

**9th ASEM Conference of the Directors-General of Immigration
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Selection of students

International mobility for students has developed to a large extent in the last decades. More and more European and Asian students take the opportunity to study abroad to extend their knowledge and expand their experience in other parts of the world. This system of international student exchange should be stimulated and in many countries there are already government policies to manage the migration of students.

There is already for years a tendency to harmonize the educational system with the Bologna Process¹ where the European Ministers of Education engaged themselves to change the system into a more European dimension, called the European Higher Education Area, which should lead to more quality and more mobility of students, professors and research personnel . The implementation measures of the Bologna Process are multiple:

- European system with easy readable and comparable diplomas and the implementation of the 'diploma supplement'
- Implementation of bachelor and master system (1st and 2nd cycle) and the doctor system (3rd cycle)
- Internal and external quality control of educational institutions

Also in the framework of ASEAN (association of southeast Asian nations)², Asian countries are taking steps to improve the cooperation in the region with following priorities:

- Promoting 'ASEANness' among ASEAN citizens, particularly youth;
- Strengthening ASEAN identity through education;
- Building ASEAN human resources in the field of education; and
- Strengthening ASEAN University Networking.

¹ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>

² <http://www.aseansec.org/19600.htm>

This open policy towards international students is however also interesting for people who do not intend to study but are interested in the easy way to emigrate. They present themselves as students but once in the destination country, they apply for the student residence permit without studying but often working in an illegal circuit or totally disappear.

To preserve the open attitude towards the exchange of international students, it is a prerequisite to undertake an efficient **selection** with transparent procedures that is making the division between the real students and the fake ones. There are different procedures possible but in all these procedures the cooperation between the country of origin and destination is imperative.

First of all, there are many ways to select students. In many cases the student arranges the enrolment in the foreign institution himself. There are also specialised agencies that are bringing students and universities in contact against payment and these agencies often are also implicated in obtaining the student visa. Between some countries there are agreements about the exchange of students (and in extension professors and researchers) where the agreement stipulates that students are selected or by the sending universities or by the receiving universities and this often in cooperation with the competent national authorities.

Personal contacts between the students and the authorities of the country of destination are a very good indication of the motivation of the students. These authorities are mainly the embassy personal but in some countries, specialists in international student migration can also contribute to an objective selection. These contacts can be done in the form of an interview about the background of the student, the motivating factors to study abroad, school results, plans for the future, What is also very important is the knowledge about the destination country to avoid that students have false prospects of the country where they want to study.

The **schooling background** of the student and especially the language knowledge also has to be checked since without the necessary basic knowledge, a student cannot take part in the normal schooling activities. Language should be tested orally and in written. The knowledge of the students is more difficult to determine since some students are going to start a study abroad but what is very important and what can be checked thoroughly are the diplomas that the students are presenting. General questions by the authorities of the country of destination and cooperation with the national authorities to check the authenticity of these documents and in some cases the background of the student are important.

There should also be attention for **schools** that are enrolling students without any background check. In some countries, the government allowances for the school are depending on the number of students that are registered and not the number of students that are graduating. This policy can encourage schools to accept students without paying attention to the motivation and background of the student. The government should have the legal means to proceed against these institutions which are clearly not following the correct selection rules.

The selection of the students before the start of the studies abroad is only one of the necessary measures. Once the student arrives in the country of destination, the national authorities also has to provide the necessary **information** on the rules and regulations, especially what concerns the residence permits and the possibilities for working. In many countries it is allowed for students to work a specific amount of hours in order to contribute themselves to the high costs of living and studying. All this information about rights and obligations can be provided by the embassies when delivering the visa but also from the student services of the universities and national migration authorities.

National authorities should also undertake the necessary **follow-up** of the students together with the universities and take the necessary legal measures when the students are not studying but are using their stay abroad for other activities like full time employment. They should only prolong the residence permit of the student when it is verified that the basic conditions like attending classes and passing exams are fulfilled.

Transparent selection procedures for students, in combination with information and follow-up, is the most efficient way to have an objective migration management for students. The countries of destination and origin should work intensively together in improving the practical cooperation, especially what concerns information exchange and the verification of documents, like diplomas and bank statements.

Questions:

- by which authorities are foreign students selected for enrolment at a certain education institution in your country ?
 - o University in sending country
 - o University in destination country
 - o Specialised agencies
 - o Government of sending country
 - o Government of destination country
 - o Others:

- What are the basic documents that foreign students have to present to obtain a university or college enrolment in your country?

- Does your country check the background of the students
 - o No
 - o Yes
 - o Language test
 - o Check of diploma
 - o Interview from embassy personnel

- Is it allowed for a student to work in your country?
 - o No
 - o Yes → unlimited
 - limited: hours / month