



The employment of foreign graduates of German higher education institutions

The BAMF's Graduates Study 2013

The main results of Research Report 23

Elisa Hanganu

Barbara Heß

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Abridged version

On the basis of an analysis of primary data, the present study analyses the employment situation of foreign graduates of German higher education institutions, as well as their socio-economic and educational characteristics and their assessments of their stay in Germany. The study covers evaluations of the data from the Central Register of Foreigners, as well as of two questionnaires which were carried out for the first time in 2013. Former holders of a residence permit for the purpose of studying who originate from third countries (section 16 subs. 1 of the Residence Act [Aufenthaltsgesetz]) and who are still resident in Germany were surveyed on a representative basis, whilst a non-representative survey was carried out among those who have returned to a foreign country.

The results of the evaluation of the data from the Central Register of Foreigners (version: 30 September 2013)

- Whilst roughly 236,500 third country-nationals had received a residence permit for the purpose of studying since 2005, approximately 165,800 (70 %) no longer held such a title as per 30 September 2013. Roughly 92,700 of them have remained in Germany with another

title, and roughly 73,100 have left the country, so that the proportion of those remaining among the former students is around 56 %.

- Roughly 6 % of the remaining 92,700 former students have a residence title for the purpose of seeking a job, 24 % to pursue an economic activity and 31 % for family reasons. 10 % have a permanent residence title in accordance with section 9 or 9a of the Residence Act and 10 % have another title. 19 % are currently applying for a residence title.
- Of the 16,000 individuals who had received a residence title for the purpose of seeking a job after completion of the studies in Germany and who no longer hold this title, 12,630 are resident in Germany with a different residence title than for the purpose of seeking a job, so that the proportion of those remaining is 79 %.
- Among all third-country nationals who had a residence title to pursue an economic activity (incl. research) at the time of the survey, 19 % have previously studied in Germany at some point. Those among them who continued to use the residence title for the purpose of seeking a job after graduation accounted for five percent.

Conclusions of the BAMF Graduates Study 2013

- A population of roughly 62,500 former students at German higher education institutions was identified, limited to 18- to 50-year-old third-country nationals. Once a full survey had been taken of those individuals who had or still have a residence permit in accordance with section 16 subs. 4 of the Residence Act (for seeking work after completion of the studies), as well as a random sample among further former holders of a residence title in accordance with section 16 subs. 1 of the Residence Act (for the purpose of studying), letters were written to roughly 20,400 individuals. 4,542 useable questionnaires were received via an online survey.
- The main countries of origin of the third-country national respondents are the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Turkey, India, Morocco and Cameroon.

Socio-demographic and educational characteristics

- The former students include the same number of women as of men. Roughly 93 % are aged between 25 and 40.
- 93 % of the respondents had successfully graduated in Germany. A further 79 % had already graduated abroad, holding a double diploma in some cases, but in most cases independently of the German qualification.
- The largest groups of graduates had studied engineering or the natural sciences, including computer science (31 % and 18 %, respectively). The largest individual subject group was that of business studies graduates, accounting for 11 % of graduates.
- Roughly 34 % of respondents stated that their knowledge of German was at least "good" when they took up their studies, and 91 % stated this as to their knowledge of German at the time when the questionnaire was carried out.

The transition from studying to work

- 85 % of the respondents are in work. Almost two-thirds stated that they were currently in full-time paid work. A further 7 % are working part-time, and almost as many are self-employed or working as freelancers. Whilst 9 % are in other work (gainful in some instances), 6 % are doing doctoral studies and 7 % are unemployed.

- 87 % of those respondents who were in work found their first job within one year of completion of the studies, and another 6 % found work within 18 months.
- Vacancies advertised on the Internet were decisive for finding a job in most cases, whilst 15 % of respondents stated that contacts which they might have established through earlier internships had also been vital. 64 % of the respondents stated that they served at least one internship during their studies, and 69 % of the respondents stated that they had had other work experience before or during their studies.
- The former students stated that, when they were seeking work in Germany, the obstacles resulting from their residence status (employers avoiding administrative effort, temporary residence) occurred more frequently than difficulties resulting from any foreign qualifications or work experience not being recognised. A much rarer obstacle was insufficient knowledge of German.

Employment

- 38 % of the respondents stated that they were working as academics in a MINT occupation (mathematics, engineering, natural sciences and technology). They are less likely to have temporary employment contracts, earn more on average and are to be found particularly frequently among immigrants from Asia, the Near East and the Middle East, as well as from Africa. Other academics (including legal and economic researchers and those working in social studies and humanities, as well as physicians) primarily come from the CIS states (in particular from the Russian Federation), as well as from the other industrialised nations (North America in particular), and they frequently work on a freelance basis.
- The proportions of graduates remaining in the country and their mobility within Germany after graduation differ when broken down by Federal Länder. The graduates primarily work in those Federal Länder which have a large proportion of foreigners.
- All in all, the former students are satisfied with their jobs. In each case, at least two-fifths of the respondents are satisfied or highly satisfied with career-related aspects (including prospects for promotion, as well as further training). The evaluation of structural and content-related aspects (performance requirements, workload, content), as well as social aspects (communication, teamwork) of working life was much more positive still.

Migration factors and intentions to remain

- Respondents considered the decisive factors for migration to be primarily those related to the universities (the quality of the higher education institution, gathering experience abroad), as well as professional aspects (career planning, level of income, general economic situation). However, individual private reasons were also important. Family-related factors played a lesser role, as did the existing knowledge of German or contacts with or vicinity to the country of origin.
- Respondents regarded the prime reasons for staying in Germany after completion of the studies as being work-related criteria (gathering work experience, level of income, opportunities on the labour market) and the quality of life in Germany in general terms.
- All in all, the respondents are largely satisfied or highly satisfied (81 percent) with their lives in Germany, and feel safe in Germany. However, only a total of 63 percent consider themselves to be welcome or very welcome.
- Almost one-third plan to remain in Germany forever. Another 43 percent are planning to remain for at least ten years and 19 percent between five and nine years. Only 7 percent plan to stay for an (initially) short period.
- An above-average proportion of nationals of all the CIS states intend to stay (86 % would like to stay for at least ten years), and a large proportion of those from the other European countries and from Japan would also like to remain (roughly 80 % in each case). In contrast, with regard to individuals from Turkey and India, the proportion of stays planned to be short-term and medium-term, at almost 45 %, is far above the average of 27 %.
- Somewhat fewer MINT academics intend to stay than other academics.

The results of the additional survey among returnees

Because of the method followed in the survey (including those who had returned abroad and were made aware of the questionnaire by former fellow students who have stayed in Germany), the survey results are not representative of the entirety of individuals who have previously studied in Germany and who then left. Having said that, the 451 evaluated responses to this online questionnaire provide a data-supported impression with the following information on the target group of returnees:

- One-third of respondents were EU citizens, who were not excluded from this questionnaire. 24 % of the respondents came from South and East Asia, 14 % from Latin America and 29 % from other places all over the world.
- Two-thirds of returnees have been in Germany for a maximum of two years for the purpose of studying. A total of 69 % have graduated in Germany.
- A total of 45 % of returnees have studied MINT subjects. This proportion is somewhat smaller than among the qualifications of those who remained.
- Roughly half of the returnees did not look for a job in Germany. Most of these had already planned to return home before taking up their studies in Germany.
- Among those individuals who were previously seeking work in Germany, the reason for moving away most frequently stated was that they had not found a job in Germany. Roughly 17 % of these individuals were affected by the expiry of their residence title for the purpose of seeking a job. The duration of seeking a job in Germany was up to six months for roughly two-thirds of the respondents, and between seven and twelve months for 27 % of them.
- According to their own assessments, insufficient knowledge of German or the lack of recognition of qualifications were only comparatively seldom an obstacle to finding a job. By contrast, time-limited residence titles were regarded as an obstacle by a total of more than 40 %.
- Returnees are just as satisfied, or even more satisfied, with their (previous) lives in Germany than those who remained.
- 16 % of returnees already have plans to return to Germany, and another 56 % could easily imagine returning.