



The Study.EU Country Ranking 2018

Which are the best countries for international students?



Your gateway to universities in Europe

Student mobility trends in Europe



Europe's higher education landscape is continuously becoming more international. The European Union's landmark programme, Erasmus+, celebrated its 30th anniversary last year – and set a new all-time record with 300,000 students partaking in an academic exchange. The same is true for full-time students: More than 700,000 Europeans were enrolled at university in another European country. ([EUobserver](#), 7 Nov 2017)

In our 2017 Country Ranking, we ranked Germany as the #1 destination of choice for international students for its remarkable mix of world-class education at no or almost no fees. And the students seem to agree with us: Three years ahead of schedule, “Germany has surpassed its long-term goal of hosting 350,000 international students”, reaching 358,000 in total. ([PIE News](#), 30 Nov 2017)

While many other countries are continuing or intensifying their efforts to open up their universities by rapidly expanding their English-taught offerings, some are hesitant.

For instance, Denmark's right-leaning government opposes the trend, “wants fewer international students” ([Uniavisen](#), 6 Apr 2017); in the Netherlands, long a front-runner of internationalisation, concerns are voiced that Dutch students might be at a disadvantage ([DutchNews](#), 9 Jan 2018); and in Italy, courts recently ruled that no degree can be offered exclusively in English, effectively putting the brakes on a successful internationalisation process ([UWN](#), 3 Feb 2018).

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Student mobility trends in Europe



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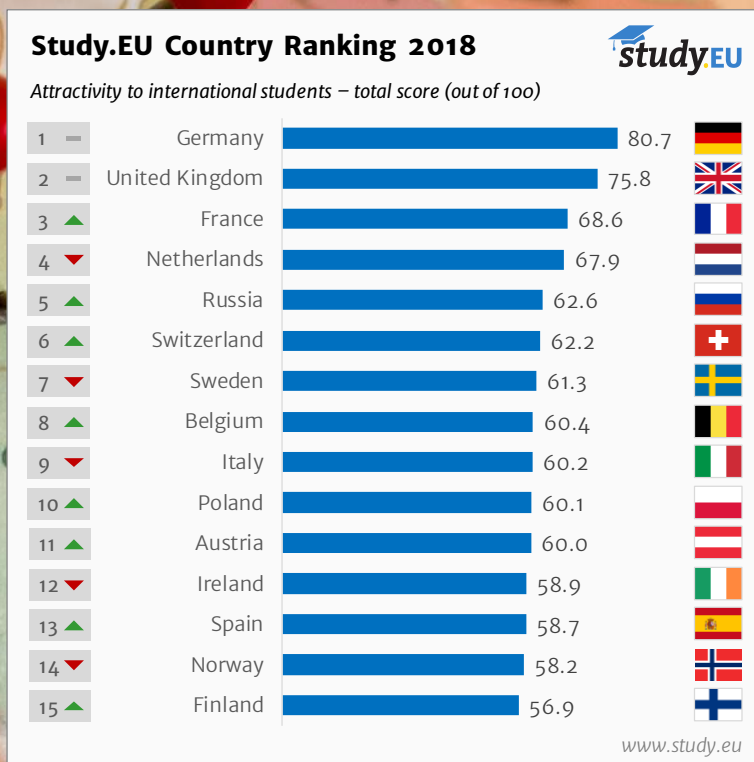
Brexit continues to be a source of concern among educators and students alike. While the EU and UK seem to agree to equal rights for students for the coming years, at least in principle ([ICEF Monitor, 13 Dec 2017](#)), students from the continent are experiencing last-minute panic: a recent rise in university applications from Europeans is said to be “last-minute rush to study at British universities”. ([The Guardian, 5 Feb 2018](#)) Meanwhile, the Scottish government “has extended the guarantee of free tuition for EU students to those starting in the 2019 to 2020 academic year”. ([BBC News, 1 Feb 2018](#))

Against this backdrop of exciting developments, we are updating our Country Ranking with its 2018 edition. The leading question remains: Which country is the best for international students?

The overarching trend is positive: Almost every one of the 30 countries we examined improved over last year. Be it with better university rankings on a global scale, an increased offering of English-taught degree programmes, or better employment prospects for international graduates: Some improved a little, and many improved a lot.

Read on to find out which countries rank best this year, and which ones stand out in each ranking dimension.

Overall rankings



The overall ranking consists of three separate pillars with differing weights: Education (45%), measuring the quality of education; Cost (30%), assessing what students should expect to pay for living and tuition; and Life & Career (25%), evaluating the quality of life and the chances of staying and working in the country after graduation. We explore each of these pillars on the following pages.

Germany keeps the top spot: Its unbeatable combination of world-class universities and a tuition-free public university system make the country the first choice for many students.

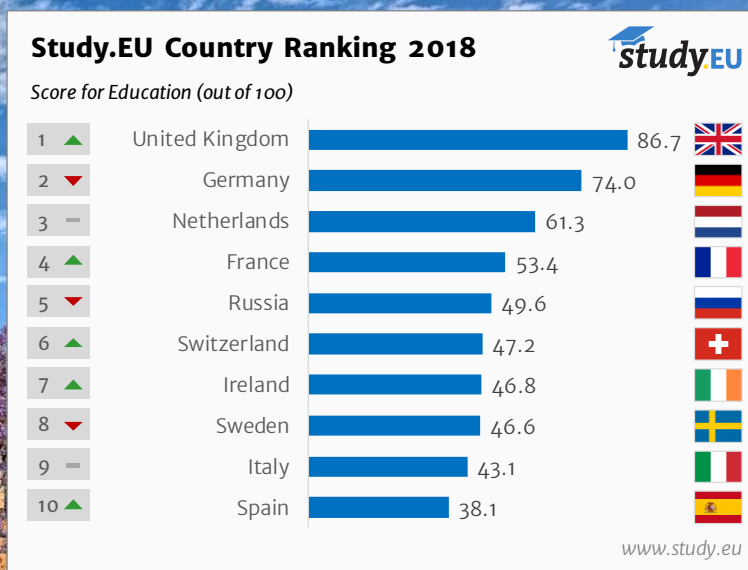
The UK comes in 2nd again. It takes the top spot for “Education”, and for “Life & Career” – but ranks 30th for “Cost” with high living expenses and prohibitively high tuition fees. The looming Brexit may have adverse effects on the country’s ranking in the coming years.

France moves up a rank, now 3rd before the Netherlands. Similar to Germany, France allures foreign students with a highly reputed, yet affordable higher education system.

Poland is the only new entrant into this year’s top 10. Already among last year’s most affordable countries, Polish universities have consistently increased the availability of English-taught study options. No wonder, then, that the number of foreign students in Poland has exploded from just 12,000 to over 65,000 in the past ten years.

Our analysis includes a total of 30 countries. We report the detailed scores for the top 15 overall and the top 10 in each category. Beyond that, many of the underlying metrics tend to become less meaningful, making distinct conclusions difficult.

Education: Top 10



Quality of education is the key factor in our ranking, making up 45% of the total score.

To assess the quality of higher education in each of the 30 countries, we first look at their performance in the top 800 of three established global university rankings (QS, THE, and ARWU). Here, the United Kingdom outshines all other countries.

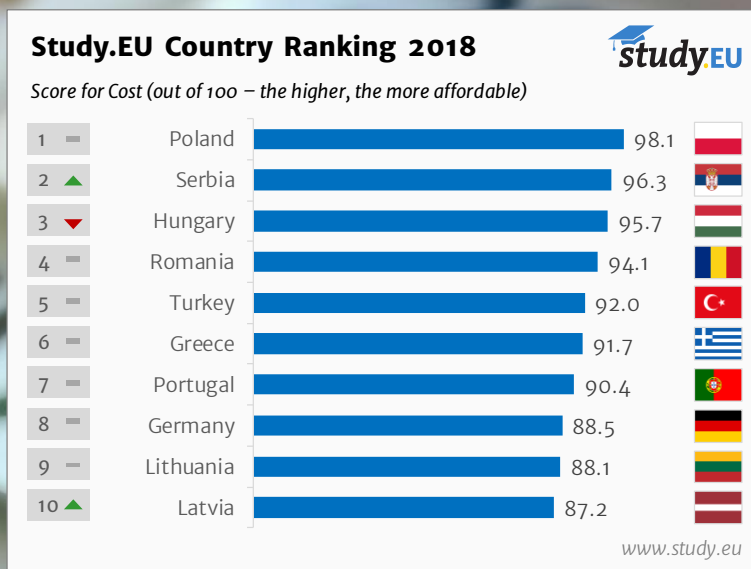
To alleviate an inherent research bias in these rankings, we separate indicators of teaching quality as reported by the QS and THE rankings, effectively re-weighting these ranking factors (primarily staff-to-student ratios and the results of academic reputation surveys). The top countries here are Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany.

As a third factor, we look at the number of English-taught Bachelor's and Master's programmes in each country. Maximum points are given for 2,000 reported study programmes, only exceeded by the UK and Ireland; although the Netherlands comes close with around 1,600.

The separate factors are weighted as follows:

40%	Performance in university rankings
40%	Indicators of teaching quality
20%	Number of Bachelor's and Master's programmes taught in English

Cost: Top 10



The affordability of a study option is a main consideration of most students, and very few are lucky enough to enjoy full scholarships. Therefore, cost is a highly relevant factor in our ranking, accounting for 30% of the total score. We take a combined look at the cost of living, including rent, and the average tuition fees.

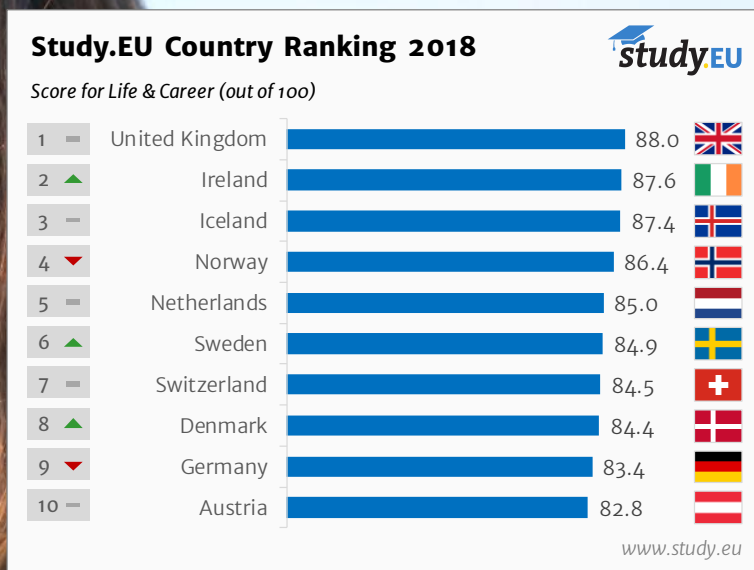
Looking at the top 10 most affordable countries, the annual cost ranges from around 7,000 EUR in Poland to around 10,000 EUR in Latvia.

Not much has changed among the most affordable countries when compared to last year. Other than Poland, Germany is the only country of the overall top 10 to score high here – thanks to its virtually tuition-free public university system and moderate cost of living. France, another country with many free study options, and ranked 10th in 2017, barely missed the top 10 this year by a handful of euros.

The very last rank in this section is claimed by the United Kingdom: On average, students should expect costs of around 23,000 EUR per year. This amount is lower than in 2017: The British pound has shed some of its value in anticipation of the country leaving the European Union.

Our “Cost” assessment can only give rough guidance, as it works with averages on a national level, and there are significant outliers for individual cases. A year studying for an MBA in London will inevitably be much more expensive than, say, an Anthropology degree in Cardiff.

Life & Career: Top 10



Studying abroad offers a wealth of life experience beyond the classroom. Most students that go abroad for their degrees plan to return home after graduation. Others choose their destination with the hope of staying and working in that country after university.

Reflecting requirements of both those groups, the score for “Life & Career” accounts for 25% of the total. In this dimension, we estimate the quality of life with indicators relevant to all students, as well as metrics that help judge the job market’s permeability for foreign graduates.

In 2018, we now include a score for personal safety in the ranking. Students, especially from outside Europe, are increasingly concerned with the safety situation in their host countries. Working with data from the Social Progress Index, this metric includes, for example, a country’s homicide rate, other violent crimes and incidences of political terror. Students coming to Europe rarely have to worry: Almost all countries in the sample are very safe in comparison to other parts of the world.

The factors are weighted as follows:

20%	English proficiency among the population
25%	UN World Happiness Index
25%	Unemployment rate for the tertiary educated
30%	Personal safety (new in 2018)

Data sources

The ranking analyses the following 30 countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA):

Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom

Our evaluation draws data and statistics from the following sources:

- University rankings:
 - [QS World University Rankings 2018](#)
 - [Times Higher Education \(THE\) World University Rankings 2018](#)
 - [Academic Ranking of World Universities \(ARWU\) 2017](#)
- Data on study programmes and tuition fees:
Taken and sampled from governmental and university organisations, e.g. Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (Germany), Campus France, Nuffic (Netherlands), swissuniversities, Svenska Institutet (Sweden) etc.
- Cost of living: [Eurostat](#)
- (Un)employment statistics:
[Eurostat](#), [OECD](#), [UNDP](#) (Serbia), [Ukrstat](#) (Ukraine)
- EF English Proficiency Index (EPI) [2017](#), [2016](#)
- [UN World Happiness Report 2017](#)
- Personal Safety: [Social Progress Index 2017](#)