



## Polish student mobility to the U.S.

### I. 2015 Open Doors data in the context of previous years' data

The total number of Polish students in the U.S. decreased by 1.8% in AY 2014/15 in comparison to AY 2013/14. The decrease is less steep than in the previous year (-3.8%) and significantly slower than in the preceding 5 years (-32.9%).

The breakup between Polish graduate and undergraduate level students in the U.S. has remained more or less constant over the past 2 years, with over 40% students studying at the undergraduate level and over 30% at the graduate level.

Currently, the U.S. is the 4<sup>th</sup> study abroad destination for Polish students, following Germany, the United Kingdom and France, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Although the overall student population in Poland keeps decreasing [2010: 1.9MM; 2014: 1.55MM according to GUS], the number of Polish students abroad continues to be on the rise [Rzeczpospolita – OECD, Eurostat].

### II. Factors behind the Open Doors data

OECD points out the following factors that influence students' choice of a country of study:

- Language of instruction,
- Quality of programs,
- Tuition fees,
- Immigration policy,
- Limitation of tertiary education in the home country,
- Geographical, trade and historical links between countries,
- Admission policies and transfer of credits between home and host institutions.

**U.S. has faced a steep decline of Polish student population from 2007 through 2012.** Potential reasons for the drop at that time might include a combination of the following:

- The 2007 financial crisis** and its impact on USD/PLN exchange rate (2004: 3.88; 2008: 2.00; 2009: 3.7).
- Rising costs of studying in the U.S.** The average annual increase in tuition costs between 2007 and 2012 at U.S. schools was **4.7%** [NCES] while the annual increase in average salary in Poland (–inflation) was ~ **2.6%** before tax [GUS]. U.S. tuition costs expressed in PLN in 2012 were a whopping 46% higher than in 2007 r. In addition to that there is no culture of taking student loans in Poland.
- Decline in the number of Polish born individuals residing in the U.S.** (2006: ~500k; 2013: 432k) [MPI] resulting in weakened cultural ties between Poland and the U.S.
- Polish students being more drawn towards EU universities than U.S. schools** due to:
  - Stronger bonds with the EU region and support from Polish communities in Europe after Poland's accession to the EU (Poles in the EU in 2004: 750k; in 2012: ~1.8M) [GUS],
  - World-class education with low or free tuition (e.g. Germany, France),
  - Variety of schools to choose from as more and more programs are offered in English at EU universities,
  - Lower complexity of the application process (the Bologna process, ECTS system),
  - Availability of governmental loans (e.g. U.K.),
  - Option to work off-campus (to cover the costs and gain experience to be competitive on the job market),
  - No need to apply for a visa (burden and cost),
  - Vicinity to home, inexpensive travel within Europe.
- Growth of the Erasmus exchange program** (now Erasmus+). Poland as a "top sending" country; the program free and relatively easy to apply.
- Popularity of online education.** Distance studies at U.S. schools with exams in the U.S. or at accredited local centers; free online courses like Khan Academy, Coursera, EdX.
- Attitude of Polish students towards studying in the U.S.** According to the 2015 survey "Attitudes of Polish students towards studying in the U.S." conducted by the U.S. Mission in Poland in cooperation with a local NGO, Polish high school and university students view education in the U.S. as too expensive, the application process as too difficult, and the distance from home as too overwhelming.

- h) Past data shows no direct correlation between the demographic changes in Poland in recent years and the no. of students going to the U.S. to study [Rzeczpospolita]. This might be associated with the fact that only a specific subgroup of the student population can get admitted and afford to study at U.S. schools

**Since 2013 the decline rate of Polish students in the U.S. started decelerating from a steep 14% down to a modest 3.8%.** This might be attributed to a combination of the following factors:

- a) **Increasing popularity of studying abroad in general among Polish students** (+20% in 3 years according to Rzeczpospolita).
- b) **Poland's growing GDP per capita PPP** (2013: \$22790; 2015: \$26210 - projected) [The World Bank].
- c) **The U.K. government's decision to triple the maximum of annual undergraduate tuition fees** at universities since 2013/14 [OECD], which might have drawn more students to other destinations, including the U.S.
- d) **Intensive efforts of EducationUSA advisors at the Fulbright Commission, U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Poland since 2013 in promoting U.S. study opportunities.** We have jointly provided a variety of outreach, in-reach and virtual activities addressing the specific needs of Polish students. Example of outreach impact: During the 2013 International Education Week celebrations we reached about 1000 high school and university students through sessions and presentations in 10 different cities in Poland; the highly successful American Educational Fair in Warsaw drew as many as 800 students.
- e) **Growth of financing opportunities in recent years available to Polish students or scientists wishing to study or conduct research in the U.S.** Examples:
  - Fulbright grants (over 20 Polish student grantees annually),
  - Visiting Research Graduate Traineeship Program (around 40 Polish grantees annually),
  - Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education's initiatives such as Top 500 Innovators and Mobility Plus,
  - EU's Marie Curie actions project.

## **U.S. student mobility to Poland**

### **I. 2015 Open Doors data in the context of previous years' data**

The total number of U.S. students in Poland increased by 15.6% in AY 2013/14 in comparison to 2012/13. The increase is a significant change from previous year's data, when the number of U.S. students dropped by 7.5% compared to the previous year. Over the last 5 years the number of U.S. students in Poland has increased by 38%.

### **II. Factors behind the Open Doors data**

The popularity of Polish universities among U.S. students reflects a general trend of growing interest in Polish schools among foreign students (coming from as many as 158 countries according to MSHE). Potential factors:

- a) **Stronger dollar** (2010: 1 USD = 3.1 PLN, 2015: 1 USD = 4 PLN).
- b) **Fast development of quality degree programs conducted in English**, especially in business and medical fields. Example: Warsaw University of Life Sciences offers 8 Master's programs in English.
- c) **Affordability of studying and living in Poland.**
- d) **Ready, Study, Go! Campaign** promoting the attractiveness of studying and doing research in Poland.
- e) **Growth of university exchange programs between Poland and the U.S.** Examples of recently established partnerships:
  - Warsaw University of Technology and Michigan State University,
  - Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan and University of Massachusetts-Lowell,
  - Warsaw School of Economics and Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Management,
  - Jagiellonian University and University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine.

## **EducationUSA Poland plans for 2016 in light of the 2015 Open Doors data**

In addition to the regular outreach, in-center and virtual activities we have conducted in the past years, in order to continue the recent positive trend in student mobility between Poland and the U.S., in 2016 we will focus our efforts on the following initiatives:

- a) **Launch the EducationUSA Mentoring program** involving U.S. school alumni who will mentor Polish applicants.
- b) **Target outreach efforts** to determined students with realistic chances of being admitted to a U.S. school (e.g. top high schools, IB schools), addressing specific students' doubts about studying in the U.S. during those visits.
- c) **Support the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education's Studies for the Outstanding program**, which will finance graduate education at top world universities (including 26 schools located in the U.S.)
- d) **Organize the first ever U.S. Study Abroad workshop** facilitating institutional partnerships between Polish and U.S. HIEd institutions. The workshop will be a natural extension of U.S. Embassy's Educational Fair with U.S. school representatives.

- e) **Participate in nation-wide educational fairs** whose audience matches our target audience.
- f) **Continue to train American Corners across Poland in educational advising.**
- g) **Continue to engage Fulbrighters** in the promotion of U.S. HiEd among Polish youth during International Education Week and on other occasions.
- h) **Further develop specializations among advisors and the offer of individual customized fee-based consultations.**
- i) **Further update the newly launched local EducationUSA website** so that it reflects Polish students' needs and includes a section for American students wishing to study in Poland.

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