

# Internationalisation in the UK, Denmark, and Germany

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- Internationalisation is the expansion of the spatiality of the university beyond borders through mobilities of students, scholars, knowledge, programs, providers (Larsen, 2016, p. 10)
- Alerts us to the idea of movements across borders or boundaries, typically understood as nation-state borders
- Deploying spatial and mobility theories; shifting perspectives away from methodological nationalism, more flexible and fluid understanding of the world
- Spatiality of the university seen as a widened transnational space of flows, rather than a simple, bounded domestic space (Larsen, 2016)
- Unpacking the spatiality of the university as part of the wider relational geographies of power and knowledge

## UK - from reciprocity to de-Europeanisation



- Since 1980s, part of the Erasmus programme; nurturing a sense of a European political identity and European citizenship (Brooks, 2019)
- 2020: UK leaves the Erasmus initiative, and instead launches its own mobility programme, the Turing Scheme
- Supporters of Brexit have long expressed concern towards the Erasmus programme's overtly Europeanising agenda (James, 2021)
- Sharp fall (44%) in the January 2024 intake
- Immigration rule changes and the rise in visa fees is putting international students off in seeing the UK as a study destination (Mitchell, 2024)

## Denmark - from internationalisation to de-internationalisation



- 2000-2019: steady increase in the number of international degree students
- 2018: Recruitment of international students must be cut at six Danish universities

2013: EU citizens who work part-time in Denmark have the status of mobile workers and the right to receive SU, the Danish student grants



DFP (Danish People's Party) inspired political agreement to set a ceiling for SU expenditure on EU students (Wright, 2022)

2018: ceiling was reached

- Policy that reflected a more national orientation in higher education (Tange & Jæger, 2021)
- Now: shift back to a more welcoming policy towards international students and skilled immigrants

## Germany - continuous commitment



- Serious commitment to internationalising its higher education landscape by steadily adopting new policies
- The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) world's largest funding organisation for the international exchange of students and researchers; main promoter of international higher education in Germany;
- Interest in the German language among international students, consequently growing effort into supporting lecturers to become multipliers of 'German as a foreign language' (DAAD, 2020)
- Has one of the highest numbers of international students staying in the country after finishing their studies

**UK**

financial pressure

**Denmark**

labour market  
language worries

**Germany**

impressive state funding  
more widely spoken language  
labour market: global pool of talent

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**Complex  
tension**

fragile balance  
fluctuates quickly

**higher education policy**  
(recruit more)

**immigration policy**  
(recruit fewer)



- Several countries have taken measures to reduce the number of incoming international students seeking to complete a degree
- Although arguments vary (e.g., housing issues, quality of teaching, visa issues), the reduction of immigration is a key rationale for most of these governments
- International degree-seeking students as one of the groups invading their country (de Wit, 2024)
- Welfare nationalism: Countries with highly developed and universally accessible welfare services have exclusionary tendencies (Barker, 2017)
- Foregrounding discourses reminiscent of cultural and welfare nationalism seem relevant to the debate over international HE in several countries



- Spatial perspective useful to see and unpack complex political dynamics and relational processes associated with HE internationalisation
- Thinking relationally helps to see how students, faculty, and knowledge are enmeshed in networks which both enable and constrain possible institutional and individual actions (Larsen, 2016)
- Studying internationalisation through a spatial lens is useful to see the changing role and nature of the nation-state with respect to higher education



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Thank you! Mange tak! Vielen Dank!

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