



It's destination Europe for high quality education at low cost

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CHENNAI: Europe is no longer just a holiday destination for Indians. With universities offering quality education at 70% of what it would cost to study in the US and the UK, middle-class students are opting for European institutions. Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, Latvia and Sweden are among the preferred destinations since most universities are government-funded and scholarships are aplenty. Students only have to cover living expenses.

"Students want excellent faculty, job opportunities and lower costs. Italy, France and Germany fit the bill," said G K Unnithan, educational consultant, Manchester educational Group, Coimbatore. "The destination also depends on the course the student wants to study. For automobile and aeronautical engineering, Germany is the best place," he said.

Prashandh Sankarappan, who is doing an MS in process engineering in Technical University of Hamburg, had got admission in a university in Canada too. "But my family could not afford it. Here in Germany, I do not have to pay tuition fees. I only have to take care of my living expenses," said Prashandh, who is from Mettupalayam.

Living expenses can be high, but students are allowed to work, an option usually not available to those going to the US or the UK. "You could help a doctoral student with research and earn about 400 (about 32,000) a month. You can also get a part-time job, which is easy if you know German," he said.

"Most German universities are funded by the government so there are no tuition fees," said G.K. Unnithan, educational consultant, Manchester educational group Coimbatore. "Even if a student has to pay, it would be about 6 lakh a year," he said. In the US, tuition fees a two-year postgraduate programme could cost between 26 lakh and 30 lakh, not including living expenses. In Frankfurt and Munich, living expenses come to around 1,500 a month (1.2 lakh), while in other places it is about 1,250 a month (around 1lakh).

"Most people choose the US or Canada for MBA but I chose Germany for its strong economy and job opportunities. It is cheaper too," said Sriram Giridhar, a student of European Business School near Frankfurt. Around 800 German visas were issued to students from Tamil Nadu in 2013 and 400 visas have been issued until May 2014, a German Consulate official said.

While Germany is trending, students are also looking at Belgium and Latvia. "Research facilities are excellent and Belgium is so beautiful," said Madurai-based biotechnology student Ovia Kumaran. She is set to join KU Leuven University in Belgium for an MS in biophysics, biochemistry and biotechnology . Her tuition fees will come to about 700 a year (56,000).

"There are many cheaper destinations for students, but the seats are fewer. So, students always have the US as a back-up where there are at least 3,500 universities," said Krishna Kumar, consultant, Score Getter, Chennai.