

Attracting and retaining international students: Policy and practice in Ireland

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Overview

- Law and policy context
- Data and trends
- Conditions for admission and stay
- Labour market access during and after studies

Law and policy context

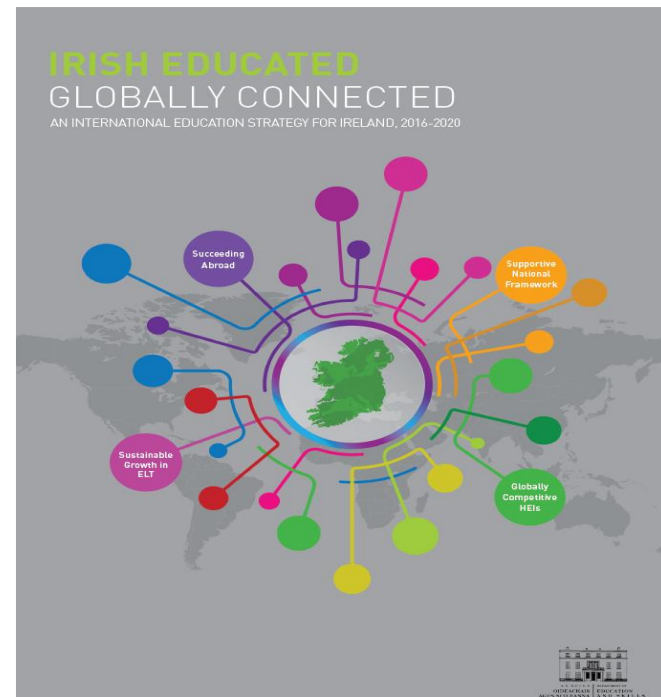
- Legislation
 - Ireland, UK, Denmark do not participate in EU Student Directives
 - Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act 2019 – section 26 – International Education Mark (IEM). This section is not yet commenced.
- Policy
 - International education strategy – 2010-2015 and 2016 – 2020
 - New immigration regime 2011

Why might students want to come to Ireland?



International Education Policy - 1

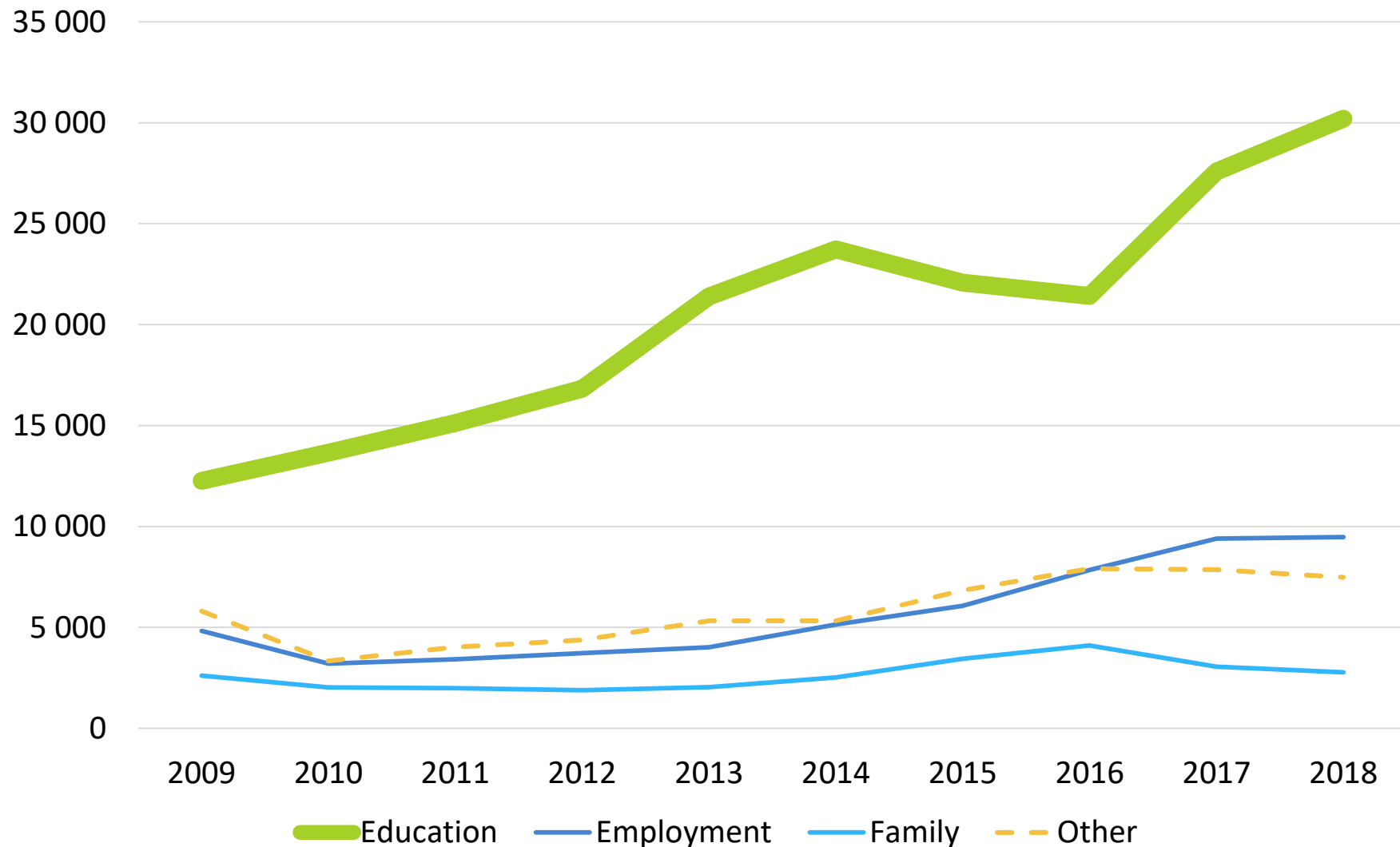
- Second international education strategy 2016-2020
- Key aims of the strategy to increase the economic value of the international education sector by €2.1bn per annum by 2020, to involve over 37,000 additional higher education and English language training students (both EU and non-EU) coming to Ireland.
- Marketing under national brand in third countries
- Regulatory reforms implemented 2011, 2014/15 to strengthen immigration framework.



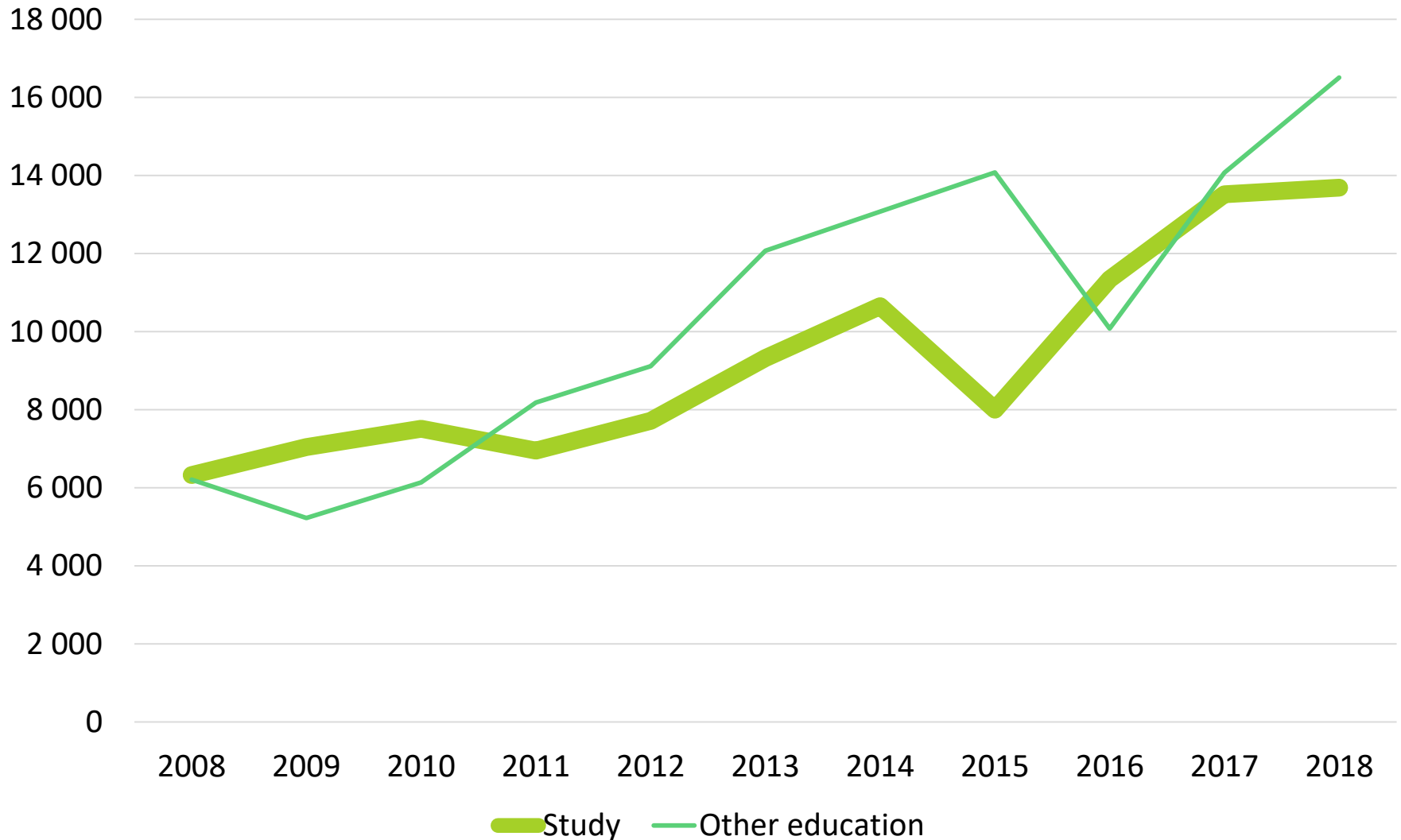
International Education Policy - 2

- Focus of immigration reform in relation to student migration on quality of the sector.
- Government policy statement of May 2015 stated reforms were designed: *to maintain Ireland's well established reputation, to tackle immigration abuses identified in the sector and provide meaningful learner protection for international students.*
- Cap of 7 years placed on a student immigration permission.
- Interim list of eligible programmes (ILEP) established pending establishment of International Education Mark on a statutory footing. Both English language and higher education programmes.
- Pathway put in place for retention of students in labour market.

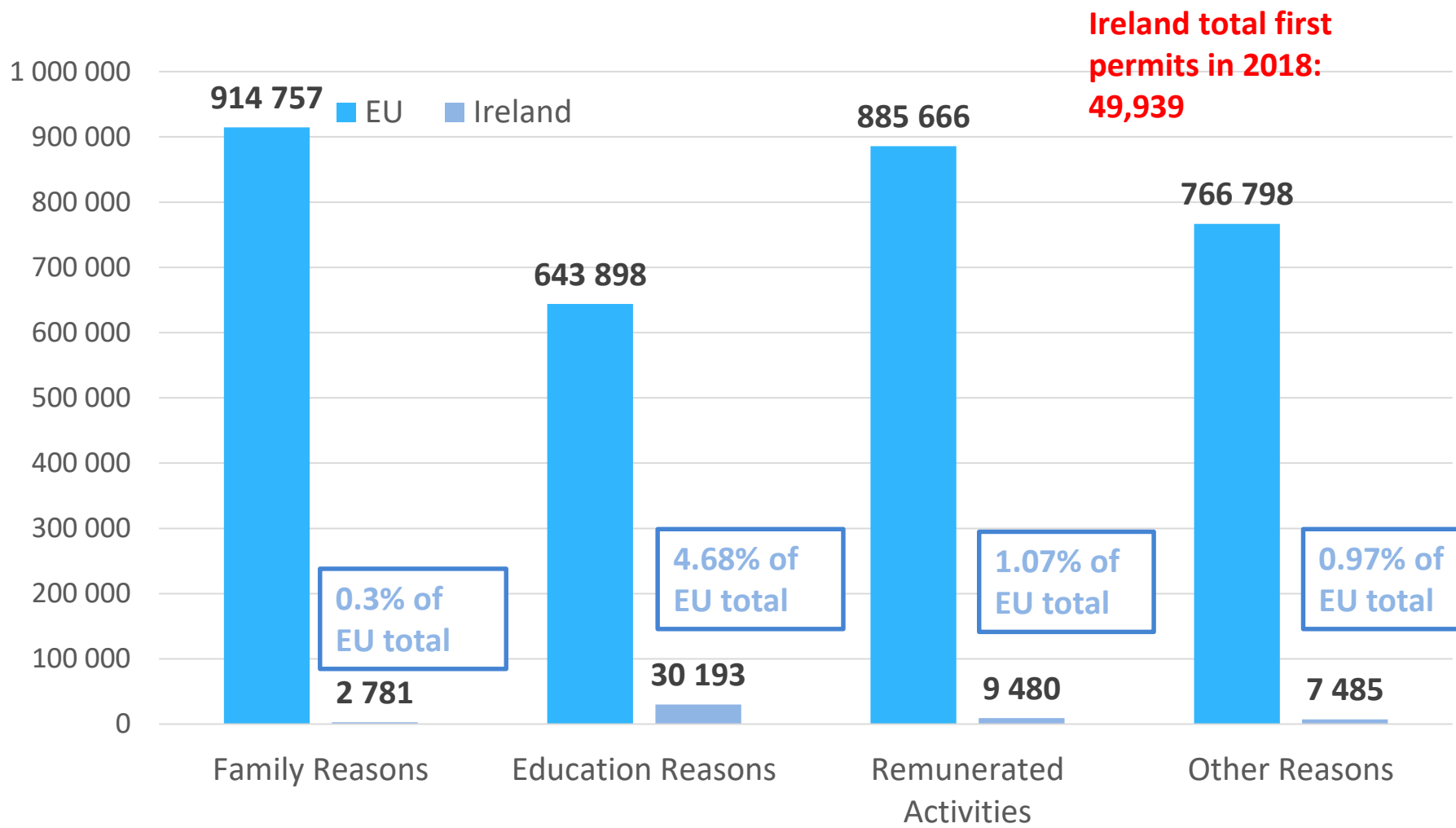
First residence permits issued to TCNs in Ireland, 2009–2018



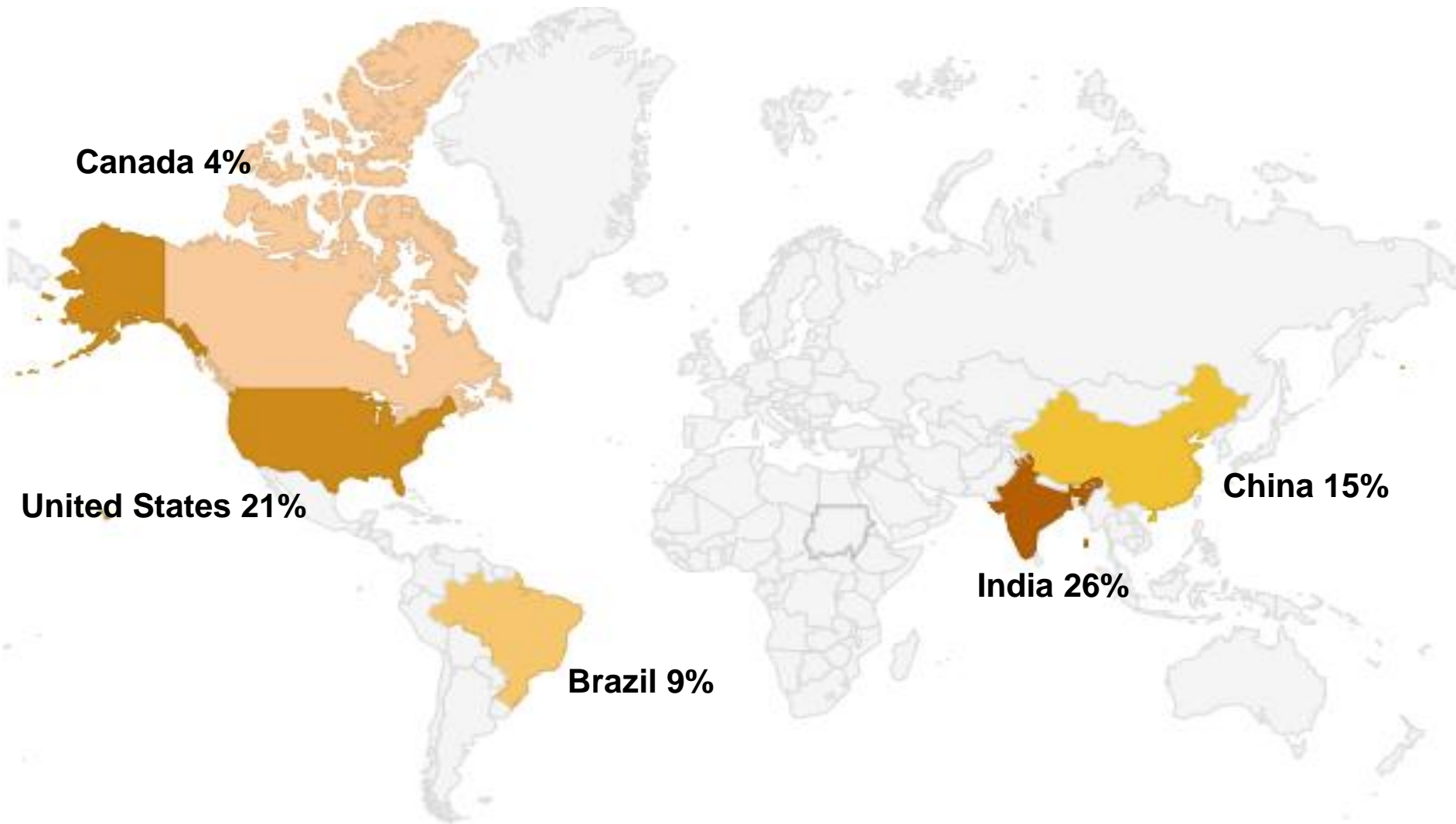
First residence permits issued to TCNs for education reasons in Ireland, 2008–2018



First Residence Permits in Ireland and the EU 2018

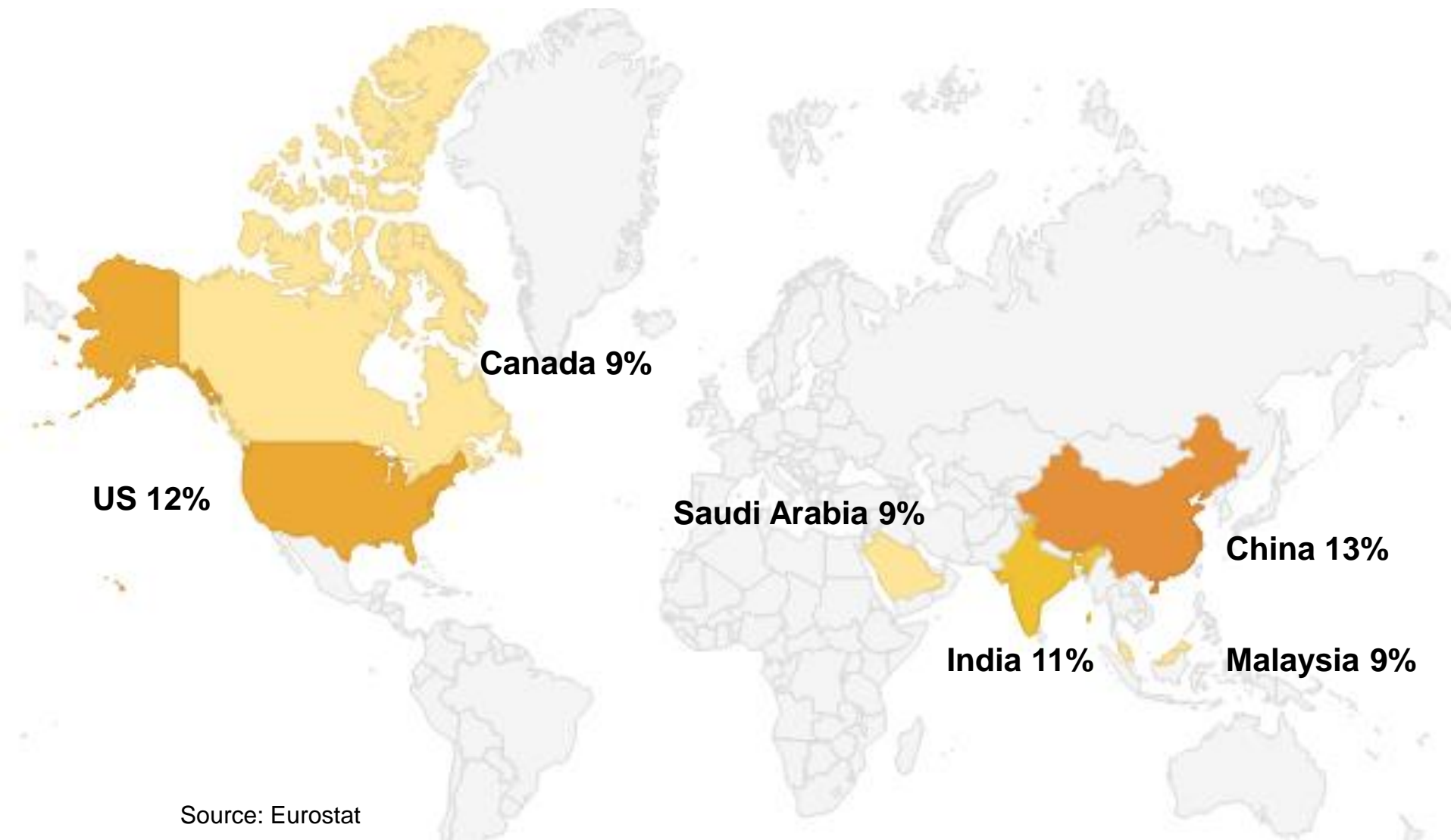


Country of origin of TCN higher education students issued a first residence permit in Ireland in 2018



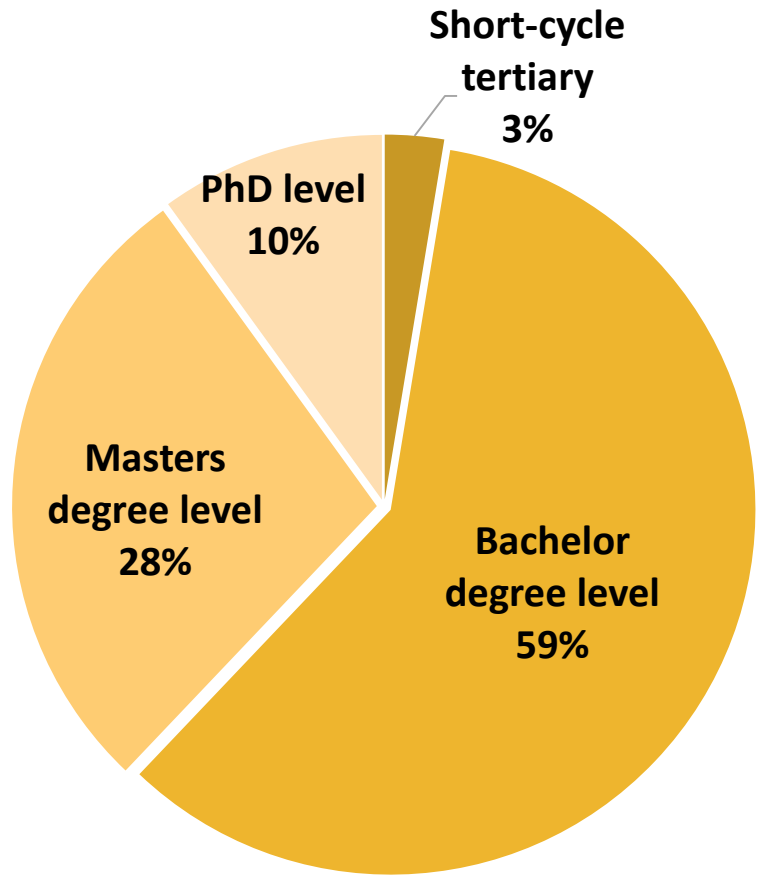
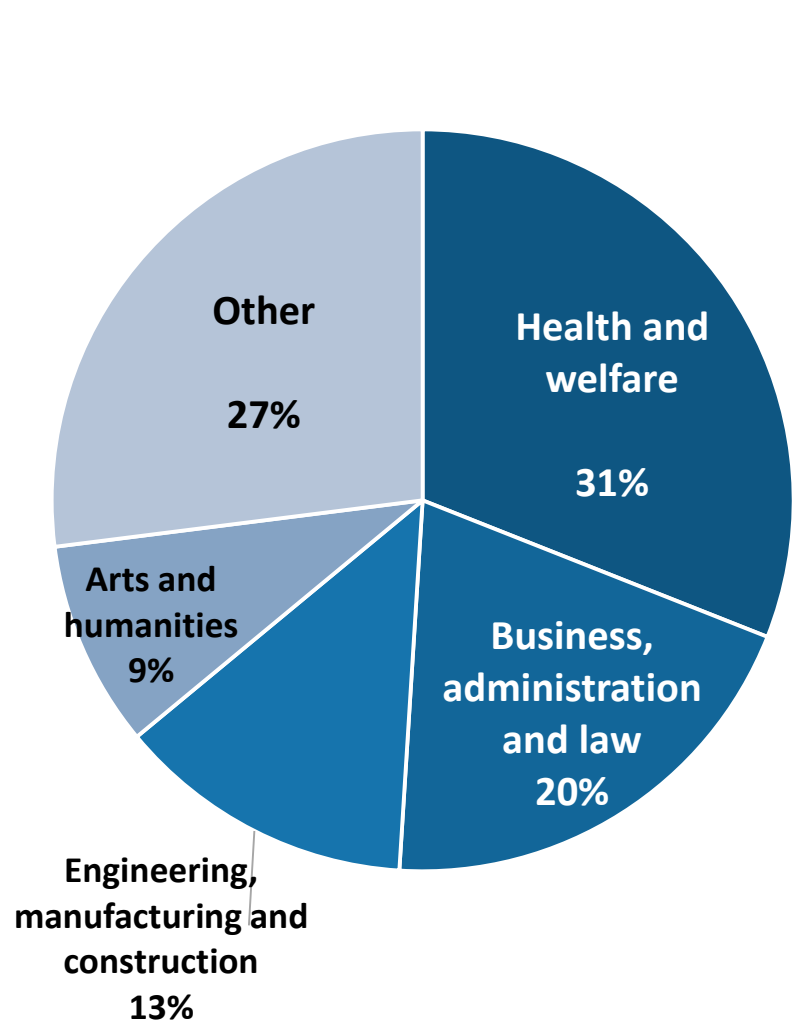
Source: Eurostat

Country of origin of non-EEA students enrolled in full time higher education in Ireland in 2017



Source: Eurostat

Study field and level of non-EEA students enrolled in full-time higher education in Ireland 2017-2018



Conditions for admission and stay in Ireland

- While Ireland has not opted in to EU Directive 2016/38, admission conditions are similar to those applied at EU level

Residence permit/visa requirements

- Letter of acceptance
- Payment of course fees
- Private medical insurance
- English language proficiency
- Sufficient funds

Terms of residence permit

- Must be renewed annually
- Renewable up to 7 years, provided academic progress
- Not reckonable as residence for citizenship
- Family reunification generally not permitted

Access to the labour market during and after study in Ireland

Student Work Concession

- Permitted to work 20h/week during term, 40h/week during holidays, in line with practice across EU Member States
- Exempt from employment permit regulations that govern access to labour market for non-EU nationals

Third-Level Graduate Programme (TLGP)

- Students with an Honours Bachelor's degree (4 years): up to 1 year
- Students with a Master's degree or higher: extended to 2 years (2017)
- Uptake grew from 650 students in 2012 to 2,090 in 2017

Employment permit system

- Employment permit required to remain in Ireland after/outside TGLP
- No. of students granted employment permit increased from 48 in 2013 to 871 in 2017

Conclusions

- Ireland has focused increased policy attention **on increasing the number of non-EEA students** in the last decade
- First-residence permits issued to **higher education** students **increased twofold** (from 6,300 in 2008 to 13,700 in 2018.)
- English language students account for approximately 50% of overall student immigration figures.
- Main countries of origin in enrolment data: **US, Malaysia, India, Saudi Arabia** and **Canada**; one third enrolled in **health and welfare** courses
- Reforms have contributed to **strengthening** the immigration **framework** and expanding **employment opportunities** for students at degree level.
- Some international students face **challenges** that may impact on the experience of studying and accessing employment in Ireland, including difficulties for students in Dublin area securing immigration appointments online, accessing housing and transitioning to TLGP and permit system following study

Thanks for your attention!

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