

Management summary



**border concepts**  
thinking | planning | implementation

**Marketing in Education**  
[www.borderconcepts.biz](http://www.borderconcepts.biz)

# The G8 reform and its consequences for student recruitment activities in Germany

A survey among 100 German guidance counsellors

# The Survey

## Background Information

Traditionally, in most German states the schooling lasted for 13 years to achieve the qualification for university entrance. These 13 years were split up in 4 years of primary school and 9 years of secondary school. Students in some German states of the Eastern part only went to school for 12 year, however.

The German government initiated **a reform of the schooling period** at German secondary schools. With the reform all German states will have a standard general secondary schooling period of 8 years resulting in a total of 12 years. The reform is generally called G8 and it is a process rolling over the German states. It started in 2008, and by 2016 all German states will have students graduating after 12 years for the first time.

A consequence of the reform is that until 2016 **the number of secondary school graduates doubles** in the respective states. The doubling in number of school graduates means there will be a shortage of study places in the affected states. Consequently, the future students need to become increasingly mobile in order to participate in an academic study programme of their choice.

The German government has initiated measures to prevent this lack of study places. Firstly, the universities have agreed to offer more study places than before the reform. Secondly, the government supports students in studying abroad. It contributes to campaigns that promote foreign universities and offers financial aid for studying abroad. Nevertheless, it is generally doubted that these measures are sufficient to provide all interested graduates with study places in their home regions.

# The Survey

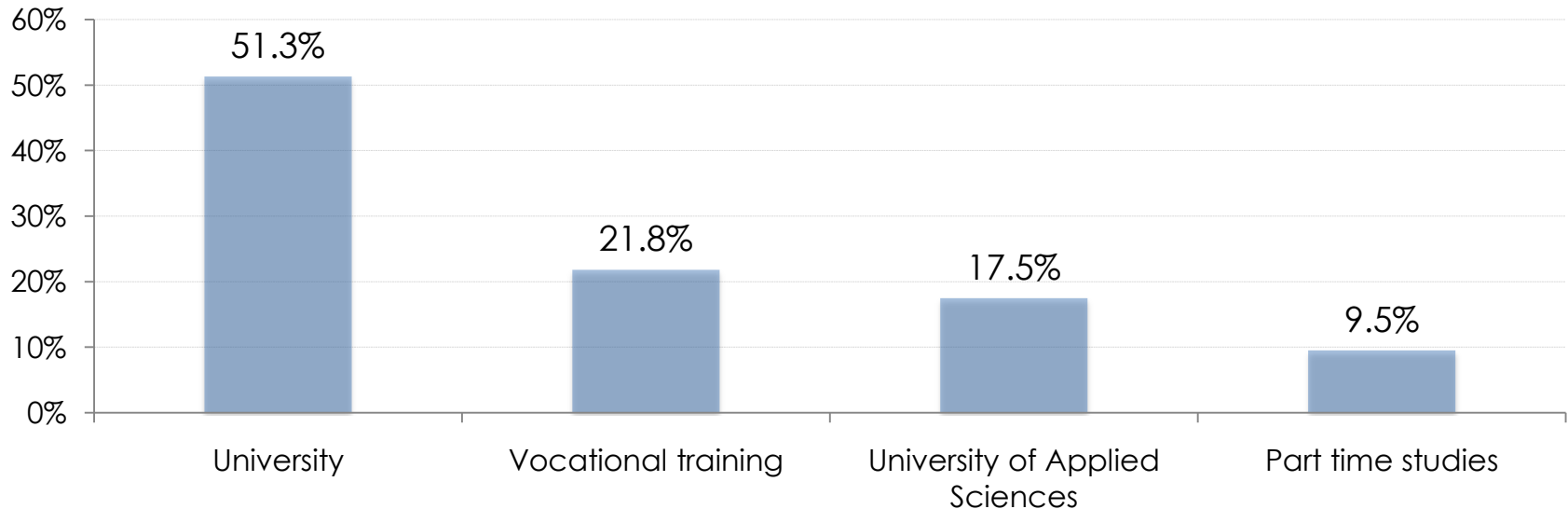
## Aims

Often, universities and colleges use the counselling procedures of students in their final years at school to promote their own institution and study courses.

The aim of the survey documented below was to get an idea of the changing counselling processes at German secondary schools caused by the G8 reform.

Institutions of higher education can take advantage of this knowledge to adapt their student recruitment activities in Germany to the new situation. In order to achieve a higher degree of internationalization with students from Germany it is important to get students to commit to the institution as early as possible. Taking advantage of the counselling activities at the schools and knowing which aspects need to be considered beforehand helps to **efficiently plan and execute student recruitment activities at German schools.**

## Which type of further education do your students choose?

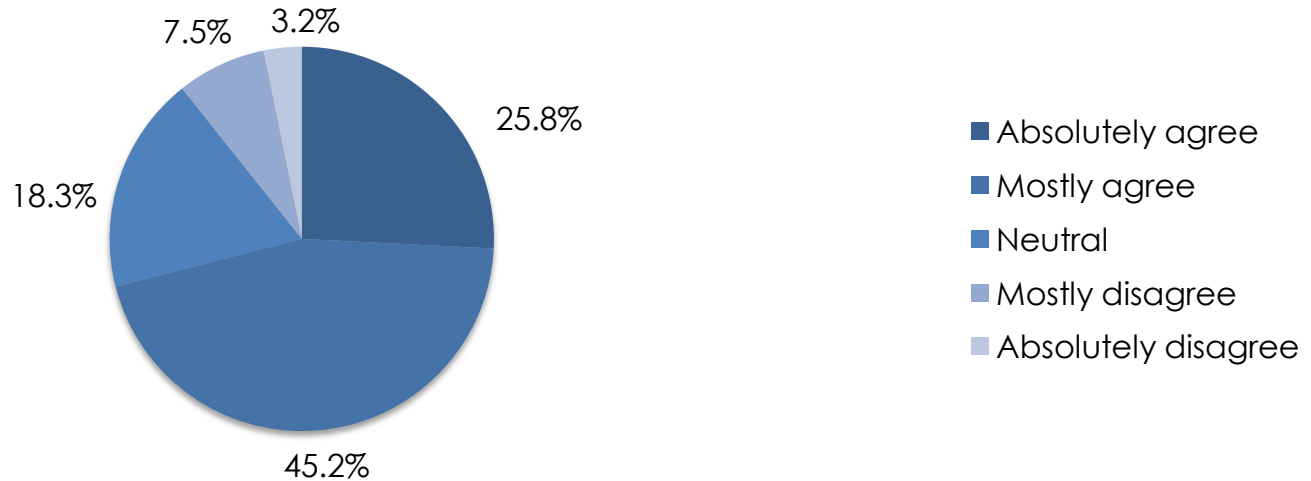


**More than half students choose an academic education at a university.** These educational institutions will be most affected by the G8 reform. Universities of Applied Sciences are less popular with secondary school graduates, but are likely to receive noticeably more applications as well.

Vocational trainings, either combined with college classes or not, are a popular option with secondary school graduates. With twice as many school graduates the education reform will cause an increased demand for vocational trainings. Rejected applicants will have to look for alternative options and are likely to end up applying at an academic educational institution.

## Please rate the following statement:

**"The political measures will not be sufficient to offset the effects of G8"**

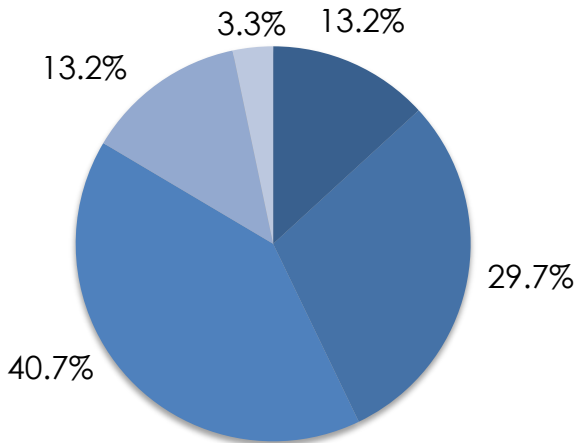


71% of the surveyed guidance counsellors state that they absolutely or mostly agree with the statement that the planned **political measures will not be sufficient** to offset the negative effects of the G8 reform, which indicates that there seems to be a high problem awareness among them.

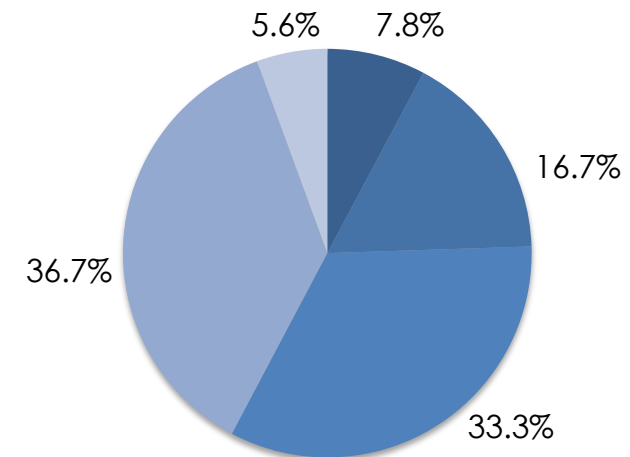
Since most of the guidance counsellors expect a situation in which some of their students will not be able to get a university place in their own region, it is likely that many of them would be interested in receiving suitable information material they can use to inform their students about their alternatives.

## Please rate the following statements:

"The students are aware of the predicted problems concerning the G8 reform."



"The G8 students gather information on universities & programmes earlier."



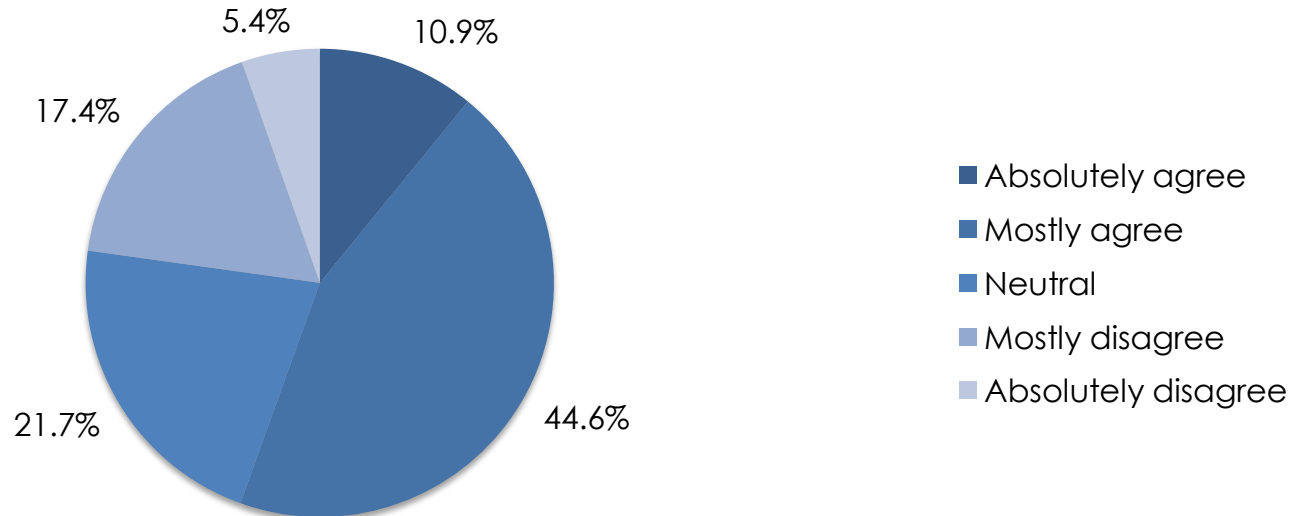
- Absolutely agree
- Mostly agree
- Neutral
- Mostly disagree
- Absolutely disagree

While the guidance counsellors estimate that the students are more or less aware of the predicted problems caused by the G8 reform, they do not observe a change in behaviour. Students seem to be reluctant to gather information earlier.

Universities looking to recruit new students should not expect students to approach them, but instead they should try to find ways to **initiate communication with the prospective future students** and offer assistance in making a decision concerning their education after secondary school.

## Please rate the following statements:

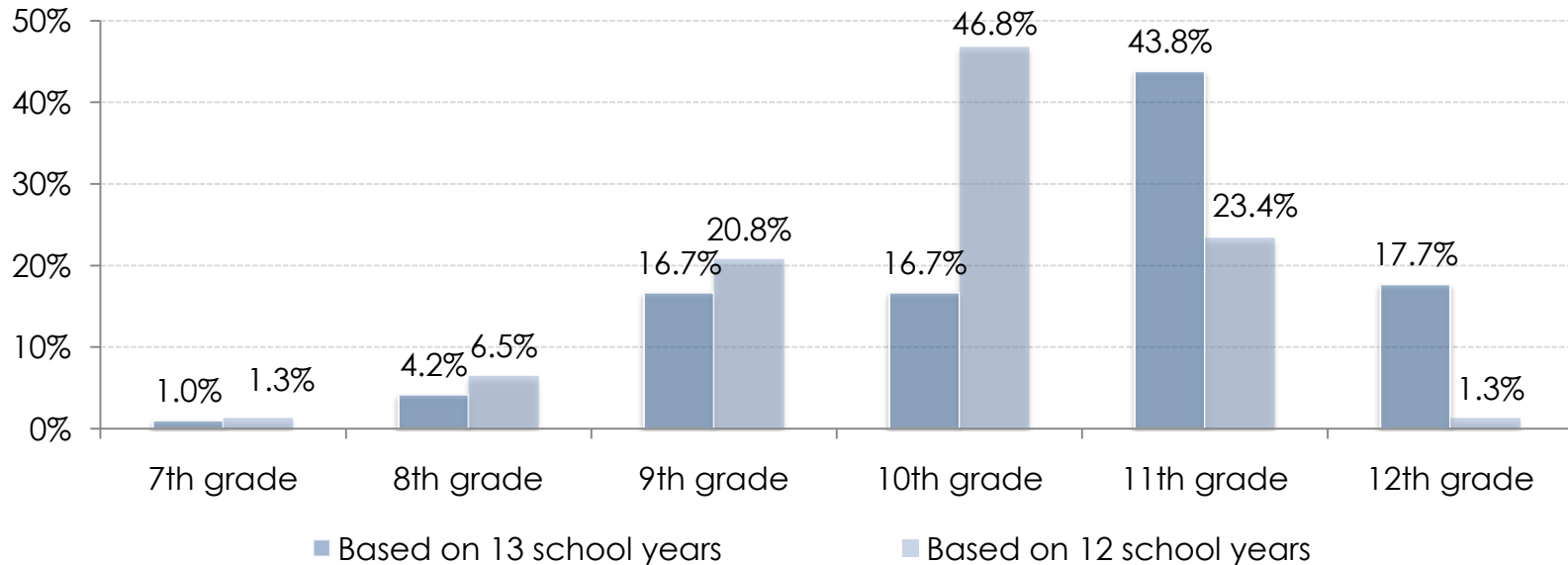
**“German private universities will profit from the G8 reform.”**



55.5% of guidance counsellors are of the opinion that private German universities will profit from the G8 reform, while 22.8% do not see any or only little potential in this field.

This expected **high potential is also applicable to foreign universities**. Studying at private universities in Germany requires more financial resources than studying at a public institution. Instead of choosing a private German institution the prospective students could also accept the possibly higher costs of studying abroad.

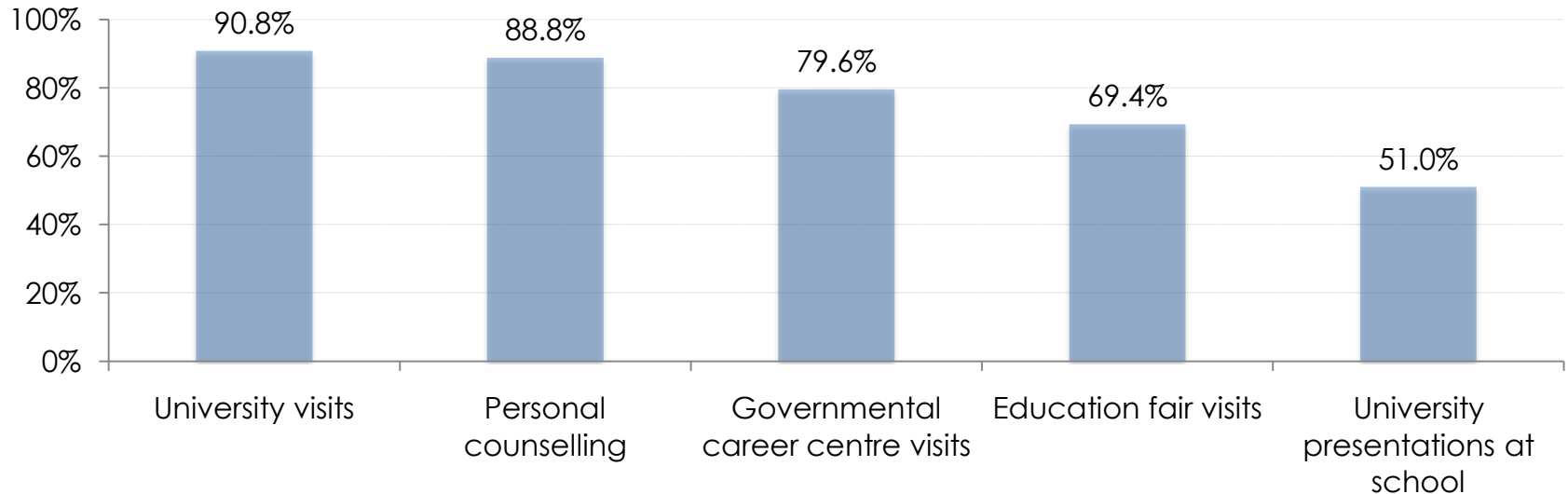
# When does your school start the counselling process?



The graph illustrates that most secondary schools start the counselling process a year earlier than before the G8 reform.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that the counselling process starts **two years before graduation**. The student recruitment activities need to start at this point in time. Thus, institutions of higher education have to make sure that their information material and information events are adapted to the interests and preferences of students at the age of 15.

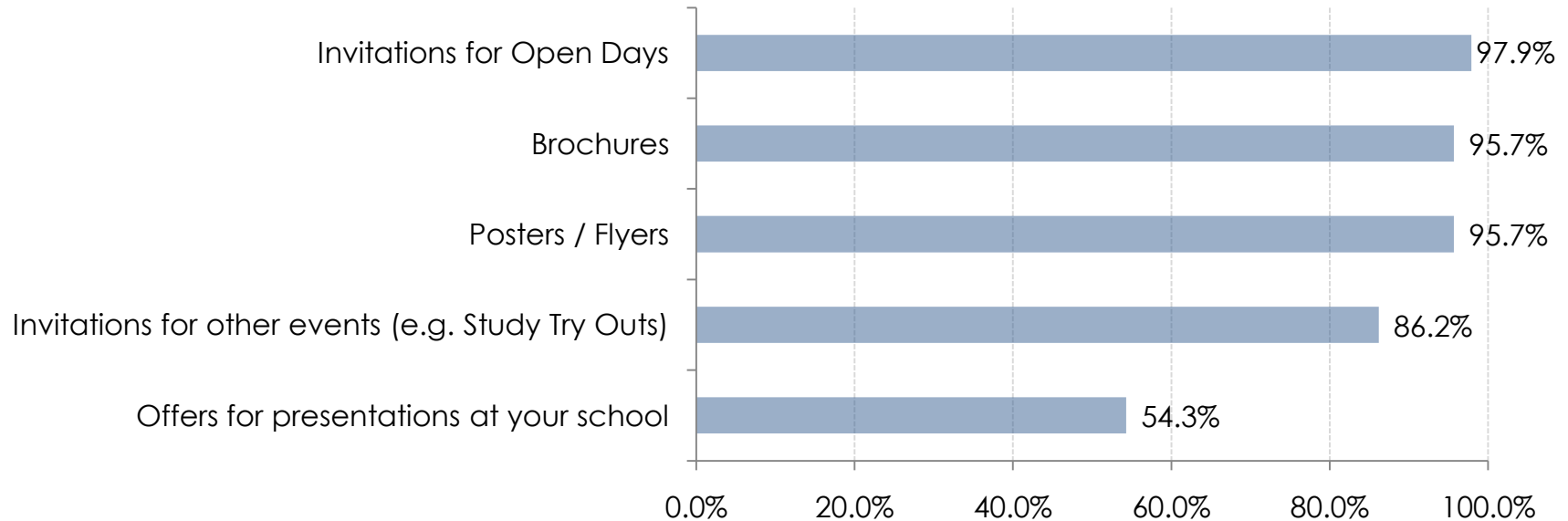
## Which methods of counselling are offered at your school?



University visits as well as personal counselling are offered by most schools, while governmental career centre and education fair visits are less popular, but still offered by the majority.

University presentations at school do not seem to be that established, yet. Only a little over half of the schools offer them to their students at this point. Thus, there are still **good opportunities to be considered for university presentations** at secondary schools.

## What do universities offer you?

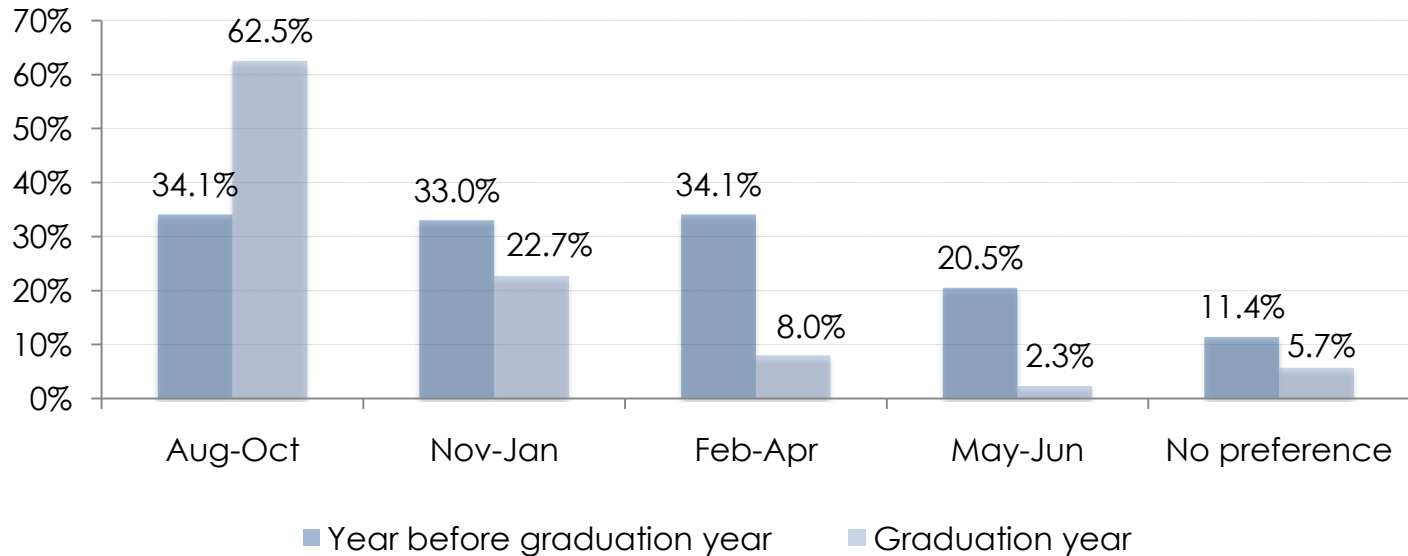


Open Days, brochures as well as posters and flyers seem to be the standard tools for universities looking to recruit students. Most schools receive countless Open Days invitations and printed information material. There is a lot of competition in this field and universities are challenged to **stand out from the crowd**.

Special events that go beyond Open Days are frequently offered as well, schools are able to choose from a variety of offers. Due to the high competition, only the most **attractive events** stand a chance of attracting schools / students.

Only slightly more than half of the schools are offered university presentations. The competition in this field is the least intense, which means that universities that **offer high-quality presentations** have the chance of becoming pioneers in this field.

## Which months of the school year are suitable for information events?

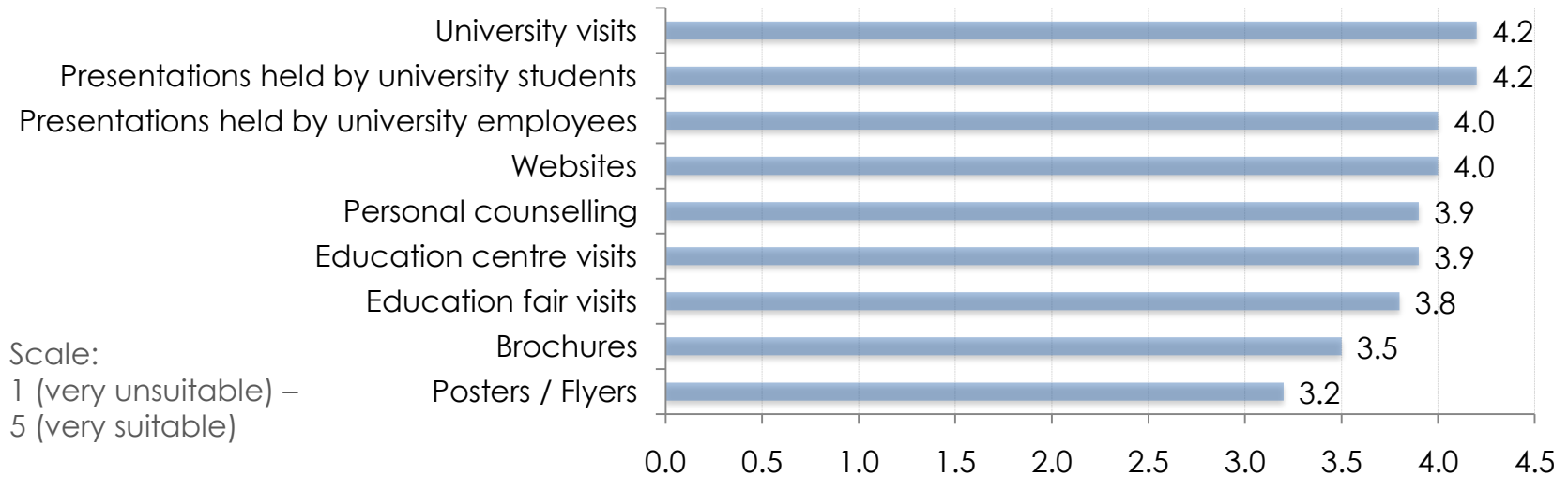


Looking at the year before the graduation year, the time period in which information events are planned does not seem to be significant. Only May and June are considered to be less suitable in this respect.

To reach graduating students, it is essential for universities to keep in mind that information events should be planned as early as possible in the school year.

Overall, the **best period for information events** to take place at schools is from **August until January**.

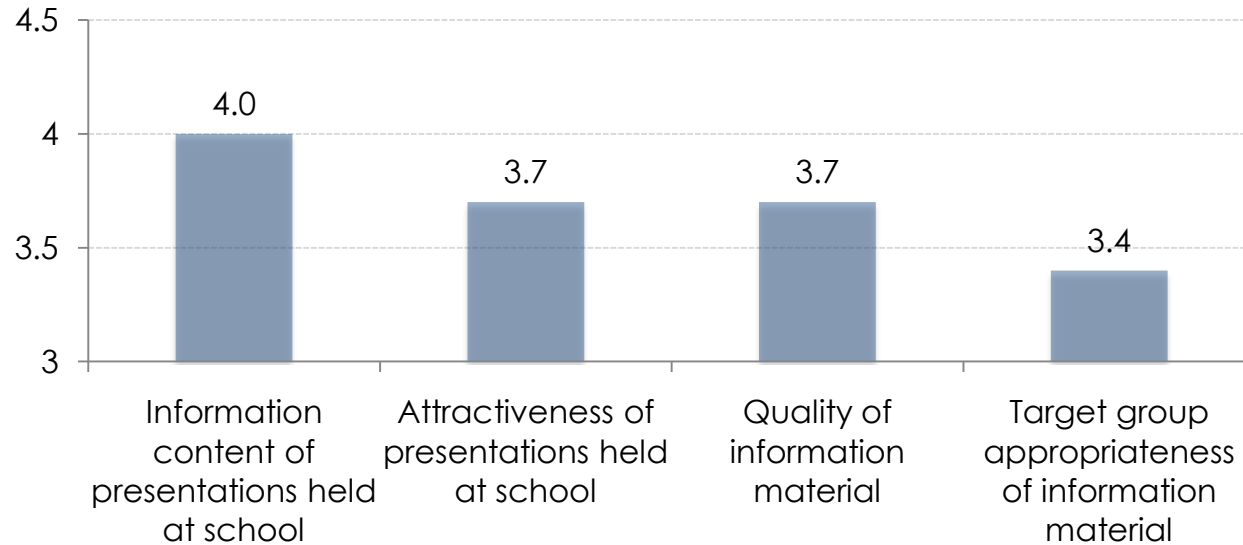
# How suitable are the following types of information material and events to inform students?



Guidance counsellors seem to be in favour of giving their students the opportunity **to get in contact with current university students** and/or professors, for example while visiting a university or attending a presentation. Presentations held by students are preferred over presentations held by university employees.

When it comes to information material, websites are by far the most popular source of information.

## How do you rate quality and content of the offered information material/presentations?

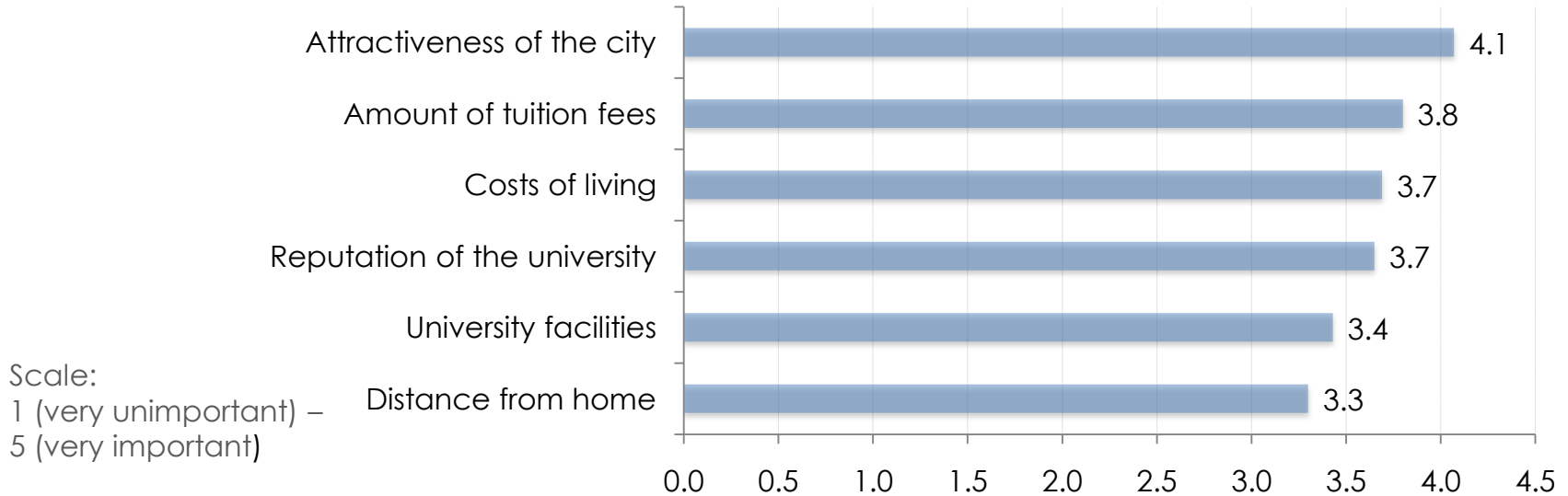


Scale:  
1 (very low) –  
5 (very high)

The guidance counsellors are satisfied with the information quality of presentations held at schools as well as with the quality of the information materials.

Nevertheless, the institutions have to pay attention to **adapting the used communication tools** to the age of the target group.

## How important is the influence of the following factors on a student's decision?

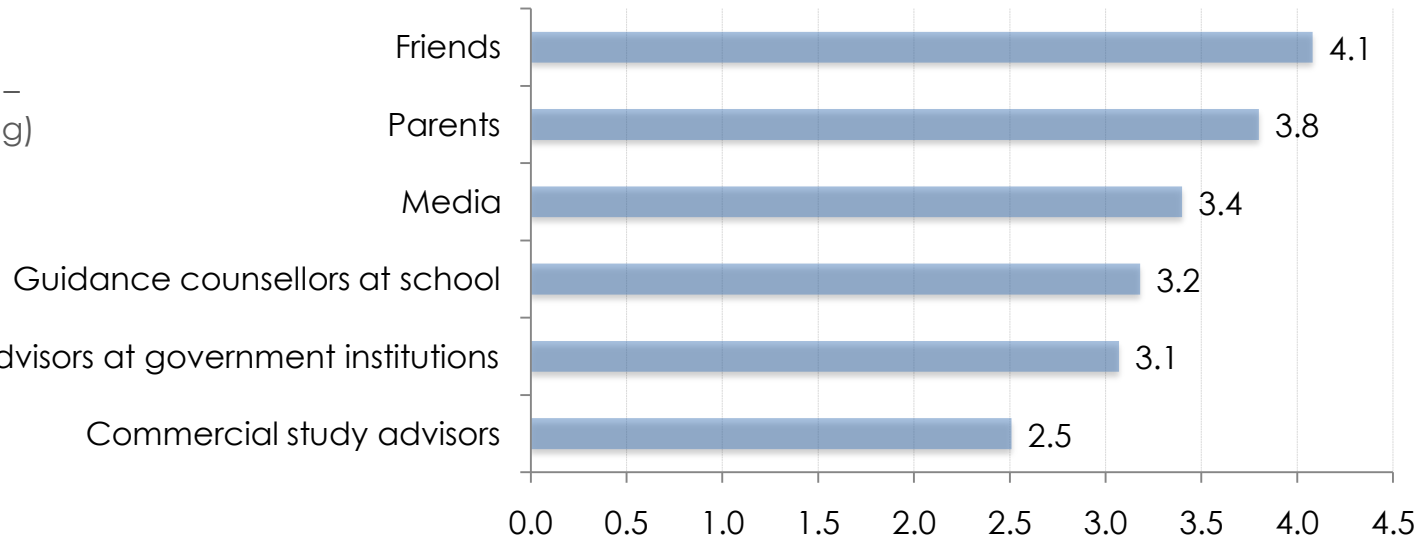


Guidance counsellors consider factors other than the education offered at an institution as very important for the student's decision.

Consequently, universities and colleges should **take advantage of all positive aspects** related to the city or region the institution is located in. These aspects should consistently be mentioned when communicating with the target group.

## How strong is the influence that the following groups have on a student's decision?

Scale:  
1 (very low) –  
5 (very strong)



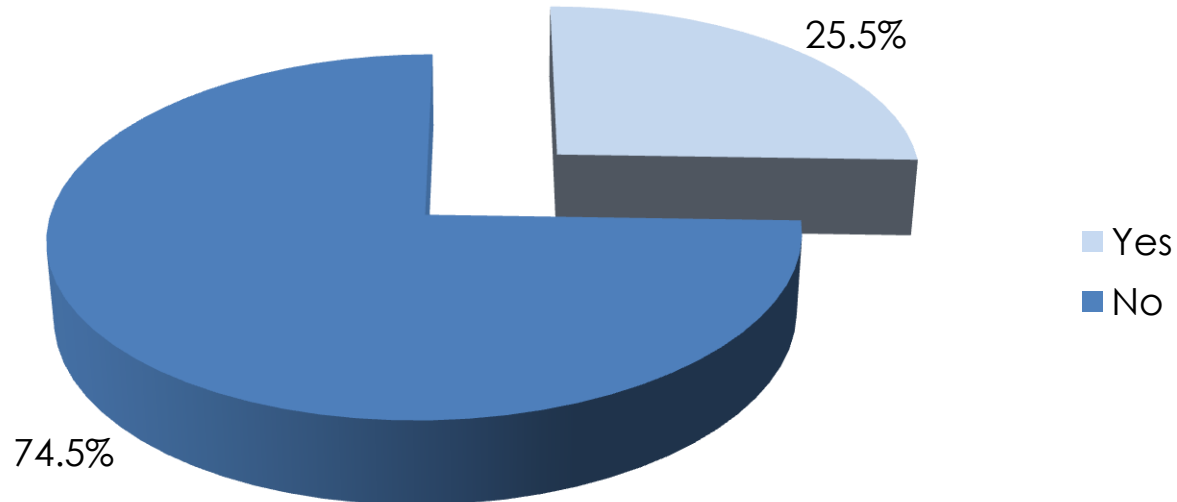
**Friends and parents** influence potential students the most.

This is a positive aspect for universities, as this means that prospective students are likely to pass information material on to their peers or might persuade their friends to study at a certain university. As friends frequently communicate via **social communities**, this way of communication should also be considered.

With respect to parents, universities and colleges should make use of **media that reaches parents** to promote the institution (e.g. magazines, internet).

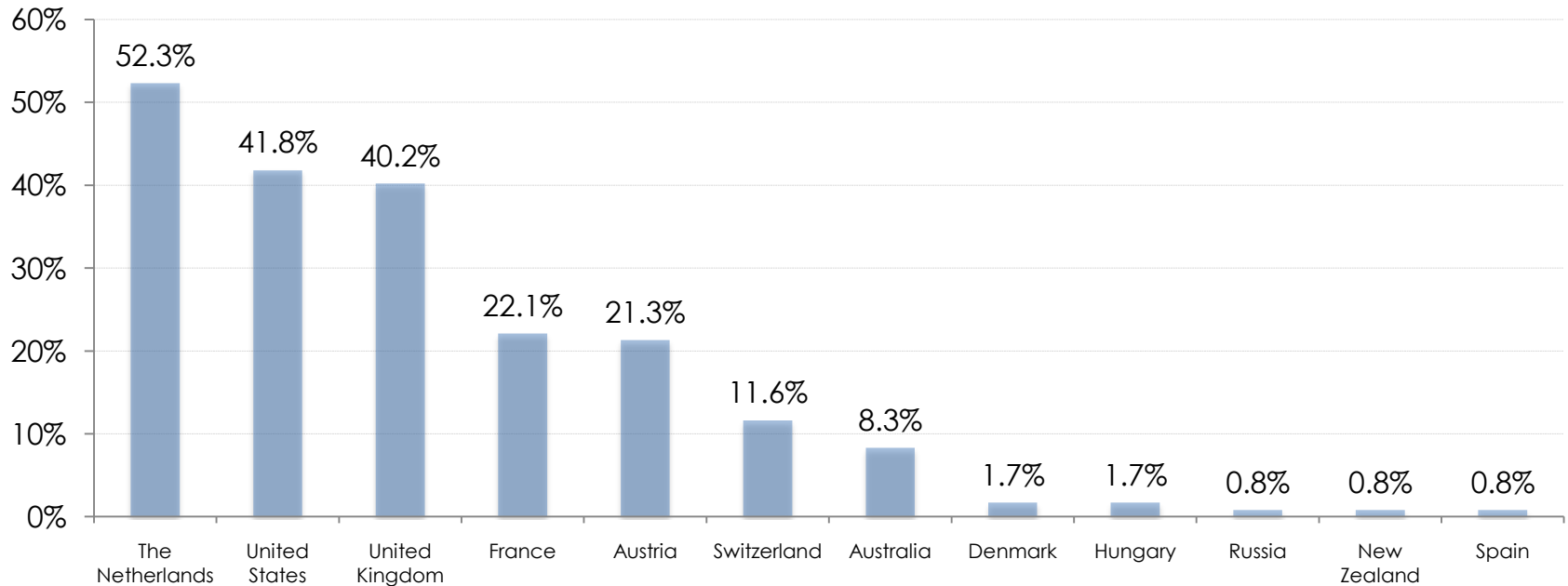
Guidance counsellors at school as well as governmental study advisors should also be considered when promoting an institution as a large number of students are informed by them.

## Do you advise your students on studying abroad?



Only about one fourth of guidance counsellors advise their students on studying abroad. Consequently, three quarters of them are not involved in this topic at this point, which implies that there is an enormous potential in this field as **the information needs are not saturated yet**. Foreign institutions that start student recruitment activities in Germany or that extend their current activities are likely to get the guidance counsellors' attention and thus reach a large number of prospective students.

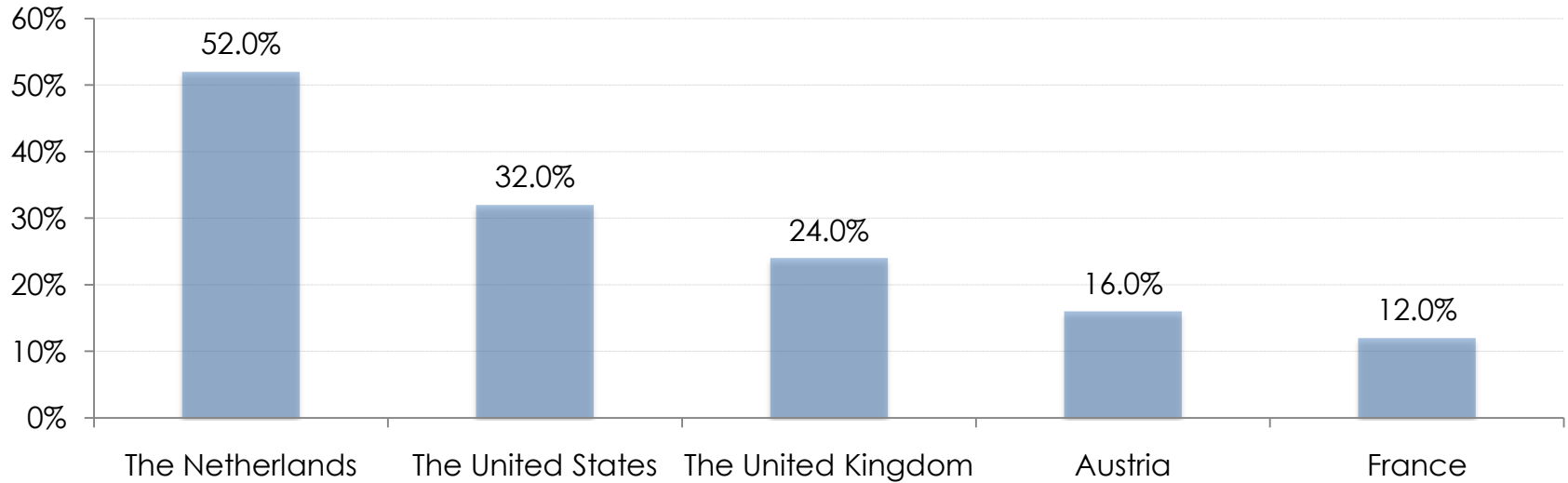
## In which foreign countries do your former students go to university?



The Netherlands is clearly the most popular country for studying abroad, followed by the United States and the United Kingdom. The top three countries all offer students the opportunity to study in the English language, with the Netherlands having the additional advantage of sharing a border with Germany. Obviously, the **extensive marketing efforts by universities of these countries pay off.**

France is attractive for students interested in improving their foreign language skills as well, while Austria and Switzerland mainly benefit from their less strict admission requirements and their programmes taught in German.

## Which countries do you recommend for studying abroad?



The Netherlands is by far the country most frequently recommended. The Dutch universities' extensive marketing efforts in Germany appear to be paying off.

The USA and the UK – two English-speaking countries – are highly popular as well, presumably due to the guidance counsellors' personal preferences and/or professional background.

The interest of guidance counsellors and students in the English language is not only positive for institutions in English-speaking countries, but for all universities and colleges that offer **study programmes taught in English**.

## Conclusion

The G8 reform clearly influences the conditions of student recruitment activities at German secondary schools. The following aspects need to be considered:

- The reform offers great opportunities for foreign institutions of higher education that seek a **higher degree of internationalization**.
- Especially those institutions that offer **study programmes in English** can benefit from the increase in German secondary school graduates.
- In order to take advantage of the G8 reform the institutions need to set themselves apart from competing institutions by **professionally presenting their USPs** when communicating with the target group.
- To get the attention of a higher number of the target group members, institutions should make use of the **whole range of effective communication tools**: Presentations at secondary schools and student recruitment fair visits, advertisement in print media and web portals, information events as well as social media activities and e-mail marketing.
- The institutions should start the communication with prospective students **two years before they graduate from school**. At this time the counselling process at schools start, and the students get in touch with the different possibilities they have. Thus, the information material and events must be adapted to 15- to 18-year-old students.