierender. In früherer Zeit habe man einige unechte Antragsdokumente aus China erhalten, was einen schlechten Eindruck erweckte (es gab sogar eine Klage bei Gericht). Angesichts der guten Erfahrung in Deutschland habe das BMBWK schließlich entschieden, die APS-Überprüfung auch für den Antrag der österreichischen Hochschulen vorausgesetzt werden. Laut des Beamten ergibt die Prüfungsgebühr „Null-Gewinn“. Sie decke nur die Kosten der Arbeit, da die Arbeitsintensität der APS tatsächlich sehr hoch sei. Außerdem gilt diese akademische Überprüfung nicht nur für Chinesen. Es gibt auch ähnliche Überprüfungen für einige Länder wie z.B. Türkei, jedoch nicht für Japan, da der Anteil an japanischen Studierenden in Österreich ohnehin sehr gering ist. (Chen, 2009, p. 94)

There are mainly two types of students who are audited at APS (Xu, 2002, p. 4): the first category is honest students who are the largest group of applicants. They go to Austria or Germany merely for studying, and they are the qualified students that the host countries want. The second group of students is suspected of falsifying their academic credentials and grades. Some of these students forged documents, which APS can identify by carefully reviewing them. Other students make the review more complicated: they have authentic materials, but in fact, these documents were not obtained legally. In this case, it is meaningless to review the documents as they are trustworthy. This is why the reviewing process includes an interview as well. Reviewing the first group of students is very simple and does not take long. However, the unqualified students are among the whole group of all applicants, which extends the review time (ibid.).

⁴³ Akademische Prüfstelle Kulturreferat der Deutschen Botschaft Peking. Häufige Fragen zum China-Verfahren. Retrieved September 02, 2019 from: <https://www.aps.org.cn/verfahren-und-services-deutschland/chinaverfahren/interview>

The most fundamental goal of APS is to simplify and make the procedures for Chinese applicants to study in German-speaking countries⁴⁴ more transparent, and to centralize the review and visa applications to make it a unified and straightforward process. However, the establishment of APS in China has caused some criticism. Some come from the applicants, who complain about the unpredicted reviewing time, or from those whose interests have been compromised, for instance, the intermediary agency (Xu, 2002, p. 5). Before the establishment of APS, these agencies could make profits from the unqualified but wealthy applicants by obtaining a fake diploma or transcript to help them apply for German or Austrian universities successfully (ibid., p. 6). However, with the advent of APS, these unfair benefits are no longer feasible. Nevertheless, in the long term, APS will normalize China's student mobility and protect the reputation of qualified Chinese applicants (ibid.).

Conclusion

This part mainly analyzes the efforts of Austria and China to promote cultural exchange and cooperation. It is quite clear that the collaboration between these two countries is still insufficient, and the room for improvement is still vast. The establishment of APS protects the academic atmosphere of Austrian universities. For China, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages in the long run, but the unpredictable and long reviewing processes cannot be ignored as well.

⁴⁴ Applicants who apply for studying in Germany can submit a visa application through the audit department after obtaining the certificate of the audit department and the acceptance letter of the German university. Applicants applying to study in Austrian and Belgian universities need to submit visa applications directly to the relevant embassy. Retrieved September 02, 2019 from: <https://www.aps.org.cn/uber-uns>

6 International Student and Host Countries' Development

This chapter lays emphasis on the relationship between international students and the host country's development: How do they influence each other? Will effective enrollment policy for international students positively impact the host country?

6.1 International Students in the Context of Internationalization

The concept of 'international students' is one of the products of the internationalization process. The word 'internationalization' has become a buzzword. However, the application of this term has a long history and can be traced back to centuries. Internationalization has been used in political science and governmental relations for centuries, but it is a relatively new term in the education sector that has now been widely used for over 20 years (Knight, 2003).

When we talk about 'internationalization', it is easy to be confused with 'globalization'. These two terms are different from each other but closely related. Regarding the definition, internationalization assumes an increasing integration of a national education system which can overcome borders and federal authoritarian' obstacles; the policy process of internationalization is steerable, but globalization is perceived as an external process to higher education which is unalterable (Luijten-Lub, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2005, pp. 149-150). Globalization is defined as the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders, and it influences each nation differently because of countries' individual history, traditions, culture, and priorities (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Globalization is regarded as a multi-dimensional phenomenon and affects education extensively (ibid.). Nonetheless, internationalization and globalization are mutually dependent. Globalization is defined as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century higher education toward broader and deeper international involvement (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). The origins of internationalization happened in the context of the globalization process. Concisely speaking, "internationalization is changing the world of education, but globalization is changing the world of internationalization" (Knight, 2003, p. 3).

In the 1990s, 'international education' was mainly applied to discuss "comparative education, global education, and multicultural education" (ibid.). During the first ten years of the 21st century, some other relevant terms like "transnational education, borderless education, and cross-border education" emerged (ibid., p. 2). As countries

attach importance to free trade, international academic mobility has been introduced (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The World Trade Organization (WTO) provided a regulatory framework to stimulate international trade in service-related and education industries as part of negotiating the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (Altbach & Knight, 2007), such as the advocacy of distance education supply, consumption overseas, the establishment of branch campuses or joint ventures abroad, but also the support of education service from professors or researchers across countries (Altbach & Knight, 2007, pp. 291-292). Driven by market forces (Omrane, Bank, & Ayub Khan, 2016), the globalization process has promoted the reduction of trade barriers, accelerated the development of cross-border trade and agreements, and fostered the diversity of trade models. Therefore, the capable human resources that can match this new international economic pattern have become especially important. As a consequence, providing people with the opportunity and possibility to study abroad is conceived as the most effective and direct way to achieve this objective (ibid.). Globalization has facilitated the internationalization of higher education, strengthened regional, and promoted national interconnections in the field of educational resources. Thus, education markets open globally. The impact of globalization has made overseas education more accessible, and also made European and American countries spare no effort to promote education abroad (ibid.). The SOCRATES and ERASMUS projects are, for instance, aiming at improving the European higher education's quality. According to data analysis, Europe and the United States have the most international students, however, other countries like Australia make great effort to be more attractive as well (ibid.). The Bologna agreement, signed in 1999 to create a unified European university framework, was perceived as the main engine of European universities' initial internationalization, while the mobility of third-country nationals to the EU has been increasingly discussed since the end of the last decade (Kirilova, 2013, p. 20). For the past decades, the number of international students engaged in higher education courses worldwide has increased significantly, from 2 million in 1998 to 5.3 million in 2017 (OECD, 2019, p. 229). A total of 83% of all foreign students study in G20⁴⁵ countries, 77% of all foreign students are in an OECD country.

⁴⁵ The member of G20 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and the European Union.

Within the OECD, 38% of foreign students study in EU21⁴⁶ countries: Within the EU21, 98% of the students come from a state within the European Union (Kirilova, 2013, p. 17). The number of foreign students' home countries indicates that free movement and mobility programs play a significant role in the EU. North America is the second most attractive target region with a share of 23% of international students. This region is more diverse than the European Union when it comes to international students' home countries (ibid.). English-speaking countries as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and Australia attract the majority of international students which are in total more than 40 percentage of all mobile students in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries, even though the proportion of internationally mobile students in the OECD increased by 2% between 2010 and 2017 (OECD, 2019, p. 228).

The motivations of international students are easy to understand. Experiencing different cultures, educational systems, acquiring language skills, and improving the adaptive capacity can broaden not only the horizon but are also assets for increasingly competitive labor markets (OECD, 2019, p. 229). For host countries, the reasons for the enrollment of international students changed from social, political, cultural, and academic dimensions until the 1980s to the nowadays economic and financial issues (Luijten-Lub, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2005, p. 156). Making profits is a pivotal motivation for all internationalization programs in the economic sector and some nonprofit universities facing financial problems (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 292). Setting a higher tuition fee for international students may be the easiest way to help host countries to achieve financial profits.

Furthermore, international students contribute to the local economy through their significant expenses of living (OECD, 2019). The Australian government even considers studying abroad as an "important export industry". According to statistics, the British market recorded a profit of 10.2 billion pounds only in terms of economic contribution rate in 2002 (Zhao & Hu, 2008). In Australia, international student education has generated \$ 9.8 billion in income (in 2006) (ibid.). The living expense of international students in the United States added an estimated \$12 billion to the U.S. economy (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

⁴⁶ The definition of EU21: All EU countries prior to the accession of the 10 candidate countries on 1 May 2004, plus the four eastern European member countries of the OECD, namely Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic. Retrieved December 19, 2019 from: <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=7020>

This section started with an introduction to students' mobility in the context of the internationalization process. The motivation of internationalization, the relationship between internationalization and globalization, and the number of international students in the central host countries were interpreted. These illustrations will be regarded as background support for the following semi-chapter to compare the Austrian policies for international students from the third-countries with the other main leading destination countries.

6.2 Austrian Policy to International Students in Comparison to other Host Countries

In general, international students refer to all students from foreign countries, including those from the EU/EEA member states. But in this section, it presents mainly the students from non-EU/EEA/EWR nations, namely, the incoming foreign students from the 'third countries'. In terms of the 'group of international students', it can be divided into two categories: "exchange/program students who are supported and serviced by the International Offices, and free movers who organize the application by themselves and who are as such assisted through the same structures as all regular students at Austrian higher education institution" (Musil & Reyhani, 2012, p. 19). As the main topic of the paper are the Austrian public universities' admission prerequisites for non-EU/EEA applicants, this part focuses on the latter category – 'free movers'.

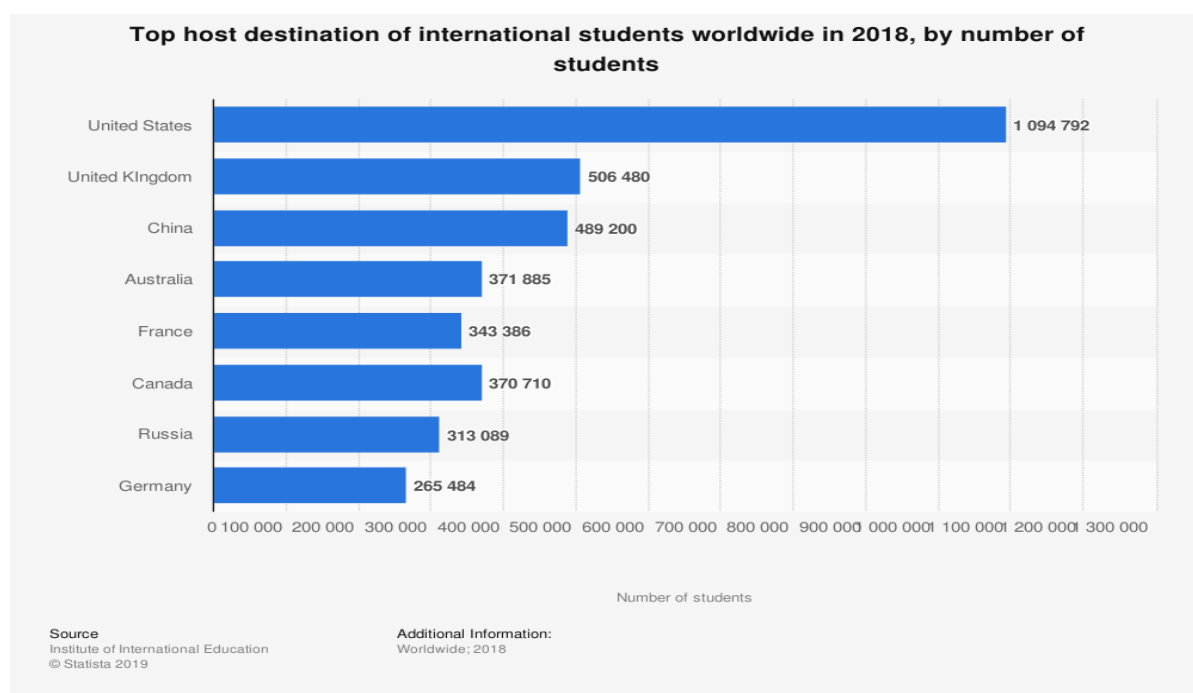


Figure 4: The host destination of international students worldwide in 2018, by the number of students. Institute of International Education. (December 31, 2018).⁴⁷

Based on the statistics in figure 4, the most attractive host destinations for international students are English-speaking countries, accounting for a half among the top eight, followed by France and Germany. In order to compare the Austrian admissions policy for international students with other representative countries, three nations are selected. In the EU region, Germany will be an example, as Germany and Austria have German as the official language, and Germany has become one of the most popular destinations among non-English-speaking countries. In English-speaking countries, the United States and the United Kingdom/Australia are selected, as they have been keeping their popularity for years. It is challenging to compare Austria with the selected countries in the fields of population, economy, and human capital, but some enrollment policies could provide informative suggestions for Austria.

6.2.1 Austria in Comparison to Germany

As the above introduction of the APS institution in chapter 5.2, Germany established this service facility in cooperation with DAAD in 2001. It aimed at verifying the authenticity of documents issued by China, Mongolia, and Vietnam. From 2005 the APS-Review is also required for the application by Austrian universities. Both countries have great attractiveness to international students due to the excellent academic reputation of universities, favorable tuition fees (some public universities collect even no tuition fee), a diverse choice of majors, and the same official language. Although they have many similarities, the proportions of international students show something different. Please see figure 5 and figure 6 as follows:

⁴⁷ Resource: Institute of International Education. (December 31, 2018). Top host destination of international students worldwide in 2018, by number of students [Graph]. In *Statista*. Retrieved January 15, 2020 from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/297132/top-host-destination-of-international-students-worldwide/>

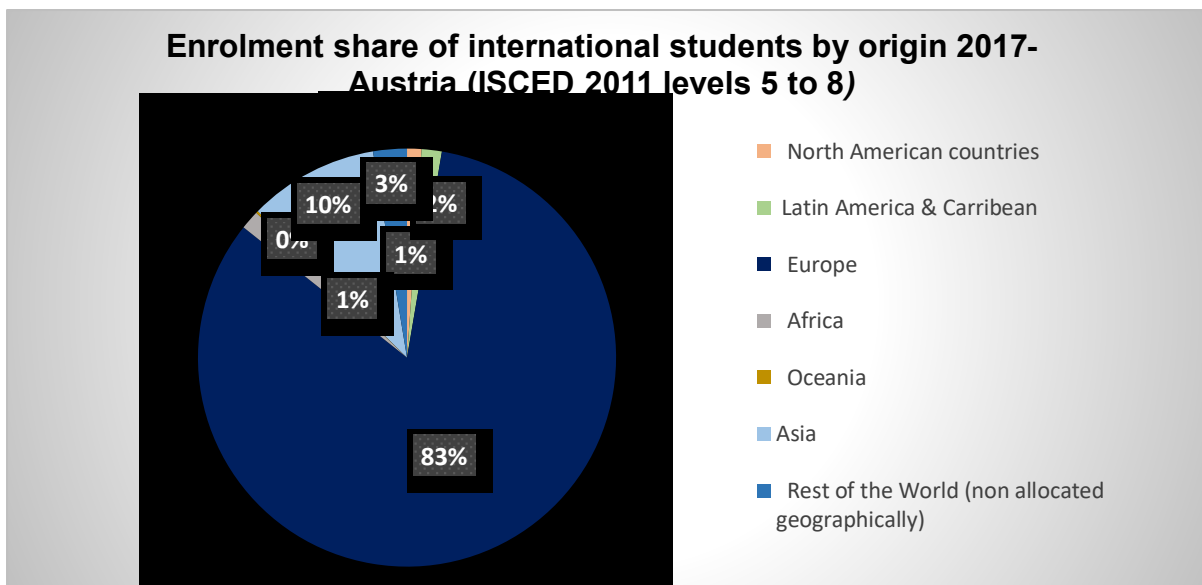


Figure 5.⁴⁸ OECD.Stat. Education and Training. Share of international, foreign, and all students enrolled by field of education. Enrolment of international students by origin. Level of education: total tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5 to 8⁴⁹) (see Appendix A original database).

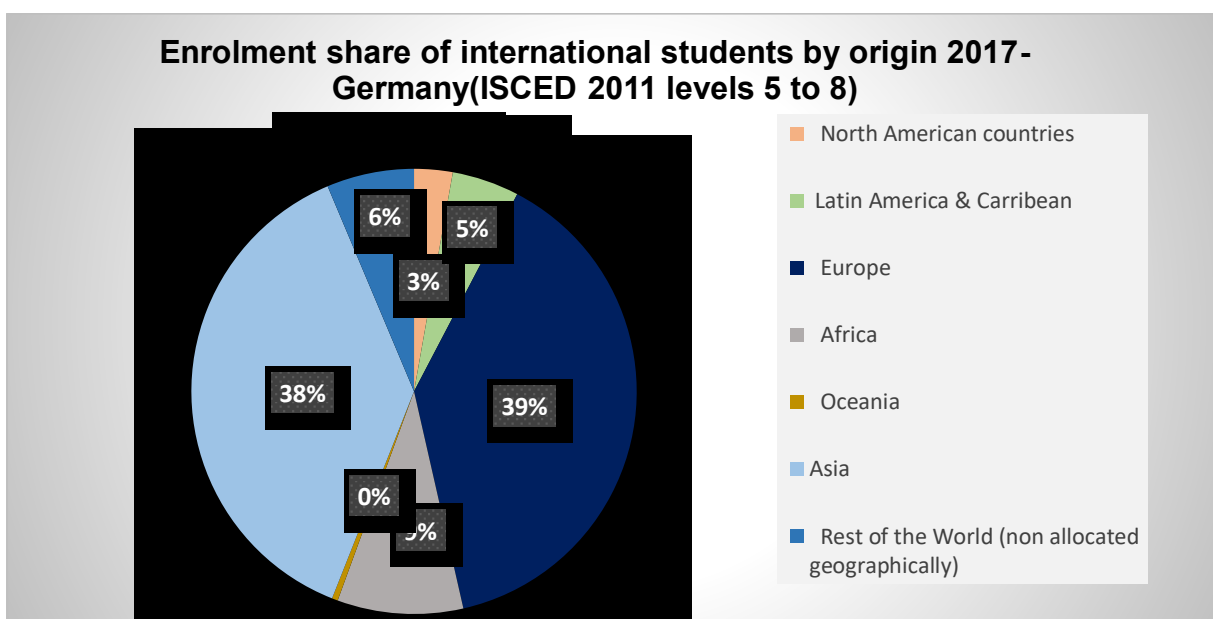


Figure 6: OECD.Stat. Education and Training. Share of international, foreign, and all students enrolled by field of education. Enrolment of international students by origin. Level of education: total tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5 to 8) (see Appendix A original database).

From the above two pie charts, one can see that although the largest international students group in both Austria and Germany comes from Europe, their proportions

⁴⁸ The enrollment shares of international students by origin in 2017 is the latest available statistics.

⁴⁹ ISCED refers to UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education, primarily aiming at facilitating standardized international comparisons of statistics across education systems, later as a foundation of numerous occupational classifications such as the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) or the German classification of occupations; there are two revisions of ISCED, ISCED 2011 has nine levels which is two levels more than the revision of ISCED 1997 (Bohlinger, 2013, pp. 23-24). ISCED 2011 level 5 to 8 includes in sequence the education of short cycle tertiary, Bachelor or equivalent, Master or equivalent and Doctoral or equivalent (Bohlinger, 2013, p. 25).

have an enormous difference. In Austria, the European international students, which is 83%, is considerably larger than in Germany, which makes up only 39%. The second largest group from Asia accounts merely for one-tenth of the total in Austria. In contrast, in Germany, it shares almost the same proportion as the European group, which constitutes 38%. According to the OECD statistics⁵⁰, the enrolment ratio of international students in Austria from OECD countries in total (71%) is more than twice than in Germany (33.6%). In Austria, the whole share of non-European students is only 17%. If we categorize international students mainly by EU and Non-EU students, Germany has many more international students from non-EU countries in general. Figures 5 and 6 show the statistics about the enrolled foreign students in total tertiary education ISCED 2011 levels 5 to 8. In the following, two figures, namely data of enrolled students ratio by origin at the master level, will show the other distinction.

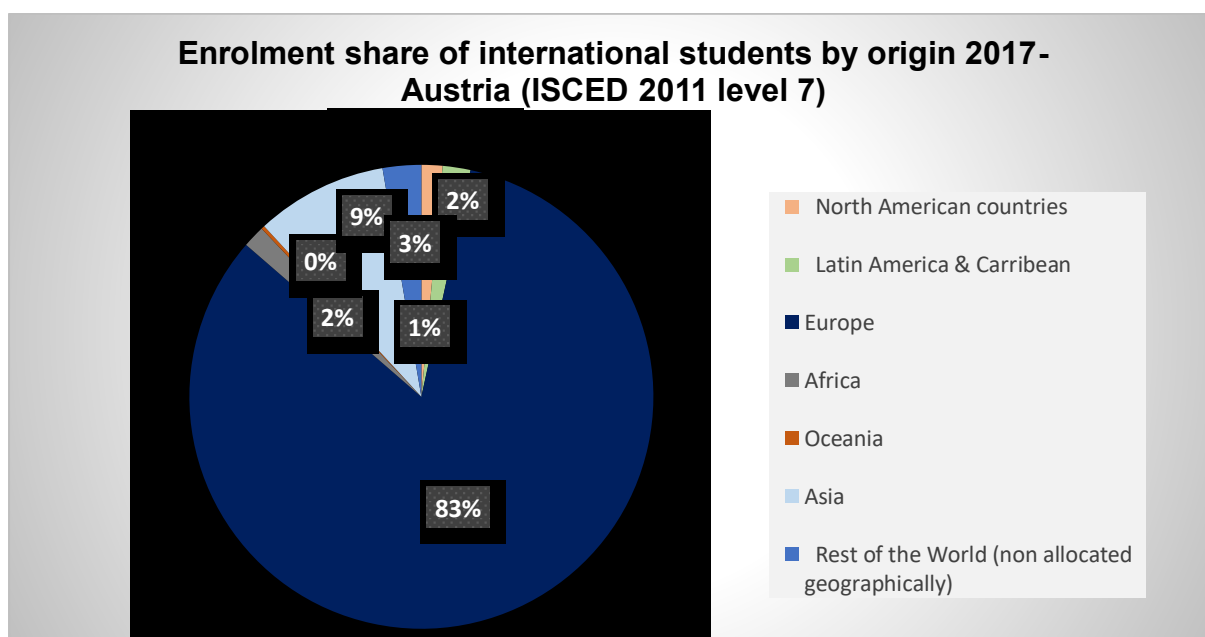


Figure 7: OECD.Stat. Education and Training. Share of international, foreign and all students enrolled by field of education. Enrollment of international students by origin. Level of education: ISCED 2011 level 7 (see Appendix B original database).

⁵⁰ See Appendix A.

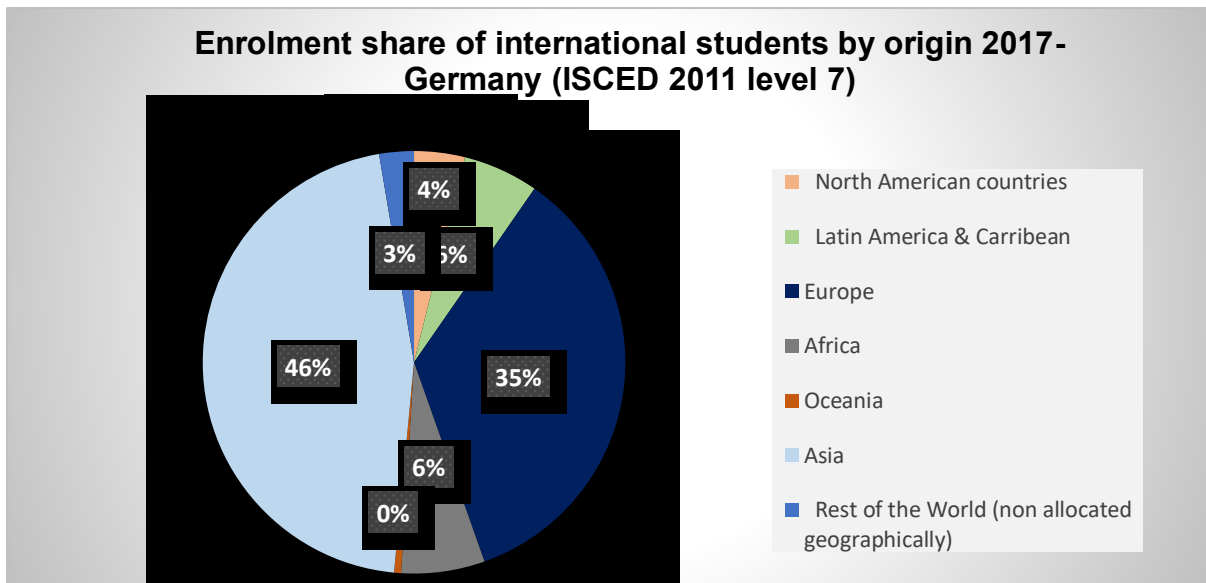


Figure 8: OECD.Stat. Education and Training. Share of international, foreign, and all students enrolled by field of education. Enrollment of international students by origin. Level of education: ISCED 2011, level 7 (see Appendix B original database).

Statistics in Figures 7 and 8 indicate that the largest enrolled international students group for the master program in 2017 in Austria is still Europe. However, in Germany, it has changed from Europe to Asia (in comparison to figure 6), accounting for nearly half the proportion (46%) of the whole international students. In comparison to the enrollment ratio of ISCED 2011 levels 5 to 8, the share of admitted European international students at the Austrian master level keeps the same rate of 83%. However, in Germany, it decreases from 39% to 35%. The other apparent differences between the two countries are that in Austria, the ratio of Asian and African groups even reduces by 1%, and the other regions have no changes. Except for a slight decline of 3% in Africa and the rest of the world international students, all the other regions increase their ratios in Germany, which the Asian students share actively increases by 8%. From what has been analyzed above, I may conclude that the master programs in Germany attract much more non-European students than those in Austria. In the following part, I will try to analyze the similarities and differences between German- and Austrian universities in terms of admission prerequisites. Research indicates that international students' decision-making process depends on five primary factors: personal reasons (personal improvement, recommendation from surroundings...), the effect of country image (academic/social reputation, cost of living, city image or working opportunity during study...), institution image (ranking/brand/quality reputation, facility availability), program evaluation (international

recognition, total cost, and finance) (Sánchez, María Cubillo, & Cerviño, 2006, p. 108), and university entrance/immigration procedures (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003, p. 323). With respect to country/institution image, Austria and Germany both have a positive international image. Firstly, the stable political situation plays a pivotal role. Furthermore, the reputation of Vienna as a music capital also influences the image of the country positively and attracts international students who tend to study music in Vienna. Moreover, according to the report of the Economist Intelligence Unit's annual Global Livability Index, Vienna has been named the world's most livable city for the second consecutive year. In the field of academics, Austria has the oldest university in the German-speaking regions – the University of Vienna (founded in 1365). Germany is also renown in many academic fields, for instance, the mechanical engineering program, philosophical theology, or social sciences. Hence, the two countries are both the ideal host countries for international students to choose except that Germany has a more significant number of universities than Austria.

Secondly, for many students from a middle-class family, financial issues may be one of the main concerns. Then the two countries are suitable choices for such applicants because, in contrast to other European and American countries, the tuition fees Germany and Austria are quite low. The state funds the majority of public universities in Germany. There are generally no fees for bachelor's programs and most master's programs at state universities (DAAD).⁵¹ The situation in Austria is similar. Most of the Austrian public universities do not charge tuition fees for EU/EEA (including Swiss) citizens and students from developing countries.⁵² However, international students from non-EU countries have to pay 726.72 €. A similar policy was also implemented in Germany. The federal state of Baden-Württemberg has decided to charge tuition fees for non-EU citizens in the amount of 1.500 € per semester (bachelor, master, diploma, state examination) in the academic year for the 2017/18.⁵³ All students, regardless of their citizenship, have to pay in Germany named Semester Ticket and in Austria called Students' Union fee (20.20 €, academic year 2019/20). In Germany, the Semester Ticket consists of contributions to the Students' Union and the student self-administration (AStA, die studentische Selbstverwaltung). At many universities (for example, the federal state of Nordrhein-Westfalen), students also receive public

⁵¹ DAAD, Ausbildungs- und Lebenshaltungskosten. Retrieved January 15, 2020 from: <https://www.daad.de/de/studieren-und-forschen-in-deutschland/studium-planen/ausbildungs-und-lebenshaltungskosten/>

⁵² See detailed introduction in chapter 2.3.1.

⁵³ See reference 50.

transport tickets, which is included in this semester ticket in Austria, students have to buy them additionally⁵⁴. This semester fee varies depending on the university and is between 100 and 350 euros.⁵⁵ Even though the universities in Austria and Germany charge tuition fees for non-EU students, they are far more attractive compared to the US or UK's high prices, especially for the students who have financial difficulties. Furthermore, in general, Austrian universities charge relatively lower tuition fees for international students from non-EU/EEA than German universities.

Thirdly, as German is the first language in Germany and Austria, and also the language of instruction in most of their universities, sufficient language skills are one of the inevitable requirements for foreign applicants to get access to higher education regardless of degree. The admission requirement for the German-language education master's courses in most public German universities is the proof of passing the *Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang* (DSH) with DSH2⁵⁶ or evidence of an equivalent certificate which accords with the regulations for the German language examination for university entrance for foreign applicants. If the applicants have not achieved DSH 2 or an equivalent language proof by the date of application, they must submit the following certificates: proof of attendance of a German course of more than 1000 hours; DSH1 certificate; TestDaF with at least 14 points; B2 certificates (or higher) from the Goethe-Institut, ÖSD or TELC. However, for the **formal registration** at the university, students must possess a DSH 2 certificate or an equivalent language proof, like for example, TestDaf with at least TDN 4⁵⁷ (TestDaf-Niveaustufen) in all parts of the exam or Goethe-Certificate C2. In **Austria**, however, there was no specific or strict requirement of language skills at the time of **application** for students whose first language is not German before 2019. Students could attend language courses with little knowledge of German during the Vorstudienlehrgang. Since the summer

⁵⁴ The Wiener Linien semester ticket (valid from 01.09 to 31.01 in winter semester and from 01.02 to 30.06 in summer semester) for all students under 26 years old with a primary residence in Vienna costs 75 €, otherwise costs 150 €. However, if your main residence is in Burgenland, you will receive a subsidy of 50% of the costs, i.e. in the amount of 75€. Students with their main residence in Lower Austria are happy to receive a financial grant of 100 €. Retrieved January 15, 2020 from: <https://www.iamstudent.at/blog/semesterticket/>

⁵⁵ See reference 50.

⁵⁶ DSH 2: competent language skills level. DSH exam includes written and oral examination, only the students who pass the written part can attend the oral exam. Both parts must reach over 67% for DSH 2 level (DSH 1: ≥57%, DSH 3: ≥ 82%).

⁵⁷ The examination results of TestDaf: TND 5- TestDaf Level 5; TND 4- TestDaf Level 4; TND 3- TestDaf Level 3; equivalent to levels B2.1 to C1.2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). All German universities recognise the TestDaF certificate. The TestDaF certificate is valid for an unlimited period of time. Retrieved January 15, 2020 from: https://www.testdaf.de/fileadmin/Redakteur/PDF/Sprachen/informationen_en.pdf

semester 2019, the requirement for language skills has changed: German Level A2 is required at the time of application. Many universities (e.g., WU and University of Vienna) even increased the language skills requirement from B2 to C1 for formal registration. DSH 2 and TestDaf TND4 are valid at the Austrian universities as well, but what should be noticed is that one precondition for attending the DSH exam in Germany is to pass C1 exams. In terms of language skills prerequisites, the admission requirements have become stricter than before, compared to Germany, however, Austria's policy is still more liberal.

In addition to the usual admission preconditions for master programs⁵⁸, the above-discussed language skill certificate, official certification, and court-certified translation of educational documents, Austria's public universities have the additional admission requirement - 'besondere Universitätsreife', which is not required in Germany. At German universities, you are allowed to apply for any bachelor program of any university, or master program of the same major, as long as you have graduated from a bachelor program or have reached the same academic level. Take China as an example. Students from Chinese high schools cannot directly apply for a German bachelor's degree. They must have already enrolled in a Chinese university before the application. Students at 211 universities⁵⁹ can apply after one semester, and others have to wait three semesters. In general, this restriction is similar to Austrian universities. Moreover, bachelor graduates from non-EU countries can apply for any bachelor program at any Austrian public university as well. However, if applicants from non-EU/EEA countries want to apply for the **master** course directly, it is **not allowed**, unless they have already enrolled in a master's program in their home countries. This is what the 'besondere Universitätsreife' in fact requires. The admission system for graduate students in some countries is an application system. But in other nations, like China, implements a national unified examination enrollment system, with the enrolment rate being merely 17% (2020 academic year).⁶⁰ A survey conducted by the China Youth Daily's Social Survey Center on a study of 2004 college students shows that 60.5% of the interviewees believe that the postgraduate entrance examination should be prepared for at least one year. In this case, the requirement of 'besondere

⁵⁸ Bachelor- and Master programs here refers to programs in German.

⁵⁹ '211 Universities' is a project, refers to the construction project of about 100 universities and a group of key disciplines that are oriented towards the 21st century. It was formally launched after being approved by the State Council in November 1995, with aim to improve the domestic overall quality of education, creating more influential and powerful universities.

⁶⁰ Retrieved January 15, 2020 from: https://kaoyan.eol.cn/nnews/201912/t20191223_1700726.shtml

Universitätsreife' is not easy to fulfill. There is an alternative for bachelor graduates who want to enroll in a master's program directly but without the proof of 'besondere Universitätsreife'. Austrian university law 2002 stipulates exemptions for providing 'besondere Universitätsreife'. As long as applicants belong to this named 'Personengruppe',⁶¹ they can apply for a master's program directly even without the proof of 'besondere Universitätsreife'. No specific document and regulation were found to explain the purpose or significance of 'besondere Universitätsreife'. However, the difficulties caused by it can be clearly illustrated by the results of the qualitative interviews.⁶² This restriction shuts the door for many qualified applicants from non-EU/EEA nations. Furthermore, the complicated process of verifying if the applicants from non-EU/EEA countries belonged to the 'Personengruppe' or not, extends the application time so that the date of attendance cannot be estimated. Meanwhile, it aggravates the unnecessary workload for the admission department.

Another noteworthy issue is the labor market policy for non-EU/EWR students in Austria and Germany. Many international students want to improve their financial hardships through a part-time job. What should be noticed is the difference in this field between Austria and Germany. They both allow students from third countries to work if their primary purpose of stay, namely their studies, is not affected. In Austria,⁶³ however, students require an employment permit to work, even for marginal employment. The employer must apply for this permit at the labor market service. The issue of an employment permit without a labor market test is only for a job from 10 hours to 20 hours a week (only for students in the master's program). The employee in a marginal employment relationship cannot earn more than 446.81 Euro per month (2019 limitation).⁶⁴ Employment over 10 or 20 hours per week can only be approved if the position cannot be filled with domestic or integrated foreign workers, which is called the 'labor market test'. In Germany, the part-time policy for foreign students is looser. According to the § 16 Aufenthaltsgesetz in Deutschland, students⁶⁵ are allowed to work up to a maximum of 120 days per calendar year (alternatively 240 half days) without any employment permit. It is possible to take on a part-time job at the university or

⁶¹ See detailed introduction of exemption and 'Personengruppe' in chapter 2.3.1 and 3.1.

⁶² See the interview results in chapter 7.3.2.

⁶³ See Österreich government agency help site on internet. Studieren und Arbeiten für Drittstaatsangehörige. Retrieved January 15, 2020 from: https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/bildung_und_neue_medien/universitaet/1/1/Seite.160224.html

⁶⁴ Ibid. Retrieved January 15, 2020 from: <https://www.help.gv.at/Portal.Node/hlpd/public/content/207/Seite.20700061.html>

⁶⁵ Students here refers to the citizens from non-EU/EWR countries.

another academic institution without time restriction and employment permit. In the case of longer paid or unpaid employment (including internships), students will always be required to provide approval from the employment agency before starting their employment. Relevant regulation about residence permits for graduates to find a job is also different in Austria and Germany. In Germany, foreign graduates can have their residence permit extended to up to **18** months after graduation,⁶⁶ but in Austria, this period is limited to **12** months.⁶⁷ If a job has been found, the previous residence permit can be converted into a residence permit for the purpose of employment.⁶⁸ After graduates have been employed with a residence permit for at least two years, they are entitled to apply for an unlimited residence permit.⁶⁹ In Austria, a residence permit “Rot-Weiß-Rot - Karte” was created to attract qualified immigration for third-country graduates. The “Rot-Weiß-Rot - Karte” entitles the graduates to a temporary establishment with limited access to the labor market, which is usually issued for a 2-year validation. The preconditions for obtaining this residence card are:⁷⁰ Successful completion of a diploma, master's degree, bachelor's degree or doctoral degree, which was obtained at an Austrian university, technical college or accredited private university; and the monthly gross salary of the employment must reach at least 2416.5 €.⁷¹ Even the graduates with a bachelor's degree can, in principle, apply for this residence card, but this salary level for bachelor students is not easy to achieve. On the whole, the labor market policy for third-country graduates in Austria is much more conservative than in Germany, for both the part-time and full-time work fields.

From what has been compared and discussed above, I may reasonably conclude that the policy differences between Austria and Germany for non-EU/EWR/EEA students are mainly reflected in the additional admission requirements for master's programs and legislations to the local labor market, but in terms of country image and tuition fees, there are no substantial differences. For the students who cannot provide ‘besondere Universitätsreife’ for a master's program, German public university has more superiorities, especially for Chinese students who want to apply for a master's degree

⁶⁶ Law Basis: Section 16 (4) AufenthG.

⁶⁷ Law Basis: Section 41 Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetz (NAG)

⁶⁸ Law Basis: Section 18 AufenthG.

⁶⁹ Law Basis: Section 18b AufenthG.

⁷⁰ See reference 62. Retrieved January 15, 2020 from:

https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/themen/leben_in_oesterreich/aufenthalt/3/2/2/Seite.120229.html

⁷¹ Law Basis: Section 12b. (2) Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz (AuslBG). The gross salary is at least 45% of the Höchstbeitragsgrundlage (5,370 Euro gross per month in 2020) in accordance with Section 108 (3) ASVG plus special special payments.

directly after their bachelor graduation in China. As the complicated APS certificate is already required in both countries, fewer preliminary conditions can save more time and energy for Chinese applicants. This may be one of the motivations why most international students in Germany (in winter semester 2018/2019) come from China (Statista 2020⁷²). Furthermore, strict Austrian policy to the labor market and immigration of international students intensify the pressure to find a job. Even with the simplification of the “Rot-Weiß-Rot Karte“ for highly qualified people, it is questionable whether the associated regulations for university graduates prove to be practical or whether it would be more useful for third-country citizens with Austrian university degree to get an uncomplicated and free access to the labor market (Springer, Pessl, & Schäfer, 2010, p. 18). Thus, it is easy to understand the proportions of the numbers of international students in figures 5 to 8.

6.2.2 The Situation in the US, the UK, and Australia

As *Figure 4* shows, the U.S., the UK, and Australia are the most attractive destinations in the English-Speaking world for international students in 2018. This part focuses on the introduction of the most popular English-speaking countries in terms of admission policies for international students.⁷³ A detailed comparison about specific aspects of admission requirement between Austria and the three countries is not the purpose of this chapter, but through an introduction of their significant features about master program admission policies, we can conclude on which aspect they mainly focus on by the recruitment. The development of the UK and the U.S. higher education systems is relatively rich of history, and many of their policies can provide a useful reference for other countries.

The following reasons can explain why the U.S., the UK, and Australia are so popular among international students. The considerable capability, diversity, and abundant financial support make the U.S. higher education system to be one of the largest ones worldwide (Rounsaville, 2014, p. 45). Like in the UK, universities in the U.S. have high institutional autonomy and academic freedom (ibid.). World’s top prestigious universities and approximately 165 higher education institutions bring the UK higher

⁷² According to the Statista 2020, in winter semester 2018/2019 the total number of Chinese students in Germany was 42.676, accounting for 10% of the whole registered foreign students (394.665). Retrieved January 15, 2020 from:

<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/301225/umfrage/auslaendische-studierende-in-deutschland-nach-herkunftslandern/>

⁷³ International students in this chapter refer to all the non-domestic students.

education system in the second place (ibid.). The UK government has implemented the national policy - 'Prime Minister's Initiatives', PMI1 (1999-2004) and PMI2 (2006-2011), aiming to attract more foreign students by "intensive recruitment, easier application and visa processes, opportunities to work during and after study, and an overall improvement in the quality of the international student experience" (Rounsaville, 2014, p. 46). The U.S. and the UK offer high-quality education in English, numerous globally renowned universities, and diverse educational and funding choices, which make them especially popular in the field of postgraduate education (ibid.). In Australia, the government perceives studying abroad even as an "important export industry" (Zhao & Hu, 2008, p. 68). For Australia, international students contribute not only to its global competitiveness but also to a significant source of Australian revenue (Altbach P. G., 2004, pp. 20-22).

Those applying for a master's degree at an American university usually need to meet the following requirements (Liu, 2005): firstly, applicants must have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree with a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0; Secondly, applicants must provide two or three recommendation letters, in which the applicant's academic performance, intellectual capacity and ability to engage in scientific research can be objectively evaluated; thirdly, General Record Examination (GRE)⁷⁴ is required at approximately 60% of all American universities, for Law and Management sciences applicants must provide the Law, Science, and Technology certificate (LST) and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) score (Liu, 2005, p. 25). Furthermore, some universities require relevant materials for scientific work during college and attend interviews with tutors. Students applying for special majors, for instance, architecture and musicology, should provide designs, drawings, or a tape of the composition or performance of a song. For international students, American universities also require applicants to provide proof of language skills, such as TOEFL (Test of English for International Communication) or IELTS (International English Language Testing System) (ibid.). The United States has specifically formed a diverse admission system with a GRE-based entrance examination (Jia, Ma, & Pan, 2016, pp. 103-104). The GRE test pays attention to the comprehensive ability of students and has a guarantee of reliability and validity (ibid.).

⁷⁴ GRE: it "published by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), is a set of standardized tests designed to predict the scholastic performance of graduate students, including tests of verbal, quantitative, and analytic abilities as well as tests of subject area knowledge for a number of fields" (Kuncel, Hezlett, & Ones, 2001).

Unlike the U.S., which has a unified national admissions test (GRE), the UK's graduate admissions system is 'academic-driving' (ibid.). As UK universities enjoy a high degree of autonomy, the government's influence can only be reflected indirectly through public funding (Luijten-Lub, Van der Wende, & Huisman, 2005, p. 160). Hence, universities can determine admission criteria for graduate students according to their characteristics, types of graduate students, and demands of individual majors. They usually recruit students through thesis planning and interviews instead of examinations, focusing on the overall quality and ability of applicants' undergraduate university level, and scores (Jia, Ma, & Pan, 2016, pp. 104-105). Interviews have a significant impact on admission results because they relate to cooperation between professors and students in the scientific field (ibid.). Another particular feature in the UK is a one-year master program, which saves more time and reduces financial pressure for students in comparison to the traditional two years program. Additionally, the opportunity of switching to a master's subject, which is different from the undergraduate degree, provides applicants an alternative to research in a new field. The flexible admission system and diversified academic system of the UK undoubtedly offer more options for applicants.

For many students, the question of employability is an essential factor for choosing a host country (Sánchez, María Cubillo, & Cerviño, 2006). In this aspect, the Australian government provides a favorable employment policy. Graduates are allowed to work automatically from 18 months to 4 years, while in the UK, and the U.S. provide only one-year allowances for finding a job (Sá, Creso M., 2018, p. 245).

In summary, the master's degree admission system in the U.S. and the UK lay more emphasis on the quality of applicants. From the GRE examination, additional required materials over the individual subject in the U.S. universities to interviews in the UK, the review of the overall capacity of applicants is always the most crucial point for recruitment. In comparison with Austria, the U.S. and the UK do not stipulate special regulations by the category of citizenships and geographical locations. The unique admission system not only ensures the maximum admission of outstanding students but also ensures fairness during the selection process.

6.3 The Influences of International Students

Why have many countries implemented various policies to attract international students? What effect will international students have on the host countries? This section will answer these two questions.

In light of today's waves of globalization, internationalization of higher education is perceived as a must (Omrane, Bank, & Ayub Khan, 2016, p. 4). And student mobility plays a pivotal role in the internationalization process (Musil & Reyhani, 2012, p. 62). Plenty of researches have verified that international students can bring various benefits, which can be summarized in two broad categories: economic and cultural benefits. Regarding the economy, international students do not just come to fill seats, but more importantly, they are considered a source of government revenue in the host countries (Altbach 2004; Luijten-Lub et al., 2005; Ayub Khan et al., 2016; Rounsaville, 2014). High tuition fee-paying international students (Omrane, Bank, & Ayub Khan, 2016, p. 4), and their daily expenses (Rounsaville, 2014, p. 43) diversify the revenue resources for the destination countries. Statistics show that Australia made a profit of \$37.6 billion in 2018/-19 from international education (Van Onselen, 2019). High-quality international students are also considered as the ideal migrants because they are the younger generations with a well-educated background and strong adaptability, which generally work in well-paid fields and contribute much more taxes than they get back from the government (Rounsaville, 2014, p. 45). In the long run, their experience in host countries could create long-term international trade and business connections (Andrade, 2006, p. 133) and eventually promote mutual understanding and cooperation (Rounsaville, 2014, p. 44).

The cultural benefit addresses international students themselves. Studying abroad is the most direct way to acknowledge distinctive local culture and history, to strengthen language skills, to widen the horizon, to experience different educational systems, to communicate with students and teachers from other countries. Under the influence of multiple cultural backgrounds, students develop a habit of thinking or analyzing from various critical angles. The ability to resist stress and solve problems will be improved during studying abroad, and this ability can also increase students' competitiveness in the labor market. With respect to the cultural benefits for the host country, the economic benefits brought by international students could contribute to the host country's research output or institution subsidy (*ibid.*, p. 43). Furthermore, international students play a crucial part in stimulating the institutional creativity and research (Bolsmann &

Miller, 2008, p. 81) by implementing intercultural courses and curricula for both international and national students (Omrane et al., 2016). Especially international postgraduates play a pivotal role in teaching and research (Rounsaville, 2014, p. 44).

Conclusion

The main topic of this chapter is the relationship between international students and the host countries' development. It begins with an introduction of how student mobility across the border has prospered in the context of internationalization. The second semi-chapter, through statistical analysis of international students' enrollment rate in total educational programs and master programs by origin in Austria and Germany, concludes that: although these two countries both have illustrious state and university reputation, their admission policies to international students, especially to the third country citizens are different. These differences can be reflected in the master's program additional entrance requirements to the third country students (for example, 'besondere Universitätsreife') and access to labor markets after graduation. In general, Austria has a more flexible policy for students whose language skills are insufficient for the application period, but a stricter requirement for access to the master's program than in Germany. Through a demonstration of particular features in the U.S. and the UK in terms of postgraduate admission policies, it also becomes clear that the admission policies in these two countries are stipulated with the primary purpose of selecting the most excellent and outstanding applicants. The quality of international students is the main point. The master program admission requirements' disparities between different nations categories, for example, EU- and non-EU citizenships like in Austrian public universities, are not found in the above three countries. In the concluding part, the third semi-chapter states the potential benefits brought by international students and encourages Austrian public universities to develop more attractive policies for international students, especially for third-country applicants.

Empirical Part – Methodology

7 Methodology

This part deals with the applied research method, introduces the process of selecting interviewees and forming research questions. Results will be summarized through an analysis of collected data.

7.1 Research Method and Interviewees

For analyzing the influences of different admission prerequisites for EU and Non-EU citizens of the master program at Austrian public universities, I applied qualitative research method of interviews. Two types of interviews, namely Expert-Interviews, and semi-structured interviews were conducted in this research.

To answer the question of why admission preconditions differ, an expert working in this field at a university can provide valuable and reliable resources in many aspects. So, I sought the advice of two experts, who have been working in the admission apartment at Austrian public university for many years, in order to support me with the expert-interviews. Since Chinese students are as an example for explaining the influence of this policy on citizens from the third country, three Chinese students were selected. Two of them are currently studying in Vienna. They shared their opinions on the Austrian university admission system. The other one has been working in Vienna for several years without any Austrian postgraduate background. She narrated her story about why she did not enroll in a master's program. During semi-structured interviews, Chinese students shared their experiences with the Austrian educational admission system and they expressed their views on the Austrian labor market as well. Although in the third country category, China could play a representative role because of the given individual preconditions for Chinese students and its large number of students abroad, China cannot cover all the other third countries' situation. Hence, for a more comprehensive and more in-depth understanding of this different admission prerequisite for third-country citizens, I invited another two students from Iran and Japan to join this discussion. From these two interviews, we can see the shared difficulties during the application period, but also some differences between the countries.

Due to data protection, personal information of all interviewees will be privately kept. However, for proving they come from non-EU countries, their nationalities will be mentioned in the paper. The interviewees are described in the following:

Interviewee 1: Expert, who works at the university admission department.

Interviewee 2: Chinese, obtained a master's degree in China, has entered the labor market without any Austrian higher educational background.

Interviewee 3: Chinese, studies at an Austrian public university (master's program)

Interviewee 4: Chinese, studies at an Austrian public university (master's program)

Interviewee 5: Expert, who works at the university admission department (different university as Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 6: Iranian, studies at an Austrian public university (master's program)

Interviewee 7: Japanese, studies at an Austrian public university (master's program)

7.2 Interview Questions

The main research questions were the following:

- Expert-Interview Questions:
 - Why are the prerequisites categorized by nationality (EU/EEA citizens and Non-EU/EEA citizens) instead of other standards?
 - What are the possible reasons for these different prerequisites? Or which kind of potential purpose could be achieved through the differences?
 - How do you evaluate these special admission prerequisites for the Non-EU/EEA countries?
 - Have you experienced any difficulties in checking the application documents (for example, the students who belong to the 'Personengruppenverordnung')?

- Semi-Structured Interview Questions:
 - Why have you decided to study in Vienna?
 - Have you ever experienced any difficulties during the application process?
 - How do you evaluate the admission system for Chinese students?

- Do you think this kind of difference can be regarded as ‘unfair’?
- What do you think of the influence of the special admission policy on Austria and the third countries?
- Do you have any suggestions for the admission system?

7.3 Results and Analysis

This part will focus on the analysis of the result. Two main research questions will be answered: the reason for different prerequisites to a master program for EU and Non-EU citizens at Austrian public universities; the influence of this special regulation on local Austrian universities and third-country students.

7.3.1 Reasons for different Admission Preconditions

EU citizens have a more simplified process than Non-EU citizens when they apply for a master's program at Austrian public universities. It can be concluded from the information which was provided by the expert participants. This is mainly because of the Austrian university legal provisions. Regarding the special university entrance qualification, Article 65 of the *Österreichisches Hochschulrecht 2002*⁷⁵ states ‘*Besondere Universitätsreife*’:

Zusätzlich zur allgemeinen Universitätsreife ist die Erfüllung der studienspezifischen Zulassungsvoraussetzungen einschließlich des Rechts zur unmittelbaren Zulassung zum Studium²²³ nachzuweisen, die im Ausstellungsstaat der Urkunde, mit der die allgemeine Universitätsreife nachgewiesen wird, bestehen. (Kasparovsky, 2013, p. 83)

There is an additional explanation in the footnote for this regulation: “Diese Bestimmung ist auf Antragsteller und Antragstellerinnen mit Staatsangehörigkeit eines EU-Staates nicht anzuwenden” (ibid.). Hence, the admission preconditions for students from EU countries are exempted from the special university entrance qualification. As for the reason of why the *Universitätsgesetz 2002* has such regulations, we can find the answer in the fourth capital – Bologna Process in Austria. From the expert-interview, it can be concluded that Switzerland has signed numerous bilateral agreements in many fields with the EU so that Swiss students are equal to EU

⁷⁵ More details see section 3.1.

citizens. Another special country, Peru,⁷⁶ is also an exception from the special university entrance qualification. This is, because

[...]Zulassungsbeschränkung in Peru selbst gesetzlich nicht geregelt ist. Das heißt, die Peruaner oder die Peruanerin, der oder die gerade die Matura gemacht hat, hat grundsätzlich ein freier Schulungszugang. Das heißt dort, gibt es zwar Universität eine Hochschule Aufnahmeprüfung verlangen und dort durchführen, aber gesetzlich geregelt ist das nicht. Deswegen verlangen wir von peruanischem Staatsangehörigen nicht der Nachweis der besonderen Universitätsreife. Weil das peruanische Gesetz nicht vorschreibt, dass man eine Hochschule Aufnahmeprüfung absolvieren muss. Wir können nicht verlangen, was die Menschen nicht in ihrem Land machen müssen. (Interviewee 1)

It is evident that the Bologna process plays a vital role in the Austrian higher education system. Furthermore, mutual agreement between countries⁷⁷ can benefit students in many fields.

7.3.2 Influence of the current Admission System

Every policy will have its individual impact, and every policy's impact is multifaceted, including positive and negative aspects.

Due to the special entrance qualification for the students from third countries, plus the individually additional APS certificate for Chinese students, the whole application process usually is much longer and more complicated than the one for EU applicants. Third country applicants must have enough patience, time, and financial support to deal with this situation. It takes perseverance to handle various problems during the process. The influences of admission policy can be put into four categories: Difficulty due to 'besondere Universitätsreife' and APS; Problems during the document review; Economic expenditure, and Time costs.

(1) Difficulty due to 'besondere Universitätsreife' and APS

If the students from third countries want to study a master's program directly at an Austrian public university, but they have already graduated from their bachelor's in the homeland, the besondere Universitätsreife is one of the necessary documents. Hence, some third country' students get a rejection because of this limitation. The interviewees have shared their experiences,

I got my bachelor diploma in China and passed through APS examination, APS took me several months, by the way, I was lucky, I passed the interview and exam at the first time, but it took me still about three months. Some others have even to try for the second or third time. Then it will be longer. Anyway, then I applied to the master's program but got a rejection because I did not have the *besondere Universitätsreife* to prove that I have the right to study masters in China.

⁷⁶ See Figure 1 (11th page): Exemptions of the special university entrance qualification at the University of Vienna.

⁷⁷ Specific explanation of mutual agreements within EU, see the section 3.2.

So, I could only attend the Chinese national postgraduate examination and got a place in a Chinese university to fulfill the requirement. This Chinese national postgraduate examination is only once a year. From the time I got the rejection to the national postgraduate test, it left only several months, that is far not enough for the preparation, because usually, the Chinese students will prepare for it at least for one year or even two years. Unfortunately, I failed the examination. (Interviewee 3)

From interviewee 3's experience, it is evident that for some students, 'besondere Universitätsreife' is not that easy to obtain. She also mentioned the time costs and problems with APS involved in the process. Concerning these requirements, interviewee 7 shared the experience of her Chinese friend as follows:

[...] I heard from one of my friends during my German course. She did not know about this one.⁷⁸ She thought she does not need it. Because in Germany they write everything in that description. She actually picked Austria, because she thought she does not need it, this Nachweis. She says it is very complicated, you have to wait for the interview so long and go to Peking. And then, in the end, we were both like, I was waiting for visa approval, she was waiting for this from the university [...] I could get it from my university, but she said she had to get it from the government [...] For the APS, if you know someone there, you could go to the next week, she (her Chinese friend) said. But if not, you have to wait for at least months [...] she went back to China, she did not get back. She was screaming about that. (Interviewee 7)

A Chinese student can only fulfill the 'besondere Universitätsreife' requirement through a national exam which is held once a year and which needs a long preparation. Moreover, the establishment of the APS institution in China exacerbates the difficulty of the application process and extends the application preparation time. With respect to the reason⁷⁹ for its establishment, the interviewee 7 expressed her own opinion,

It is because the Chinese government tries to control it. There are so many Chinese leave from China before, so now the government is crazy about controlling the flow out and flow in. Like if you want to travel you also have to apply for a visa, right? It is not because of your communist, but the government wants to, it is from the Chinese government. It makes sense somehow, otherwise, all want to study outside and do not come back. So in China, it is very strict with this flow-out, because they need someone to stay. Workforce or something like. (Interviewee 7)

Whatever its original purpose or function, its negative influence on students can not be neglected.

(2) Problems during the documents review

The more procedures universities have, the more documents they have to check. This requirement signifies not only a lot of effort for students, but also a heavy workload for the staff which is responsible for checking the submitted documents. Through the expert interview, we can get more detailed information about this point,

[...] Jeder Antrag hat seine Besonderheit, und jedes Land hat seine Besonderheit. Die Schwierigkeit liegt einerseits gerade, dass wir sehr viel Fachkenntnis brauchen, um diese Arbeit machen zu können. Man muss eigentlich jedes Land, beziehungsweise Bildungssektor jedes Landes, bei jedes Land Bescheid wissen. Dann müssen wir wissen, wie schaut mit der

⁷⁸ 'One' means besondere Universitätsreife (Studienplatznachweis).

⁷⁹ There are two reasons which can be traced by official website and document, see section 5.2.

Universität, gibt es viele private Universitäten und alle in staatlich Hand. Wie ist das System haben sie dort geschaut, das Bologna System in Bachelor, Master, Doktorat und in Diplom Studium. Achso, jedes Land hat seine Eigenheiten, Natürlich das ist nicht leicht. Wir haben viele Unterlagen, wir schauen auch sehr oft selbst.

Die andere Schwierigkeit liegt natürlich daran, dass viele Studentenbewerber aus drittem Land insbesondere, nicht Bescheid wissen, über die Zugangsregelungen in Österreich. Das Universitätsgesetz ist sehr komplex, wir haben zwar eine Informationswebsite, dort stehen sehr viel Informationen, und viele sind mit dieser vielfalten Informationen einfach überfordert. Das heißt, die Studenten einfach auf Zulassung, und hab oft nicht erforderliche Dokumente, nicht vollständig aufgeladen, oder das Dokument fehlt die Beglaubigung. Oder die Übersetzung fehlt, zum Beispiel, alles auf Chinesisch, aber nicht auf Deutsch oder Englisch übersetzt. Wir brauchen alle Dokumente in originaler Sprache, und auf Deutsch oder Englisch übersetzt. Dann müssen wir eine Verbesserungsauftrag erstellen und die Person mitteilen, deine Dokumente sind mangelhaft, bitte schicken Sie die richtigen. Dann geben wir vier Woche Zeit, vier Woche Zeit ist für Studienbewerber oft nicht genug. Denn eine Beglaubigung dauert länger als vier Woche. Deswegen empfehlen wir immer, bevor Sie den Antrag für Zulassung stellen, informieren Sie sich, schauen Sie auf die Website, lesen Sie der Nachweis Sie benötigen, reichen Sie die vollständigen Unterlagen ein. Wenn Sie unvollständig einreichen, geht es sich mit der Zulassung in beantragtem Semester grundsätzlich nicht aus. Dauert sind eigentlich die Beglaubigungen, dass die meistens nicht verhandelt sind oder nur unzureichend verhandelt sind. (Interviewee 1)

The review of documents is not that easy to handle. From the viewpoint of the admission department's staff members, many students may be overwhelmed with the diverse information about the application, which could lead to the incomplete submission of materials. Students have other perspectives. Interviewee 3 shared her experience related to the documents checking,

After that, I noticed the exemptions of the special university entrance qualification, and I found I could meet one of the requirements, so I applied again. I uploaded all the documents to prove that I indeed belong to this group. But, still rejection for the same reason as the first time. I was so confused and a little angry, so I appealed against the rejection letter. Then through many times calls, I uploaded once again all my documents, the college verified, after one semester, I finally got a place for a master's program. This process was really tough for me. I cannot imagine now how I got through it. (Interviewee 3)

The student, like interviewee 3, is relatively fortunate because she got access to a master's program at last. However, this will not happen to every applicant without '*besondere Universitätsreife*'. For instance, interviewee 2 came to Austria because of her family after she graduated from a Chinese university. According to her perspective, she should be categorized according to the special group, namely the exemption for the '*besondere Universitätsreife*'. However, she was still rejected.

I cannot still quite understand why I got rejected at that time. Because I think I belong to the family member, so I must not provide the *besondere Universitätsreife*. I asked the college for 2 times and even cried at the admission office, but they just said that I did not meet the requirement. So, I came back to China and attended the Chinese national postgraduate examination. (Interviewee 2)

The other interviewees complained about the application procedure as well,

I am sure I guess I waited for more than three months for approval, the period for waiting was very long. I did not know when I get it, more than 3 months I waited, so I asked because I have scheduled, I want to come or something. Then they said they need the 'Studiennachweis', I had

6 months visa-free here, so I have already applied for it long ago, so I just came here, because I should get Zulassung soon according to that email that you know, it states up to 16 weeks or something, you remember that? So I shouldn't wait for more than that. I thought my case would never wait for 16 weeks [...] but then I waited for 5 months for Zulassung. They told me that they need the 'Studiennachweis', then I think why they did not tell me before, I was not in Japan anymore. Then I asked my mentor to do this, I got it in two or three days because I told him that I was in a rush. So he did it in two days, so it was ok. If it was something like APS, I would have no chance [...] So they have like basic documents they need. And they write you need this one on the website. But sometimes if you are not the EU student, and they need the document, but they did not write them, maybe they write somewhere else, you know, but not that clearly, you do not see it. So I think it is difficult. A little annoying. Like I need extra documents, I said it is bad. In my case, that is freaking out. I was also worried about if I can get it (Studiennachweise), but I got it in 2 days. (Interviewee 7)

[...] I was waiting a lot. They told me that I need to wait. They cannot provide me any further information. They cannot say where they are in the process of my documents. I guess after one week or ten-day, they said ok, you are admitted. And maybe nobody was checking my documents and they got my email and then they started to consider [...] Because it happened to me. I wanted my documents back to apply for international development. I just wrote to them several times that I needed my documents back. They said they have already sent them to me. But I did not get it, so I needed to go three times there to ask my documents. And in just one second, I remembered that and asked which address did you send my documents to? And they gave me an address that was invalid, yes, so I said that was not my address. When I was applying, I was not in this country (mean Austria), I was back home. So, I said could you please just get out and see your files if my documents are there because you were saying you just sent them to Austria, not Iran. And that address was wrong. So maybe you just get up and just look at your files. And she was like no, no, em...I was just like to ask her please, please. I just want to apply for another study program, this is very important to me, this is master. And she got up and got back with my documents. (Interviewee 6)

What deserves to be noticed regarding this issue is the information asymmetry between the admission department and applicants. The university lists all the useful information on the website. However, for applicants, the information still lacks conciseness. Beyond doubt, a massive number of applicants plus complicated review procedures are a challenge for the admission department. In this situation, omissions and incorrect reviews may occur during the reviewing process, even if this deficiency is tried to be avoided as much as possible. Students, especially those whose foreign language skills are not excellent, should spend more time and pay more attention to every requirement's detail or approach teachers for help with the translation. Either simplified procedures or the applicant's attention to detail can alleviate the pressure on both sides.

(3) Economic expenditure

In Austria, all documents which are not in German must be authenticated (in German named 'Beglaubigung'). This is different from notarization. In Germany, notarized documents are enough for application. Regarding the difference between notarization and 'Beglaubigung', the expert gave the following explanation,

Das ist zwei unterschiedliche Themen. Es gibt einerseits die diplomatische Beglaubigung, das ist Länder abhängig. Länder haben entweder die Apostille, das ist ein Stempel. Genieß die Haager Beglaubigungsabkommen in dem 60 Jahre war das, es gibt einige Länder, die sind in diesem Haager Beglaubigungsabkommen beigetreten. Dann gibt es Länder, die mit dieser Vereinbarung nicht gibt. Und diesen Ländern müssen die volle diplomatische Beglaubigung auf ihre Dokumente einbringen. Damit sie in Österreich anerkannt wird. Die volle diplomatische Beglaubigung ist die kompliziertest Variante. Denn man muss in drei verschiedenen Institutionen durchlaufen. Nämlich das Bildungsministerium, das in der Universität des Landes, dann kommt das Außenministerium, dann kommt erst die Österreich Botschaft, die österreichische Vertretungsbehörde. Die Österreich Botschaft bestätigt den Inhalt der ersten zwei, achso, das Bildungsministerium und Außenministerium. Nur wenn diese Kette so gegeben ist, dann ist die Vollmacht in Ordnung. Das ist sehr schwierig zu bekommen. Dann gibt es die notarielle Beglaubigung, sowie wir angesprochen haben, die kann man machen, wenn man z.B. originales Reifezeugnis, oder originales Bachelorzeugnis. Dann geht man mit diesen originalen Reifezeugnissen zu Bildungs- und Außenministerium österreichische Botschaft, lässt sich diese Zeugnisse beglaubigen. Dann kann man, wenn man möchte, davon eine notarielle Abschrift machen. Und diese notarielle Abschrift kann man übersetzen lassen. (Interviewee 1)

Typically, there is not only one but two documents that should be notarized and authenticated for the application. From notarization to authentication, each step is closely connected with financial expenditure⁸⁰.

I also tried to apply for a German university. For Germany, notarized documents were enough. But for an Austrian university, all my documents must be authenticated. The colleges who were responsible for this told me that the document for Austrian has a double number and for German is a single number, I did not understand what that means, but I was asked to pay double the price for the Austrian document. And this was only the notarization part. After this, I should send the notarized document to Peking to let them finish the authentication part. Of course, this part costed much more than notarization one. (Interviewee 3)

We also have to pay a lot of money. If you consider the differences between the currency, it is a lot of money. (Interviewee 6)

Since I came here because my mother has been living here for many years, so my visa was Familieangehörige. As I was already in Vienna, so when they ask me for proving APS, I said I cannot get it anymore, because I was already here. I don't know why they did not assist in asking APS. I was lucky at this part. Money and time spared. But I paid still much for notarizing documents, also Beglaubigung, my birth certificate, my bachelor courses in China, and some others, I cannot remember. (Interviewee 4)

Searching for further study opportunities in a foreign country and experiencing different educational systems need exactly financial support. The critical issue is whether all of the expenditure essential or not.

(4) Time costs

Regarding the fourth influence, non-EU students usually spend more time than EU students. Complicated admission procedures, high demand for material, uncertain reviewing duration for documents, and visa, each of these issues will extend the

⁸⁰ A short introduction of APS cost can be seen in section 5.2.

application process. All interviewees told me that they spent a lot of time from the very beginning of the application to the letter of acceptance:

It took me about two years from the first application for a master's program at the University of Vienna to the end when I got admitted. (Interviewee 3)

[...] for the first visa, it was very very difficult. They have limited time. It was crazy, because of the admission, they did not care. I think they got so many emails, I want my visa, or I want my Zulassung, but they don't care. They are like just wait, just wait. It was annoying. And if it takes so long [...] There was also a Russian girl also, she was like waiting for Zulassung. She got the visa, but she waited even longer than me. She was waiting for more than six months, almost ten months. (Interviewee 7)

[...] I mean it took me about one year and a half or two years. With the Visa and everything else. (Interviewee 6)

It was quite a long time. Let me think about it. I graduated in June or July in China and came here maybe in September [...] I have prepared the documents, plus several additional documents needed to be delivered from China to here, it also took some time [...] I got rejection [...], and it was already spring. (Interviewee 2)

More detailed information about time effort for third country students is given by the expert (Interviewee 1). He explained that if the students' uploaded documents cannot meet the standard, for example, lack of authentication, then they will tell the student to upload supplementary material in 4 weeks. However, 4 weeks for authentication is normally not enough. The expert gave a short summary of time and money expenses:

Für die dritten Ländern Studenten, müssen sie zuerst alle Unterlagen beglaubigen lassen, müssen übersetzen lassen. Das kostet doch viel Geld. Der muss nachweisen, dass die Deutsche Kenntnisse auf A2 Niveau. Muss ein Sprachtest machen. Das kostet auch Geld. Dann muss sich bemühen, dass der Nachweis der besonderen Universitätsreife zu bringen, das heißt, muss ein Hochschulaufnahmetest machen in seinem Land. Dann erst wenn die alle Dokumente hat, kann der Antrag auf Zulassung stellen. Das heißt, sehr viel Vorbereitungen erforderlich. Meistens wird es wahrscheinlich zwischen 6 Monate und 1 Jahr sein, das man benötigt, damit man alle Dokumente in schönes Paket hat, dann der Antrag vollständig einreichen kann. (Interviewee 1)

Moreover, the time costs between EU and non-EU students shows noticeable differences. A comparison is given in the following:

Wenn man⁸¹ im September oder im August seine Bachelor Abschluss fertig hat, kann es gut sein, wenn alles in Ordnung ist, im Oktober schon die Master machen kann.[...] Wenn man⁸² die Dokumente wirklich alles passt, bekommt man das Zulassungsbescheid, muss man auch warten bis man das Visum zu bekommen, das dauert auch sehr lange. Dann vergehen auch 4, 5, 6 Monate. Iran, zum Beispiel, bis zu 9 Monate, bis man einen Termin zu bekommen bei der Österreich Botschaft. Dann die Vorstudien Lehrgang noch dazu gerecht, das ist schon sehr sehr groß Zeitspanne. Zeit, Geld, Nerven. Muss man Nerven dafür hat, das alles durchzuboxen. Das ist nicht leicht. (Interviewee 1)

The influence of Austrian special admission regulation on non-EU students was analyzed from four main aspects: Difficulties due to 'besondere Universitätsreife' and

⁸¹ It refers to a student from Germany.

⁸² It refers to a student from non-EU countries.

APS, problems during document review, economic expenditure and time costs. These impacts are not only a challenge for the third country students, but also aggravate the work's complexity of the admission department. Whether these additional admission procedures can facilitate the selection of qualified students or not, is worthy of being discussed.

The above illustration emphasizes the influences of admission entrance policies on the non-EU students. In regard to the impact of this admission system on Austria, the interviewees have expressed their opinions from an economic perspective by addressing the job market.

For Austria, I guess they earn money that comes first to my mind. Because I think this is not only about the Austrian education system, it is about the whole Austria and government and everything somehow connected with each other. For this notarization of documents, I remembered I just paid a lot in euro, in my own currency, which is a huge difference. That is good for Austria. (Interviewee 6)

For local Austrian students, the places local students at university can be guaranteed. Especially some popular majors. It also has a protective effect on domestic market competition. (Interviewee 4)

When I was looking for a job, I applied for almost all law firms in Vienna. I attended several interviews and talked with my partner a lot. He said that he would not hire you and thought you were too expensive [...] Even if he hired me, I used two or three years to get you two or three big Chinese customers. He is not at a loss, but he is unwilling. He thinks the opportunity cost is too much [...] They talked to me frankly, very frankly, and said: I 'm sorry to tell you that the labor market in our country is so closed. He used 'geschlossen', this word [...] So I felt at the time that if I didn't go to university or Schulung, I would have no way to enter this labor market. (Interviewee 2)

It will be too arbitrary if we define these individual admission preconditions as one kind of discrimination. Since the enactment of university law should be subordinate to federal law. The starting point of a country's law is not to aim at developing special policies to discriminate against particular countries. However, from non-EU students' viewpoints, some regulations demonstrate a lack of fairness.

As the requirement of 'besondere Universitätsreife' is based on the applicants' citizenship, which means no matter where the students get their bachelor degrees, as long as they are EU citizens, they do not need to submit 'besondere Universitätsreife'.

The first complaint is about this regulation,

I think the citizenship part is super unfair. Because, like the Russian girl, she is pretty smart, it is such a waste that she cannot study the economy. I do not know why they do this. Because for economics, you cannot finish if you are stupid, but they can take them⁸³ anyway even they cannot finish it [...]. (Interviewee 7)

For Austria, because of the so-called EU Constitution, they let so many unqualified students in. But for high-qualified students from the third countries, they made this (refers to admission system) directly in order to limit your development. Because this division is not according to

⁸³ 'them' refer to student who has EU citizenship

majors [...], for example, I can accept civil law and international law of criminal are all classified under legal category [...] but the key is that you divided by nationality. (Interviewee 2)

Except for the 'besondere Universitätsreife', they shared their opinion on tuition fees,

If you as an EU citizen or an Austrian citizen, it is not OK if I pay for 850 euros, and you just 18 or 19 euros, this is unfair. I mean, in the US, everyone pays the same, there is no difference between US citizens or other siblings from the other countries. And they do not care if you come from the third country. Everyone is the same. (Interviewee 6)

And also, I think they also should be clear about, I give an example like the tuition. For me, it is ok, for me, the price is 750 euros or... I think the Russian girl has to pay the same. Because of Russia or something. Russia has to pay also 800 or 750 euros. If you are from the third country, if you are like from the poor country, you have to pay half, 350euro.⁸⁴ This is also like you know, If you do that I do not care, but like my friends always discuss that is unfair. Because they are also poor. You have EU and non-EU program, but EU like in my opinion, if you are an EU student, you pay the tax for that or your parents or someone pay for that, and this tax distributes to the country, then you have this welfare, so in my opinion, it is fair. Those people between non-EU. But then, if you make a difference between non-EU, you need an explanation, otherwise, they will complain about it. (Interviewee 7)

Based on the seventh interviewee's perspective, it is not hard to understand why the EU/EWR citizens can fall under the fee regulation for EU/EEA citizens. Because that not only due to the Bologna Process but also due to the establishment of mutual agreements between these countries. As the applicants' category has already been divided into two main parts – EU/EWR citizen and Non-EU/EWR citizen, it would be understandable if there were only two categories for tuition fees. However, among the non-EU/EWR countries, some developing countries can enjoy the same benefit with EU/EWR countries, which is not persuasive enough. No evidence could fully prove that a person from a developing country is poor, and a person from developed countries is rich. Accordingly, research indicates that the above-average proportion of international students from Eastern and Southeast European countries face financial problems (Zaussinger, Binder, Dibiasi, Litofcenko, & Thaler, 2016, p. 66). The rate of students from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, and Turkey has even exceeded 60% (ibid.). Nevertheless, those countries are not on the list for the 'exemption of tuition fee countries.

Additionally, for non-EU applicants who cannot get the 'besondere Universitätsreife', interviewee 1 and 5 both suggested that these students can try to apply for a master's program in English, which will be held once a year. Even though these English master's programs will be undertaken with a strict selection process as well, it could present an alternative for certain students.

⁸⁴ See section 2.3.1.: the first exemption-students from certain developing countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesch, Haiti, Laos, Uganda and so on are exempt from paying the tuition fee.

Conclusion

The empirical part combines with the previous theoretical section, analyzes the reasons for different admission requirements for EU-students and non-EU students. Through qualitative research methods – semi-structured interviews and expert interviews, the influences of special entrance requirements on the admission department and applicants from the third countries are summarized according to four aspects. It can be concluded that the lack of mutual agreement or cooperation could lead to obstacles for student mobility but may also be one of the measurements for reducing domestic educational resources pressure and protecting the labor market. Concerning the impact of a policy, whether its negative aspects overwhelm the positive or vice versa depends on the perspective of the analysis. For instance, from the standpoint of non-EU students, deficiencies outweigh the advantages, but for Austria, it may be the opposite.

8 Overall Conclusions

This paper starts with the introduction of special entrance qualification for non-EU citizens, takes the University of Vienna and Vienna University of Economics and Business as examples for listing the different admission prerequisites to master program for EU/EEA citizens and non-EU citizen at Austrian public universities. Through the explanation of the EU system, the precise requirement for non-EU students, and the definition of the third country are explained. Furthermore, a theoretical background is given for the conducted research. The Bologna Process in Austria provides one of the pivotal reasons for the existence of this distinct prerequisite. Additionally, the results of the qualitative analysis indicate that the Austrian public universities' admission prerequisites for third-country students could extend the application period, increase economic and time costs, and aggravate the pressure of the admission department. Apart from the negative aspects, favorable tuition fees make studying abroad an achievable objective, especially for students from middle-class – or even low-income families.

Based on the comparison and analysis, the European Super-state system benefits all the member states' activities to some extent. They have common interests, similar educational system, and more flexible personal mobility, which is impossible for the non-EU countries. As a consequence, reciprocal cooperation and agreement between the EU and non-EU countries are especially important. Under the premise of internationalization, conservative policy is not a sustainable way in the long run. What kind of system can cater to the internationalization trend, guarantee the quality of international students, and protect the country itself from cultural over intrusion is a topic worth investigating.

The advantages of international students for host countries is to some extent sustainable. As discussed above, they are the ideal workforce for the local labor market and contribute to local economic development. The role of the Asian international student market should not be underestimated. Active educational cooperation could provide a communication bridge between countries.

The focus of the admissions policy should be on the premise of being able to screen out outstanding international students, rather than using geographical division as one of the admission limitations. The barrier-free policies within the EU and many other agreements facilitate the connection between European students', but also exaggerate the risk of enrolling unqualified EU applicants. Many applicants with poor education get

access to the master's program without only a few restrictions, but dropouts or postponed graduations due to their inadequacy intensify the students' own pressure. This also applies to the host country's education resource. The role of international students is not only to promote economic development, but more importantly, to promote academic exchanges and the international development of universities and colleges, and to encourage students to develop a global mindset. "An international dimension to teaching is when referring to the diversity of learners in the classroom" (Catro, Woodin, Lundgren, & Byram, 2016, p. 424). The overly conservative admission policy will protect the local job market to a certain extent, but in the long run, it is not sustainable for the destination country's economic and academic development. Reports show that the aging problem in Austria has become severe: by 2030, almost everywhere (except in the cities and the outskirts of Vienna) the number of 20- to 64-year-olds will decline sharply; however, the number of people over the age of 64, will increase by around a third in most regions by 2030, and it will only become problematic after 2030 (Kluge & Kocher, 2019). As stated above, the international postgraduates play a significant role in economic development and also in the labor market. Hence, active policies to attract capable international students, including both EU and non-EU citizens, could relieve pressure on the future job market.

In the field of international study, simplifying unnecessary application procedures could reduce not only the pressure on verifying colleges but also foster student faculty's, and resource mobility. This cultural mobility will ultimately improve the world civilization because of the exchange and communication of research achievements. Higher education reform is a process that requires time and experience. This experience can be gained through the practice of their own country or can be taken from other countries' achievements and then be combined with specific national conditions. Only comparison and competition could foster sustainable progress.

9 The Future Review

The research of this paper on the topic of admission policy still has certain limitations. The researching scope focuses mainly on master's programs. As the currently existing Austrian admission prerequisites for master's programs for non-EU students limited the enrolled student's number from the third countries, so the interviewee selection for semi-structured interviews had no plenty of choices. Thus, in this aspect, there is more space for further research. Furthermore, the attractiveness of higher education in a country is reflected in various aspects. Admission conditions are only one of them. Besides the actual economic strength, political situation, university capacity, and education system of each country are different. Factors affecting admissions could thus be compared in a deeper dimension. This paper merely pointed out some existing special admission preconditions and analyzed the meaning, impact, and necessity of its existence.

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12 Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
APPEAR	The Austrian Partnership Program in Higher Education and Research for Development
APS	Akademische Prüfstelle
AStA	Die studentische Selbstverwaltung
ASVG	Allgemeines Sozialversicherungsgesetz
BMBWF	Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung.
BRI	Belt and Road
CEEPUS	The Central European Exchange Program for University Studies
CEFR	The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DSH	Deutschen Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang
EAEC	European Atomic Energy Community
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EEA	The European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EMJMD	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
EPU	Eurasia Pacific Uninet
EU	The European Union
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test
GPA	Grade Point Average
GRE	General Record Examination

ICM	International Cooperation and Mobility
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LST	Law, Science and Technology Certificate
NC	Numerus Clausus
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OeAD	Österreichische Austauschdienst
ÖH	Österreichische Hochschüler_innenschaft
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TOEFL	Test of English for International Communication
WTO	World Trade Organization
WU	Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien

Appendix A

Enrolment of international students by origin. Level of Education: Total tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5 to 8)

Dataset: Enrolment of international students by origin

		Sex	Total	
		Level of education	Total tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5 to 8)	
		Category of education	All educational programs	
		Year	2017	
		Unit	Persons	
Country		Austria	Germany	
Country of origin				
Rest of the World		73 964	258 873	
Total	North American countries	826	7 228	
	North American countries	North America not allocated	0	601
		Bermuda	0	0
		Canada	121	917
		United States	705	5 710
	Latin America & Carribean	1 150	12 631	
	Latin America & Carribean	Latin America & Carribean not allocated	0	803
		Antigua and Barbuda	1	1
		Anguilla	0	0
		Argentina	68	541
		Aruba	0	1
		Barbados	1	4
		Bolivia	13	217
		Brazil	208	2 575
		Bahamas	1	2
		Belize	1	3
		Chile	52	770
		Colombia	215	2 286
		Costa Rica	25	182
		Cuba	20	106
		Curacao	0	2
		Dominica	4	4
		Dominican Republic	6	51
		Ecuador	124	579
		Grenada	0	2
		Guatemala	48	122
	Guyana	1	2	
	Honduras	9	86	
	Haiti	1	15	
	Jamaica	5	26	
	Saint Kitts and Nevis	0	1	
	Cayman Islands	0	0	
Saint Lucia	2	1		

	Montserrat	0	0
	Mexico	156	2 458
	Nicaragua	7	59
	Panama	5	51
	Peru	94	798
	Puerto Rico	0	7
	Paraguay	15	60
	Suriname	1	5
	El Salvador	13	199
	Sint Maarten (Dutch part)	0	0
	Turks and Caicos Islands	0	0
	Trinidad and Tobago	0	19
	Uruguay	7	80
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	3	2
	Venezuela, Bolivarian Republic	45	511
	Virgin Islands, British	0	0
	Europe	61 417	100 367
	Europe		
	Andorra	1	4
	Albania	364	886
	Austria	..	10 631
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3 059	708
	Belgium	174	1 349
	Bulgaria	1 498	6 372
	Belarus	175	1 115
	Switzerland	928	2 843
	Czech Republic	491	1 293
	Germany	28 474	..
	Denmark	69	427
	Europe not allocated	0	10 994
	Estonia	62	398
	Spain	552	5 505
	Finland	139	906
	France	530	7 057
	United Kingdom	807	2 255
	Gibraltar	0	4
	Greece	559	2 929
	Croatia	1 065	560
	Hungary	2 221	1 798
	Ireland	90	511
	Iceland	12	95
	Italy	8 741	6 929
	Liechtenstein	157	27
	Lithuania	78	751
	Luxembourg	1 004	4 126
	Latvia	80	639
	Monaco	0	0
	Moldova, Republic of	109	708
	Montenegro	119	88
	North Macedonia	283	447

	Malta	3	29
	Netherlands	351	1 377
	Norway	61	420
	Poland	816	4 710
	Portugal	112	692
	Romania	1 254	2 359
	Serbia	2 214	792
	Russian Federation	1 390	9 620
	Sweden	130	623
	Slovenia	787	425
	Slovak Republic	1 099	794
	San Marino	0	2
	Ukraine	1 357	6 148
	Holy See (Vatican City State)	5	21
	Africa	1 090	23 641
	Africa		
	Angola	3	11
	Burkina Faso	8	53
	Burundi	4	16
	Benin	2	84
	Botswana	2	9
	Congo, the Democratic Republic of the	18	54
	Central African Republic	0	6
	Congo	4	44
	Cote d`Ivoire	11	165
	Cameroon	35	7 050
	Cape Verde	2	8
	Djibouti	0	3
	Algeria	25	169
	Egypt	326	2 473
	Eritrea	3	39
	Ethiopia	44	288
	Africa not allocated	0	1 203
	Gabon	0	132
	Ghana	19	601
	Gambia	6	17
	Guinea	4	125
	Equatorial Guinea	1	1
	Guinea-Bissau	0	0
	Kenya	59	350
	Comoros	0	5
	Liberia	0	12
	Lesotho	0	3
	Libya	81	183
	Morocco	40	3 097
	Madagascar	6	68
	Mali	1	22
	Mauritania	0	67
	Mauritius	2	82
	Malawi	4	10
	Mozambique	5	24
	Namibia	6	75
	Niger	2	12

		Nigeria	95	1 266
		Rwanda	9	125
		Seychelles	1	5
		Sudan	28	133
		Sierra Leone	4	24
		Senegal	8	149
		Somalia	21	13
		South Sudan	0	8
		Sao Tome and Principe	0	0
		Swaziland	1	4
		Chad	1	14
		Togo	7	256
		Tunisia	95	4 286
		Tanzania, United Republic of	11	92
		Uganda	17	136
		South Africa	67	329
		Zambia	4	29
		Zimbabwe	5	211
	Oceania		123	1 106
	Oceania	Australia	87	826
		Cook Islands	0	0
		Fiji	0	1
		Micronesia, Federated States of	0	0
		Kiribati	0	2
		Marshall islands	0	1
		Nauru	0	0
		Niue	0	0
		New Zealand	35	165
		Oceania not allocated	0	103
		Papua New Guinea	1	1
		Palau	0	6
		Solomon Islands	0	0
		Tokelau	0	1
		Tonga	0	0
		Tuvalu	0	0
		Vanuatu	0	0
		Samoa	0	0
	Asia		7 430	97 477
	Asia	United Arab Emirates	38	354
		Afghanistan	57	333
		Armenia	61	615
		Azerbaijan	90	712
		Bangladesh	73	2 311
		Bahrain	7	39
		Brunei Darussalam	0	14
		Bhutan	5	6
		China	577	27 765
		Cyprus	42	745
		Georgia	160	1 874
		Hong Kong, China	0	99
		Indonesia	66	2 394
		Israel	120	1 576

	India	382	13 387
	Iraq	85	303
	Iran, Islamic Republic of	1 466	4 846
	Jordan	40	1 020
	Japan	132	1 816
	Kyrgyzstan	56	477
	Cambodia	6	36
	Korea, Democratic People`s Republic of	6	51
	Korea, Republic of	150	4 825
	Kuwait	5	45
	Kazakhstan	271	750
	Lao People`s Democratic Republic	1	10
	Lebanon	38	742
	Sri Lanka	9	157
	Macao	0	9
	Malaysia	29	1 018
	Maldives	0	4
	Mongolia	170	395
	Myanmar	6	58
	Nepal	44	904
	Oman	61	64
	Pakistan	150	3 647
	Palestine, State of	0	1 103
	Philippines	50	184
	Qatar	3	27
	Saudi Arabia	63	353
	Singapore	14	413
	Syrian Arab Republic	269	4 379
	Tajikistan	14	125
	Thailand	69	544
	Timor-Leste	0	0
	Turkey	2 405	6 074
	Turkmenistan	9	59
	Uzbekistan	41	651
	Viet Nam	89	2 380
	Yemen	9	570
	Asia not allocated	0	7 214
	Rest of the World (non allocated geographically)	1 928	16 423
OECD total		52 543	86 906

Data extracted on 18 Jan 2020 09:52 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat

Legend:

M:	Missing value; data cannot exist
x:	Data included in another category
w:	Includes data from another category
z:	Not applicable

Appendix B

Enrolment of international students by origin. Level of Education: Total tertiary education (ISCED 2011 level 7)

Dataset: Enrolment of international students by origin							
Level of education	Master's or equivalent level (ISCED2011 level 7)						
Category of education	All educational programmes						
Year	2017						
Unit	Persons						
Country of origin	Total						
	North American countries	Latin America & Caribbean	Europe	Africa	Oceania	Asia	Rest of the World (non allocated geographically)
Sex	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Country							
Austria	427	562	24 133	448	70	2 667	780
Germany	5 523	8 201	49 668	9 089	756	65 161	3 769

Data extracted on 20 Jan 2020 10:33 UTC (GMT) from OECD.Stat