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## Social aspects of transboundary education. Case study of Ukrainian students studying in the Subcarpathian region.

Paper peer-reviewed by Prof. Marek Lisiecki, PhD



## Summary

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The paper presents the results of research on Ukrainian students studying in the Podkarpackie Province. The purpose of the paper is to show the motivations behind deciding to study in Poland as well as the social practices that appear during studying. For this purpose, a questionnaire research was carried out in 2015 and 2017 on a sample of 250 and 224 students respectively. The data was collected in an auditorium questionnaire. The students choosing to study in Poland were driven mainly by the opportunity to obtain a European degree, high quality of education, possibility to travel abroad and to avoid corruption. Their main problems after arriving in Poland included high prices, limited command of the local language and limited contact with Polish nationals. The surveyed students were most positive about studying conditions, relations with academic staff and modern infrastructure, while limited career opportunities for students and graduates were seen as the greatest downside to studying in Poland. The majority of students declared they would continue their education at master courses. Upon completed education, they intend to stay in Poland or relocate to the west of Poland.

In the era of globalization and commonplace migrations, educational migrations have become very popular among youth. Anthony Giddens wrote that globalization forces people to live a more open, thoughtful life.<sup>212</sup> This means that we continuously respond to changes occurring in the world and we constantly adapt to occurring transformations. Apart from its political, economic, technological and cultural aspects, globalization has also its educational aspect. It is clearly apparent in our educational content. As pointed out by Mirosław Szymański, "the command of foreign languages, knowledge of general history, world literature, knowledge that is multicultural in its character must be greater than ever before. It also becomes necessary to master new means of communication, as the Internet and other contemporary media are no less significant in their informational and cultural role than a book has become a long time ago"<sup>213</sup>. The changes also pertained to institutional solutions. The implementation of the Bologna process in tertiary education have uniformized the structure of education and allowed to extend the scope of student exchanges, e.g. within the framework of the Erasmus program. Along with educational globalization, other changes are also apparent. The abolishment of visa requirements and border control within the Schengen Area, development of low-cost airlines or long-distance coach services makes traveling around the world much easier. Also, recent technology allows students to travel abroad to study and, at the same time, stay in touch with family and friends thanks to various on-line communication tools.

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212 A. Giddens, *Sociology*, PWN, Warsaw 2006, page 84.

213 M. Szymański, *Sociology of Education*, Impuls, Kraków 2013, page 167.

In the process of globalization, the convergence of youth is of particular importance. The youth are both a “product” of globalization and its creative subject. They are shaped by popular culture, Internet and the global consumer market. They have similar tastes in music, typically speak English and declare similar aspirations and ambitions. The contemporary youth are under the influence of liberal and meritocratic ideology.

An important component of modern times is the society of knowledge, in which education is the decisive factor in achieving high social status and quality of life. Globalization also causes considerable social inequalities. These result, in turn, in migration processes. Much like in the case of economic migration, student migration generally occurs from peripheries towards city centers. Increasing global instability and disparities in the quality of life between states may also lead to increased student migrations.

According to OECD statistics, the number of international students was 0.8 million in the 1970s, whereas in 2015 it was 4.6 million. The data in the dynamic approach show a successive increase in the number of international students since 1995. It increased every subsequent year<sup>214</sup>. In terms of percentage, most international students come from Australia (28%), New Zealand (26%), Great Britain (22%), Switzerland (20%), Austria (18%) and Belgium (12%)<sup>215</sup>.

According to the same data, in terms of percentage of foreign students, Polish universities are at the bottom of the list. However, in recent years the situation in our country started to change because of the influx of Ukrainian students and in 2016 this value equaled 5.15%<sup>216</sup>. Ukrainians increasingly often choose to study in Poland and, currently, they account for as much as 54% of foreign students. Due to the prevalence of Ukrainians at Polish universities and with their number increasing every year, a question arises as to their functioning in Polish conditions. This article aims to identify the motivations driving students who decide to travel to Poland. It will also be important to highlight the issues they are facing after arriving in Poland. The final objective of the article shall be the presentation of evaluations regarding the functioning of students in the reality of Polish cities and presentation of life goals upon completing education.

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214 *Education at a Glance 2017: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris 2017, page 295.

215 *Ibidem*, page 292.

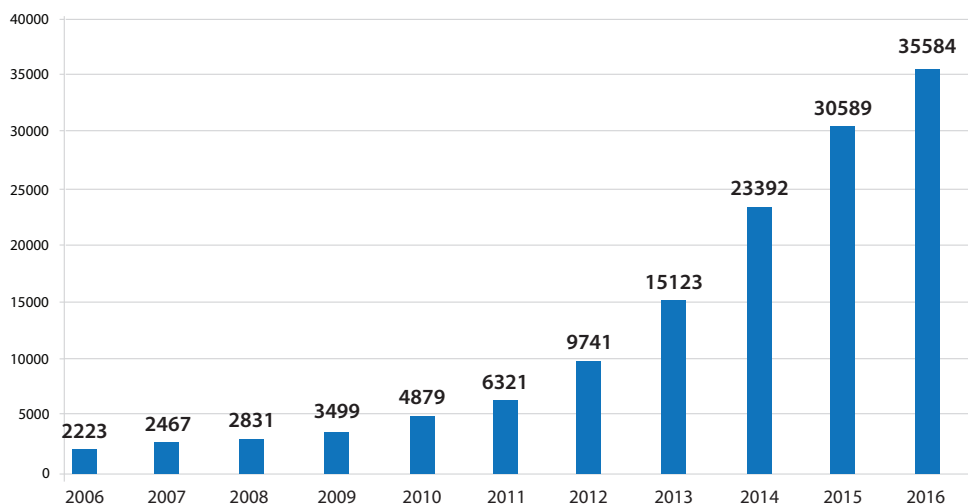
216 W. Siwiński, *Educational Highway Poland -Ukraine; project under construction 2017*, [upc.kpi.ua/documents/dni\\_nauky/presentations/06-04-2017/Siwiniski.pdf](http://upc.kpi.ua/documents/dni_nauky/presentations/06-04-2017/Siwiniski.pdf) (download date 10.10.2017).

## Ukrainian students in Poland

According to CEDOS, 59,648 students left Ukraine in 2015. Typically they choose countries such as: Poland, Germany, Russia, Canada, Italy, Czech Republic, Spain and USA. The increase in the number of Ukrainian students studying abroad was very dynamic between 2009 and 2015 (increase by 129%). In this aspect, Poland remains the absolute leader – currently (data for 2016) as many as 35,584 persons from Ukraine study in Poland and they constitute the most numerous group of foreign students. Only 12,568 persons studied in Russia, whereby it should be noted that Russia is the second most popular destination country among Ukrainian students. However, as compared to other foreign students, they account for only 7% of all foreign students in Russia.<sup>217</sup>

The data clearly shows that Poland does, indeed, constitute the main migration destination for Ukrainian students. The results presented by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (Chart 1) show an increase in the number of Ukrainian students in Poland in the last decade. It is apparent that since 2011 the number of Ukrainian national at Polish universities has been steadily increasing. Because of this process, the term of Ukrainization of Polish universities has even been coined.

**Chart 1. Number of students from Ukraine at Polish universities**



217 О. Слободян, Є. Стадний, *Українськ студенти за кордоном*, CEDOS 2016, <https://cedos.org.ua/uk/osvita/ukrainski-studenty-za-kordonom-skilky-ta-chomu> (download date 10.10.2017).

The major, rapid increase in the number of Ukrainian students in Poland in the recent years may be related to the difficult domestic situation in Ukraine. According to Ukrainian analysts, there may be several factors driving student migrations into Poland. Poland is still a relatively cheap country for Ukrainian students. Monthly subsistence costs calculated in Euro are 208 in Poland, 670 in Germany, 615 in France, 532 in Spain and 417 in Italy. Among the listed countries, Poland is clearly the cheapest and therefore more competitive as compared to other countries.

Furthermore, the fact that Poland was the most popular country to study abroad can also be due to cultural reasons. In terms of language and culture, Poland is similar to Ukraine. Classes for Ukrainian students are carried out in Polish with the aim to help their integration with the Polish-speaking community.

Also the size of Ukrainian diaspora in Poland is a factor of major importance when it comes to choosing to study in Poland. Apart from the Ukrainian minority, according to estimates, as many as 1 to 1.5 million Ukrainians have recently migrated to Poland. Student migration may be the first step towards permanent migration. Students may also be allowed to migrate easier, because their friends and relatives are already in Poland.

Nevertheless, geographical proximity is just as important. Direct neighborhood between Poland and Ukraine, good coach and railway service (a fast train from Kiev to Przemyśl has been launched several months ago and since recently there are two services of this kind available) The Podkarpackie Province benefits from the immediate vicinity of Ukraine. Students may choose to study in Przemyśl, Jarosław or Rzeszów - these cities are located closest to the Ukraine border. If someone chooses to study in the Podkarpackie Province, they may save time and money for travels from Ukraine to their university.

In the case of studying in a neighboring country, transboundary education might be the right term. We already know a lot about Ukrainians studying in Poland. Available data show that approx. 769 students migrated from Poland to Ukraine (medical education) in 2016.<sup>218</sup> A good example of transboundary education is the Podkarpackie Province. The Central Statistical Office of Poland reports 2800 foreigners in 2017 in the Podkarpackie Province. Foreign students accounted for 5.6% of the entire student population in the Podkarpackie Province. Most of them (84%) originated from Ukraine. Most foreign nationals

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218 W. Siwiński, *Educational highway ...* Op. cit.

studied at the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów – 1900 persons (65.3% of all studying foreigners), followed by the East European State University in Przemyśl – 318 persons (11.2%), University of Rzeszów – 201 persons (7.1%) and University of Law and Public Administration – 156 persons (5.5%). As mentioned earlier, the vast majority of foreign students at universities in the Podkarpackie Province are from Ukraine. In the initial phase of popularity of studies in Poland among Ukrainians, the Podkarpackie Province benefited from its location. Currently, a decline in the number of students in the Podkarpackie Province is being observed. It is particularly apparent at the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów, where the number of Ukrainian students declined by more than 50%<sup>219</sup>. Most often they choose to travel to large cities. Most Ukrainian students chose to study in the Mazowieckie Province – 8837 persons, Lubelskie Province - 4484 province, Małopolskie Province 4835 and Dolnośląskie Province 2221<sup>220</sup>. Whereby it must be noted that Ukrainian students study in large university cities, such as: Warsaw, Lublin, Kraków, Wrocław. In the Podkarpackie Province, there were 2348 such students according to those estimates.

Based on presented statistics, it may be concluded that in the recent years, the number of Ukrainian students at Polish universities was increasing. 8469 of such students attended state universities and 12224 studied at private universities. Women account for the majority of Ukrainian students in Poland – 58%<sup>221</sup>. As already mentioned, they typically choose to study in large university cities. This may result from the fact that large cities usually have a developed labor market, extensive cultural offer and varied academic community. Large cities also have more prestigious universities which are increasingly more preferred by Ukrainians. However, potential professional career is also important. International corporations employing students and graduates operate from large cities. It is much easier to find a job in large cities than in Przemyśl or Rzeszów.

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219 *First admission stage at the University of Information Technology and Management – less students from Ukraine, more from Far East Asia. Candidates from Poland as usual*, <https://www.wsiz.rzeszow.pl/pl/Uczelnia/Wydarzenia/Strony/I-tura-rekrutacji-2016.aspx> (download date 10.10.2017).

220 W. Siwiński, *Educational highway...* Op. cit.

221 Є. Стадний, *Українські студенти в польських ВНЗ* (2008-2015), 2015, <https://cedos.org.ua/uk/osvita/ukrainski-studenty-v-polskykh-vnz-2008-2015>



## Theoretical premises for student migration

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The main theoretical premise explaining student migration is globalization. Apart from global flow of information, goods and money, what we currently observe is opening of Polish universities to providing educational services to foreign students<sup>222</sup>. In part, the increasing internationalization of tertiary education was the effect of 90's drop in birth rate currently reaching Polish universities. Since 2011, a drop in the number of students at Polish universities is observed and, according to forecasts, it would last until 2020.<sup>223</sup> Polish universities, therefore, try to attract students from many countries, but it is Ukraine that is the key country. Intensive promotional campaigns, higher standard of living and social security in Poland mean that there is mass student migration from Ukraine to Poland. The educational market becomes a global university and it is apparent also in Poland, where the internationalization rate reached 5.15 in the year 2016<sup>224</sup>.

In the analysis of student migrations, also the world-systems theory with its core, semi-peripheries and peripheries is useful<sup>225</sup>. In less developed countries with high unemployment, corruption, insufficient meritocracy, low wages and low quality of life, with political, ethnic and armed conflicts, people tend to search for better life abroad. Most often they decide to travel to the core regions where higher wages, better quality of life, better life opportunities and stabilization are available. Migration typically occurs from poorer to richer countries. In the world-systems theory, Poland is a semi-periphery, while Ukraine is classified as periphery. The core, i.e. central countries are the "old" European Union states. Migration according to this pattern occurs from peripheries towards semi-peripheries to eventually reach one of the core countries. Studying in Poland or, more precisely, European degree of a Polish university may be considered a pass that enables further migration to the core states. In this context, Polish universities become attractive for Ukrainians as they are a cheaper alternative to western universities. They issue certificates allowing to find a job within the European Union.

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222 P. Długosz, *Transboundary education. Case study of Ukrainian students in the Podkarpackie Province* "Youth Policy: Problems and Prospects", 6. 2015.

223 *Demographic tsunami*. Socrates Institute, Warsaw 2011, [instytut sokratesa.pl/pliki/Demograficzne\\_Tsunami\\_Institut\\_Sokratesa.pdf](http://instytut sokratesa.pl/pliki/Demograficzne_Tsunami_Institut_Sokratesa.pdf).

224 W. Siwiński, *Educational highway*... Op.cit.

225 I. Wallerstein, *The modern world-system I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century, with a new prologue* (Vol. 1). California Press, London 2011.

In this approach, one should also note the consequences of migration for peripheral states. According to this theory, there is a belief that the core exploits the peripheries, limiting their development. In the era of knowledge-based economy, high-quality workforce becomes a vital resource. The core countries may develop thanks to human resources, i.e. the creative class<sup>226</sup>. Migration of students from the peripheries is called “brain drain”. The youth migrating from Ukraine reduce its development potential and perpetuates existing situation.

Upon mentioning human capital, the model of investing in the human capital should also be underlined. The Ukrainian analysts trying to adequately explain the migration of students to Poland highlight this problem.<sup>227</sup> The decision to choose Polish universities as the place of study is taken based on economic calculations. When benefits prevail, they youth decide to migrate and, in case of expected losses, they remain in their country of origin. We assume that foreign university courses are chosen by students intending to migrate to western countries to increase their life opportunities. A degree from a Polish university is a means to achieve this goal. A university course in Poland is considered an investment that will pay off in future. Considering the costs of studying in other countries, it is beneficial. Courses at both private and state universities are not very problematic for students. The university teachers are understanding and try to cater for the needs of a client - Ukrainian student, as the number of Polish students is declining. In this calculation, the most important aspect may be the potential rate of return on such investment. In Poland, it is relatively high and, therefore, it becomes an attractive country for migrants from Ukraine.<sup>228</sup>

In summary, in the context of global education, Poland becomes attractive to students from Ukraine. As a result of adverse internal circumstances, such as economic and political crisis as well as armed conflict in the eastern Ukraine, the youth willing to increase their life opportunities decide to take a university course in Poland. Thinking about their future, they try to make the best possible educational investment. The Polish education system, conditions and costs of studying as well as opportunities after graduation make Polish universities very popular among Ukrainian youth.

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226 R. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. NCK, Warsaw 2010.

227 О. Слободян, Є. Стадний, *Українськ студенти ...* Op. cit.

228 О. Слободян, Є. Стадний, *Українськ студенти ...* Op. cit.

## Research methods

The purpose of this paper is to present the situation of Ukrainian students studying in Przemyśl and Rzeszów. The research was quantitative in nature, with data being collected in an auditorium questionnaire. The sampling for the research was purposive. The research was conducted in 2005 and 2017. 250 and 224 students gave answers to respective questionnaires. Due to asking the same questions, two cohorts of students will be compared and changes between then will be observed. The research pertained to third-year bachelor's course students.

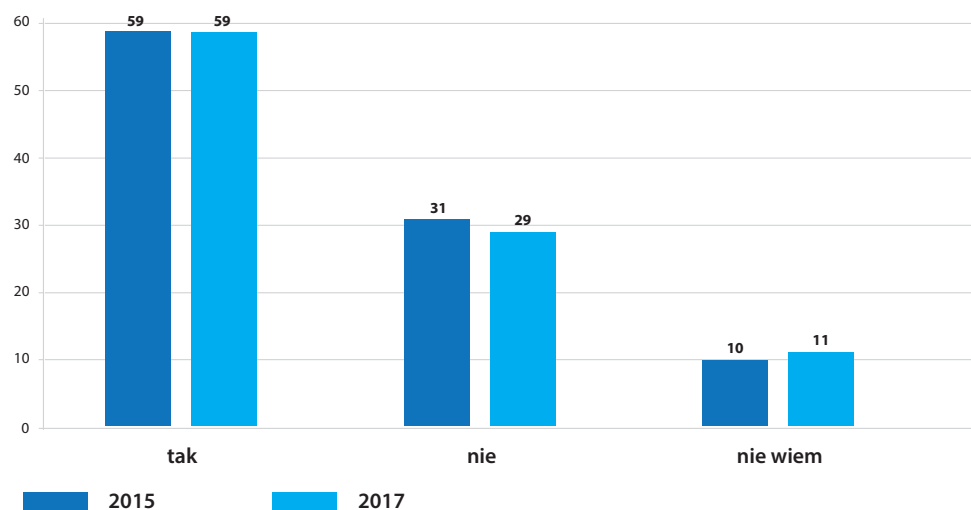
The research was intended to answer the following questions:

- What are the motivations for Ukrainian students to migrate to Poland?
- What problems do they encounter upon arriving in Poland?
- How do they evaluate everyday life in Poland?
- What are their life plans?

## Causes of migrations to study in Poland

In the deliberations regarding the causes of student migrations, an assumption may be made that the youth intending to take a university course will be more willing to leave their home country if there is no possibility to take their preferred course locally.

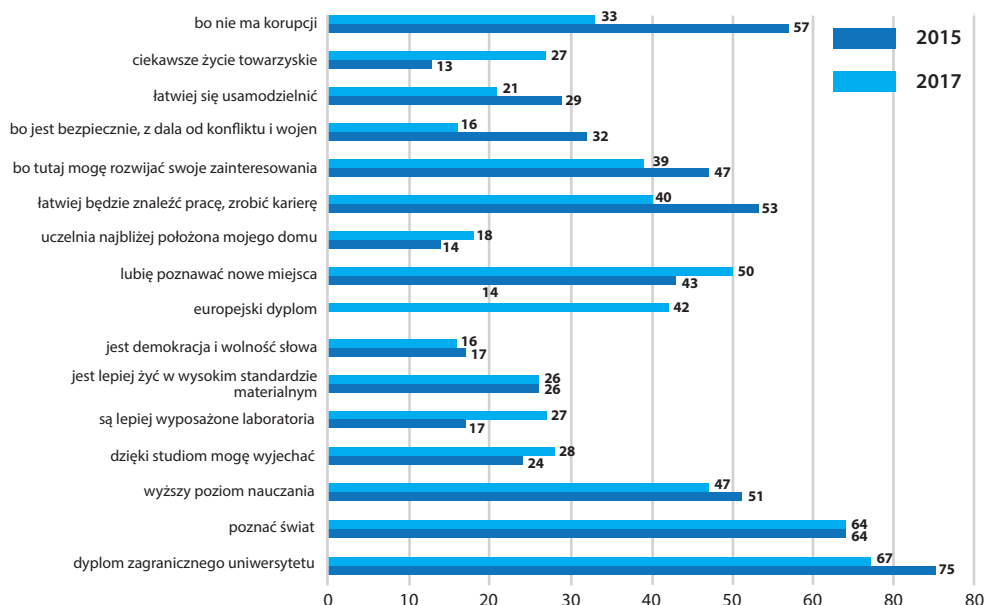
**Chart 1. Was there a similar course available when you started studying in Poland?**



The answers presented in the chart show that majority of Ukrainian students, despite being able to take the same or similar course in Ukraine, still decided to study in Poland. Only 1/3 of the students stated that their desired university course was unavailable in Ukraine. Therefore, it should be noted that student migrations have causes other than university program inadequacy - lack of adequate courses in Ukraine.

The results presented in chart 2 show the factors contributing to taking a university course in Poland. Young Ukrainians mainly highlighted the possibility to obtain a degree from a foreign university. Many students also chose Poland because they wanted to travel the world and visit new places. Corruption at Ukrainian universities was another major factor contributing to the decision to migrate. The answers in the questionnaire also suggest that taking a university course abroad was related to the belief according to which the quality of education in Poland is higher and that it would allow the student to better develop their interests. The students also often indicated the possibility to obtain a European degree and believed that it would allow them to find a job and pursue a professional career easier.

**Chart 2. Motivations for migrating to study in Poland<sup>229</sup>**



<sup>229</sup> The data does not sum up to 100% because students were allowed to indicate more than one answer.

To a lesser degree, student migration was also driven by motivations such as: university course is an opportunity to leave the country, Polish laboratories are equipped better, there are better opportunities for good financial standing, there is democracy and freedom of speech, the university is located closer to home (in the context of Przemyśl and Rzeszów). The decision to take a university course in Poland was also partly motivated with better security in Poland, attractive social life, opportunity to become self-reliant and independent of parents.

The comparative analyses also allow for observation of changes. Firstly, the results of qualitative research<sup>230</sup> demonstrated that students choose a university course in Poland because they can obtain a European degree. This category was implemented in the second research and received 42% votes. Also, the increase in the importance of attractive social life was observed (by 13 per cent).

The observations indicate that the importance of corruption as the motivation to study abroad decreased considerably - by 24 per cent. Would that mean that the Ukrainian youth find corruption to decline? The students also less often indicated that their migration to study in Poland results from the issues of security and possibility to take a university course away from a conflict zone (decline by 16 per cent). This may be related to Ukrainian youth becoming accustomed to the conflict, familiar with the situation. Previously, and particularly in the very beginning, such situation could cause anxiety and concerns about military draft. Presently, the impact of this factor decreased greatly, i.e. by 15 per cent. Further research showed that importance of motivations such as: "it is easier to become independent" (decrease by 8 per cent), "because I can develop my interests here" (decrease by 8 per cent), "it is easier to find a job, pursue a career" (decrease by 13 per cent).

It follows from these observations, that the will to flee a conflict zone and corrupted state contributed to the decision to take a university course in Poland to a degree lesser than expected. The students asked presently are less concerned about these problems. Taking a university course in Poland is supposed to increase life opportunities by obtaining a European degree rather than to escape inhospitable reality. The student choosing a university course in Poland are driven by will to travel the world and try being independent. However, the key factor contributing to migration of the Ukrainian youth is pursuing high quality education or at least obtaining a degree that will certify the obtained qualifications and open

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230 D. Izdebska-Długosz, *Life plans of Ukrainian students taking up university courses in Poland*. "Youth Policy: Problems and Prospects", 6. 2015.

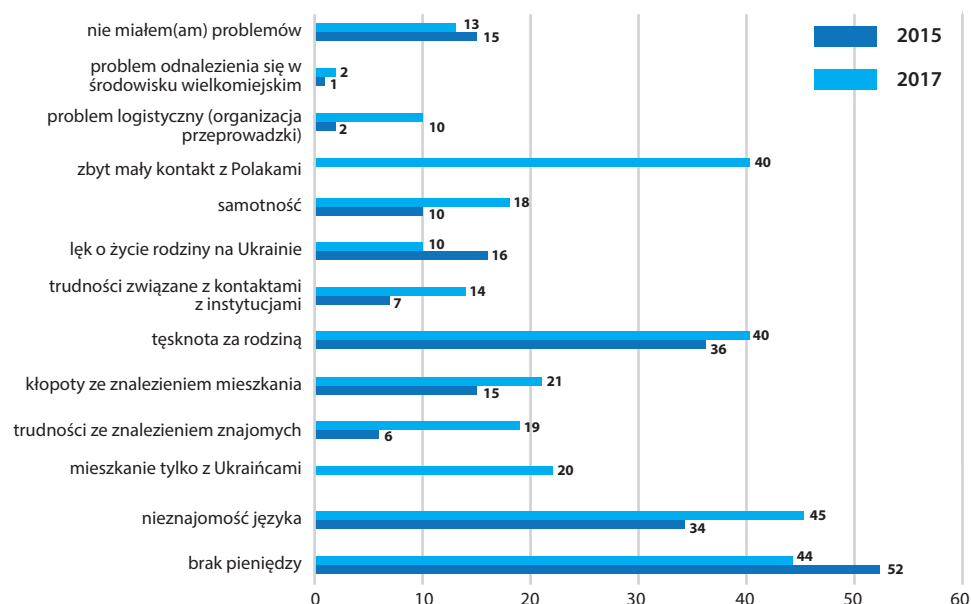
the door to the European labor market. The main objective behind selecting this strategy is achieving high quality of life, professional position and career. Education in Poland is perceived as a means to achieve this objective. The answers from respondents may be construed as an anomaly of social system and reaction to it. The youth assume that they are unable to achieve the desired standards in Ukraine and, therefore, they use innovative strategies, i.e. by deciding to study in Poland where these goals may be achieved easier.

## Everyday life of Ukrainian students

Relocation to a foreign country is quite a challenge for a young person. On one hand, such decision is made with new hopes related to taking a university course in a foreign country, whereas on the other hand, various problems may occur that make the integration more difficult.

In the research, a question was asked regarding the problems occurring after arriving in Poland. The students most often reported financial problems which is hardly surprising, considering the difference in earnings in both countries. Ukrainian students considered lack of knowledge of Polish a major obstruction to effective integration.

**Chart 3. Problems faced by Ukrainian students in Poland**



After arriving in Poland, homesickness and limited contact with Polish people are key factors preventing integration. It is hardly surprising, as this refers to persons aged 16-17 well before their adulthood. A commonplace problem is that Ukrainian students isolate themselves and spend the entire free time in their own groups. Such life style reduces their opportunities to make acquaintances among Poles and makes integration more difficult. To a lesser extent, Ukrainian students mentioned issues such as difficulties in finding friends, problems in finding accommodation, difficulties in contacts with various institutions, concerns about family in Ukraine, loneliness, logistic problem with relocation or difficulties accommodating to urban life (particularly for youth from countryside). Only few students stated that everything is all right and they have no problems related to relocation and studying in Poland.

The data from two measurements also allows for comparison of results. The ratio of answers indicating that the insufficient command of language is a problem increased (increase by 11 per cent). In the second questionnaire, the problem of living with compatriots was introduced; previously, such answer was unavailable in the questionnaire. In turn, the problem with finding friends occurred more often (increase by 13 per cent). Also, "loneliness" was mentioned more often (increase by 8 per cent). Besides, the logistic problem with relocation was mentioned more often (increase by 8 per cent).

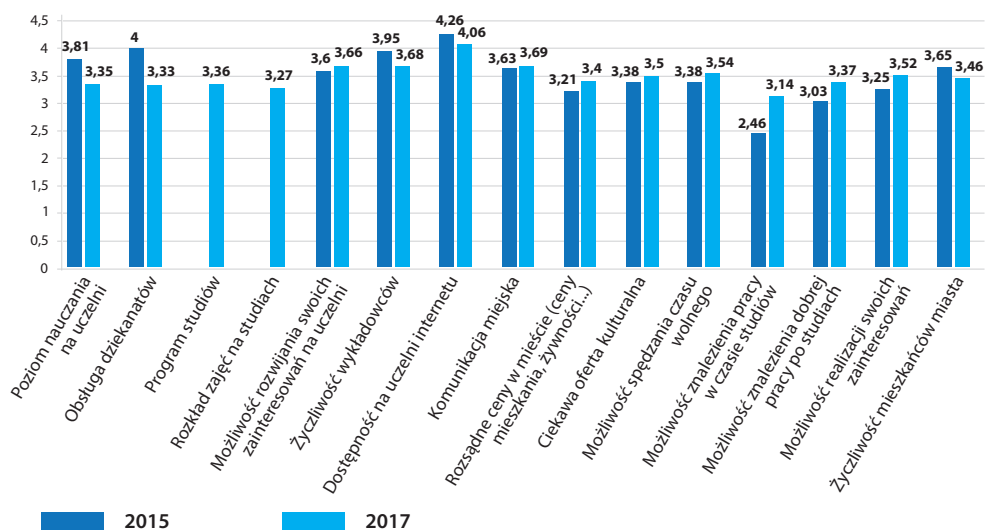
At the same time, the decline in the rate of answers regarding insufficient money was observed (decrease by 8 per cent), as were the answers mentioning concerns about the security of family in Ukraine (decrease by 6 per cent). This would suggest that Ukrainians cope better in financial terms (grants and scholarships, part-time jobs). The second observed change confirms that the direct impact of the conflict in the eastern Ukraine on the student migration is diminishing.

It clearly follows from these observations that the main difficulties arising after arrival in Poland are financial issues, insufficient command of language and limited contact with Poles. All three factors pose an obstruction towards integration of Ukrainian students with Polish society. Financial problems translate into lower economic status giving rise to a sense of deprivation. I myself witnessed situations in which the Ukrainian students in Przemyśl at the student canteen ordered only half portion of soup but with plenty of bread. Financial problems may also lead to social exclusion, as the Ukrainian youth cannot afford to frequent the same clubs as their Polish peers. Insufficient command of Polish not only makes social interactions more difficult, meaning that Ukrainian students tend to stick together, but also it constitutes a serious barrier in studying and functioning at the university and in

daily situations. Perhaps it is the language problems that make Ukrainian students tend to isolate themselves. The problem is commonly known in Kraków, Rzeszów and Przemyśl. Students do not know Polish very well and they do not communicate with Poles. In turn, limited relationships make learning the language even harder. This situation entails a negative feedback which ultimately leads to Ukrainian students separating themselves and contacting only their compatriots. Perhaps the increased rate of problems in social interactions among the next cohort of Ukrainian students is caused by competitive fight for university achievements and, thus, better positioning on the labor market. The increase in the number of Ukrainian students in Poland may generate animosity between them, since not everyone will be equally successful in achieving their desired high social status. It should be noted, that Polish youth also struggle for better status and are aware of increasing competition. Unquestionably, living abroad is not easy, particularly with limited funds, limited command of Polish and interacting only with Ukrainians.

The satisfaction was evaluated on a five-point scale with 1 meaning no satisfaction and 5 meaning highest satisfaction. The data collected during two measurements show that the Ukrainian students were satisfied most with Internet accessibility at the university, kindness of university staff including those at the faculty office, level of education. The students were slightly less satisfied with opportunities to develop their interests at the university, kindness of local residents, free time opportunities, cultural offer of cities and public transportation system. The least satisfaction was declared regarding the opportunity to find a good job after graduation, possibility to find a job during education and prices of goods and services.

**Chart 4. Level of satisfaction with various aspects of studying in Poland.**





As compared to research from 2015, it is apparent in the measurement carried out presently that the satisfaction with education level, service at faculty offices, kindness of university staff, availability of computers and kindness of local residents declined. In turn, evaluation of prices in the city, cultural offer and possibilities to spend free time improved. A significant increase in positive feedback was observed regarding the possibility to find a job during education and after graduation.

The aspect that is assessed best is the relationship between the university and the student. The attitude of Polish university staff, administration personnel and digitalization are all assessed highly by Ukrainian students. In comparison to authoritative education system combined with limited digital infrastructure, contact with a Polish university typically results in positive surprise. The worst assessment refers to economic aspects of living in Polish cities. These primarily include high prices and lack of adequate employment after graduation. However, it should be noted that Przemyśl and Rzeszów are peripheral cities with high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth. It is therefore little surprising that these aspects scored the lowest.

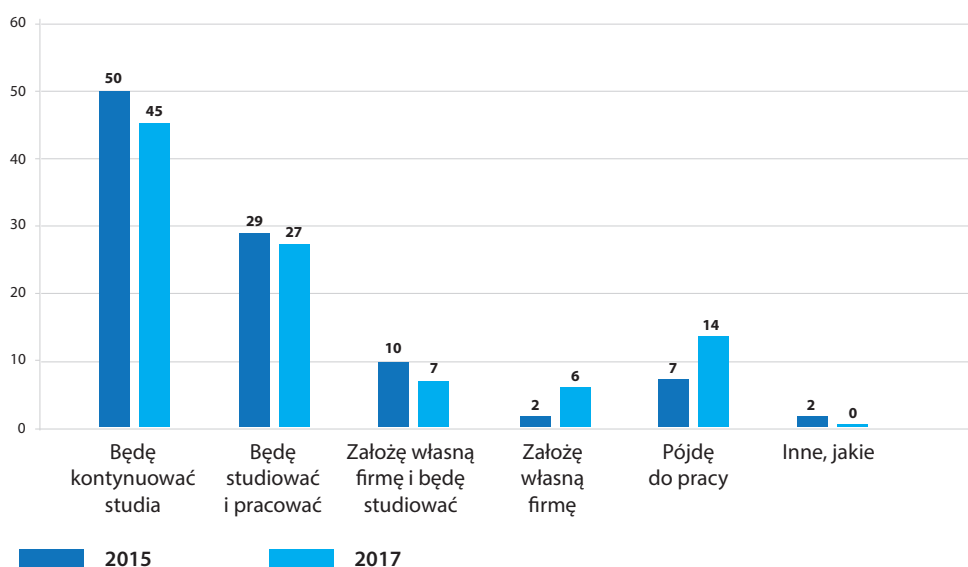
It follows from the data that in the second measurement, the relationships at the university generally were assessed worse and relationships regarding the labor market were assessed better. Perhaps, the improvement of economic situation, decreasing unemployment provide more opportunities for employment and this fact is reflected in students' opinions. The labor market is a key aspect in the evaluation of studying conditions in a given city. Most youth migrate to Poland with a view to raise their living standard. The work and living conditions are naturally a key factor here. If the opportunities in this aspect are limited, the students tend to leave such universities. This is specifically the case of Rzeszów, where the number of Ukrainian students decreases dramatically. The university authorities explain this with students' migrations to bigger cities, such as: Kraków, Warsaw, Lublin. For it is much easier to find a job and higher wage in metropolises than in peripheries. Furthermore, private universities were more often chosen when a uniform fee of approx. EUR 2000 was charged by state universities. After the legislation changed, each university independently sets the fees for foreign students. They are similar or lower than fees at private universities, resulting in the loss of students from Ukraine by these universities.

## Stay in Poland or return to Ukraine?

The final aspect of the conducted research presented in this paper is the question of the surveyed Ukrainian students' long-term plans. Having received their baccalaureate degree, almost half of the respondents plans to continue education at a master's course; a third aims to be working and studying simultaneously. Running an own business or finding a job upon graduation seems to be a less popular option.

Young people are focused on receiving an education – and that it their main life strategy. Estimates show that 75% of students will be continuing their education to eventually achieve a master's degree. This proves the surveyed students are aware of the demands of the labor market. In an age of an inflation of degrees, the level of education has become more important. With an excess of graduates on the market, even people with good education may become jobless. A higher level of education (master) may protect students against joblessness. For this reason, young people are aiming for a master's degree.

Chart 5. Life plans of students



In order to verify our initial assumptions, it may be worth to look at students' answers to what are their plans upon completing studies. Most surveyed students plan on remaining in Poland after they've received their desired education - in 2015 it was 52%, in 2017 – 44%. A significant group of Ukrainian students plans on leaving for other Western

countries in Europe or USA, though – in 2015 it was 34%, in 2017 – 44%. A relatively small percentage of students prefers to return to Ukraine – 15% in 2015 and 13% two years later.

Most surveyed students do not intend to go back to Ukraine after completing their studies. The theoretical assumptions of the presented paper have been confirmed – engaging in academic courses in Poland is seen as a tool to fulfill dreams of a better life. Sadly, the conclusions are not optimistic for the Ukrainian state - the phenomenon described in this paper can be described as a brain drainage that might lead to Ukraine lacking in the educated youth needed to modernize state structures at a decisive moment in history.

## Conclusions

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The article was intended to present social aspects of Ukrainian student migrations to Poland. As a result of conducted research, it was possible to learn about motivations that driven the respondents in their decision to take a university course in Poland. Also, the analysis allowed to become familiar with problems they faced during relocation and their evaluation of the university course and related aspects. The main conclusion of the research is that the youth choose to study in Poland as they want to fulfill their ambitions for high standard of living. The university course or, more specifically, European degree allows, in the students' view, to find a job in Poland or Western Europe. The obtained results could be considered a kind of anomie adaptation according to Robert Merton<sup>231</sup>. The youth equipped probably with resources and, particularly, with economic resources, try to leave the country and start a university course in Poland to improve their life opportunities. A classical innovation strategy arises because in the country with corruption, economic and political crisis, the youth do not see any future. They prefer to invest in the education and achieve higher rate of return in Poland or other countries. They choose university courses in Poland because they are relatively cheap. Besides, Poland is the country that is closest to Ukraine in terms of geography and culture. An assumption that in the global reality, the flow of people between countries intensify is indeed true. Students migrate from peripheries towards semi-peripheries or core areas. The data show that young Ukrainians either stay in Poland or migrate further to Western Europe. The university course in Poland typically is a one-way travel. In consequence, Polish universities

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231 R. Merton, *Social theory and structure*. PWN, Warsaw 2002.

benefit from this, as they may compensate for the effects of the demographic low, while Ukraine loses valuable human capital that is crucial for modernization of the state undergoing rapid transformations.

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