

Question for written answer E-002642/2025
to the Commission
Rule 144
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Subject: Strategies to attract international professionals from third countries to the EU

In an increasingly globalised labour market, the EU is competing with other economies, in particular the US, for highly skilled international talent. While the US Optional Practical Training (OPT) programme allows international graduates to work in the country for up to three years without prior job offers, there is no comparable flexible model in the EU. The extensions of the OPT in 2008 and 2016 resulted in a 400 % increase in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) participants – a clear indication of its effectiveness in tying highly qualified third-country nationals to the US labour market¹.

While Germany allows third-country nationals with a German degree to stay for up to 18 months to seek employment, this approach is limited to that country and not harmonised across the EU. At the same time, it is clear that many international students prefer to go to the US, including as a result of restrictive EU visa policies and a lack of awareness of career prospects. Given the acute shortage of skilled workers in areas such as health, AI and STEM, there is an urgent need for an overall EU strategy to actively attract international talent from third countries.

1. Is the Commission planning to develop an EU model of employment-related follow-up support, akin to the OPT model, allowing third-country nationals with an EU university degree to transition temporarily into the EU labour market?
2. What funding instruments are there currently at EU level for international talent outside the higher education sector, in particular with regard to professional integration or qualified employment?

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¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/global-migration-and-demography/2018/05/10/number-of-foreign-college-students-staying-and-working-in-u-s-after-graduation-surges/>