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**Author**

ERTL, Hubert

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**Abstract**

This paper investigates the expansion of student numbers in higher education (HE) in Germany. The quantitative sources indicate a constant increase in student numbers in the 1990s, but show that this growth was uneven and differentiated. The paper discusses a number of factors that influenced the increases in student numbers since the early 1990s, including the opening up and restructuring of HE in eastern Germany, and the strong increases in female participation and in the number of international students. Growth has been particularly significant in certain subject areas, as well as at Fachhochschulen and at private HE institutions. Current developments regarding the introduction of tuition fees and changing structures regarding access to HE are outlined, and their impact on the future expansion of HE is discussed. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)