



UMCS
UNIWERSYTET MARII CURIE-SKŁODOWSKIEJ
W LUBLINIE



MRU
MYKOŁO ROMERIO
UNIVERSITETAS



Joanna Bielecka-Prus (UMCS)
Marzena Kruk (UMCS)
Zofia Kawczyńska-Butrym (UMCS)

The Eastern European University Report from the survey on the motivation of potential students from abroad

Abstract

Demographic changes in European countries and the decreasing number of young people are contributing to the difficulties of the challenges being experienced by the European education system, which is why higher-education institutions have struggled, for many years now, to attract foreign students. Thus it is essential to identify the expectations of foreign university students and to define the barriers hindering young people's coming to Poland.

The analysis of Eurostat data on the internationalisation of higher-education institutions in Europe has demonstrated that the internationalisation rate for Bachelor's and Master's studies in Polish higher-education institutions (1.27%) is among the lowest in Europe. The situation in PhD studies is similar (2.3% of the total number of PhD students come from abroad). Despite the unfavourable internationalisation rate of higher-education institutions, Poland is among the countries with the highest increase in the number of foreign students. In Poland in the 2013/2014 academic year Polish higher-education institutions recorded 35,983 foreign students. In the last ten years this number has seen a fourfold increase. The highest number of foreign students attend public higher-education institutions on a full-time basis. The number of students from European countries is constantly growing; in 2013 their number amounted to nearly 23 thousand. The number of students from Asian countries is increasing slowly (over 4000 in 2013), accompanied by a slight decrease in the number of students from Africa (593 in 2013) and Northern and Central America (1416 in 2013). CSO data from 2013 show that the highest number of European students come to Poland from Ukraine (52% of all students from Europe) and from Belarus (13%). The most popular



Erasmus+

Projekt współfinansowany ze środków Unii Europejskiej w ramach Programu Erasmus+



UMCS
UNIWERSYTET MARII CURIE-SKŁODOWSKIEJ
W LUBLINIE



MRU
MYKOŁO ROMERIO
UNIVERSITETAS

UNIVERSITAS CATHOLICA
RUŽOMBEROK



majors in EU are social sciences, economics and law, selected by from 35% (EU average) to 40% (Poland) of foreign students.

Within the Eastern European University, co-financed by the EU within the Erasmus+ Programme in 2015, research was carried out among 500 secondary-school students and university students from Eastern Partnership countries taking their first year. The primary goal was to learn about the motivations behind the young people's choices concerning their plans for future education, as well as about their choices of specific higher-education institutions abroad. Diagnosing the educational plans and needs of foreigners is the essential first step towards creating new majors of study and introducing modifications to the existing ones. Recognising the barriers to studying abroad can help higher-education institutions apply measures removing or at least considerably reducing these obstacles. The data were obtained with the use of an online questionnaire available in Polish, English, Russian and Ukrainian, and later subjected to statistical analysis focusing on the following variables: gender, financial situation, occupational status, the assessment of one's academic knowledge, & the willingness to study in Lublin.

The surveyed sample consisted of 64% women and in 36% men. A considerable majority of the people lived in Ukraine (92%) and only 8% were residents of other countries in the Eastern Partnership (Belarus, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia). Most of them came from large cities. Over a half the respondents (54%) were students who had already made some key decisions regarding their education, and 44% were secondary-school students facing difficult decisions concerning their professional career development. Over half of those surveyed (54%) evaluated their financial situation as neither good nor bad, and 31% as good or very good. The largest group of respondents came from families with a rich cultural capital, with 67% of respondents' mothers and 55% of fathers having higher education. The majority of those surveyed assessed their level of academic knowledge as good (54%) and 13% as very good. However, as far as the foreigners' language skills were concerned, the majority (89%) claimed that their Russian language skills were at a good or very good level, and 66% knew the English language. As many as 40% of the respondents did not speak Polish at all, and 31% demonstrated poor Polish skills and only every third of those surveyed spoke Polish at a good or very good level of fluency.



Erasmus+

Projekt współfinansowany ze środków Unii Europejskiej w ramach Programu Erasmus+



UMCS
UNIWERSYTET MARIII CURIE-SKŁODOWSKIEJ
W LUBLINIE



MRU
MYKOŁO ROMERIO
UNIWERSYTETAS

UNIVERSITAS
CATHOLICA
RUŽOMBEROK



The respondents' personal predispositions were positively evaluated: 53% of those surveyed saw themselves as highly optimistic, 59% reported having a lot of hope, and 56% positively assessed their life opportunities. The respondents evaluated highly their adaptation skills (59%), bonds with family and friends (60%) and the ability to make contacts with others (44%).

The respondents' plans included taking up studies (53%) or continuing them (41%), while only 5% of those surveyed had not made a decision on this issue. The research demonstrated that as many as 85% of those surveyed, regardless of gender, would like to take up studies in one of the EU countries; 75% of the respondents were planning to come to Poland, and 63% to Lublin. Those surveyed expected that studies abroad would increase their chances of finding a job after graduation (89.6%), anticipated high educational standards (89%), and the possibility of obtaining an EU diploma (85.5%). Among the major factors taken into consideration by the respondents when choosing their higher-education institution were: high educational standards (94.6%), a comprehensive range of educational services (87.8%), and friendly relations between students and academic teachers (80.3%) as well as between students themselves (71.6%). For 62.7% of those surveyed the opportunity of taking classes in English (or another language) was of importance.

The majority (68.9%) were considering joining a public higher-education institution such as a university (82.5%), with every fifth person planning to study at a higher-education institution with a medical (20.5%) or economic profile (20.1%). Master's and Bachelor's studies enjoyed the greatest popularity (71.1% and 50.4% respectively). Only every fifth person, with a predominance of women, said they would like to take up PhD studies. The preferred majors were: economics (26.7%), medicine (25.3%) and European and international studies (21.9%). The fields of study associated with agriculture and theology were the least popular (3.2% and 1.8% respectively). Women more often than men selected medical studies (28.8%), the arts (23.8%), pedagogy and psychology (21.9%), journalism and advertising (21.3%), language studies (19.7%) and European and international studies (23.8%). However, men preferred economics (34.6%), IT (19%), engineering and technology (14%), security and military science (12.8%), history (14%) and, slightly-less often, agriculture (6.7%). According to most of those surveyed the major factor determining the choice of a major was the guarantee of finding a job after graduation (94%), with



Erasmus+

Projekt współfinansowany ze środków Unii Europejskiej w ramach Programu Erasmus+



UMCS
UNIWERSYTET MARIII CURIE-SKŁODOWSKIEJ
W LUBLINIE



MRU
MYKOŁO ROMERIO
UNIVERSITETAS

UNIVERSITAS CATHOLICA
RUŽOMBEROK



83.9% of those surveyed stating that it should be well-paid. The basic source of information on foreign studies was the Internet (chosen by 81% of those surveyed), parents (45%) and school (38%). Traditional media such as the radio or TV were reported as a useful source of information by every third respondent.

When choosing the place for studying, those surveyed drew attention to low maintenance costs (57.6%), the possibility of finding a job in the city or town when they would decide to continue their education (52.8%), the quality of the transport connection with the place of residence in the home country (48%) and the distance from the family home (39.4%). Furthermore, the sense of security in the city or town of study turned out to be important for 46% of those surveyed. Only every fourth respondent took into consideration the number of their country's nationals staying in their city or town of study (27.4%) and the presence of their friends or acquaintances in the city/town (24%).

The major obstacle to taking up studies in Poland was financial issues (53.2%). In addition, the financial situation of the family was one of the key variables significantly influencing the respondents' educational plans and preferences. Those surveyed also reported such difficulties as poor foreign-language skills (21.5%) and no information on studying opportunities (14.3%).

Every fourth respondent (27%) claimed that they did not have any specific plans on where to stay after graduation, with an almost equal group (25.5%) of respondents wishing to return to their country or planning to stay in Poland (24%). Only 17.5% were considering moving to another European country, and 5% to a non-European country. Therefore, 22.5% saw Poland as only a transitory stage in their migration.

This publication was prepared with the financial support of the European Commission. It reflects only the views and opinions of its authors and neither the European Commission nor the Polish National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme are to be held responsible for its contents.



Erasmus+

Projekt współfinansowany ze środków Unii Europejskiej w ramach Programu Erasmus+