

# English-Taught Master's Programs in Europe: New Findings on Supply and Demand

Report Prepared by:  
Megan Brenn-White and Edwin van Rest



# IIE Information Resources

[www.iie.org](http://www.iie.org)

Institute of International Education Website

[www.iienetwork.org](http://www.iienetwork.org)

Resources for IIE Members

[www.iie.org/opendoors](http://www.iie.org/opendoors)

Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange

[www.iie.org/atlas](http://www.iie.org/atlas)

Data on Global Student Mobility

[www.iiebooks.org](http://www.iiebooks.org)

IIE's Online Bookstore

[www.iiepassport.org](http://www.iiepassport.org)

Directory of Study Abroad Programs

[www.StudyAbroadFunding.org](http://www.StudyAbroadFunding.org)

Study Abroad Funding for U.S. Students

[www.FundingUSstudy.org](http://www.FundingUSstudy.org)

Funding for United States Study

© Copyright 2012 by the Institute of International Education

The views expressed in this briefing paper are solely those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Institute of International Education.

## IIE Editorial Team

Daniel Obst, Executive Editor

Luke Epplin, Managing Editor

Arturo Romero-Pereda, Designer

## About the Authors

**Megan Brenn-White** is the Managing Director of The Brenn-White Group, LLC. The Brenn-White Group ([www.brenn-white.com](http://www.brenn-white.com)) provides marketing strategy, editorial, and translation services with a focus on helping universities reach international audiences.

**Edwin van Rest** is CEO of StudyPortals. StudyPortals.eu, which includes the subportal MastersPortal.eu, is a website enabling students to compare academic programs and fees offered throughout Europe. StudyPortals also publishes BachelorsPortal.eu, PhDportal.eu, ShortCoursesPortal.eu, ScholarshipPortal.eu, and the Student Experiences Exchange: STeXX.eu

The authors would like to thank the following individuals for their support during the development of this briefing paper:

Laura Montgomery, Director, Editorial and Globalization Services, The Brenn-White Group, LLC

Leslie Harlson, Director, Information Center San Francisco, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)

**English-Taught Master's Programs in Europe:  
New Findings on Supply and Demand**

**Prepared by  
Megan Brenn-White and Edwin van Rest**

**March 2012**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Foreword.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>I. Tracking Growth in English-Taught Programs.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>II. Duration and Types of English-Taught Programs.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>III. Surveying the Field: What Institutions Are Offering.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>IV. Prospective Students: Where They Are from and What They Want.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix: Disciplinary Categories in MastersPortal.....</b>	<b>20</b>

## Foreword

This briefing paper, *English-Taught Master's Programs in Europe: New Findings on Supply and Demand*, published by the Institute of International Education's Center for Academic Mobility Research, provides a detailed, data-driven look at the burgeoning growth of English-taught master's programs in Europe. The authors, Megan Brenn-White and Edwin van Rest, examine statistics that they have obtained from MastersPortal.eu, an online directory and comprehensive source of information about postgraduate degree programs in Europe. The authors examine the growth of English-taught master's programs in Europe, including the total number of programs offered by country and academic discipline, their duration, and data on prospective students.

The recent growth of English-taught master's programs in Europe underscores the timeliness of the topic in the field of higher education. Another recently published IIE briefing paper, *U.S. Students in Overseas Degree Programs: Key Destinations and Fields of Study*, presents findings from the first-ever survey on U.S. students pursuing full degrees abroad at the postsecondary level, their specific level of study, and their chosen field of study. According to this report, of the more than 43,000 U.S. students who pursue full degrees abroad, most are enrolled in master's degree programs (44 percent), followed by students in undergraduate degree programs (39 percent), and students in doctoral degree programs (17 percent). It can be argued that the significant number of U.S. students pursuing overseas master's degrees is related to the recent growth of English-taught master's programs in Europe.

Both of these recent briefing papers were produced through the recently launched IIE Center for Academic Mobility Research. This Center brings together the Institute's in-house research expertise with leading minds from around the world to conduct and disseminate timely and relevant research and policy analysis in the field of international student and faculty mobility. The Center provides applied research and program evaluation services to domestic and international governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, corporations, and foundations. To learn more about the center, please visit: [www.iie.org/mobility](http://www.iie.org/mobility). For more information about IIE's publications and briefing papers, please visit [www.iie.org/publications](http://www.iie.org/publications).

Daniel Obst

Deputy Vice President, International Partnerships  
Institute of International Education

## Introduction

Higher education in Europe underwent a profound transformation as a result of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 and the follow-up meetings held every two years by respective ministers in each country. The creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) sought to standardize important aspects of higher education across signatory countries, which numbered 47 as of late 2011. Whereas most countries in Europe had previously operated under a “two-tier” system, where students concluded their first postsecondary degree with the equivalent of a master’s, the EHEA structure consists of three “cycles” corresponding to bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees. This new structure was intended to “strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education and to foster student mobility and employability through the introduction of a system based on undergraduate and postgraduate studies with easily readable programs and degrees.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first years of the Bologna Process, the signatory countries focused their energy on transforming their individual systems to fit the new three-cycle structure. In most continental European countries, the traditional first degree was split into two standardized phases: the bachelor’s (three-four years) followed by the master’s (one-two years). At the same time, countries in which English is not the primary language were creating a growing number of programs taught either fully or partly in English in order to serve domestic demand for higher education in English and to attract international students.

The introduction of standalone master’s degrees across Europe had implications for both students and institutions—and, most importantly, created a new entry point to European higher education systems for students from other countries. Most international education experts agree that international student mobility will likely increase dramatically at the master’s level, and the development of English-taught programs in non-English-language countries is an important driver for this. The race to develop competitive master’s programs that are attractive to both European and international audiences has made English-taught master’s programs one of the closest watched trends in European higher education.

By examining data from MastersPortal.eu, Europe’s most popular source of information about postgraduate degree programs, this briefing paper will address aspects relating to the growth of English-taught master’s programs. The data examined is, to our knowledge, the most extensive source of data available on English-taught master’s programs in Europe. More than 960 public and private universities from across Europe currently list over 18,000 master’s degree programs on MastersPortal, making it the most comprehensive database on degree programs offered in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis in this briefing paper attempts to outline a constantly shifting picture of English-taught programs in Europe. Some of the questions addressed include: Which countries are most involved with this growing trend? How are the programs generally structured? Which disciplines offer the largest number of English-taught programs? Moving beyond what institutions and countries offer, the MastersPortal data also allows for an analysis of what students want. What programs are prospective students searching for? What disciplines are of interest to them and how does this vary among countries? Finally, how does tuition vary by country, and for international vs. European students? Above all, this briefing paper seeks to enable institutions and policy-makers to better understand the changing European higher education landscape and to make informed decisions on how to respond to these trends.

---

<sup>1</sup> The official Bologna Process website, accessed October 23, 2011: <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=3>

<sup>2</sup> The rapid growth of MastersPortal to nearly one million visitors per month in roughly four years reflects an increasing student demand for the growing number of master’s programs offered in Europe as well as institutional demands for additional marketing channels for student recruitment. The website started as an initiative of European student associations. In 2009, StudyPortals, a for-profit company, was created to manage the dramatic growth of the site and serve demand for coverage of new areas. Funded by advertising income as well as by the European Commission, StudyPortals has moved beyond the original MastersPortal to include BachelorsPortal, Phdportal, ShortCoursesPortal, ScholarshipPortal, and STeXX, a site with student reviews.

## I. Tracking Growth<sup>3</sup> in English-Taught Programs

In 2008, the Academic Cooperation Association reported the total of English-taught master's programs in Europe to be 1,500, up from 560 in 2002. In an *IIE Networker* article published in July 2010, Megan Brenn-White, Director of The Brenn-White Group, and Edwin van Rest, CEO of StudyPortals<sup>4</sup>, reported that the MastersPortal database contained 3,543 English-taught master's programs offered in European countries (not including the United Kingdom and Ireland<sup>5</sup>). The quantitative growth in English-taught programs in Europe has clearly been impressive.

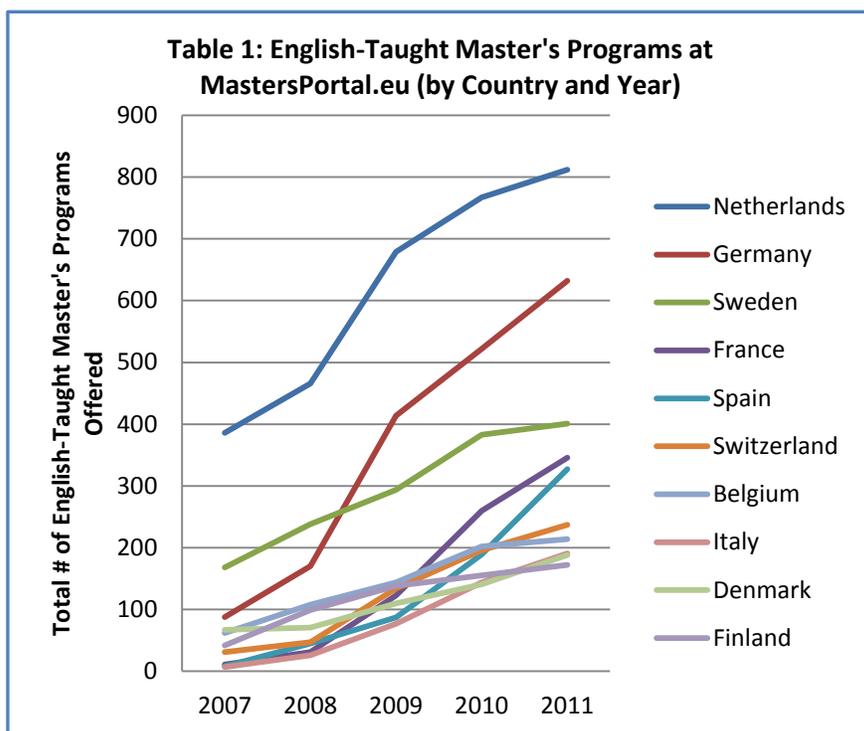
### A. Growth by Country

By October 2011, the number of English-taught programs listed at MastersPortal had risen to 3,701. An additional 963 programs listed English as one of their languages of instruction, bringing the total number of programs taught entirely or partly in English to 4,664. Thereby, of the programs listed, 79 percent of English-taught programs are taught solely in English and 21 percent in English and at least one other language. Table 1 shows the growth in English-taught master's programs listed on MastersPortal, by country, since the site launched in 2007. Van Rest estimates that 90 percent of the total number of English-taught master's programs offered throughout Europe are listed on the site at this point.

Table 2 delves further into the increase in English-taught master's programs. It takes the 10 non-English-speaking European countries with the most programs, featured in Table 1, and presents the number of programs added each year, as well as the percentage increase since the previous year. It is clear that in each year most countries added a larger number of master's programs than in the previous year. The especially large growth through 2010 is, apart from the growing popularity of MastersPortal, likely due in part to the Bologna Process goal of having the three-cycle system fully implemented by that year, which has largely taken place.

That the percentage increase is less dramatic over time does not indicate an actual slowdown in growth, but rather a reflection of the increasing absolute number of programs. After all, the fact that France showed 111 percent growth in 2010, adding 260 new programs, must be seen in relation to the country's 33 percent growth in 2011, which corresponds to 346 new programs.

A clear distinction can be observed between the smaller countries (such as the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands), which have switched almost all their postgraduate teaching to English, and the large countries (Germany, France, Spain, etc.), which have adopted only a small part of their educational offerings in English, in spite of the comparatively large absolute number of programs.



<sup>3</sup> It is important to keep in mind in this section and subsequent sections discussing "growth" in program offerings that some apparent growth may actually be attributable to the fact that some programs that already existed in 2007 were not yet listed in MastersPortal, which had launched just that year. Thus, this seemingly dramatic growth may be due partly to the growing popularity of MastersPortal rather than real growth in program offerings.

<sup>4</sup> StudyPortals is the publisher of MastersPortal.eu and other European StudyChoice websites.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the United Kingdom and Ireland are left off all tables within this paper, as the present analysis looks at trends in non-English-speaking European countries.

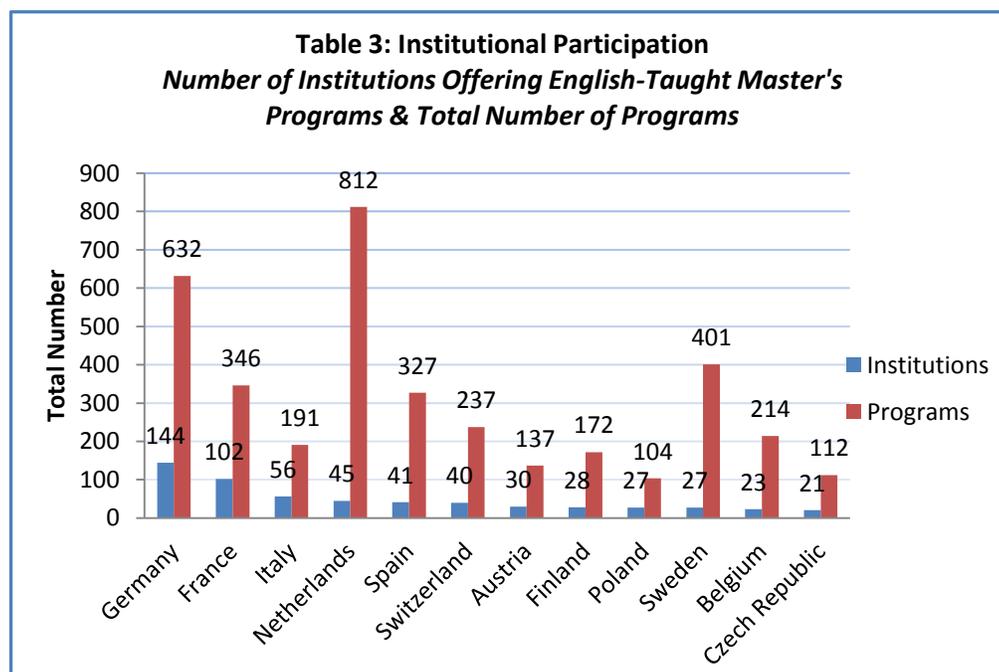
**Table 2: Increase in English-Taught Master's Programs Listed on MastersPortal  
Top Countries by Total Number of Programs and % Increase from Previous Year**

	2007	2008		2009		2010		2011	
	Total # of programs	Total # of programs offered	% increase	Total # of programs offered	% increase	Total # of programs offered	% increase	Total # of programs offered	% increase
All of Europe	1028	1615	57%	2795	73%	3933	41%	4644 <sup>6</sup>	19%
Netherlands	386	466	21%	679	46%	767	13%	812	6%
Germany	88	170	93%	414	144%	522	26%	632	21%
Sweden	168	238	42%	294	24%	383	30%	401	5%
France	11	31	182%	123	297%	260	111%	346	33%
Spain	8	45	463%	87	93%	189	117%	327	73%
Switzerland	31	47	52%	134	185%	196	46%	237	21%
Belgium	62	108	74%	144	33%	202	40%	214	6%
Italy	7	26	271%	77	196%	144	87%	191	33%
Denmark	67	71	6%	110	55%	141	28%	188	33%
Finland	42	99	136%	138	39%	155	12%	172	11%

Furthermore, countries have implemented the Bologna reforms with varying speed. For example, in 2009 France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany all saw more than a 100 percent increase in master's programs, whereas Spain showed a growth spurt in 2010 and 2011. As the number of programs continues to grow, it will be interesting to see whether countries will eventually plateau at a "natural" number of programs that fits with the domestic—and international—demand for English-language master's programs. Since the Bologna Process is just that, a process, it may be some time before individual countries, and Europe as a whole, find the number of programs that meets European and worldwide demand for English-taught programs.

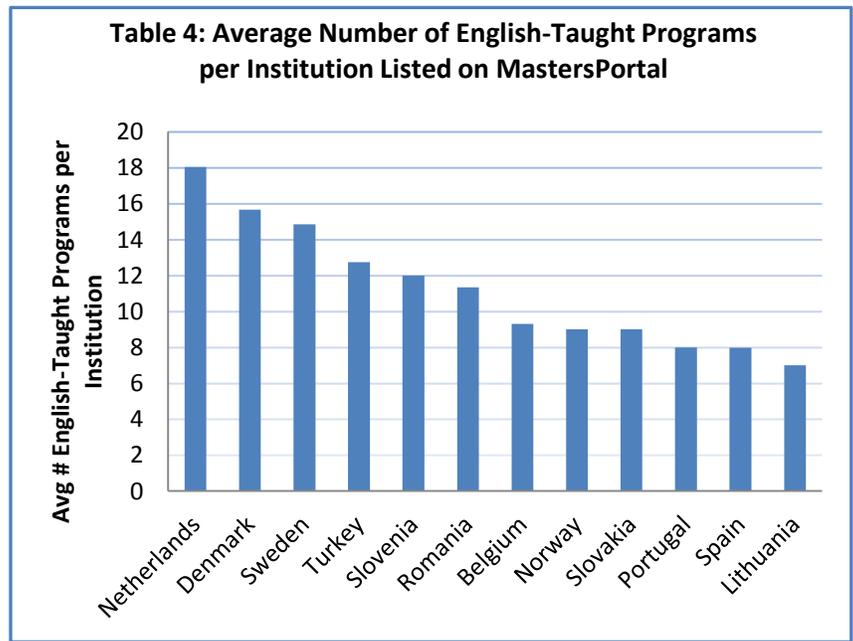
## B. Institutional Participation

Table 3 displays both the total number of English-taught programs offered by each country and the number of institutions that offer them. Germany is the leader in the number of HEIs listing degree programs taught in English, with 144, followed by France (102) and Italy (56). While these numbers are impressive, their size corresponds to the total number of HEIs in each country. In terms of the number of programs offered, the standout is the Netherlands with over 800 programs, followed by Germany (632) and Sweden (401).



<sup>6</sup> As of March 15, 2012, the total number of programs offered had increased to 5,444.

Table 4 gives a more focused picture of the number of English-taught master’s programs in each country in proportion to the number of HEIs offering those programs. The average number of English-taught programs per institution shows that some countries with a large total number of programs do not actually offer English-taught programs as a large percentage of their degree offerings. For example, seven of the countries in Table 3 do not appear at all in Table 4. The Netherlands has the largest average number of English-taught programs per institution<sup>7</sup> at 18, Denmark (16) and Sweden (15) follow, and Belgium (9) and Norway (9) also are included in the top twelve. This is unsurprising, considering that in the Benelux countries and Scandinavia, master’s education has switched almost entirely to English language instruction.



In other countries, English-taught master’s programs may still be niche offerings primarily targeted at international students. It would be interesting to look at data on the number of students per program in order to understand the relative size of student populations in these programs in each country, although such data is beyond the scope of this analysis. It should be noted that differences between countries or institutions may also reflect differences in marketing practices, as listings in MastersPortal are voluntary and inputted by program managers, department staff, or central marketing/admissions staff. Nevertheless, since MastersPortal includes an estimated 90 percent of all English-taught programs available, these results are more representative than any other data source.

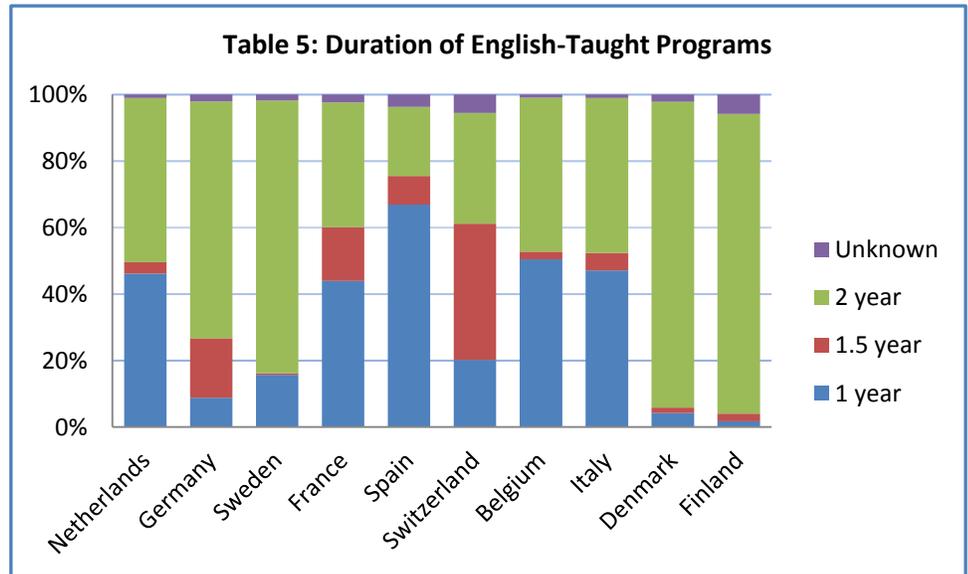
<sup>7</sup> Luxembourg has one HEI and 18 programs, technically giving it the same average number as the Netherlands. Due to this small sample size, Luxembourg was left off the list. It should be noted that a small number of institutions in Slovenia (4), Romania (3), and Slovakia (3) listed programs in MastersPortal, though these countries are included in the present list.

## II. Duration and Types of English-Taught Programs

### A. Duration

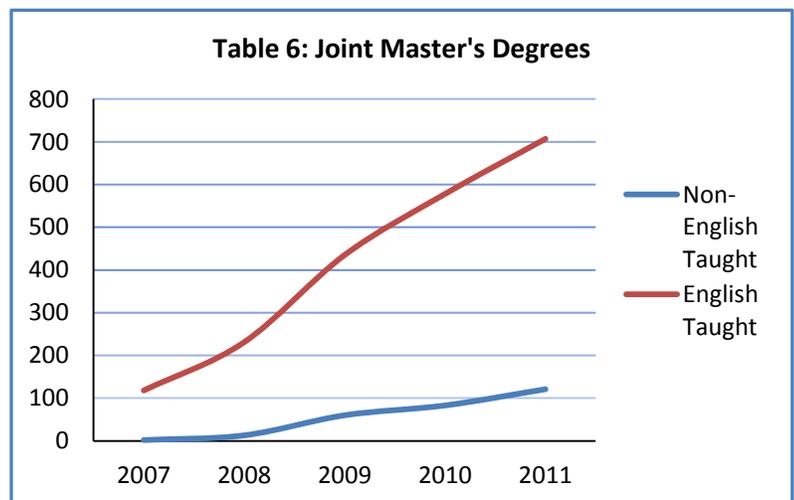
Another interesting area of comparison is looking at the duration of master’s programs. Although the Bologna Process sought to standardize higher education systems across the continent, the duration (workload) of a “European Master” was an intensely debated topic among states. The consensus was that master’s degrees should be between one to two years, a decision that is largely dependent on the duration of the bachelor’s degree program in the country in question.

The majority of master’s programs in the UK and Ireland are one year in duration, but few non-English-language countries have such large percentages of one-year programs. According to MastersPortal data, 67 percent of master’s programs in Spain last about one year, and in Belgium the proportion is considerably lower at 50 percent (Table 5). Most other countries in continental Europe offer longer programs. This difference has more to do with the overall structure of the respective higher education systems and is not specific to English-taught programs.



### B. Joint Degrees

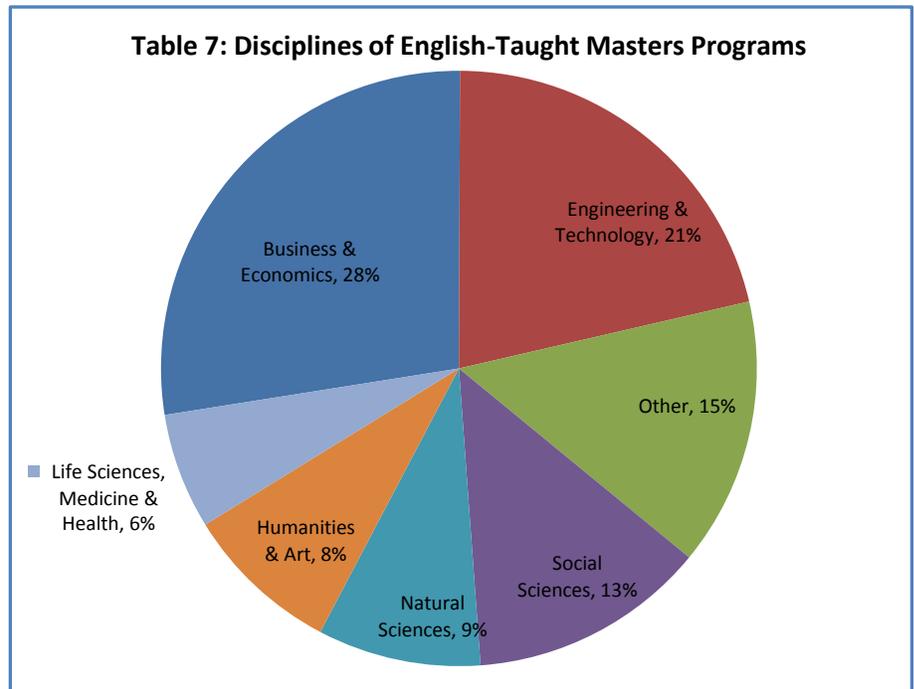
Joint master’s programs are another area of growth for English-taught master’s programs in Europe. As shown in Table 6, there has been considerable growth in the number of MastersPortal listings for such programs in non-English-speaking Europe, from 118 joint master’s in 2007 to 707 such programs in 2011. This is especially remarkable when compared to the number of joint programs not taught in English: starting with 2 in 2007 and growing to 121 in 2011. English is clearly the language of choice for joint programs. Joint master’s programs with the United Kingdom have also seen growth, from 14 degree programs in 2007 to 103 programs in 2011. It is interesting to compare these numbers for the UK to the data in Table 6, as it becomes apparent how much overall growth Europe has seen in English-taught joint master’s programs over the past few years.



### III. Surveying the Field: What Institutions Are Offering

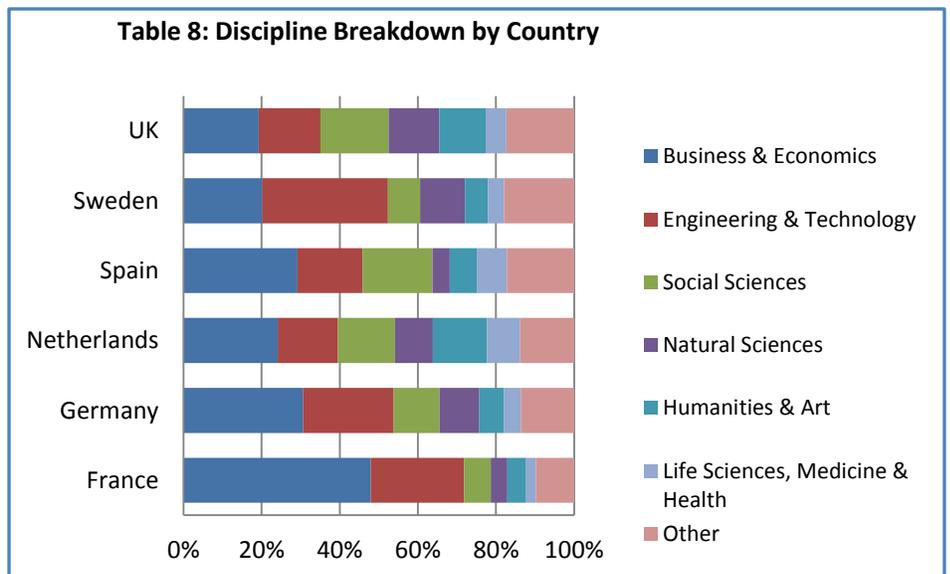
#### A. Breakdown by Discipline

As seen in Table 7, business & economics and engineering & technology are the most popular disciplines for English-taught programs, comprising 28 and 21 percent of total programs, respectively. (The appendix contains a comprehensive list of which disciplines fall into the various categories.) These two disciplinary categories total 2,285 programs, or 49 percent of the 4,664 programs offered.<sup>8</sup> Programs in the social sciences are the third most popular with 13 percent of the total (602 programs), followed by natural sciences (9 percent, 413 programs), humanities & art (8 percent, 397 programs), and life sciences, medicine & health (6 percent, 293 programs). The remaining 15 percent of programs are a combination of other disciplines, including education, law, environmental science, hospitality, and journalism.



#### B. Discipline Variance by Country

There is also variance within each country with regards to the subject-breakdown of their English-taught programs (Table 8). For the European countries that offer the greatest number of English-taught programs, all except Sweden have business & economics programs as the most represented. English-taught programs in France are overwhelmingly offered in business & economics (48 percent), followed by engineering & technology (24 percent); all other programs only have 2-7 percent share. Sweden shows a strong preference for engineering & technology programs (32 percent). Although mirroring other countries' trends in business & economics and engineering & technology, the Netherlands has a more even distribution of the remaining disciplines. This is also the case in the UK, where there is a more balanced distribution of programs across disciplines, although still strongest in business & economics (19 percent) and the social sciences (17 percent). Engineering & technology is next (16 percent), followed by the natural sciences (13 percent).

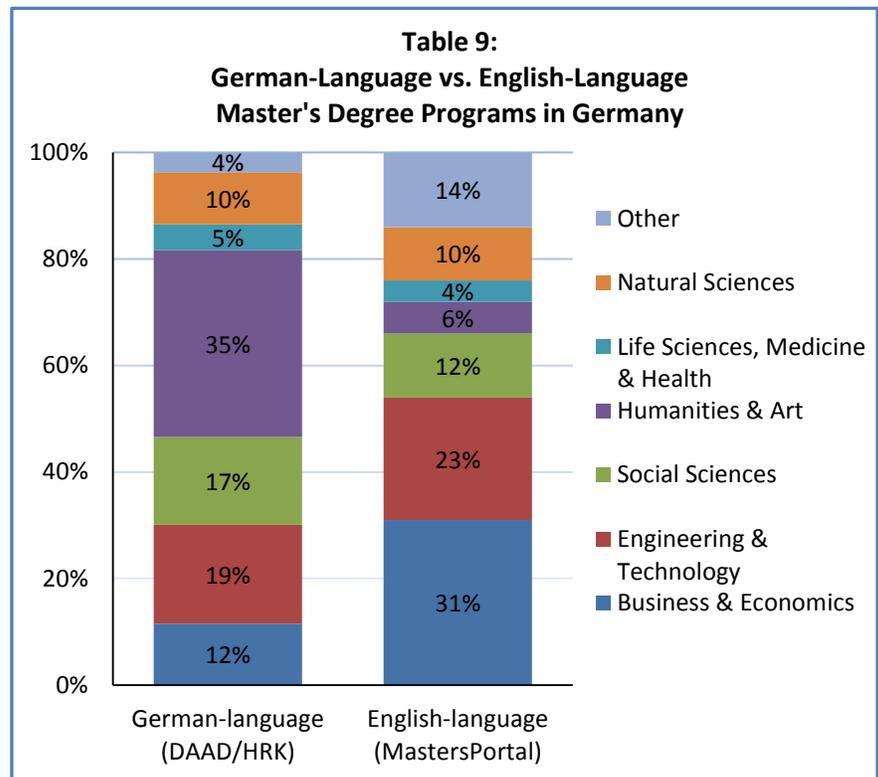


<sup>8</sup> Some programs are multidisciplinary, so for this analysis programs listed in two different disciplines are counted as ½ in each category.

## Case Study: Germany

Do countries focus on different disciplines when creating English-language master's program as compared to offerings in their national language? While there is no central data source on master's programs offered in all European countries, data for Germany is available through the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).<sup>9</sup> The Germany data is coded slightly differently with regards to discipline and language of instruction, but is nevertheless comparable to the MastersPortal data.<sup>10</sup> Table 9 shows that, when compared to the English-language master's degree programs listed on MastersPortal, master's programs offered in German at German HEIs were more heavily skewed toward the humanities & arts, which comprised 35 percent of all German-language master's programs; this area accounted for only 6 percent of Germany-based programs on MastersPortal. Of the 6,515 total German-language master's programs, 12 percent are in business & economics, much lower than the 31 percent share this discipline holds for Germany on MastersPortal.

This data leads to the conclusion that German universities are creating English-language programs with a different audience in mind. Germany is well known worldwide for its engineering expertise, and is also the largest economy in Europe and home of the European Central Bank, two potential explanations for the strength of these disciplines for English-language programs. Further research needs to be done on other countries to determine where any variances exist.



<sup>9</sup> Data compiled from <http://www.daad.de/deutschland/studienangebote/alle-studiengaenge/06541.en.html>, accessed on November 5, 2011.

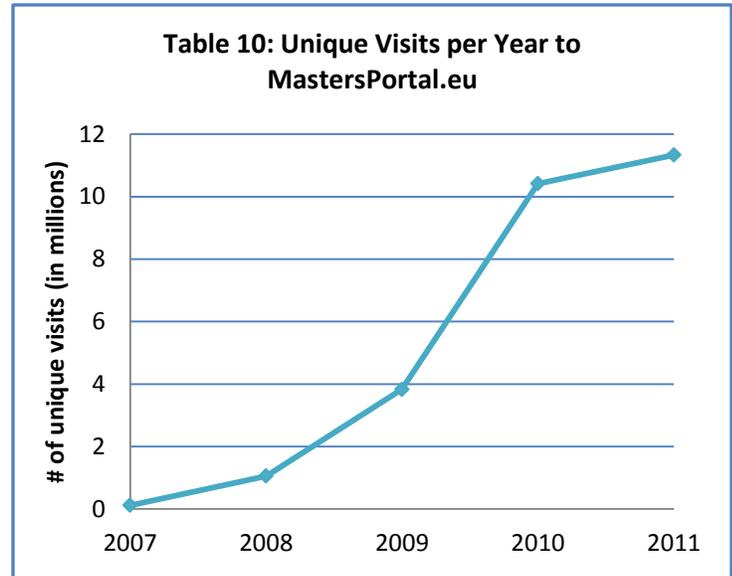
<sup>10</sup> The main course language is German. Some programs have English as a secondary language. This is the main difference from the MastersPortal data, which includes programs in which English is both the primary and one of the languages of instruction.

## IV. Prospective Students: Where They're From and What They Want

Since the launch of MastersPortal in May 2007, traffic at the site has increased from around 200,000 visits per month to 500,000 by the end of 2009, and then up to 950,000 per month by October 2011. Table 10 shows the growth in unique visits per year in 2011, totaling over 26 million unique visits since it launched. While these increases can be attributed to StudyPortals' increased marketing efforts, they also reflect a greater demand for master's programs offered in Europe.

### A. Country of Origin

Table 11 displays the most popular countries of origin of the students who visited MastersPortal between September 2010–August 2011. The United Kingdom<sup>11</sup> has the highest percentage of visitors (11.4 percent), followed by Germany (7.8 percent), the United States (6.9 percent), India (6.5 percent), and Greece (4 percent). The Netherlands (3.5 percent of total visitors), Italy, Pakistan, France, and Turkey (all with around 2 percent) round out the top 10.



**Table 11: Country of Origin (World)**

United Kingdom	11.4%
Germany	7.8%
United States	6.9%
India	6.5%
Greece	4.0%
Netherlands	3.5%
Italy	2.4%
Pakistan	2.3%
France	2.3%
Turkey	2.2%

**Table 11.1: Country of Origin (Europe)**

United Kingdom	11.4%
Germany	7.8%
Greece	4.0%
Netherlands	3.5%
Italy	2.4%
France	2.3%
Spain	2.0%
Romania	1.8%
Ireland	1.6%
Belgium	1.5%

**Table 11.2: Country of Origin (Outside Europe)**

United States	6.9%
India	6.5%
Pakistan	2.3%
Turkey	2.2%
Canada	2.0%
Iran	1.8%
Nigeria	1.7%
China	1.0%
Australia	1.0%
Mexico	0.9%

Tables 11.1 and 11.2 look at which students within and outside Europe are most active on MastersPortal—and thus more likely to be internationally mobile and interested in pursuing an English-language masters education. In Europe, after those listed in Table 9 (the UK, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Italy, and France) the next top countries of origin are Spain (2 percent), Romania (1.8 percent), Ireland (1.6 percent), and Belgium (1.5 percent). For countries outside of Europe, after those listed in Table 11.2 (the U.S., India, Pakistan, and Turkey), the most searches come from Canada (2 percent), Iran (1.8 percent), Nigeria (1.7 percent), China and Australia (both with 1 percent), and Mexico (0.9 percent).

These results are noteworthy as they correlate with internet access in each respective country and how students generally seek out information for their studies. While Chinese students make up 15 percent of globally mobile students,<sup>12</sup> they make up only around 1 percent of the searches on MastersPortal. This likely has to do with their

<sup>11</sup> While information about English-taught programs offered in the UK was not included in statistics in previous sections of this paper, this segment does include information on students in the UK and what they are searching for, as they may be looking for programs outside the UK.

<sup>12</sup> From UNESCO's *Global Education Digest 2009*, p. 48, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/ged09-en.pdf>

general access to internet, knowledge of the StudyPortals website, and reliance on recruitment agents for their information on international study, not necessarily with their actual desire to study outside of China.

Table 12 displays the popularity of MastersPortal by region of origin. Europe represents the largest cohort of visitors, followed by Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Oceania.<sup>13</sup>

## B. What Prospective Students Want

### 1) Countries Students Search for

A question yet to be explored is: What are students searching for once they get to MastersPortal? The United Kingdom is predictably the most-visited country, with 31 percent of total views. For total views of non-English-speaking countries shown in Table 13, Germany comes out on top with 14 percent of views, followed by the Netherlands (12 percent), Sweden (6 percent), Belgium (5 percent), and France (4 percent).<sup>14</sup>

### 2) Disciplines Students Search for

The previous “Breakdown by Discipline” section addressed the kinds of programs offered by HEIs. This section looks at the popularity of disciplines from the other side: search preferences of prospective students who visit MastersPortal. Table 14 breaks down each discipline into its percentage of total worldwide search, including the number of existing English-taught programs offered by European HEIs in that field.

Are universities offering what students want? The data show that, on average, this is the case. The primary difference is that while business & economics is the most popular discipline for English-taught master’s programs offered by HEIs in non-English-language countries, engineering & technology takes the prize as the most searched for discipline by students.

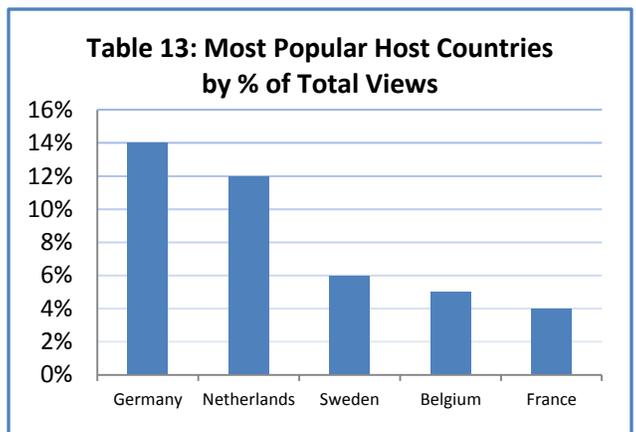
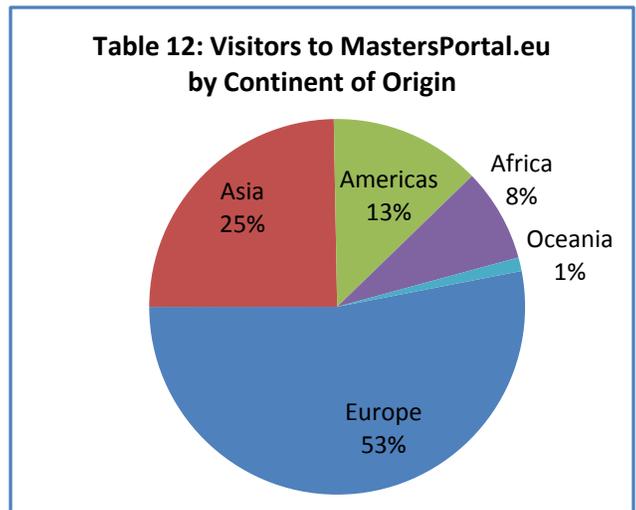
Comprising 40 percent of all English-taught master’s programs on MastersPortal, business & economics and engineering & technology are the most popular disciplines both for HEI offerings and for students. Combined, they draw around 444,000 visits per month, around 47 percent of the site’s total. Since each of these disciplines contain a breadth of subfields, we have broken down the disciplines to determine more specific areas of interest, as displayed in Tables 15 and 16. In the category of engineering & technology,<sup>15</sup> the subfield of computer science & IT proves to be of most interest to students, drawing 27 percent of searches, followed by civil engineering & architecture (12 percent) and electrical & mechanical engineering (each with 10 percent). For prospective students looking for programs in business & economics,<sup>16</sup> 22 percent were interested in management & organization, 18 percent in business administration, and 16 percent in economics. Such rich data can help universities develop English-language master’s programs that will be attractive to international audiences.

<sup>13</sup> Like for the preceding three tables, this data is from September 2010 to August 2011.

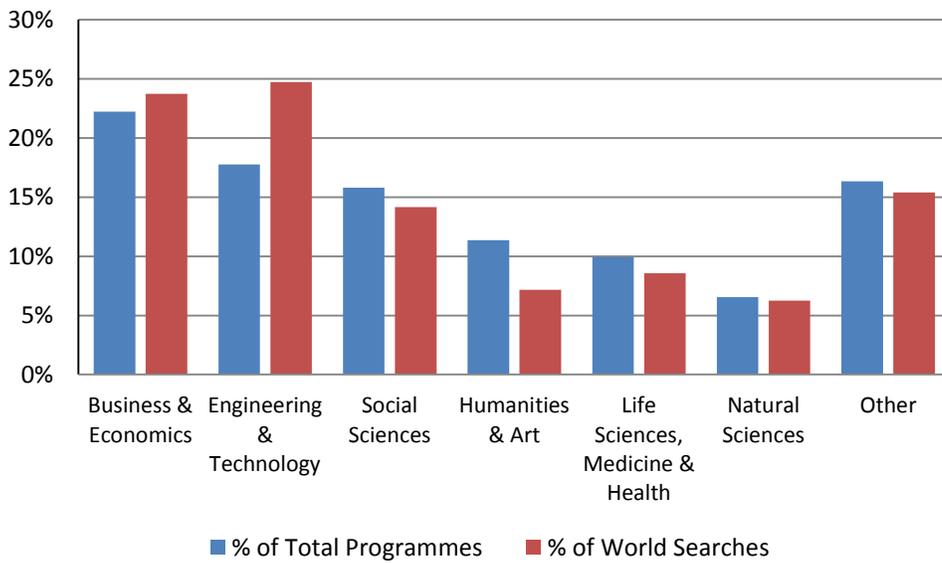
<sup>14</sup> Data referencing the time period June to August 2011.

<sup>15</sup> In engineering & technology, the “Other” subfield includes: aerospace, aeronautical & marine engineering, applied mathematics, chemical engineering, engineering physics, industrial design, and materials engineering.

<sup>16</sup> In business & accounting, the “Other” subfield includes: accounting, econometrics, education, entrepreneurship, human resource management, project management, and public administration.

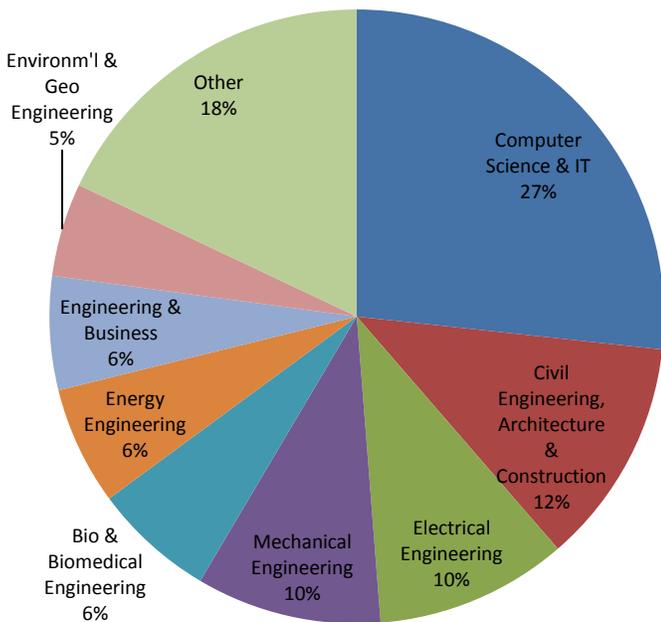


**Table 14: Most Popular Disciplines Searched for and Percentage of Total Programs Offered in Each Discipline**

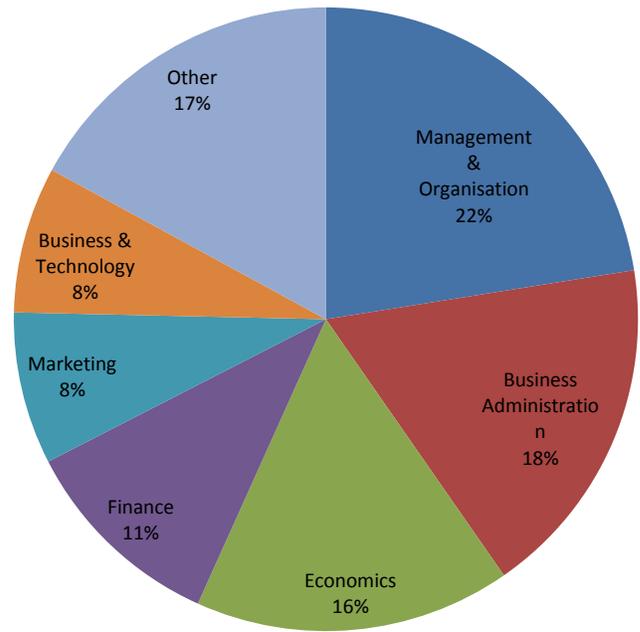


The humanities, natural sciences, and law tend to be less popular globally than business, engineering, and technology; and may present hurdles to students who want to study abroad. Students interested in going abroad for a degree in the humanities are more likely to have gained mastery of the foreign language; as such, there is less need for programs in English. Across the board, all disciplines tend to draw interest from students that is proportionate to the size of the discipline.

**Table 15: Percentage of Engineering & Technology Searches by Subfield**



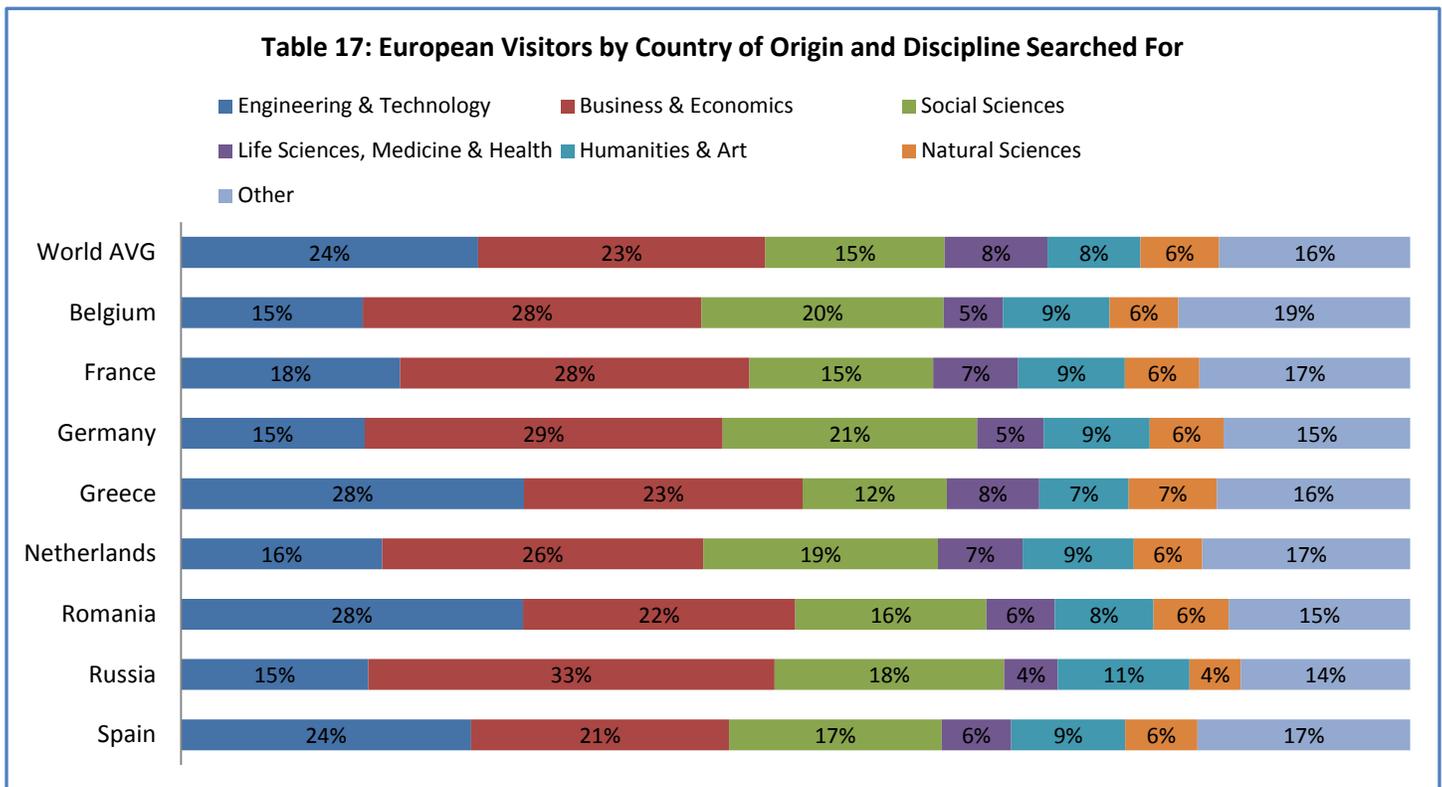
**Table 16: Percentage of Business & Economics Searches by Subfield**



### 3) Disciplines of Interest: By Country of Origin

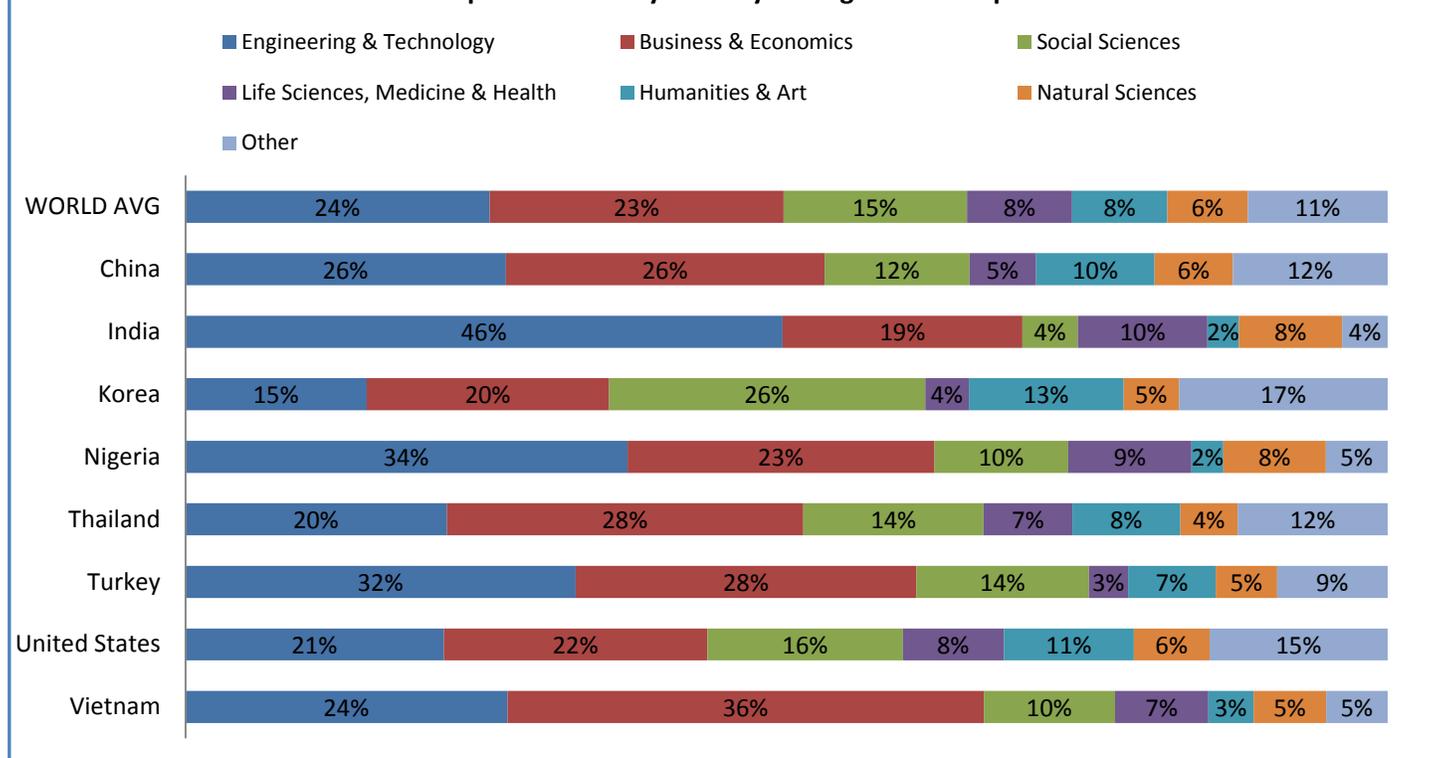
Breaking down search behavior by country can give institutions or program directors a sense of where to target their marketing efforts—or at least of where there is likely to be a match between supply and demand. Table 17 displays the search behavior of 1.7 million unique visitors to MastersPortal from a sampling of European countries for the period of June–August 2011. The most popular disciplines queried are compared with the average shares of worldwide searches that these disciplines receive in order to determine where these countries diverge from and align with global trends. For example, Greek and Romanian students are more likely—and Belgian, French, German, Dutch, and Russian students less likely—to search for engineering & technology when compared to the world average. The opposite is true for the social sciences, with Belgian, German, Dutch, Russian, and Spanish students more likely to show interest compared to the world average. Business & economics was most popular in Russia (33 percent of all searches), Germany (29 percent), and France (28 percent), and less so for students in Romania (22 percent) and Spain (21 percent).

It is possible to attribute some of this variance to strong programs offered to these students in their home country. For example, many engineering programs in Germany are regarded as high-quality; as a result, German engineering students may not be as motivated to do their master’s abroad. This could, therefore, indicate potential opportunities for institutions outside of Europe that offer programs in English to refine their recruitment efforts, since it shows which types of programs European students are exploring outside of their own countries.



It is equally important for institutions or program directors to explore the search behavior of non-European students seeking English-taught master’s programs. Around 1.3 million visitors from non-European countries visited the site during the three-month period referenced in Table 18.<sup>17</sup> The first significant finding is that 46 percent of Indian visitors searched for engineering & technology, and a mere 4 percent for social sciences. Nigerian (34 percent) and Turkish (32 percent) visitors also showed strong preferences for programs in engineering & technology. Vietnamese visitors favored business & economics, comprising 36 percent of their total searches. South Korea was the strongest in social sciences, with 26 percent of total searches. Search results from the United States closely mirror the world average, although they are slightly lower in engineering & technology and slightly higher in the humanities & art. However, given that nearly 7 percent of all searches on MastersPortal come from the United States—only the UK and Germany had higher percentages of the search—the size of the visitor population from the U.S. strongly influences the world average.

**Table 18: Non-European Visitors by Country of Origin and Discipline Searched For**



<sup>17</sup> As in Table 17, this data is from June–August 2011.

## Conclusion

This briefing paper sought to give a snapshot of the master's-level landscape in 2011 within European higher education in relation to the provision of English-taught degree programs. The development of these programs, which open up higher education systems that were previously inaccessible to most international students, may have a dramatic impact on international student flows both within and outside of Europe. As a result, the trends are being closely monitored by institutions and individuals alike.

The data from MastersPortal shows that there has been dramatic growth in the number of English-taught master's programs offered in non-English-speaking Europe over the last five years. Currently, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, France, and Spain are (in ranked order) the countries with both the largest numbers of such programs and the largest number of institutions offering them. Approximately 20 percent of the programs listed in 2011 were joint degree programs. The overwhelming majority of English-taught master's programs are two years in length, although more than half offered in Spain and Belgium are one-year programs, due largely to national higher education policies and structures.

As far as disciplinary breakdown is concerned, business & economics (28 percent) and engineering & technology (21 percent) are the dominant fields in which English-taught programs are offered. It is interesting to note, however, that prospective students more commonly searched for engineering & technology programs than for business & economics programs, indicating a slight mismatch of supply and demand. France offers a particularly large proportion of programs in the business & economics discipline (48 percent of programs), while Sweden shows a strong preference for engineering & technology (32 percent).

Germany, as a case study, supports the theory that countries focus on different disciplines when creating English-language master's programs for international audiences as compared to offerings in their national languages. Master's programs in Germany taught in German are more heavily skewed toward the humanities & arts (35 percent); yet this area accounted for only 6 percent English-taught programs in Germany. Instead, business & economics (31 percent of programs) and engineering & technology (23 percent) were the favored disciplines in English-language programs.

Prospective students who have shown the greatest interest in English-taught programs in non-English-speaking Europe are based primarily in Europe, followed by Asia, and more specifically in the UK, Germany, the U.S., India, and Greece (in order of prevalence). Students are most interested in programs offered in Germany and the Netherlands, which collectively account for 26 percent of searches. Specific disciplinary areas of interest included computer science & IT, management & organization, business administration, economics, and civil engineering & architecture. Some significant national preferences emerge as well, with Greek and Romanian students showing a preference for engineering & technology programs, while students in Russia, Germany, and France more frequently searching for business & economics programs.

The steadily growing number of visitors to MastersPortal points to the rising awareness that European institutions are offering a growing number of new and often attractively priced options. Institutions will continue to reevaluate their position in this marketplace of mobile students seeking master's degrees taught in English. Will institutions continue to increase the number of programs they offer in English or will Europe reach a saturation point where supply and demand is balanced? Will business and engineering programs continue to be the leading disciplines both in offerings by universities and popularity among students, or will the humanities and social sciences catch up? And for the countries that have changed the language of instruction for their full postgraduate degree offerings to English, is this the end of their national language for communication on an academic level?

The challenges are daunting as questions arise concerning how to ensure quality, integrate students with little or no language skills into the community, and make certain that university support structures serve this multinational audience. The development of these is one of the drivers of increasing higher education professionalization across Europe in such areas as student services, marketing, and program administration. Additionally, these programs have potentially significant implications for international education as a whole. What does the development of

English-taught programs in continental Europe mean for countries that have been the main destinations for international students, such as the U.S., the UK, and Australia? As students become able to access information in English about a variety of programs that exist in multiple relatively compatible systems of higher education, they are better able to pick and choose their study options based on the same criteria they would use to select a program in their home country. New generations of mobile students will increasingly opt for the best and most attractive programs in the world. The question that higher education institutions will face is: How can institutions make sure that the brightest minds make the journey to their campuses?

## Appendix: Disciplinary Categories in MastersPortal

### Engineering & Technology

---

Aerospace, Aeronautical, & Marine Engineering  
Applied Mathematics  
Bio & Biomedical Engineering  
Chemical Engineering  
Civil Engineering, Architecture, & Construction  
Computer Science & IT  
Electrical Engineering  
Energy Engineering  
Engineering & Business  
Engineering Physics  
Environmental & Geo-engineering  
Industrial Design  
Materials Engineering  
Mechanical Engineering

### Business & Economics

---

Accounting  
Business & Technology  
Business Administration  
Econometrics  
Economics  
Education  
Entrepreneurship  
Finance  
Human Resource Management  
Management & Organization  
Marketing  
Project Management  
Public Administration

### Social Sciences

---

Anthropology  
Communications  
Development & Social Policy and Planning  
Ethnic Studies  
Gender Studies  
Geography  
History  
Linguistics  
Political Science & International Relations  
Psychology  
Sociology

### Life Sciences, Medicine & Health

---

Biomedicine  
Dentistry  
Human Medicine  
Nursery  
Pharmacy  
Physiotherapy  
Public Health  
Veterinary Medicine

### Applied Sciences, Professions & Arts

---

Agriculture, Forestry, Animal & Related Sciences  
Design  
Education  
Educational Research  
Ergonomics  
Family and Consumer Science  
Hospitality, Sports, Recreation, & Tourism  
Journalism and Mass Communications  
Library and Information Science  
Military Science  
Social Work

### Humanities & Art

---

Area/Cultural Studies  
Art & Art History  
Film and Theatre Studies  
Language, Literature, & Cultural Studies  
Music  
Philosophy  
Religious Studies

### Natural Sciences

---

Astronomy  
Behavioral Science  
Biology  
Chemistry  
Earth Sciences  
Informatics & Information Science  
Mathematics  
Physics

## **Environmental Sciences**

---

Climate Studies & Meteorology  
Ecology, Biodiversity & Conservation  
Environmental Biotechnology  
Environmental Chemistry & Toxicology  
Environmental Earth Sciences & Geology  
Environmental Economics  
Environmental Impacts & Human Health  
Environmental Systems Analysis  
Environmental Technology  
Geo-information & Spatial Planning

Hydrology & Water Management  
Soil Science & Soil Ecology  
Sustainable Management, Policy & Governance

## **Law**

---

Civil & Private Law  
Criminal Law and Criminology  
European Law  
International Law  
Public Law

## About the Institute of International Education

The Institute of International Education, founded in 1919, is a world leader in the exchange of people and ideas. IIE has a network of 30 offices worldwide and 1,100 college and university members. In collaboration with governments, corporate and private foundations, and other sponsors, IIE designs and implements programs of study and training for students, educators, young professionals and trainees from all sectors with funding from government and private sources. These programs include the Fulbright and Humphrey Fellowships and the Gilman Scholarships, administered for the U.S. Department of State, and the Boren Scholarships and Fellowships administered for the National Security Education Program. IIE also provides advising and counseling on international education, and conducts policy research. IIE's publications include the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, as well as *Funding for United States Study*, the *IIE Passport Study Abroad* print and online directories, and the [StudyAbroadFunding.org](http://StudyAbroadFunding.org) website.

[www.iie.org](http://www.iie.org)

## About IIE's Center for Academic Mobility Research

The IIE Center for Academic Mobility Research brings together the Institute's in-house research expertise with leading minds from around the world to conduct and disseminate timely and relevant research and policy analysis in the field of international student and faculty mobility. The Center provides applied research and program evaluation services to domestic and international governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations, corporations, and foundations. The Center's in-depth books and reports, including the well-known *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, supported by the U.S. Department of State, are key reference resources. In addition, the Center's policy papers and snapshot surveys rapidly capture trends in the changing landscape of international education.

The core activities of the Center fall within three key areas:

- Driving policy and program decisions through applied research and analysis
- Fostering and disseminating knowledge
- Training the next generation of mobility researchers

[www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/Centers-of-Excellence/Center-for-Academic-Mobility-Research](http://www.iie.org/Who-We-Are/Centers-of-Excellence/Center-for-Academic-Mobility-Research).