

# FACTS.

9B/2018

express

## STATISTICS ON FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN 2017



### BACKGROUND

International strategy for higher education and research states that measures should be taken to enhance the international visibility and attractiveness of Finnish higher education. In this work, recruiting foreign students to complete their entire degree in Finnish higher education institutions plays an important role. In addition to interesting, high-quality courses attracting foreign degree students to Finland, this group of students also requires services that support living in Finland and integration into Finnish society.

Non-EU/EEA students have been charged tuition fees by Finnish higher education institutions since the autumn of 2017. Tuition fees change the position of higher education institutions in the

international education market. In this new situation, it is particularly important to monitor the number of foreign degree students in Finnish higher education institutions as well as the number of applicants.

This Facts Express publication discusses the 2017 statistics on foreign degree students in Finnish higher education institutions from three points of view. Its first part provides a general overview of the total number of foreign students and their distribution in different fields and levels of study. The second part focuses on new first-year students, as the possible impacts of the tuition fees are most clearly visible in this group of students. The third part looks at foreign applicants to Finnish

higher education institutions.

International student mobility also includes mobility periods, during which students complete a part of their studies abroad instead of the whole degree. Facts Express 8B/2018 focuses on these mobility periods in the 2017 student mobility statistics.

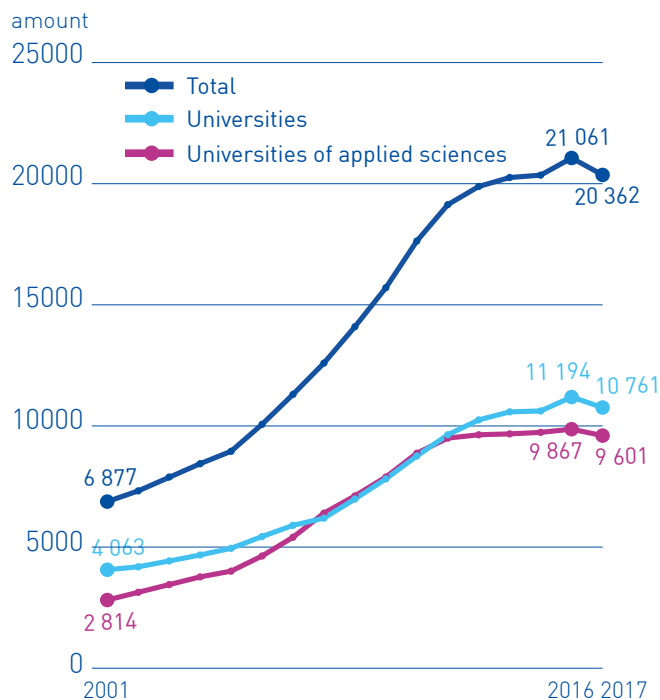
#### MORE STATISTICS:

- [vipunen.fi](http://vipunen.fi)
- [cimo.fi](http://cimo.fi) | Statistics on internationalisation
- Facts Express 6B/2018: What brought students to Finland, how do they find studying here? The International Student Barometer of foreign degree students in higher education institutions
- Facts Express 8B/2018: Statistics on international mobility periods of higher education students in Finland 2017

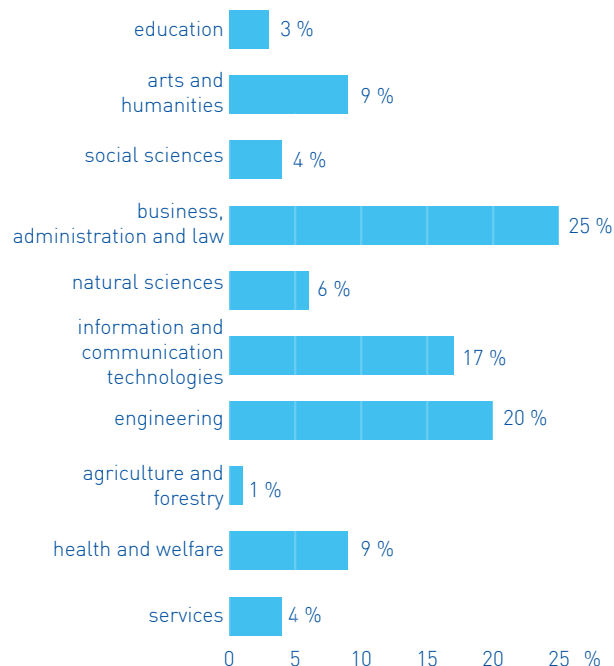


## PART 1: TOTAL NUMBERS OF FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS 2017

### FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS



### FOREIGN STUDENTS BY FIELD OF EDUCATION



### THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS FELL BY 3%

The total number of foreign students completing an entire degree in a Finnish higher education institution fell slightly in 2017. They numbered more than 20,000, a decrease of 700 students and 3% from the previous year. A decline was seen in the number of students at universities of applied sciences (UAS) and universities alike.

The proportion of foreigners in all higher education students also declined. Of students in UASs, 6.8% were foreign nationals and 7% in universities. However, the number of foreign students in Finland is still higher than the average of the OECD countries. According to the most recent Education at a Glance report, the proportion international or foreign students in higher education institutions in the OECD countries was on average 5.7% in 2016.

The higher the level of study, the higher is also the proportion of foreign students. Foreign students account for 7% of students studying a Bachelor's degree at UASs, 12% of students studying a Master's degree at universities and 20% of doctoral students.

### FOREIGN STUDENTS STUDY MAINLY IN PROGRAMMES LEADING TO A BACHELOR'S DEGREE AT UASs AND TO A MASTER'S OR DOCTORAL DEGREE AT UNIVERSITIES

Just under one half of foreign students in higher education study a Bachelor's degree at a UAS. A large number of foreign students also complete a Master's degree at a university or study in a doctoral programme, while they less commonly complete a Master's degree at a UAS or a Bachelor's degree at a university. Only a few foreign students complete a Licentiate degree.

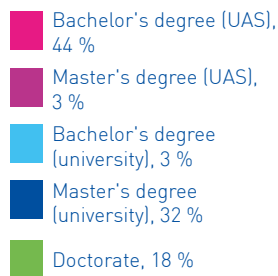
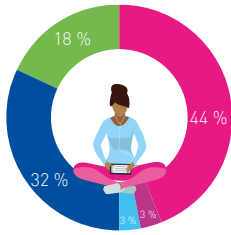
Foreign students mainly study in three fields in Finnish higher education institutions: business, administration and law, engineering and information and communication technologies (ICT). Especially those studying at UASs favour the field of business, administration and law. Although natural sciences as a field is not emphasised among this group of students as a whole, there are a large number of students of natural sciences studying for a Doctoral or a Master's degree at universities.

*In 2017, foreign students accounted for 6.8 % of students in universities of applied sciences and 7 % in universities.*

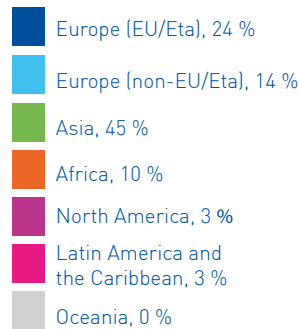
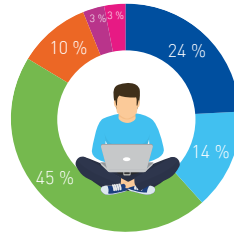


## FOREIGN STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS BY

### LEVEL OF EDUCATION



### CONTINENT



## THE MOST COMMON NATIONALITIES AMONG FOREIGN STUDENTS



|            | Universities | Universities of applied sciences | Total higher education |
|------------|--------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Russia     | 846          | 1714                             | 2560                   |
| Vietnam    | 616          | 1831                             | 2447                   |
| China      | 1083         | 526                              | 1609                   |
| Nepal      | 309          | 801                              | 1110                   |
| India      | 666          | 104                              | 770                    |
| Estonia    | 265          | 426                              | 691                    |
| Pakistan   | 542          | 136                              | 678                    |
| Bangladesh | 424          | 193                              | 617                    |
| Germany    | 373          | 244                              | 617                    |
| Iran       | 491          | 73                               | 564                    |



## MORE THAN 75% OF FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS WERE NON-EU/EEA NATIONALS

Only one in four foreign degree students in higher education are from the EU/EEA. There are differences between UASs and universities regarding where their students come from: universities have more students from the EU/EEA countries while UASs have more students from the non-EU/EEA countries in Europe. The proportion of Asian students at universities is slightly bigger than the average, while UASs have more African students.

The proportion of students from European countries and Africa has declined in the long term and correspondingly, the proportion of Asian students has increased.

The largest number of students come from Russia, Vietnam, China and Nepal. Particularly the number of students from Vietnam has seen a dramatic increase over the past few years. The number of students from Nepal and Russia has also increased, while the number of students from China has declined. Chinese and Indian students mainly study at universities, while Russian, Vietnamese and Nepalese students mainly study at UASs.

*The largest number of students came from Russia, Vietnam, China and Nepal.*

## FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS BY LEVEL AND FIELD OF STUDY

|  | Bachelor's degree (UAS) | Master's degree (UAS) | Bachelor's degree (university) | Master's degree (university) | Doctorate | Total |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Education                                  | 33                      | *                     | 64                             | 369                          | 138       | 606   |
| Arts and humanities                        | 190                     | 27                    | 255                            | 1002                         | 428       | 1905  |
| Social sciences                            | *                       | *                     | 37                             | 539                          | 320       | 898   |
| Business, administration and law           | 3331                    | 316                   | 107                            | 1006                         | 275       | 5036  |
| Natural sciences                           | 17                      | *                     | 59                             | 601                          | 608       | 1287  |
| Information and communication technologies | 1675                    | 92                    | 47                             | 1301                         | 425       | 3542  |
| Engineering                                | 1709                    | 89                    | 89                             | 1338                         | 776       | 4008  |
| Agriculture and forestry                   | 6                       | 5                     | *                              | 143                          | 125       | 284   |
| Health and welfare                         | 1202                    | 88                    | 12                             | 104                          | 477       | 1883  |
| Services                                   | 779                     | 38                    | *                              | 65                           | 31        | 913   |
| Total                                      | 8943                    | 658                   | 673                            | 6468                         | 3603      | 20362 |

\* Fewer than 5 persons

*Foreign degree students mainly study in the fields of business, administration and law, engineering and ICT.*

## PART 2: NEW FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN 2017



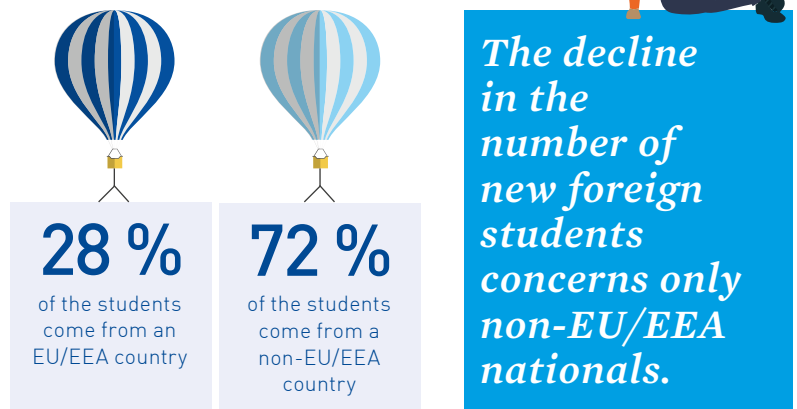
### THE NUMBER OF NEW FOREIGN STUDENTS DECLINED BY ONE QUARTER

Excluding those starting in doctoral education, about 4,150 foreign students started their higher education studies in Finland in 2017. The number fell by one quarter from 2016, when it was 5,500. The sharpest decline (37%) was seen in the number of new Master's students at the universities. The decline was less dramatic among new Bachelor's students at UASs, but their number was now also 17% lower than the previous year.

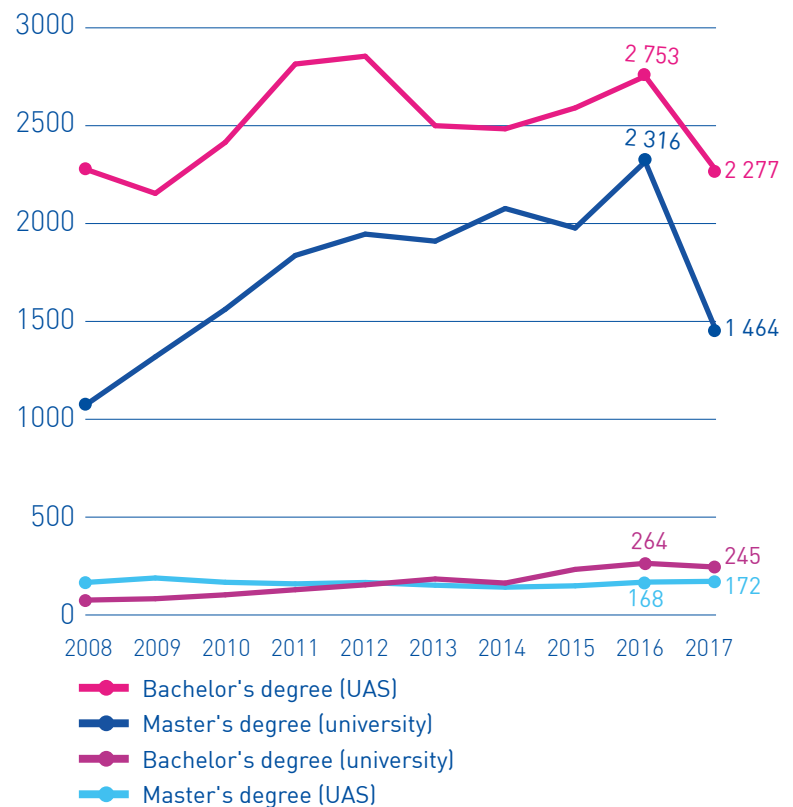
The most significant decline was seen in the fields of study with the largest numbers of students, to which also a lot of foreign students are recruited. However, in practice the decline was fairly evenly distributed between all fields and the number of new foreign students increased slightly from 2016 only in health and welfare.

More than 25% of new foreign students came from the EU/EEA. The proportion of students from this area was higher at universities (30%) than at UASs. Both the number of new students from the EU/EEA and their proportion in those who started their studies increased from 2016, when they numbered 910 and their proportion was 17%. The decline in the number of new foreign students therefore concerns only non-EU/EEA students.

By far the most dramatic decline was seen in the number of Vietnamese students. The number of new students coming from China and Russia was also clearly lower in 2017 than the previous year. These three nationalities are the most common ones among incoming foreign students in Finland. The fourth most common country of origin is Nepal; however, there was no decline in the number of incoming Nepalese students.



### NEW STUDENTS BY LEVEL OF DEGREE



### COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DECLINE IN THE NUMBER OF INCOMING STUDENTS 2016-2017

| Universities | New students in 2017 | Change 2016-2017 | Universities of applied sciences | New students in 2017 | Change 2016-2017 |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Vietnam      | 90                   | -163             | Vietnam                          | 329                  | -423             |
| China        | 177                  | -140             | Russia                           | 286                  | -202             |
| Russia       | 171                  | -113             | China                            | 127                  | -47              |
| Bangladesh   | 74                   | -95              | Cameroon                         | 57                   | -34              |
| Iran         | 60                   | -75              | Nigeria                          | 76                   | -31              |

### FIELDS OF EDUCATION WITH THE LARGEST DECLINE IN THE NUMBER OF NEW FOREIGN STUDENTS

|  | New foreign students in 2017 | Change 2016-2017 |
|--|------------------------------|------------------|
| Business, administration and law           | 1180                         | -375             |
| Information and communication technologies | 687                          | -344             |
| Engineering                                | 786                          | -313             |

## PART 3: FOREIGN APPLICANTS TO PROGRAMMES IN FINNISH HIGHER EDUCATION STARTING IN AUTUMN 2018



### THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN APPLICANTS STARTED TO INCREASE AGAIN

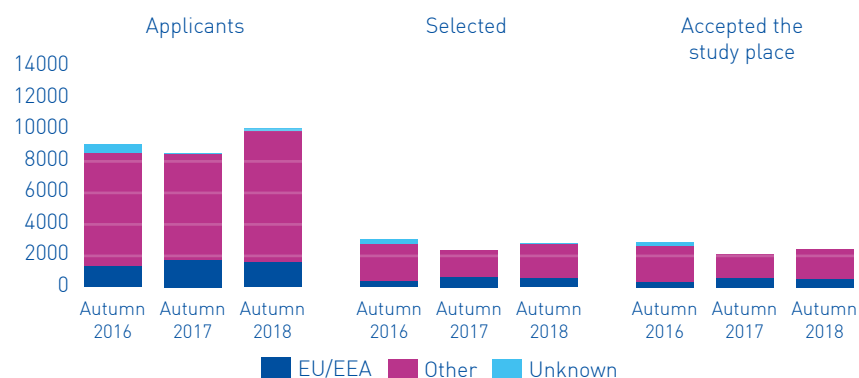
The tuition fees charged for non-EU/EEA students were reflected in the number of applicants to higher education institutions. Fewer foreign students applied to degree programmes starting in autumn 2017 in both UASs and universities than the previous year. However, the number of foreign applicants to degree programmes starting in autumn 2018 again saw a significant increase. There were more applicants now than in 2016, which was the last year before the tuition fees were introduced.

The number of selected candidates and those who accepted a study place increased from the previous autumn in both UASs and universities, but the level of autumn 2016 was not reached.

EU/EEA nationals accounted for 16% of the applicants to UASs and for 15% of the applicants to universities. The proportion EU/EEA nationals among the selected candidates was higher: they accounted for 20% of the candidates selected to UASs and for 22% of those selected to universities. The proportion of EU/EEA nationals has not increased

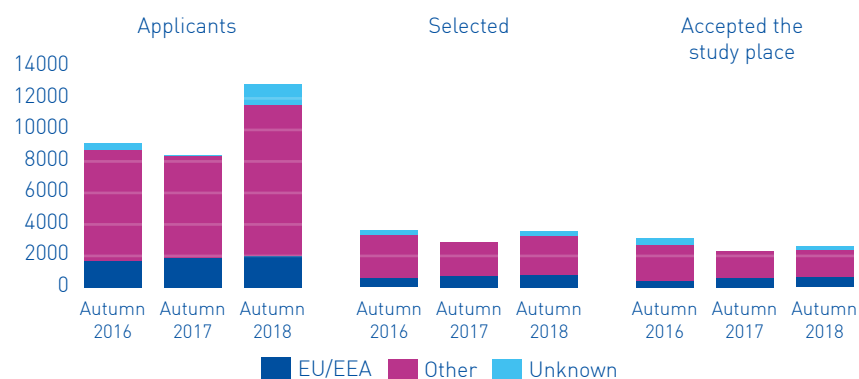
### FOREIGN APPLICANTS, SELECTED CANDIDATES AND THOSE WHO ACCEPTED THE STUDY PLACE 2016-2018

#### UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES



|                                | Applicants   |              |               | Selected     |              |              | Accepted the study place |              |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                | Autumn 2016  | Autumn 2017  | Autumn 2018   | Autumn 2016  | Autumn 2017  | Autumn 2018  | Autumn 2016              | Autumn 2017  | Autumn 2018  |
| EU/EEA                         | 1 333        | 1 727        | 1 582         | 371          | 655          | 567          | 345                      | 612          | 515          |
| Other                          | 7 219        | 6 719        | 8 371         | 2 371        | 1 663        | 2 191        | 2 212                    | 1 497        | 1 905        |
| Unknown                        | 520          | 65           | 164           | 309          | 12           | 30           | 285                      | 11           | 20           |
| <b>Total foreign nationals</b> | <b>9 072</b> | <b>8 511</b> | <b>10 117</b> | <b>3 051</b> | <b>2 330</b> | <b>2 788</b> | <b>2 842</b>             | <b>2 120</b> | <b>2 440</b> |

#### UNIVERSITIES



|                                | Applicants   |              |               | Selected     |              |              | Accepted the study place |              |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                | Autumn 2016  | Autumn 2017  | Autumn 2018   | Autumn 2016  | Autumn 2017  | Autumn 2018  | Autumn 2016              | Autumn 2017  | Autumn 2018  |
| EU/EEA                         | 1 692        | 1 876        | 1 973         | 568          | 716          | 781          | 443                      | 605          | 628          |
| Other                          | 7 006        | 6 465        | 9 569         | 2 737        | 2 133        | 2 436        | 2 276                    | 1 665        | 1 725        |
| Unknown                        | 486          | 43           | 1 354         | 355          | 3            | 355          | 382                      | 3            | 241          |
| <b>Total foreign nationals</b> | <b>9 184</b> | <b>8 384</b> | <b>12 896</b> | <b>3 660</b> | <b>2 852</b> | <b>3 572</b> | <b>3 101</b>             | <b>2 273</b> | <b>2 594</b> |

## FOREIGN APPLICANTS, 10 MOST COMMON NATIONALITIES

### UNIVERSITIES OF APPLIED SCIENCES

|            | Applicants in autumn 2018 | Of whom were selected, % |
|------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Nepal      | 1 031                     | 26 %                     |
| Bangladesh | 908                       | 30 %                     |
| Nigeria    | 893                       | 13 %                     |
| Russia     | 620                       | 40 %                     |
| Vietnam    | 580                       | 61 %                     |
| Estonia    | 448                       | 20 %                     |
| Kenya      | 428                       | 18 %                     |
| Cameroon   | 424                       | 25 %                     |
| Pakistan   | 367                       | 17 %                     |
| Ghana      | 356                       | 7 %                      |

### UNIVERSITIES

|            | Applicants in autumn 2018 | Of whom were selected, % |
|------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Unknown    | 1354                      | 26 %                     |
| Nigeria    | 972                       | 6 %                      |
| Pakistan   | 909                       | 22 %                     |
| Ghana      | 863                       | 7 %                      |
| Bangladesh | 676                       | 27 %                     |
| India      | 573                       | 32 %                     |
| China      | 573                       | 57 %                     |
| Russia     | 517                       | 51 %                     |
| Vietnam    | 351                       | 54 %                     |
| Iran       | 310                       | 25 %                     |

*EU/EEA nationals accounted for 16% of the applicants to UASs and 15% to universities. Their proportion in the selected ones was larger: 20% of those selected to UASs and 22% to universities.*

with the introduction of the tuition fees; rather, it has fallen slightly. On the other hand, there are also a lot of applicants to universities whose nationality has not been recorded.

Of the applicants to UASs, 43% come from Asia, 29% from Africa and 23% from Europe (both EU/EEA and non-EU/EEA countries). The distribution of applicants by continent is very similar in universities (37%, 27% and 21%), although the large number of applicants whose nationality is not known affects the figures.

Asian and European applicants do better than applicants from Africa, as more of them are selected. Asians account for 48%, Africans for 16% and Europeans for 31% of the foreign candidates selected to UASs. The corresponding figures in universities are 44%, 8% and 31%.

The largest numbers of applicants to UASs were from Nepal, Bangladesh and Nigeria, and to universities from Nigeria, Pakistan and Ghana. In addition, there are many applicants whose nationality is not known among applicants to universities. About one half of Vietnamese, Chinese and Russian applicants were selected. •

### DATA SOURCES

#### Foreign degree students in higher education institutions:

- Statistics Finland

#### New foreign students in higher education institutions:

- Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland | New students, students and degrees in universities of applied sciences. Education administration and Statistics Finland's data service contract, material 2.8 and 2.9, data retrieved on 23 October 2018
- Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland | New students, students and degrees in universities. Education administration and Statistics Finland's data service contract, material 2.8 and 2.9, data retrieved on 23 October 2018. The figures do not include doctoral education.
- Statistics Finland (new foreign students in higher education institutions according to nationality). The figures also include doctoral education.

#### Foreign applicants and selected candidates in higher education institutions:

- Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland | University of applied sciences (UAS) education | Applicants and selected candidates | Analysis report: Applicants, selected applicants and those who accepted a place in polytechnic education. Data retrieved on 25 October 2018.
- Vipunen - Education Statistics Finland | University education | Applicants and selected candidates | Analysis report: Applicants, candidates selected and those who accepted a place in university. Data retrieved on 25 October 2018.

The Finnish National Agency for Education is an agency operating in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture. It is responsible for the development of education, early childhood education and care, and lifelong learning as well as for the promotion of internationalisation.