

## English-Taught Bachelor's Programs in Europe

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The significant growth in English-taught bachelor's (ETB) courses has raised debates within the sector of higher education. In the Netherlands, a public debate on the impact that degree programs in English have on the Dutch language and the quality of education is currently taking place. A lobby group has—unsuccessfully—taken two Dutch universities to court for teaching too many degree programs in English. Just like Dutch, the local language(s) of many European countries are often not widely used outside their national borders. This has led higher education institutions (HEIs) to increasingly offer degree programs in nonlocal languages, predominantly English, as part of their internationalization efforts. The development started at the master's level and has lately spread to the bachelor's level.

This article is based on an analysis of the findings of the European Association for International Education (EAIE) and StudyPortals: *English-taught bachelor's programs—Internationalising European higher education* (2017). The study explores how widespread ETBs are in Europe and what their perceived benefits and challenges are, as well as their predicted future. The findings derive from an analysis of a StudyPortals database on English-taught programs offered by HEIs in 19 European countries, complemented by qualitative data collected in 2017 through interviews with staff at HEIs and national agencies in the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain.

### THE ENGLISH-TAUGHT BACHELOR'S PROGRAM LANDSCAPE IN EUROPE

The number of ETBs in Europe has increased exponentially in the past decade. According to the interviewees, ETBs have not only become widespread but are now seen as a deliberate strategic internationalization activity at HEIs. The second edition of the *EAIE Barometer: Internationalisation in Europe* study further evidences this: 33 percent of the 2317 respondents indicated programs in nonlocal languages as a priority activity within their institutional internationalization strategy.

There are, however, large variations in the number of ETBs available to students when comparing countries in Europe. Among the countries included in the study, the highest reported numbers are in Turkey (545), followed by the Netherlands (317) and Spain (241). The countries with the lowest number of ETBs are Romania (32), Latvia (39), and Austria (59). The most common disciplines in which ETBs are available are reportedly business and management, social sciences, and engineering and technology.

When comparing the number of institutions offering ETBs by country, Germany leads the group with 69 HEIs, followed by the Netherlands (42) and France (41). Cyprus (10), Latvia (9), and Romania (8) are the countries with the lowest numbers. A somewhat different picture emerges when reviewing the percentage of HEIs offering ETBs in each country. Switzerland—where almost all institutions offer such programs—is the country where ETBs are the most widespread across the higher education sector, followed by the Netherlands (75 percent of HEIs offering ETBs) and Denmark (70 percent). Romania (9 percent), France (13 percent), and Poland (14 percent) are the countries with the lowest proportion of HEIs offering ETBs. Overall, ETBs appear to be a more common aspect of internationalization at institutions in smaller Northern or Western European countries.

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### LACK OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

Introducing ETBs brings its own distinct challenges. Our research shows that the lack of English language skills among faculty and staff is a key obstacle, with some interviewees expressing a concern that this might adversely affect the quality of education. Other prominent challenges in developing ETBs, particularly in the programs' first years of operation, are related to identifying popular ETB fields of study among students, and enrolling (diverse groups of) international students. In some countries, the admission of international students is further complicated by rigid national regulations pertaining to secondary education diploma recognition. Issues related to integrating international students and ensuring efficient international classrooms also emerge as challenges.

**ETBs AS A VEHICLE FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION**

Despite these barriers, the professionals who were interviewed feel that ETB programs have a positive impact on their respective institutions. ETBs have resulted in more internationalized administrative procedures, higher international student numbers and diversified classrooms, as well as increased numbers of international staff and improved English skills among staff. Some also feel that ETBs have facilitated the mainstreaming of internationalization. As such, ETBs appear to have a positive effect on the development of internationalization at the institutional level and can be seen as a mechanism enhancing the process.

ETBs also seem to have a positive impact beyond the institutions themselves. According to national agency representatives, ETBs have financial benefits both for the institutions and the local economy, and they bring increased opportunities for internationalization at home and for attracting international talent to the country. Some national agency staff also mention increased quality as an additional benefit of developing ETBs. Others, however—both at HEIs and at national agencies—raise concerns over a potential lowering of educational quality due to insufficient language skills among teaching staff and the cancellation of higher quality programs offered in local languages.

**AN OPTIMISTIC AND MORE THOUGHT-THROUGH FUTURE FOR ETBs**

Overall, research shows that most actors are positive about ETBs, both at the institutional and national levels. As one interviewee hypothesizes, this could be partly because ETBs have not yet reached a critical mass in most European countries (unlike in the Netherlands) and are not seen as a particularly controversial topic for analysis and discussion. The interviewees believe that their HEIs will continue offering ETBs in the future and that the demand and, as a result, the supply of such programs will continue to increase globally. At the same time, interviewees recognize a growing need to be strategic about their ETB offering and to identify niche programs. The future is likely to bring both quantitative and qualitative changes to ETBs in Europe, as well as, potentially, an increased discussion about the value of such programs when they become a more common feature of the education landscape. ■

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## Hybrid Internationalization in Korea: A Promising Development?

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Over the past several decades, a large number of students have participated in cross-border higher education, mostly in major English-speaking countries. However, students in developing countries are now looking for other options. Through inbound internationalization strategies such as increasing the use of English on campus, Korea has become one of those destination countries.

Recently, Korean higher education institutions (HEIs) have witnessed a new, fast-growing internationalization model that combines existing features of internationalization—the typical study-abroad model in which international students are taught in the host country’s primary language and the decade-long Korean internationalization model in which international students are educated in separate academic programs—with recently developed, demand-based educational programs. We would call this combination a demand-based, locally oriented, hybrid model of internationalization, or simply a *hybrid model*. Although it is too early to tell how good it is, we hope that our assessment will help HEIs in non-English speaking developing countries to explore new internationalization strategies.

**THE LAST DECADE’S POPULAR APPROACH TO INTERNATIONALIZATION IN KOREA**

To internationalize its HEIs, Korea has focused on creating “English-friendly” learning environments. HEIs have recruited foreign faculty from elite institutions and established English-speaking international colleges such as Underwood International College at Yonsei University. The number of courses taught in English continues to grow. For example, Pohang University of Science and Technology has become a bilingual campus that uses both Korean and English as formal academic and administrative languages.

Moreover, since 2005, the Korean government has been offering scholarships to incoming international students through the Study Korea Project. It has also created a global education hub by inviting five renowned univer-