

# Educational Migration Trends Review in Poland (with Particular Emphasis on the Immigration of Ukrainian Youth)

NATALIIA BOICHUK<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: [0000-0002-0054-4847](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0054-4847)

University of Opole

## Abstract

This article aims to review and synthesise research on educational migration in Poland, particularly youth immigration from Ukraine. The paper collects statistical data from 2004, which allowed for the analysis of the existing trends in educational migration in Poland. The research on the largest group of foreign students – citizens of Ukraine – was reviewed, which resulted in identifying research gaps regarding student mobility in Poland, both in terms of demand and supply of educational migrations. The practical implication appears to show that the governments of the host countries, the business sector, and the academic units – due to the increase in the number of foreign students – can expect positive effects in the form of obtaining qualified human capital for the local labour market and the improvement of the demographic situation, provided that foreign students remain in the country and the family there.

**Keywords:** international student mobility, educational migration, higher education, foreign students, Poland, Ukraine

## Introduction

Migrations are an inseparable element of human life, since people are always on the move. There are many reasons for this movement, such as geographic, economic, political, and socio-cultural conditions. Migration related to socio-economic inequal-

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<sup>1</sup> Contact: [natalia.boichuk@uni.opole.pl](mailto:natalia.boichuk@uni.opole.pl)

ities is currently changing towards the migration of highly qualified people, people who want to pursue higher education in a country other than their home country, and people who want to learn about new cultures and traditions. This type of mobility is favoured by, e.g., the free movement of goods, capital, and people in the context of European Union law and easier procedures for obtaining a visa to individual countries.

In recent years, educational migration has intensified, with a particular emphasis on international migration. According to estimates by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (*UNESCO*), between 2000 and 2017, the number of international students worldwide increased from approximately 2 million to 5 million.

The internationalisation of higher education has become an important research topic, and the number of publications on International Student Mobility (ISM) has increased several times since 2005 (Gümüş et al. 2020). Scientists from the United States, Great Britain, and Australia made the most significant contribution to the development of the ISM theory. This is possible because most foreign students study in these countries. For example, in 2019, the most popular fields of study were such countries as the United States (1,095,299 international students), the United Kingdom (496,570 international students), Australia (420,501 foreign students), France (343,400 foreign students), and Russia (34,497 foreign students) (*Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students 2021*). Other desirable countries for higher education are Canada, China, Germany, Japan, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, and New Zealand (*Project Atlas 2019*). At the forefront among the foreign students are people from China, India, South Korea, Germany, and Nigeria (*Nous Group 2019*).

Despite the growing interest in educational migration, foreign students are still not treated by the state authorities as a valuable source of human capital, whose retention in the country of education is associated with socio-economic benefits (King, Raghuram 2013). However, countries experiencing positive effects for a few years in connection with the inflow of educational migrants recognise opportunities to use their potential. Among the countries that have gained popularity as a place of education is Poland – in 2019, the number of foreign students increased more than 12 times compared to 2000 (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*).

In this context, the article's aims are to review and synthesise research on educational migration in Poland, particularly youth immigration from Ukraine. The paper focuses attention on specific objectives such as:

- determination of the state of knowledge on educational emigration to Poland
- identification of trends concerning the scale, structure, and directions of educational emigration to Poland.

A better understanding of the essence of educational immigration to Poland in the future may result in adapting the state policy and the business environment to

the existing trends. The research method used is the analysis of the literature and secondary statistical data.

The first part of the article presents the theoretical foundations of educational migrations. The second part contains information about the situation in the Polish education market and analyses secondary data. The third part includes information about the state of research on the educational migration of the largest group of foreign students in Poland – youth from Ukraine. The final section presents conclusions, limitations, recommendations for future research, and managerial implications.

## Background of educational migrations

The definition of an international student is a person who crosses national borders to study or undertake other activities related to learning, at least for a certain stage of the study program or a certain period in the country to which he/she is moving (Kelo et al. 2006). These movements of students are referred to in the academic literature as migration or mobility, with a debate arising as to which term is better to use. On the one hand, King and Raghuram (2013) suggest that the concept of “international migration” is more relevant to longer-time moves for the entire degree programme with a lower probability of return to the country of departure. On the other hand, the scientists highlight that the term “mobility” emphasises movement involved in migration rather than privileging the sending and receiving localities and their perspectives. Additionally, mobility means a shorter timeframe for the movement and a high probability of return to the sending country. Consequently, mobility is a more flexible term favoured by many scientists. The European Parliament and Council define the concept of learning mobility (European Parliament and Council 2006) as “all types of mobility for learning or professional development purposes: education or training; formal or non-formal learning, including voluntary work and projects; short or long mobility periods; school, higher education or job-related learning; measures in connection with lifelong learning”. Also, student mobility is favoured by exchange programs such as Erasmus (Décision du Conseil du 15 Juin 1987), established in 1987. It is a short-term stay, usually lasting one or two semesters of study at a foreign university. Wells (2014) and Findlay (2012) distinguish two types of student mobility – mobility for credit (e.g. Erasmus short-term mobility) and mobility for diploma (long-term mobility throughout the whole cycle of higher education). Therefore, the phenomenon of educational migration leads to broader reasoning than student mobility and consists of undertaking studies for the full period of their duration outside the home country. In turn, the economic and positivist approach to educational migration explains this migration as part of the migration of skilled workers (Truong, Gasper 2011).

By enabling international students to study, countries can apply a strategy of attracting talent, which has a positive effect on their economy. Moreover, for host

countries, student mobility is one of the important sources of migration of highly qualified workers (Ritzen, Marconi 2011). Research by Papatsiba (2005) shows that student mobility strengthens individual beliefs about the possibility of adapting to a changing environment, encourages personal development and independent planning of career paths. The “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, Passeron 1978) of foreign education is fully realised after the graduates return home, giving them an advantage in the labour market over the locally educated youth. However, after graduation, more and more people decide to remain permanently in the country of education, which, *inter alia*, is confirmed by studies of plans of foreign students in Great Britain (Findlay 2011). Countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States are liberalising the migration policy regarding foreign students, thanks to which they obtain several benefits. It can be determined that, by internationalising the educational offer, countries gain:

- increasing income from the sales of paid educational services to foreign students
- improving the age structure of the population by attracting people of reproductive age through the provision of educational services
- highly skilled human capital that has started the process of linguistic and cultural adjustment

The dominant flow of cross-border student mobility comes from less developed and newly industrialised countries to western, well-industrialized countries. The intensity of student migration has increased significantly, and governments’ roles in sending and admitting students have changed from direct sponsors to regulators, and facilitators (Li, Bray 2007). Altbach (1998) presented a push-pull model for international student mobility, in which push factors motivate people to leave their place of origin, while pull factors attract migrants to new areas. The researcher suggests that some students were pushed by unfavourable conditions in their home countries, while scholarships and other opportunities in the host countries attracted others. Factors influencing student mobility include socio-economic status, personal relationships, cost and quality of studies, and geographical location of host countries and educational institutions. These pushing factors in the country of origin initiated the student’s decision to undertake international studies. In turn, the factors influencing the selection of the host country include knowledge of the host country, language skills, recommendations, costs of living, environment, geographic proximity and social connections (Mazzarol, Soutar 2002). Additionally, when choosing a country of education, applicants pay attention to the migration policy of the host country (Lu et al. 2009). The ease of obtaining a visa, access to the labour market, and the possibility of obtaining permanent residence may be among the most important reasons for choosing the destination country where the foreigner will study. After graduation, social and personal factors encourage people to return to their home

country, while professional factors encourage people to stay in the host country (Alberts, Hazen 2005).

Educational migration is a complicated phenomenon which, on the one hand, has a positive effect on the host country (an increase in state income from foreign students, cultural and social exchange, the possibility of obtaining and retaining human capital and knowledge) whereas on the other hand, it has a negative impact on the sending country, in which the brain drain appears.

## Trends in educational migrations in Poland

Over the past few years, Poland has found itself in the ranking of countries attracting educational migrants. According to the report *The Learning Curve* (The Learning Curve 2012: Lessons in Country Performance in Education 2012), the Z-Score<sup>2</sup> for Poland regarding the global index of cognitive skills and educational achievement was 0.43, which allowed the country to be ranked 14th. In turn, in 2014, Poland reached 10th place in this ranking (The Learning Curve 2014: Education and Skills for Life 2014), which, according to the report, means that the Polish educational system is considered better than, for example, the one in Sweden, France, the USA, Germany or Switzerland. It is possible to observe that the educational potential of Poland is growing – English-speaking faculties are developing, thus attracting foreign students.

Educational migrations of foreigners to Poland took place at the beginning of the 1990s. Young people from the countries of the former Soviet Union, with Polish origin and the possibility of taking advantage of the scholarship offer, decided to study in Poland. That is the reason why all research on educational migrations focused on this group of people (Żołądowski 2011; Gońda 2012). The objectives of the Polish scholarship programmes for foreign students of Polish origin were primarily to revive the intelligentsia of Polish origin in centres of Polish communities (Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, Zaolzie). But Nowicka and Wyszynski's research, conducted in 1999–2000 among students from Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine, indicated that the educated young people often did not follow the unwritten assumptions of the action. The graduates remained in Poland instead of strengthening the local Polish communities in the countries of the former Soviet Union (Wyszynski 2005). Research by Gomółka (2015) showed that scholarship benefits for people of Polish origin from Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova contributed to the increase in their inflow to study. Mucha's (2003) research conducted in 1999–2000 showed that, in most cases, students had ties to Poland and had visited the country before starting their studies.

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<sup>2</sup> Z-Score indicates how many standard deviations an observation is above or below the mean. The process of normalising all values in the Index into z-scores enables a direct comparison of country performance across all indicators. The default weight for the Index is two-thirds to cognitive skills and one-third to educational attainment.

Moreover, foreign students saw that the Polish standard of living was much higher than that of their own countries, which was one of the reasons to start studying in Poland. According to Wójcikowska-Baniak (2019), social networks occur as one of the key elements in the process of choosing a place of study. However, in recent years, the trend has changed. More and more people use the educational offer in Poland without Polish ties or roots and the possibility of free study. In 2017, the National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA 2019) was formed to initiate and implement activities to support international academic exchange and the internationalisation process of universities. Scholarship programmes for researchers, students and institutions are implemented. For example, in 2019, NAWA funding was awarded to 6,557 people in the framework of ongoing programmes, commissioned tasks and scholarship exchanges based on international agreements. In addition, NAWA's scholarship support programmes also provide opportunities to study at public universities free of charge. But the majority of foreigners undertake education mainly on a paid basis, thus increasing the income of universities. They are exempted from fees if their connections to Polish citizens or the Polish state are confirmed (e.g., Card of the Pole, spouses, ascendants, or descendants of Polish citizens living in the territory of Poland, C1 certificate of knowledge of the Polish language). Moreover, free studies are available to citizens of the Member states of the European Union, persons with a permanent or long-term EU resident's card or people with refugee status (Ustawa Prawo o Szkolnictwie Wyższym i Nauce).

Despite paid studies for the rest of the foreign students, studying in Poland is profitable due to the relatively low cost of living here than in other EU countries. According to Gońda (2020), the traditional model of migration, according to which the primary motive is an attempt to overcome unsatisfactory economic conditions in the country of origin, is significant (although not dominant) in the mobility strategies of the students. Their efforts to seek a better life abroad are also based on non-economic motives. Another factor facilitating study in Poland is the ease of obtaining a student visa (people from non-EU countries must apply for a visa, while within the EU, there is free movement of people). Moreover, the state policy supports foreign students with free access to the labour market during and after their studies. It is worth noting that most foreigners in Poland complete a full cycle of education and not only come as part of an Erasmus + type educational exchange. Statistical data on the education cycle of foreign students in the country has been published since 2010, where 83% of these people completed a full cycle of studies, and in 2019 as much as 95% of foreigners decided to complete a full cycle of education in Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). Decisions on where to study – apart from the formal and legal conditions, the country's migration policy, the educational offer and the widely understood costs of studying – are also influenced by the brand of the country and the university, the recognition of diplomas (Matacz 2014). Considering the above information, it should be mentioned that in 2005, The Conference of Rectors of

Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP) and the educational foundation “Perspektywy” began the Study in Poland programme (Study in Poland 2022). It aims to promote Polish higher education institutions (HEI) abroad and encourage foreigners to study in Poland. Some 50–60 HEIs participate in the programme, whose offer is promoted during the study and information-recruitment trips, as well as educational fairs held in eastern countries (Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, the Republic of Korea, and India). In addition, some cities have joined the initiative by launching Study in Wrocław, Study in Lublin, etc. programmes. Extensive promotional activities have contributed to an increased interest in higher education by foreigners in Poland, as evidenced by statistical data.

Also, students often consider the absorption capacity of the labour markets, historical ties between countries and cultural proximity before starting their studies in a foreign country. According to the results of a survey conducted by the Centre for Migration Research of the University of Warsaw, foreigners most often also indicated non-substantive factors – lack of significant bureaucratic barriers, geographical proximity, availability of attractive fields of study, relatively low cost of living – as essential elements inducing them to choose Poland as a place to study (Matacz 2014).

In Poland, the number of foreigners enrolling in higher education institutions grows yearly. Table 1 presents data on the number of students in Poland, the number and share of foreign students in Poland, and the number and percentage of people of Polish origin among foreign students in Poland in the years 2000–2019. Statistics show that in the period under review, the largest number of people who studied at universities was in the academic year 2005/2006, with 1,953,832 students. On the other hand, the share of foreigners at that time was only 0.52%. In the following years, the number of students decreased, but the share of foreign students increased, which in 2019 amounted to 6.83%. The decrease in the total number of students is related to a demographic decline. In the academic year 2000/01, 6,563 foreigners took up studies in Poland, while in the 2019/2020 academic year, the number of foreign students increased to 82,194, which means more than a twelve-fold increase.

As a result of the internationalisation of the educational offer, people from all continents from over 180 countries undertake to learn in the country. Table 2 presents statistical data on the number of foreigners studying in Poland by continent. The data illustrated covers the period of 2004–2019, but there is no precise information on the previous years. Students from European countries have the largest share (74.4% on average), and the smallest from Australia and Oceania (0.1% on average). This may be dictated by geographical proximity, cultural similarity, and the formal and legal system, which affects the ease of obtaining a student visa. The share of international students from North and Central America has decreased more than sixfold, while the number of foreigners did not change significantly. In turn, the number of foreign students from Asia increased more than tenfold, and the average share was 16.1%. A similar situation is in the case of educational migrants from Africa – more than

Table 1.

## The number of foreign students in Poland in 2000–2019

Year	Number of students in Poland	Number of foreign students in Poland	Share of foreign students %	Number of foreign students of Polish origin	Share of foreign students of Polish origin %
2000	1,584,804	6,563	0,41	3,618	55,13
2001	1,718,747	7,380	0,43	3,820	51,76
2002	1,800,548	7,608	0,42	3,977	52,27
2003	1,858,680	8,106	0,44	3,907	48,20
2004	1,926,122	8,829	0,46	3,789	42,92
2005	1,953,832	10,092	0,52	3,723	36,89
2006	1,941,445	11,752	0,61	3,510	29,87
2007	1,937,404	13,695	0,71	3,501	25,56
2008	1,927,762	15,862	0,82	3,405	21,47
2009	1,900,014	17,000	0,89	3,709	21,82
2010	1,841,251	21,474	1,17	4,117	19,17
2011	1,764,060	24,253	1,37	4,667	19,24
2012	1,676,927	29,172	1,74	5,155	17,67
2013	1,549,877	35,983	2,32	5,610	15,59
2014	1,469,386	46,101	3,14	6,242	13,54
2015	1,405,133	57,119	4,07	7,576	13,26
2016	1,348,822	65,793	4,88	7,675	11,67
2017	1,291,870	72,743	5,63	7,683	10,56
2018	1,230,254	78,257	6,36	7,596	9,71
2019	1,203,998	82,194	6,83	7,209	8,77

a nine-fold increase in the number of people studying in Poland – but the average share in the analysed period is 3.3%.

People from Ukraine, Belarus, Norway, Sweden, India, Spain, Turkey, Germany, China, and Russia most often study in Poland (see Figure 1). Students from Ukraine have the largest percentage in the entire period under review. In 2019, the share of Ukrainians was 47% (39,017 people), Belarusians – 10% (8,373 people), Indians – 4% (3,388 people), Spaniards – 3% (2,260 people), Turks – 3% (2,203 people), while other countries – less than 3%. The number of students from Taiwan, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Nepal is increasing. The number of foreign students from Kazakhstan,

Table 2.

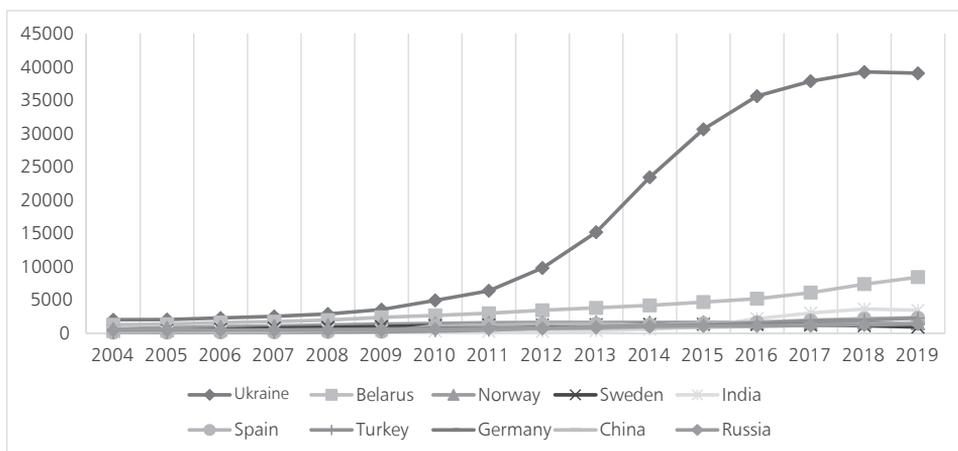
Foreign students in Poland by continent in 2004–2019

Year	The number of foreign students	Foreign students by continent											Without citizenship	% Undetermined country	% 0,03	
		Europe	%	Azia	%	North and Central America	%	South America	%	Africa	%	Australia and Oceania				%
2004	8,829	6,075	68,8	1,495	16,9	,841	9,5	57	0,6	,346	3,9	12	0,1	–	3	0,03
2005	10,092	6,687	66,3	1,888	18,7	1,023	10,1	58	0,6	,411	4,1	25	0,2	–	–	–
2006	11,752	7,766	66,1	2,194	18,7	1,140	9,7	65	0,6	,567	4,8	20	0,2	–	–	–
2007	13,695	8,852	64,6	2,603	19	1,334	9,7	112	0,8	,769	5,6	23	0,2	2	–	–
2008	15,862	10,676	67,3	2,899	18,3	1,428	9	112	0,7	,724	4,6	21	0,1	2	–	–
2009	17,000	11,592	68,2	3,111	18,3	1,469	8,6	82	0,5	,721	4,2	25	0,1	–	–	–
2010	21,474	15,618	72,7	3,481	16,2	1,525	7,1	94	0,4	,725	3,4	25	0,1	6	–	–
2011	24,253	18,305	75,5	3,654	15,1	1,510	6,2	102	0,4	,638	2,6	35	0,1	4	–	0,02
2012	29,172	22,985	78,8	4,048	13,9	1,416	4,9	103	0,4	,593	2	22	0,1	2	–	0,01
2013	35,983	29,207	81,2	4,712	13,1	1,346	3,7	99	0,3	,592	1,6	22	0,1	2	–	0,01
2014	46,101	38,475	83,5	5,602	12,2	1,172	2,5	109	0,2	,719	1,6	22	0	2	–	–
2015	57,119	47,591	83,3	6,896	12,1	1,230	2,2	173	0,3	1,197	2,1	29	0,1	3	–	–
2016	65,793	53,719	81,6	9,177	13,9	1,255	1,9	164	0,2	1,440	2,2	38	0,1	–	–	–
2017	72,743	57,823	79,5	11,325	15,6	1,281	1,8	237	0,3	2,033	2,8	44	0,1	–	–	–
2018	78,257	61,023	78	13,089	16,7	1,251	1,6	282	0,4	2,573	3,3	39	0	–	–	–
2019	82,194	61,881	75,3	15,424	18,8	1,204	1,5	386	0,5	3,253	4	42	0,1	–	–	0

Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Lithuania is systematically growing – most often, the people from these countries have the Pole’s Card. The Pole’s Card is a document confirming belonging to the Polish nation, which may be granted to a person who does not have Polish citizenship or a permit to settle in the territory of Poland and declares belonging to the Polish nation and meets the conditions specified in the Act (Ustawa z dnia 7 września 2007 r. o Karcie Polaka). Holders of this document have the opportunity to study at public universities free of charge and to receive various types of scholarships. They can stay in Poland on a national visa 365 days per year.

Figure 1.

The number of foreign students from selected countries in Poland in 2004–2019



Bringing attention to the policy of Poland attracting people of Polish origin from abroad, Table 3 includes data on the number of foreigners of Polish origin undertaking education in the country. Referring to the earlier information that there were mainly people of Polish origin among foreign students, it should be emphasised that this trend has changed. The percentage of foreigners with Polish roots studying in Poland decreased more than six times – from 55.13% in 2000 to 8.77% in 2019. Considering the number of foreign students with Polish origins – which doubled in the discussed period – from 3,618 people in 2000 to 7,209 people in 2019. Europe has the largest share (88% on average). This is because some Poles have remained in areas that used to belong to Poland and are now located within the borders of other countries. They are most often from Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Russia, and Moldova. The number of foreign students of Polish origin from Asian countries in 2019 decreased by 25% compared to 2000. Most often in this part of the world, people from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Georgia had Polish roots. In the case of other continents, the number of students of Polish origin is decreasing, as is their share among this category of people undertaking education.

Table 3.

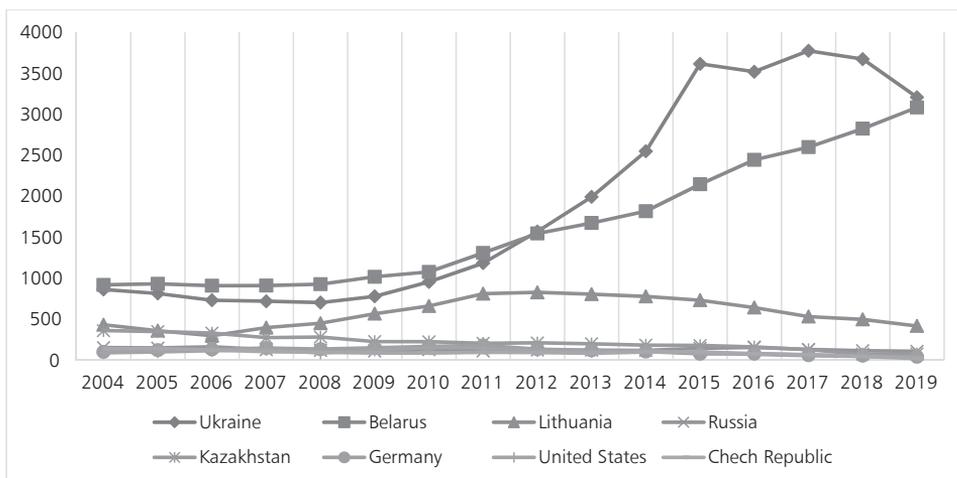
Foreign students of Polish origin by continent in 2004–2019

Year	Foreign students of Polish origin by continent												
	The number of students of Polish origin	Europe	%	Azia	%	North and Central America	%	South America	%	Africa	%	Australia and Oceania	%
2004	3,789	3,058	81	476	13	171	5	36	1	42	1,1	6	0,16
2005	3,723	2,976	80	473	13	193	5	32	0,9	42	1,1	7	0,19
2006	3,510	2,772	79	441	13	215	6	35	1	44	1,3	3	0,09
2007	3,501	2,818	80	274	8	227	6	30	0,9	48	1,4	4	0,11
2008	3,405	2,810	83	403	12	134	4	27	0,8	29	0,9	2	0,06
2009	3,709	3,083	83	341	9	227	6	22	0,6	34	0,9	2	0,05
2010	4,117	3,467	84	318	8	293	7	15	0,4	22	0,5	2	0,05
2011	4,667	4,055	87	288	6	293	6	19	0,4	11	0,2	1	0,02
2012	5,155	4,599	89	310	6	213	4	16	0,3	13	0,3	4	0,08
2013	5,610	5,079	91	310	6	191	3	13	0,2	14	0,2	3	0,05
2014	6,242	6,242	100	269	4	187	3	10	0,2	8	0,1	1	0,02
2015	7,576	7,113	94	315	4	128	2	14	0,2	4	0,1	2	0,03
2016	7,675	7,222	94	338	4	97	1	10	0,1	8	0,1	-	-
2017	7,683	7,386	96	207	3	78	1	7	0,1	5	0,1	-	-
2018	7,596	7,387	97	141	2	57	1	9	0,1	2	0	-	-
2019	7,209	7,031	98	122	2	47	1	6	0,1	3	0	-	-

Figure 2 shows the dynamics of the number of studying foreigners of Polish origin from the countries where the most numerous groups come from (average share > 2.5%) in the years 2004–2019. The number of Ukrainians of Polish origin, whose share is the largest, has declined since 2017. Among Ukrainians studying in Poland in 2004, 44% (863 people) had a Polish origin, while in 2019, only 8% (3,209 people). There is a clear upward trend in the number of people from Belarus who belong to the Polish nation. Among Belarusians in 2004, 76% (919 people) of those undertaking studies in Poland were of Polish origin, and in 2019 – by half as much – 37% (3,084 people). Among Lithuanians in 2004, as many as 91% (432 people) of students were of Polish origin, and in 2019 – 68% (418 people). In turn, from year to year there are fewer and fewer students with Pole Cards or Polish origin both by number and by percentage from countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Germany, the United States, the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Canada.

Figure 2.

The number of foreign students of Polish origin by selected countries in 2004–2019

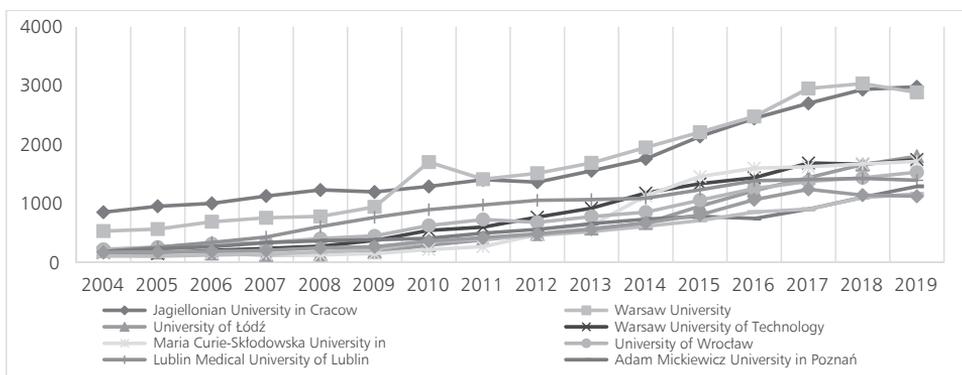


In many countries, the best universities try to recruit students from all over the world, contributing to the internationalisation of the educational offer of the unit (Findlay 2010). In turn, students also choose universities with high positions in the world ranking. Figure 3 shows the number of foreign students by individual public universities in 2004–2019. The data indicate a general increase in interest in starting studies by foreigners at these universities. There are also two leading universities – the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and the University of Warsaw. But accordingly, to the ranking of the Educational Foundation Perspektywy (2019) in 2019 through most internationalisation universities were Vistula University, Kozminski University in Warsaw and Warsaw University of Technology. Two of them are private universities.

Statistics Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny) provides accurate data/the number of foreign students by the university only for a public institution. In contrast, the number of foreign students at private universities is reported in aggregate numbers. By the statistical data in 2019, the largest group of foreign students in Poland was visited by public universities: the Jagiellonian University in Krakow (3.6% of the foreign student population – approximately 2,980 people), the University of Warsaw (3.5% of the foreign student population – approximately 2,885 people), the University of Lodz (2.2% of the foreign student population – approximately 1,801 people), Warsaw University of Technology (2.1% of the foreign student population – approximately 1,747 people), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (2.08% of the foreign student population – approximately 1,714 people) and the University of Wrocław (1.86% of the foreign student population – approximately 1,532 people) (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). Moreover, non-public universities are popular among foreign students in Poland, where in 2019 40.3% of the foreigners studied. This means that 39,513 people chose private universities. Taking up studies by foreigners in Poland gives the possibility of free access to the labour market during the studies and after graduation. However, having a university diploma does not allow staying in the country – graduates should apply for a working visa or a temporary/permanent residence card or a long-term EU resident card, which legalises staying in Poland. Despite this, many foreigners decide to study in Poland at private universities (usually extramural) due to the possibility of taking up work in this way, as well as preferential wage conditions – i.e., no income tax for students under 26 years of life.

Figure 3.

Number of foreign students according to the most popular public universities in 2004–2019

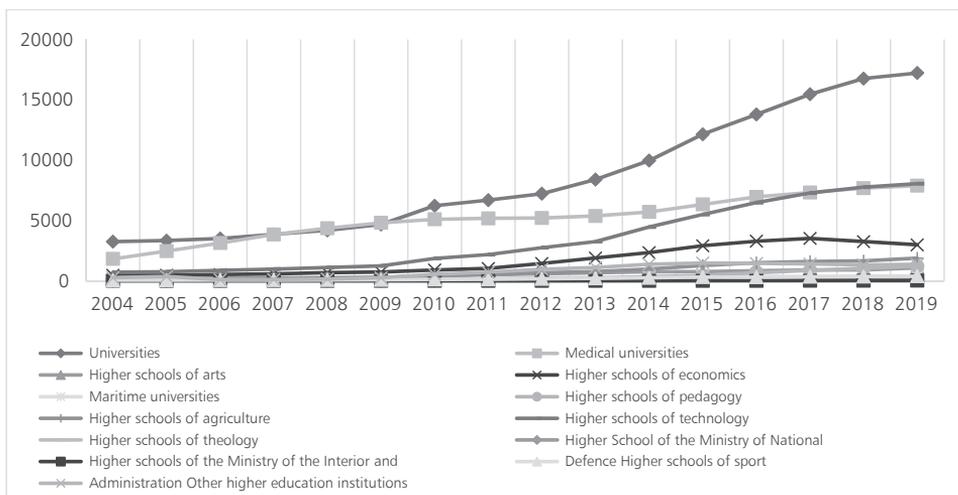


According to statistical data (Główny Urząd Statystyczny), most of the foreign students in the analysed period chose business, administration, and law (41.2% on average). Health and social care attracted nearly 20.7% of people, while the humanities and arts – 12% of studying foreigners. 8.1% of foreign students studied technology,

industry, and construction in Poland, and 6.8% of foreigners chose the study in the service sector. Lesser interest was in life sciences, mathematics, and statistics, along with ICT (6.3%). Education-related fields of study were chosen by only 3.2% of foreigners, agriculture – by 0.9% of people, and individual inter-area studies by 0.8%. Figure 4 presents the number of foreign students by type of university in 2004–2019. Most students studied at universities, medical universities, and technical colleges.

Figure 4.

The number of foreign students by type of university in 2004–2019



Summing up, Poland has become an attractive country to undertake higher education, which is indicated by the statistical data. The government has implemented an educational policy with foreign students consisting of free access to the labour market after graduation, which helps them to remain in the country of education. An incentive for foreign students to stay in Poland may be a simplification of legal procedures regarding the legalisation of stay in Poland and the legalisation of work (Hut, Jaroszewska 2011). The level of education, according to international rankings and students’ opinions, is sufficiently high, and the graduation diploma allows migrants to find employment in any of the European countries.

## Educational migration of Ukrainian youth to Poland

The most numerous group of foreigners undertaking education in Poland are the citizens of Ukraine, whose share in 2004 was 22.2%, while in 2019 it was 47.5%, and their number during this period increased more than thirty times – from 1,963 people in 2000 to 39,017 people in 2019. The paper contained analysed articles in

Polish, as well as in Ukrainian and English languages. Hence the phenomenon of increased foreign educational migration among Ukrainian youth occurs not only in Poland but also in other countries such as Russia, Germany, Canada, the Czech Republic, Italy, the United States, Spain, Austria, France, Slovakia, and Bulgaria (Kvita 2020). Until 2013, Russia was the most frequently chosen destination, which is currently in second place, just behind Poland. According to UNESCO data, foreign educational migration of Ukrainians has more than doubled since 2013, and in 2019 it amounted to 75,287 people studying abroad (Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students 2021). In literature, it is indicated that this data may be significantly underestimated. According to Andrejuk and Kornijchuk (2018), in the case of Ukrainians, educational migrations are becoming professionalised and detached from the ethnic context. The negative effect of the educational migration of Ukrainians is the outflow of human capital from their home country and a brain drain (Velychko, Yaremenko 2020). Following the opinion of Rodchenko et al. (2017), the mobility of Ukrainian youth is transforming into academic emigration, which will have negative implications for the sending country.

Jaroszewicz and Małynowska (2018) argue that the main reason for the increased inflow of Ukrainian immigrants to Poland was a significant increase in the difference in wages between Poland and Ukraine in the context of a sharp deterioration in living standards after 2013. Consequently, it is possible that the educational migrations of the Ukrainian youth to Poland were shaped by economic factors and further perspectives on the development/degradation of the economic situation. Research by Kliuchkovska et al. (2019) conducted among students at the Kyiv University of Technology and the Lviv University of Technology showed that every fourth surveyed student would like to study abroad, and the most desired fields of study are Poland, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. 19% of the respondents would consider returning to Ukraine after completing their studies abroad. According to Libanova (2018), Ukrainian youth going abroad for educational purposes consider starting education and obtaining a foreign diploma as a chance for employment in the labour market of the European Union. Hnatiuk's (2018) opinion is similar – he claims that in the case of studies in Poland, Ukrainians often study at private universities, where the quality of learning is low. Still, they obtain a European diploma that allows them to work in EU countries. Whereas the Ukrainian diploma in EU countries should be nostrified, confirming the knowledge and skills of graduates. Despite the fact mentioned earlier, graduation in Poland does not contribute to the legalisation of stay. As a result, some of the graduates return to Ukraine. In addition, students undertaking studies in Poland believe that studying at a Polish university gives them greater life chances compared to their peers in their home countries (Michno 2018). It suggests that even studying at a private university in Poland to perform work during studies simultaneously contributes to the achievement of benefits for foreigners.

The large share of Ukrainian citizens among students speaks in favour of examining this group in the direction of factors encouraging to study in Poland and the prospects of permanent residence in the country of education, which may positively impact the demographic situation. Research by Długosz (2018) conducted among students from Ukraine, undertaking studies in the south-eastern part of Poland indicates that educational migration was aimed at increasing the life chances of young people resulting from a foreign education. After graduation, more than half of the respondents intended to stay in Poland permanently. 1/3 of the respondents declared their willingness to go further west, while 13% of the respondents planned to return to Ukraine. At the same time, research by Trzciński (2015) indicates that among Ukrainian students, 77% of the respondents are willing to take up employment after studying in Poland, which may mean that they intend to stay permanently.

Economic and educational factors are considered among the reasons for the educational migration of Ukrainians to Poland. The decision-making process to start studying abroad takes into account the level of economic development of the receiving country and the sending country. The leading economic indicator may be the GDP per capita gap between countries (Wei 2012). An additional factor influencing the demand for international education among Ukrainian youth may be the social class that allows (requires) them to obtain “better” foreign education, which is consistent with Waters’ theory (2006). However, this thesis is not confirmed by empirical research, so this research gap should be filled.

The immigration of Ukrainians to Poland, including educational immigration, is increasing. Considering the fact that a large number of students from Ukraine plan to stay in the country for education, it can be supposed that the state will gain qualified employees and may expect an improvement in the demographic situation in the future thanks to the recruitment of people of reproductive age. The role of students from Ukraine in the Polish state is important for the implementation of economic and social goals. In addition, Ukrainian students are perceived both by government institutions responsible for education and by the universities themselves as an essential element that can save Polish higher education during the demographic crisis (Michalska 2018).

## Concluding discussion

Educational immigration to Poland has transformed from root migration/migration of people of Polish origin to international migration to acquire knowledge or better life opportunities. This is especially true for people from the former Soviet Union countries (e.g., Ukrainians, Belarusians, Russians, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Azerbaijanis). Thanks to measures aimed at the internationalisation of higher education, Poland is increasingly attracting students from EU countries (usually as part of the Erasmus+

educational exchange, but also for the entire study cycle). Due to the Study in Poland programme, the country has promoted its educational offer in Eastern European and Asian countries. In turn, NAWA's scholarship programmes support foreigners from European, Asian, Latin American, North American, and Sub-Saharan African countries to study in Poland by providing financial means to live. Nevertheless, it should be noted that NAWA's promotional activities are insufficient. In programmes aimed at international students, the most important channel of information about the programme for Polonia (people of Polish origin) is the friends of the applicants who are grantees of NAWA programmes, followed by the website. The internationalisation of higher education is necessary for Poland and is included in the Law on Higher Education and Science (*Ustawa Prawo o Szkolnictwie Wyższym i Nauce*). This is a priority task resulting from the need to evaluate activities related to cooperation with foreign academic centres and academic exchange. To attract foreign students, universities set up units responsible for recruiting foreigners and promoting their educational offers abroad. These activities were mainly aimed at people from the East. By contrast, recruitment is now primarily for people from African countries- and the number of students from African and Asian countries is increasing. It is observed that there is a growing interest among foreigners to study higher education in Poland, and the faculties most in demand are those related to business, administration and law, and medical faculties. To be able to invite people to study from all over the world, it is first and foremost crucial to develop study programmes in English. Given the contemporary challenges, universities should consider launching studies in e-learning form. This will meet the educational needs of people who have difficulty in crossing national borders.

For years, Poland's largest share of foreign students has been made up of Ukrainian citizens. They complete higher education in Poland to get a diploma recognised in European countries. The motives for the educational migration of young Ukrainians have yet to be grouped into appropriate categories to develop a theoretical framework for these migrations. Although one might be tempted to suggest that, until around 2010, the migration of Ukrainian citizens to Poland was mainly based on migration network theory (Massey et al. 1993) – in 2004. 44% of Ukrainian citizens studying in Poland were of Polish origin, in 2010. 20%, in 2015. 12%, in 2019. 8%. From 2011–2013, economic motives predominated, suggesting an attribution to the New Economic of Labor Migration theory (Stark, Bloom 1985). This is related to the worsening economic situation in Ukraine and the possible desire of parents to diversify risks by sending their children to study abroad. But the current research on the educational migration of Ukrainians to Poland is insufficient to confirm these suppositions unequivocally.

Human capital, knowledge and creativity, not natural resources, is the key to economic development (Williams 2006). The increase in the number of foreign students contributes to the state's acquisition of human capital, which, together with its cultural, social and educational origins, can build the Polish economy based on

knowledge. This is confirmed by the thesis of Wei (2013), who says that host countries are often the main beneficiaries of inflows of foreign students, as the residence rates are often relatively high. Therefore, Poland's strategy of attracting young people from abroad to study may result in the acquiring of human resources to develop a knowledge-based economy. Pulling foreigners to study is primarily associated with economic benefits in the form of tuition fee revenues, which is consistent with the conclusions of Hegarty (2014). On the other side, the country can acquire human capital that will support the development of the economy. Urban and Palmer's (2014) research suggests international students can significantly contribute to higher education, not only financially but also culturally, in terms of helping campus communities to institutionalise internationalisation while facilitating the development of intercultural competencies. In Poland, particular attention should be paid to foreign students from countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Russia, and Kazakhstan, because they are often people of Polish origin who, thanks to this, can be kept in the country of education. Additionally, the review of research indicates that a large proportion of Ukrainian students plan to stay in Poland after graduation. This represents an opportunity to increase the working-age workforce and improve the demographic situation. The fate of the graduates and the fulfilment of their declarations regarding their place of residence should be examined in the future.

The Polish government may see significant economic benefits in the future from the inflow of global talent in the form of foreign students from these countries who easily integrate. Well-coordinated stakeholder collaboration between public authorities, universities, and the business sector in the host country is essential to facilitate the successful transformation of a foreign student into a labour market participant, as suggested by the study by Mosneaga and Winther (2013). Thus, the governments of the host countries, the business sector and educational units, owing to the increase in the number of foreign students, can expect positive effects in the form of acquiring qualified human capital for the local labour market and improving the demographic situation, provided that foreign students remain in the country and start a family there. It means that access to the labour market after graduation in Poland is an asset of the Polish migration policy. This is compatible with research by Hazen and Alberts (2006), which shows that economic and professional factors tend to dominate among the incentives to stay in the country of training, while personal and social factors attract students back home.

Concerns of the local society regarding the loss of jobs due to the influx of foreign students and staying after their studies should not arise. The impact of immigration on the receiving labour markets depends on the degree of substitutability or complementarity of the migrating and native labour force. Currently, there is no increase in unemployment in Poland due to the inflow of immigrants (Boichuk 2020), including educational immigrants. That shows that remaining foreign students in the country of education after graduation at a given time is not a threat and may

have positive effects on the Polish economy. In turn, for sending countries, such a phenomenon is negative due to the brain drain and the possible lack of qualified specialists in the future.

In Poland, there is much research on educational migration, but there is still a lack of research on the behaviour of educational migrants after graduation. The analysis is mainly based on the causes of educational migration and integration. The results of the research by Kubiciel-Lodzińska and Ruszczak (2016) suggest that studies on student migration should be conducted by dividing foreign students into two categories: students from the EU and students from outside the EU, due to their motivations for studying in Poland differing significantly. Most often, there are works on foreign students from Ukraine, ignoring other groups of countries. It is suggested to extend the research to different groups of educational migrants in Poland. There are also no studies on the economic aspects of the functioning of foreign students in the country. Additionally, there needs to be research on Poland's supply side of international education. Therefore, these research gaps should be filled in the future.

To sum up, the paper discusses the situation in the international educational market in Poland, which allowed for the identification of current educational trends in the country and for indicating the directions of future research in the field of both the demand and supply of educational migrations.

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