

**Outgoing
student mobility
in Dutch higher
education,
2015-2016**

1. Outgoing degree mobility

1.1 Total numbers

In 2013-14 there were a total of approximately 13,700 internationally mobile students of Dutch nationality officially enrolled in a bachelor's or master's degree programme abroad. This amounted to exactly 2% of the total number of students enrolled in higher education in the Netherlands, putting the Netherlands' outgoing degree mobility ratio at 2 in 100 students.¹ Of these students, 9,100, or around 2-3rds, received a Dutch government grant and/or loan while they were enrolled abroad.

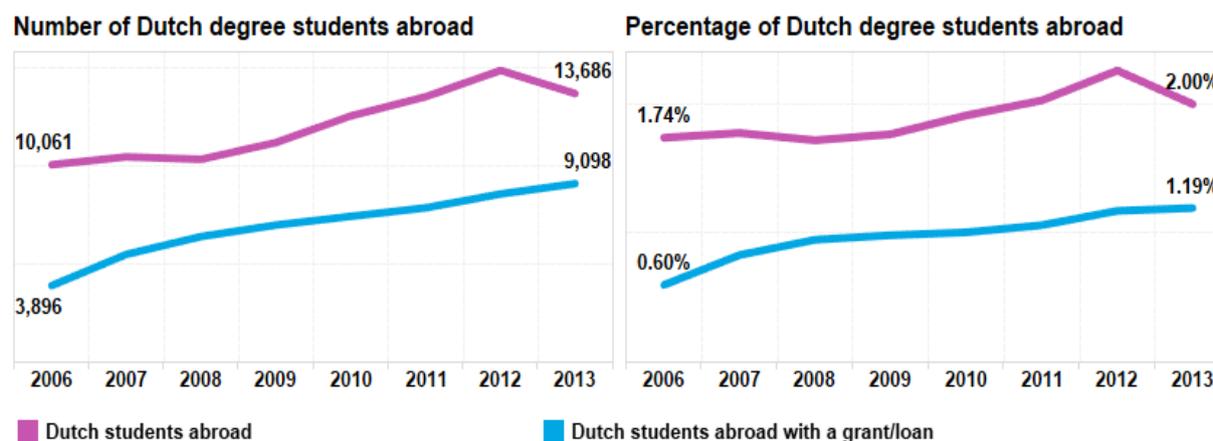


Figure 1: Outgoing degree mobility from the Netherlands over time

1.2 Trends over time

In general, the Netherlands has seen an upward trend in degree mobility since 2006-07. The sudden drop in the total number of outgoing degree students in 2013-14 was at least partially attributable to a data quality issue.² From the very stable trend that appears for the subset of students who receive a government grant and/or loan, we can assume continuity rather than a break. Also, we can see that the change from the grant-based studiefinanciering system to the primarily loan-based studievoorschot, which took effect on 1 September 2015, seems to have had no direct discernible effect on the number of outgoing Dutch degree students.³

Over time, the number of Dutch degree students enrolling in programmes at master's level has gone up. Since 2009, the number of students enrolled in bachelor's programmes abroad has grown 40% to 6,900. By comparison, the number enrolling for master's degrees has since grown 100% to 3,100. Furthermore, given that master's programmes average around half the duration of the typical bachelor's programme, outgoing mobility for '1st-year' Dutch degree students abroad is much higher at the master's level.

¹ Prior to 2015 (reporting year 2013-14), the OECD still used the older definition of 'foreign students' as an indicator for international degree mobility. As of EAG 2015, the OECD switched to the prior education/mobility criterion to bring its definition for this indicator into line with Eurostat, Unesco and almost all national bodies.

² 2013-14 is also the 1st reporting year to which the latest ISCED 2011 classification of education indicators was applied. The relatively sudden drop in an otherwise stable trend was caused purely by lower numbers of Dutch degree students reported in France and Belgium, indicating that these countries used to overestimate the number of mobile Dutch degree students enrolled in their higher education systems.

³ Unlike total outgoing degree mobility numbers published by Unesco, information on Dutch degree students abroad who have a government loan is administrated by DUO, and as such is always more up to date.

Dutch degree students abroad with grant and/or loan

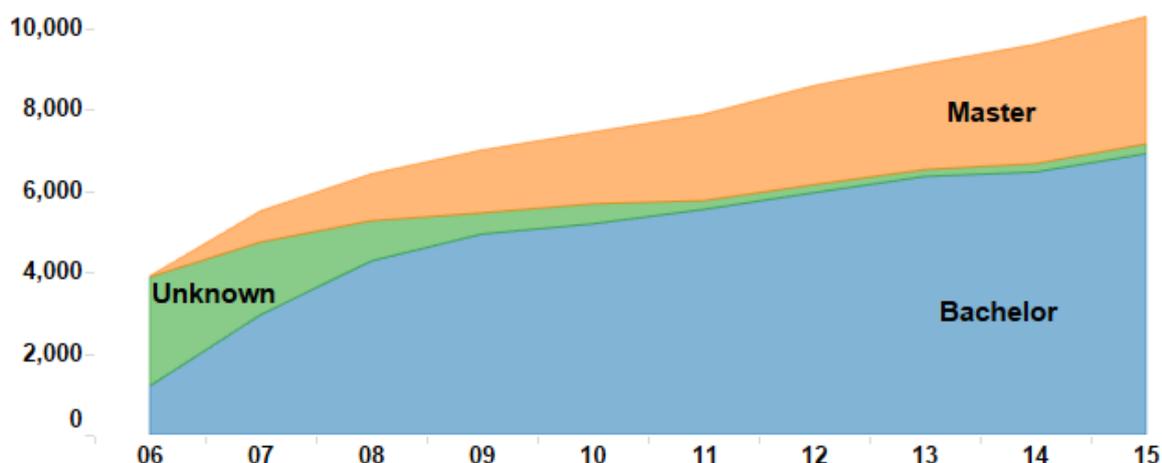


Figure 2: Outgoing degree students from the Netherlands with a government grant and/or loan.

Policy measure: The Dutch government's 2006-07 policy measure to expand possibilities for applying a Dutch government grant and/or loan towards degree study abroad has led to a clear and significant increase in the number of outgoing degree students making use of this option.⁴ To apply for a portable government grant and/or loan, students must meet certain preconditions.⁵ The success of this policy measure over the last 10 years can be used as an argument to support the requests recently made by student organisations (ISO/LSVb/NWS) to expand the portability of current study loan schemes and make them more flexible to adequately support outgoing degree mobility in the future.⁶

1.3 Destination countries, institutions and programmes

The diversity of destination countries, institutions and programmes receiving Dutch degree students with government funding has increased enormously over the last 10 years. In 2006-07, they were registered in 54 different destination countries and at 578 receiving higher education institutions, and enrolled in 3,000 programmes. By 2015-16 these figures had increased to 86 destination countries, 1,300 receiving institutions and 5,750 programmes. That said, the main destinations remain concentrated in north-western Europe and the US.

1.3 A. Belgium (Flanders)

The most important destination country for Dutch degree students abroad continues to be Belgium (Flanders). As a neighbouring country with the same language as the Netherlands, Belgium is in the odd position of enrolling more students with a Dutch grant and/or loan than there are actual mobile students from the Netherlands (5,100 vs. 3,500, both measured in 2013-14). This is due to specific regulations involved in determining when a student is eligible for state funding for study abroad.⁷

With a large number of Dutch degree students enrolled in this relatively small country, the number per institution is high. The 10 most popular institutions worldwide for Dutch degree students are all located in Flanders, and in 2015-16 the universities of Leuven (1,124), Antwerp (1,046) and Ghent (626) together enrolled over half of all Dutch students who went to Belgium with government funding. The most popular programmes are very much concentrated in the healthcare sector, both at the bachelor's and master's level (e.g. medicine, veterinary medicine, midwifery, psychology).

⁴ [//zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/dossier/30933/kst-30933-3?resultIndex=30&sorttype=1&sortorder=4](http://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/dossier/30933/kst-30933-3?resultIndex=30&sorttype=1&sortorder=4)

⁵ [//duo.nl/particulier/student-hbo-of-universiteit/buitenland/studeren-in-het-buitenland.jsp](http://duo.nl/particulier/student-hbo-of-universiteit/buitenland/studeren-in-het-buitenland.jsp)

⁶ EP-Nuffic's credential evaluation/diploma recognition department has been conducting quality checks on the level of higher education degree programmes abroad for 10 years now to determine whether such preconditions are met.

⁷ [//duo.nl/particulier/student-hbo-of-universiteit/buitenland/extra-voorwaarden-buitenland.jsp](http://duo.nl/particulier/student-hbo-of-universiteit/buitenland/extra-voorwaarden-buitenland.jsp)

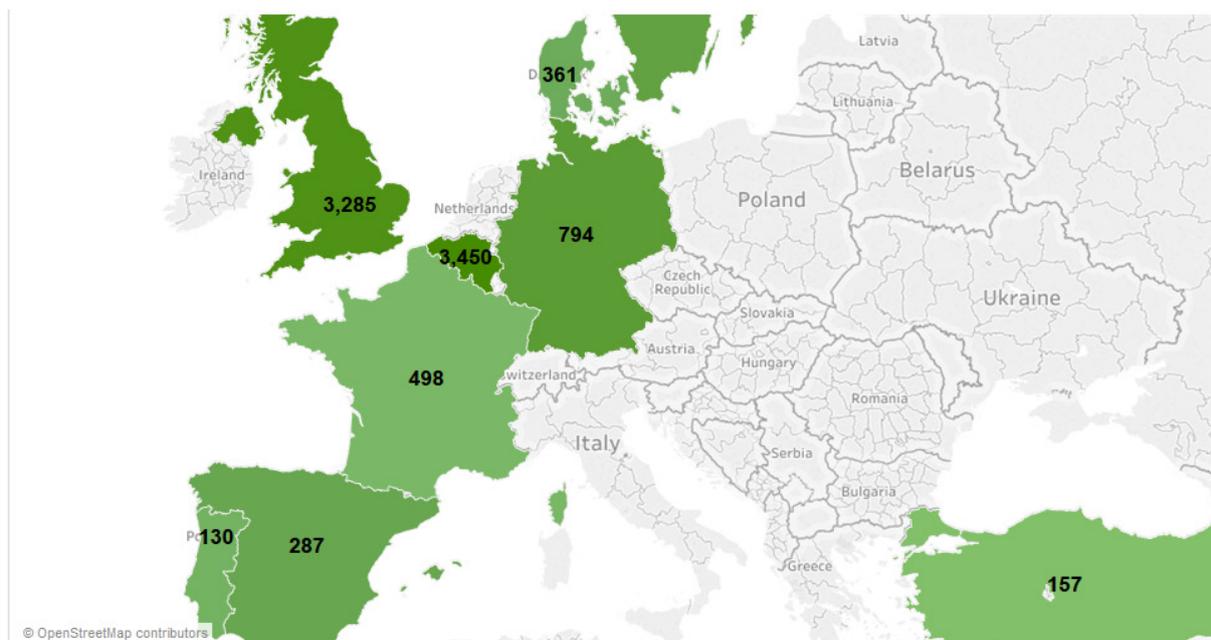


Figure 3: Top 10 destination countries for Dutch degree students in 2013-14, excl. USA (1,900) and Sweden (271).

1.3 B. United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has been the 2nd most important destination country for at least a decade. In contrast to Belgium, only around half (1,700 in 2013-14) of all 3,300 Dutch degree students in the UK use government funding. UK master's programmes are much more popular among Dutch students than bachelor's programmes. Edinburgh, Oxford, UCL, King's College, Cambridge and LSE together make up a quarter of all enrolments of Dutch students with government funding in the UK.

1.3 C. United States of America

The United States is the 3rd most important destination country, with a total of 1,900 Dutch degree students enrolled in 2013-14. Only 447 of these students had Dutch government funding, similar to the situation in the UK. This group most often enrolls in bachelor's rather than master's programmes. Liberal arts and sciences programmes are particularly popular. Dutch degree students with government funding are enrolled at over 100 different institutions in the US. Though there are strong concentrations in the south-western and north-eastern urban coastal areas (greater California and Boston areas), in general the destination institutions and programmes are quite diverse, reflecting the size and diversity of the US higher education system.

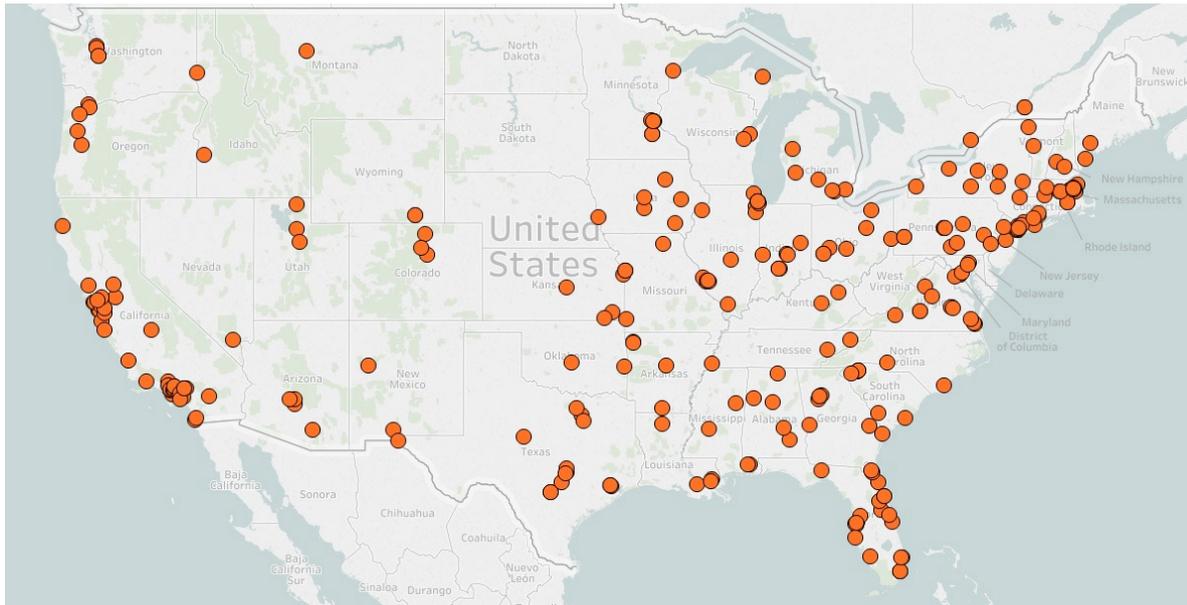


Figure 4: Distribution of US institutions enrolling Dutch students with government funding, 2015-16.

1.3 D. Germany

Last but not least, at upwards of 500 enrolments (794 in 2013-14), Germany is the 4th main destination country for Dutch degree students. Slightly less than half had government funding (326 in 2013-14, rising to 462 in 2015-16). German master's programmes are relatively popular and account for around half of enrolments with government funding. The RWTH Aachen, a top-ranked technical research university across the border from Maastricht, is the most popular institution (85 students with government funding from the Netherlands). This is still less than a quarter of the approximately 400 German students enrolled in engineering programmes at 1 of the 3 Dutch technical universities – in Twente, Eindhoven and Delft. Though the balance in the overall Dutch/German student mobility flow is gradually improving, there is still a very long way to go. Mutual credit mobility is largely balanced, but whereas there are roughly 800 Dutch degree students in Germany, over 22,000 German degree students are enrolled in the Netherlands.^{8 9}

After the 2012 political debate on this imbalance, the number of German degree students in the Netherlands began to decline, especially at universities of applied sciences.¹⁰ In June 2013 the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the DAAD and the University of Amsterdam together established a 'German Desk' (*Duitslanddesk*) at the DIA/UvA aimed at encouraging Dutch students to study in Germany. Thus far, this is the only instance in the Netherlands where a combination of stakeholders including the Ministry of Education has invited a party from another country (DAAD) to actively recruit Dutch students to study abroad.

Policy measure: To boost the outgoing mobility, and especially outgoing degree mobility, of Dutch students it would be worthwhile to look to other countries and stakeholders that have a similar interest in recruiting Dutch students to their higher education institutions. Best suited would be countries with advanced higher education systems in the EU and Schengen Zone such as France, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Poland. At the very least, the Netherlands could support selected stakeholders in these countries with relevant information on which students to target and through which channels and media.

⁸ For a legal perspective on balancing international student mobility flows, see Hoogenboom, A. (2016), *Balancing student mobility rights and national higher education autonomy (International and European Law)*.

⁹ For data on student mobility between Germany and the Netherlands, see: www.studereninduitsland.nl/feiten-cijfers.

¹⁰ EP-Nuffic, (2015), *Drop in German student numbers at Dutch universities of applied sciences*. [Download](#).

2. Outgoing credit mobility

2.1. Share of graduates with study-abroad experience

Unlike outgoing degree mobility, which involves 2% of the total Dutch student population, international exchanges and work placements are much more common among students in the Netherlands. Annual and biennial graduate surveys indicate that within the 2013-14 graduate cohort, the average share of graduates with study-related experience abroad was around 24%. This figure was higher among master's graduates from research universities (Dutch WO, 26%) than among bachelor's graduates from universities of applied sciences (Dutch HBO, 23%).¹¹

2.2 Share of graduates with study-abroad experience by sector and field of study

Students in some fields of study have much higher outgoing credit mobility than in others. This share is greatest in the agriculture and environment sector, where approximately 3 in 5 graduates has experience abroad, mostly work placements. Students in economics and business and arts and culture programmes have above average mobility at universities of applied sciences, and below average mobility at research universities. Engineering and healthcare students show the opposite trend, with below average mobility at universities of applied sciences and above average mobility at research universities. Science students have slightly above average mobility. Students in human and social sciences, law, and education programmes score lowest on outgoing credit mobility. The low mobility of education (mainly teacher training) students is worrying, given that they are the teachers of tomorrow and will have to deal with an increasingly diverse mix of pupils in increasingly international classrooms and equip those pupils to become the world citizens of the future.

Policy measure: There is a clear need for more international activities in teacher training programmes in the Netherlands. Such activities should encompass not only student mobility but also, crucially, more opportunities for study exchanges and work placements abroad. Apart from the existing CILO network for internationalisation in teacher training, other education sector networks also have an important role to play.¹²

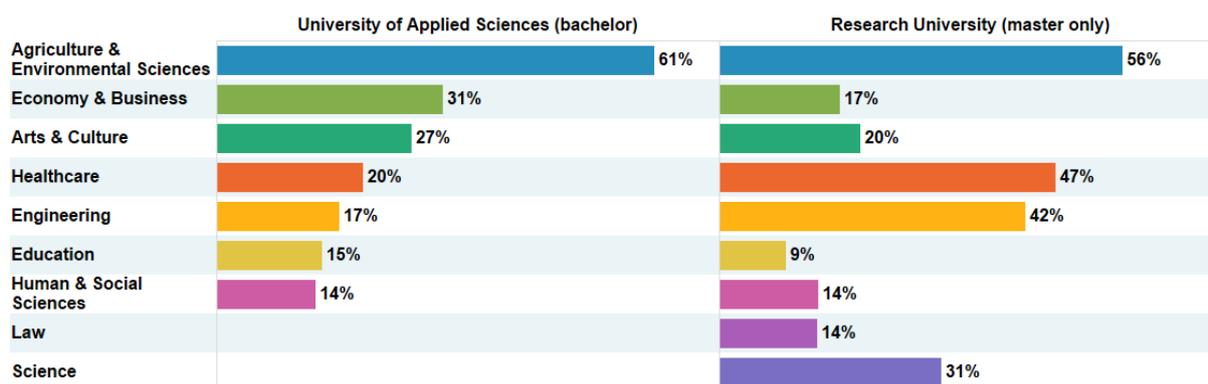


Figure 5: Outgoing credit mobility by field of study, based on recent graduate surveys (2013-14 cohort).

2.3. Study exchanges and work placements

Among universities of applied sciences graduates with study-abroad experience, 55% indicate that they did a work placement abroad, 26% did a study exchange, and the remaining 19% did both. Whether the last group did both during a single stay or multiple stays abroad ('mobilities') is not known. Worth noting is that agriculture and environment students take part in a much higher share of work placements abroad than they do in study exchanges

¹¹ In the research university graduate survey held biennially by the VSNU, graduates are asked to specify whether they went abroad for an exchange and/or a work placement, and whether this was during the bachelor's and/or master's phase of their studies. This leaves a problem in the sense that on the basis of a survey amongst graduates of master's programmes, one can only directly infer outgoing credit mobility in the master's phase. Hence, whereas the 23% cited for universities of applied sciences bachelor's graduates is very accurate, the 26% for research university master's graduates is a minimum assessment. Source: ROA/VSNU, 2015.

¹² [LOBO](#), [ADEE](#), [ICEL](#) and [VELON](#), most notably.

At research universities the preference for doing a study exchange or work placement differs depending on the phase of study. Around 50% of all graduates who went abroad in their bachelor's phase did an exchange, while 38% did a work placement and 12% did both.

In the master's phase, the majority of outgoing credit students (67%, or two-thirds) went abroad for a work placement, and slightly less than a quarter (23%) for a study exchange. The remaining 10% did both an exchange and a work placement. The prospect of a better position in the labour market seems to be a factor motivating master's students to do a work placement abroad.

Finally, there is a smaller category of students that has been abroad in both their bachelor's and master's phase. This category makes up around 16% of all graduates with study-abroad experience, but represents a much larger number of separate mobilities.¹³

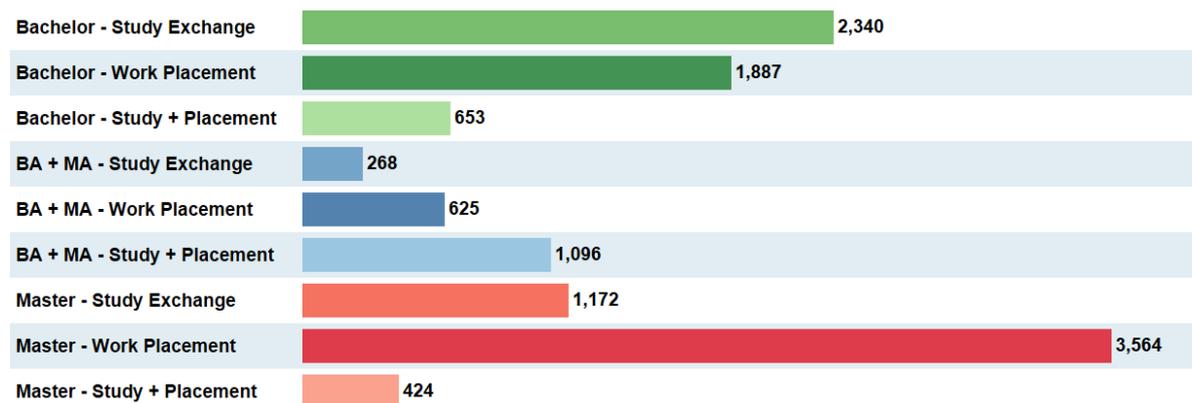


Figure 6: Number of research university graduates (estimate) from 2013-14 cohort with study-abroad experience, by phase of study and type of activity.

2.4 The role of Erasmus+ in outgoing credit mobility

The most important programme for outgoing credit mobility is the Erasmus+ programme. Since its inception in 1987, more than 4.4 million European students in higher education have organised and financed their study exchange and/or work placement abroad through an Erasmus grant. Where in 1987 the programme started with a total of 3,244 students, this number has now risen to over a quarter of a million per academic year. In 2013-14 over 10,600 students from the Netherlands used an Erasmus+ grant to fund their study exchange (7,200) or work placement (3,400) abroad. Thus, in contrast with total outgoing credit mobility from the Netherlands, students with Erasmus+ more often do study exchanges than work placements abroad.¹⁴

The share of Erasmus+ mobility in total outgoing credit mobility from the Netherlands can only be approximated. Given an outgoing total of 9,100 (35,000 x 26%) research university graduates and 13,800 (60,000 x 23%) university of applied sciences graduates in 2013-14, the approximately 10,600 outgoing Erasmus students in the same year represents a 46% share of total Dutch outgoing credit mobility.¹⁵ This estimate is on par with other north-western European countries.¹⁶

¹³ Students in this category actually represent at least double the number of mobilities (bachelor's + master's phase), and possibly even as much as triple or quadruple (exchange + work placement in both bachelor's and master's phase). Students who do a study exchange and a work placement in either their bachelor's or master's phase also count double.

¹⁴ This most likely has to do with the origins of the Erasmus programme, which lie in structuring and institutionalising bilateral study exchanges between partner universities within the EU.

¹⁵ Total numbers of graduates obtained from statline.cbs.nl. This approximation assumes relative stability in outgoing credit mobility trends. The estimate of total outgoing credit mobility would be higher if not only graduates but also student dropouts were counted, or if the multiple mobilities of some students were counted separately.

¹⁶ The Eurostudent.V research report arrives at a similar result (45%) and also offers a comparison with other countries.

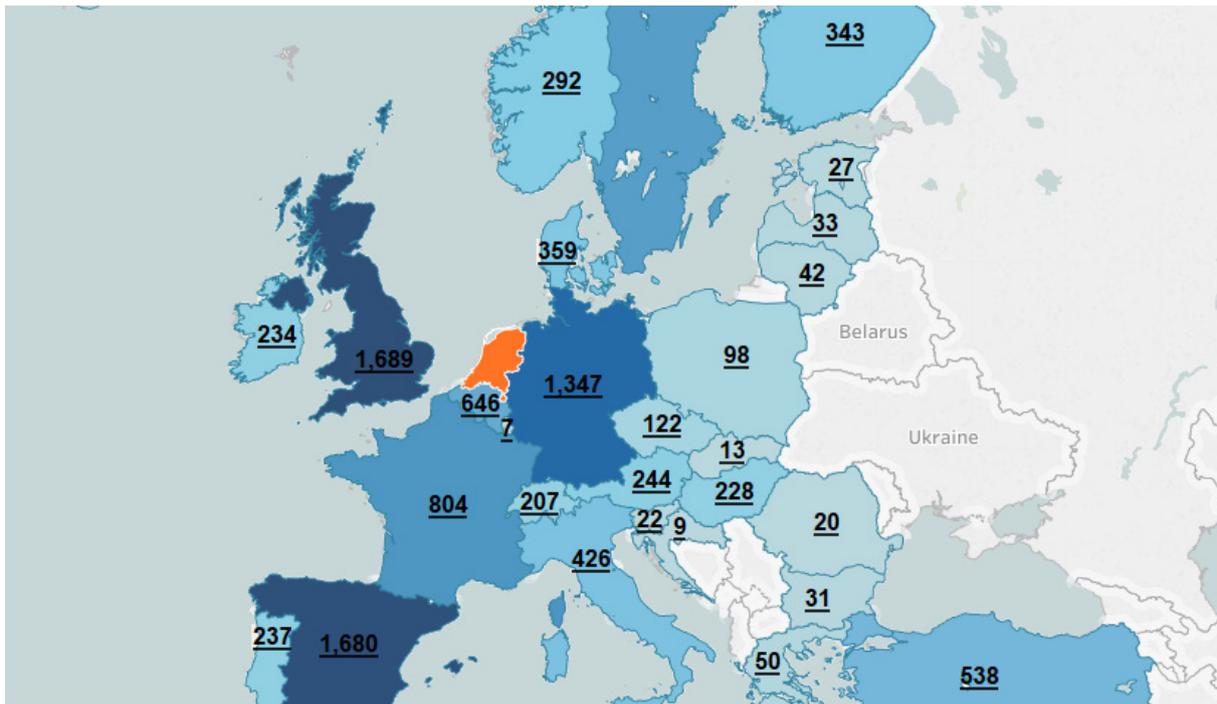


Figure 7: Number of Dutch outgoing credit students doing study exchanges or work placements abroad with an Erasmus+ scholarship in 2013-14, by destination country. Iceland (31) and Sweden (739) are not included on the map.

Policy measure: Institutions in the Netherlands make relatively little use of the zero-grant option available within Erasmus+. Zero-grant students can use the full Erasmus+ framework of partner institutions, learning agreements and so on, but receive no funding from the European Commission. Their stay abroad is then financed through the national government, institution or an alternative source of funds.¹⁷ It would be worthwhile for the Dutch Ministry of Education, higher education institutions and EP-Nuffic to explore the options that the zero-grant offers further, as well as what additional sources of outgoing mobility funding may be available in the future.

2.5 Top destination countries

Figure 7 shows the most important destination countries for outgoing credit students going abroad through Erasmus+. The **UK, Spain and Germany** are by far the 3 most important, constituting over 40% of all outgoing Erasmus+ mobility in Dutch higher education. However, since less than half of all outgoing credit students use Erasmus+, this ranking has to be checked against the destination countries reported in the most recent research university and university of applied sciences graduate surveys. A country that is listed as a popular destination country in survey results from both sectors but is not included in Erasmus+ is the **US**, which ranks alongside the UK, Spain and Germany in popularity. Erasmus+ countries **Belgium, France and Sweden** follow in 5th, 6th and 7th place. The overall top 10 is rounded out by 3 non-European countries: **China, South-Africa and Australia**.

2.6 Top 10 institutions

The top 10 list of institutions with the highest share of outgoing credit mobility in the Netherlands is dominated by schools with a focus on agriculture and environment, hospitality and tourism, and engineering. **HAS Den Bosch** (97%) and **Hotelschool The Hague** (95%) are in the lead, both having an obligatory term abroad as an integral part of the curriculum. **Wageningen University** (63%) and **Vilentum** (58%) follow at a respectable distance. **Maastricht University** (58%), which receives the largest number of inbound international degree students, is the only non-technical university in the list at place 5. **Design Academy Eindhoven** (55%) is in 6th place, and the technical universities in **Delft** (52%) and **Eindhoven** (46%) are 7th and 9th, and **NHTV Breda** (48%) and **Stenden** (42%) 8th and 10th.¹⁸

¹⁷ In the call year 2015, only 334 students from the Netherlands used a full zero grant to finance their stay abroad through Erasmus+. However, over 1 in 5 (22%) of all outgoing Erasmus+ students used the zero-grant option in addition to their regular grant. The average duration of this additional zero-grant period was around 6 weeks. Some institutions employ this option more than others.

¹⁸ Overall top 10 based on the National Alumni Survey (NAE) carried out in 2015 among 2013-14 academic year graduates. This study is coordinated by ROA Maastricht and supervised by the VH and VSNU.

2.7 Policy measures in a comparative perspective

Different policies adopted by individual states and activities carried out by higher education institutions are very important in determining the extent to which students are allowed and enabled to do part of their studies abroad. The 'Mobility Scoreboard' issued by the European Commission provides information about which policies are currently in place and how countries rank on 6 different composite indicators relating to enabling student mobility in higher education.¹⁹ By looking at which countries rank high on any given indicator in the Scoreboard, it can be deduced what would be needed to raise the Netherlands' rank in that area. Therefore, all policy measures included in the Scoreboard are relevant:

A) *Information and guidance*: The Netherlands has a central strategy, campaign and web portals (www.wilweg.nl and www.beursopener.nl) aimed at fostering student mobility. Personalised mobility services are available at institutions. The one element the Netherlands does not have is a central monitoring mechanism for evaluating such personalised services, their reach and quality.

B) *Foreign language preparation*: Pupils in the Netherlands are reasonably proficient in foreign languages, scoring slightly above average on most measures.²⁰ However, in spite of the relatively modest amount of time and effort spent on foreign languages at school. Compulsory language learning in general is fairly limited in Dutch primary and secondary education, and few pupils have to learn more than 1 foreign language for any substantial number of years.

C) *Portability of grants and loans*: The Netherlands has an excellent track record on this indicator; see Section 1.2.

D) *Support for disadvantaged students*: The Netherlands has no monitoring mechanism in place to establish how inclusive student mobility actually is. Although student loans are in general dependent on means, there is no additional funding for learning mobility specifically for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.²¹

E) *Recognition of learning outcomes through the ECTS*: All institutions in the Netherlands use the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), but the 2015 ECTS user guide is not a basis for national legislation. Monitoring is in place for this purpose.

F) *Recognition of qualifications for student mobility*: The Netherlands has a fast and efficient credential and qualification evaluation structure in place. For the majority of EHEA countries, de facto automatic recognition is applied; in the case of Belgium and Luxemburg this is laid down in specific legislation.



WilWeg is the EP-Nuffic campaign to inform and motivate scholars and students to study abroad

3. Outgoing PhD students

There is relatively little solid information on the mobility of PhD researchers worldwide, including on the enrolment of Dutch PhD researchers at institutions abroad. The OECD indicates that in 2013-14 around 3,000 PhD researchers enrolled as students (ISCED level 8) abroad. The majority, around 60% (1,650), of Dutch PhD researchers abroad were enrolled in other OECD countries, and the remaining 40% (1,350) in non-OECD countries. Within OECD countries, Europe and the US together were the most important destinations for outgoing Dutch PhD researchers.²² More information is needed in terms of both detail (gender, country of destination, 1st versus continuing enrolments) and the career paths of PhD researchers.²³

¹⁹ Eurydice (2016): [Higher Education Mobility Scoreboard](#). See the [background report here](#).

²⁰ See Eurostat: [Foreign Language Learning Statistics](#).

²¹ The [universities of Applied Sciences](#), the [Ministry of Education](#) and [EP-Nuffic](#) all signalled this need for inclusivity in 2016.

²² OECD (2016), *Education at a Glance 2016* (Paris, oecd.org). Download [EAG publications](#).

²³ The [Rathenau Institute](#) is conducting a study on the mobility of PhD researchers at Dutch higher education and research institutions, both intersectoral and international. Forthcoming.

4. International context

With an outgoing degree mobility rate of 2% in 2013-14 (see figure 1) and an inbound degree mobility rate of around 10%, the ratio between inbound and outgoing degree mobility in Dutch higher education is approximately 5 to 1.²⁴ Whereas the Netherlands has long scored above the European average on inbound degree mobility, its 2% rate for outgoing degree mobility is significantly below the EU average of 3.3% in 2013-14. The top student destination countries – the UK, Australia and New Zealand – all score comparatively very low on outgoing mobility. Norway, Sweden, Germany and Switzerland are all significantly above average.

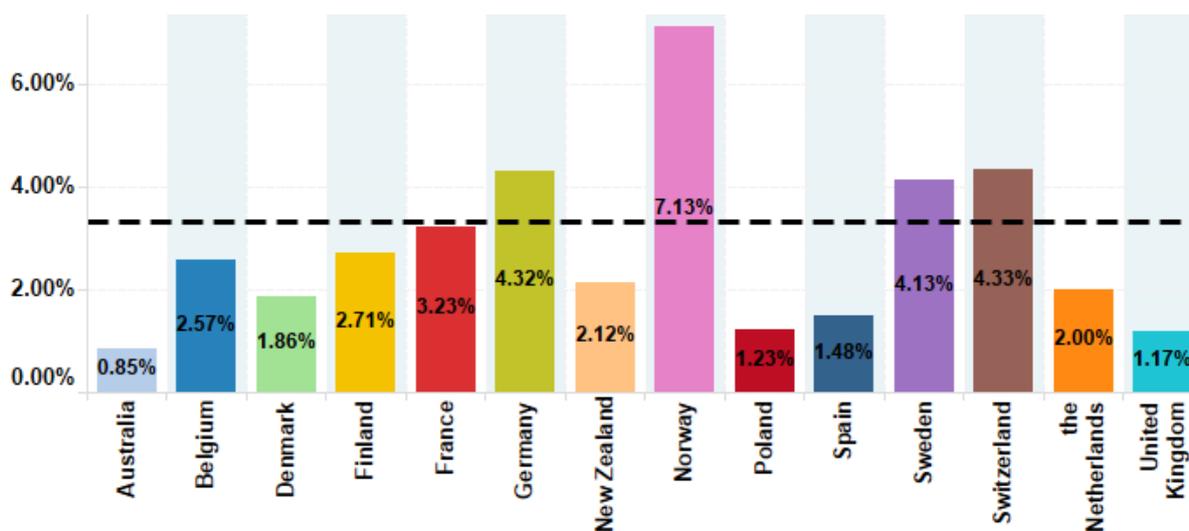


Figure 8: Outgoing degree mobility ratios for several comparable OECD countries, 2013-14

In the 2013-14 Dutch graduate population, 23% of graduates of universities of applied sciences and 26% of research university graduates indicated they had gone abroad for a work placement and/or exchange during their studies. Both these figures are above the EU benchmark for this indicator, which is 20% for 2020.²⁵ However, the introduction of the student loan system (studievoorschot) may lead to a drop in these positive trends, and close monitoring of possible downward effects is recommended. Belgium (Flanders) and Germany have set more ambitious targets for outgoing credit mobility, at 33% and 50% in 2025 respectively. In so far as European comparisons are possible, the Netherlands is doing above average.²⁶

Comparisons on the international mobility of PhD researchers are difficult due to data quality issues. It is estimated that the Netherlands has relatively high outgoing PhD mobility ratios compared to similar European countries, but rather low relative to its inbound PhD mobility, which is 45%.²⁷

²⁴ EP-Nuffic, Update: International degree students in the Netherlands 2015-16. [Download](#).

²⁵ Target set by all education ministers pursuant to the Council meeting held in Brussels in November 2011. [See the conclusions here](#). This benchmark includes both credit and degree mobility.

²⁶ See [Eurostudent V 2012-2015, Chapter 10](#) for comparisons. For a further analysis, see [EP-Nuffic \(2016, in Dutch\)](#).

²⁷ VSNU, [WOPI records](#).

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