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**Abstract**

The number of international students and the number of countries hosting these students are growing. The level of internationalization has also become an indication of the prestige of higher education institutions. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important for countries ? an indeed the European higher education area as a whole ? to be academically attractive to international students. To measure the attractiveness, this paper argues that in addition to looking at countries' characteristics (i.e. factual data), subjective data (i.e. perceptions of international students) should also be considered. Hence, proposed is an explorative benchmark model based on a mixed method approach and consisting of factual and perceptual data as an initial attempt to measure the academic attractiveness countries. Outcomes provide insights into the strengths and weakness as benchmarked against other countries and can result in possible implications for policy. Because of data limitations, the model was solely applied to the Netherlands. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)