



## Ukrainian Students in Slovak Republic: Policies of Engagement, Integration, Students' Motivation and Plans

**Project:** Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives

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## **Executive summary**

The rapid growth of Ukrainian students during last few years was in line with socio-demographic developments in Slovak Republic. As more Slovak students are choosing to study abroad universities are motivated to fill the gap with Ukrainian students who have free access to labor market. At the same time student migration is overlooked at strategic level. Among the top strategic documents only migration strategy and integration policies have some provisions on foreign students which often are not implemented in practice due to lack of cooperation with other agencies.

Policies that allow students to come to Slovak Republic are not very selective. Students have access to free higher education in Slovak language and migration rules are continuously softening in order to allow students come easily. Due to the low number of students for some majors admission exams are substituted with admission procedure and language knowledge is not always checked very closely. At the same time universities and special agency are promoting Slovak higher education in Ukraine.

Policies that should support enhancement of human capital of Slovak students are not very efficient due to low coordination. In some cases policies gaps are filled by universities as for example by some element of adaptation programs for Ukrainians students or Slovak language courses. But a lot of problems arise when students transit from school to labor market. The main reason for them is that universities are not preparing students of those majors that are needed by Slovak economy. Some positive developments in the students' right to access labor market while studying and after the graduation were introduced under the requirement of EU.

As a result of these policies the number of students is rising however the majors they choose do not meet the labor markets needs of Slovak Republic. Ukrainian students dominate in social studies and humanities while labor market needs more IT specialists. Ukrainian students mainly see Slovakia as a country with easy access to higher education which is first on their way to other countries in European Union. However it is unknown whether such intentions are driven by Slovak policies toward foreign students.

Policies in Slovakia concerning Ukrainian students can be significantly improved. A starting point is to set a strategic view of Ukrainian students for Slovakia: are they a part of future labor force of Slovakia or Ukraine, what is their place in internalization of higher education and whether they are a part of business activities of universities. Due to different needs Ukrainian student cannot be treated in the same way as native students and special measures should be designed to use their development potential fully.

## Introduction

Slovak Republic is one of the most economically successful countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Economic reforms and EU accession coupled with significant inflows of foreign direct investment led to a long-term economic growth and job creation. Economic developments and demographic changes also pushed the need for more skilled workers. At the same time the country became more integrated into the EU and open border and common educational space resulted in out-migration of Slovak students to the nearest Czech Republic and other EU countries. Universities became facing a gap of students that jeopardized their financial positions. All these developments resulted in gradual easing of migration policy and getting more third country nationals to previously closed Slovak Republic. Policies connected to foreigners are still changing and there still is a need for more coherence in order to effectively address these developments in social-economic life in Slovakia.

Student's migration is just one of the spheres that were affected by this processed and definitely a sphere of not the first priority in Slovak Republic: there is no provision connected to student migration in most of the top strategic documents. In this respect Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the year 2020<sup>1</sup> is rather an exception. It states that migration policy should allow highly skilled third-country labor force, including students, come to the country in order to contribute to overall competitiveness of the Slovak Republic. Moreover according to the migration strategy a phenomenon of "brain waste" should not be supported by not recognizing the skills of migrants that come to Slovakia and should be prevented by extension of powers of institutions in charge.

Integration Policy is aligned with migration policy and puts effective and responsible integration of foreigners into the labor market among its priorities. As Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic is responsible for this policy it rather concentrates on enabling third-country students to work during their studies in areas where skilled workers are lacking and simplifying administrative procedures in relation to obtaining residence and work permits with regard to third-country nationals who have obtained a university diploma at Slovak schools.

Although granting more access to the country for third country national is not very attractive for politics and usually is not very supported by Slovak society it should be noted that Ministry of Interior attends to its strategic document and significantly liberalized migration policies lately.

While migration policy acknowledges the need for talents from other countries for the development of Slovak Republic and for more cooperation between different state authorities it seems that policy makers in education and labor market spheres are lacking this understanding. As a result foreign students are overlooked in strategic documents and migration strategy is being implemented only partially.

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<sup>1</sup> Available in SK and EN languages at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky>

## Policies

### Selection of human capital

The Basic Law governing the situation of aliens in Slovakia is the Act No. 404/2011 on Residence of Aliens and Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Acts<sup>2</sup>, which defines the basic concepts, regulates the conditions of admission of foreigners to the territory of Slovakia and the conditions for the residence permit, regulates the control of their stay and the competence of various public administration bodies. Foreigners Residence Act changes in the last years brought liberalization and exceptions for knowledge transfer - mainly for university students, doctoral students, researchers. The Act is amended approximately once a year and the last change brought significant liberalization for students.

After 11 June 2017 Ukrainian citizens can come to Slovakia for 90 days without visa and discuss all the issues with the University, make necessary exams to pass the admission examination, however, when accepted by the University, studying must be based on the temporary residence permit (issued for a period of up to 6 years). Application for temporary residence must be submitted in a person at a diplomatic mission (embassy) of the Slovak Republic accredited to the country where the passport of a third country national was issued or to the country of his/her residence. In some cases (e.g. the case of an applicant is worth special attention) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic may empower another diplomatic mission of the Slovak Republic to accept and process the application. The diplomatic mission will interview the applicant for the purpose of preliminary assessment of the application.

Students have the choice either to apply for a residence permit to the embassy or to get so-called national visas from diplomatic mission and come to Slovakia to apply for a residence permit. Bureau of Border and Alien Police of the Presidium of the Police Force, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic is aware of negative fact that upon admission to study, some foreign students missed the beginning of the school year because of a lengthy procedure for granting a residence permit. That is why they introduced changes that should solve these problems, so today if a student visits the Embassy with all accompanying documents that are accepted, they are complete and are eligible for a national visa, he/she can travel to Slovakia and can be equipped by residence permit in Slovak Republic. Moreover with the latest amendment to Foreigners Residence Act a shorter time-limit for residence permit procedure was introduced, so the students have a 30-day decision-making deadline, otherwise 90 days.

If a foreign national resides in Slovakia legally, the application may be submitted at the competent Foreign Police Department according to the place of his/her residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic, which does not apply to a person who was granted tolerated residence, as his/her departure is not possible and his/her detention is inefficient, and to asylum seekers.

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<sup>2</sup> EN language version available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4fe08a7a2.html>

Documents required when applying for temporary residence:

- Filled in application form,
- 2 identical color photos (3 x 3.5 cm),
- Administrative Fee (as required for the relevant type of residence),
- Valid passport,
- Document proving the purpose of residence (study),
- Document proving clear criminal record,
- Documents proving financial coverage.

The purpose of residence due to study is documented by confirmation of the competent state administration authority (Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic) or letter of admission to a school issued by an authorized representative of the school (e.g. director, deputy director, dean of the faculty, vice-dean) or confirmation from an organization securing a program approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic or a Union program based on a contract with a relevant state administration authority.

Stay of the foreign national in Slovakia must be financially covered in the amount of a statutory life minimum for each month of your residence (from July 2017 the sum of the statutory life minimum is EUR 199.48/month). If the length of stay exceeds a period of one year, it is required to prove financial coverage in the amount of 12 times the statutory life minimum (from July 2017 this equals to EUR 2 393.76). Financial coverage may be for example proved either by submitting a bank account balance confirmation in the name of the foreign national from a bank in the territory of Slovakia or from a bank in the country of origin of the foreign national (if the account is in a freely convertible currency), translated by a certified translator to Slovak language. Until the latest amendments to the Act on Foreigners students had to confirm availability of accommodation with the document issued for a minimum period of 6 months; but now there is no such a requirement.

The third country national must enter the territory of Slovakia within 180 days after having been granted the temporary residence. Within 3 working days from arrival to Slovakia, the third country national must report the beginning of his/her residence at the Foreign Police and within 3 working days from obtaining the residence document he/she has to conclude a health insurance policy. Within 30 days from obtaining the residence document, it is also necessary to submit at the competent Foreign Police department a document on health insurance in Slovakia and a medical report not older than 30 days confirming that the third country national does not suffer from any disease endangering public health. The biggest problem for Ukrainian students is the issue of health insurance. Since Ukrainian students are only entitled to commercial insurance (which is very expensive) and are not insured in the Slovak system of health insurance.

The study at the higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic is governed by the Act on higher education (the relationship with foreigners is regulated by Act no. 245/2008 on education and training<sup>3</sup> and Act no. 596/2003 Coll. on state

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2008/245/20160901>.

administration in education and school self-government<sup>4</sup>). Pursuant to the transition provisions of the Act on higher education, higher education institutions can enroll students only to the accredited study programs that are pursued on the basis of the credit system.

Every person, including foreign nationals, has the right to study at a higher education institution in the elected study program, provided he or she meets the basic admission conditions under Section 56, and other conditions as laid down by the higher education institution offering the relevant study program, under Section 57 paragraph 1<sup>5</sup>. The study programs are implemented at three levels: Study programs may combine the first two levels of higher education in one complex. (Section 53 paragraphs 3). The study program of first level includes the Bachelor's-degree study programs. The study programs of second level and the study programs combining the first two levels of higher education (hereinafter referred to as "combined study program) include Master-degree study program, engineer's degree study program and the doctor's degree study program. The PhD-degree study program is a third-level study program.

The basic admission conditions for a bachelor-degree program or to a combined study program is the completion of the upper-level of secondary education or secondary vocational education (i.e. secondary education finished with a school leaving examination). The basic admission condition for a second -level study program is the completion of a first-level study program (bachelor). The basic admission condition for a PhD program is the completion of a second-level study program or a combined study program (master, engineer or doctor).

The Slovak Republic is bound by the Directive 2005/36/EC on recognition of professional qualifications. The Directive divides the recognition of documents on previous education according to the purpose of recognition on recognition for academic purposes (i.e. recognition of previous education in order to continue in education in the Slovak Republic or pursuing a so-called regulated profession in the Slovak Republic) and for professional purpose. Hereafter we will talk about academic recognition of diplomas.

According to the legislation in force, qualifications obtained outside Slovakia giving access to higher education in Slovakia are recognized by the Department of Education of the respective District. Each District Office has the competence to make the decision on the recognition of education and one must choose the respective District Office according to the place of his/her residence in the Slovak Republic. If an agreement with foreign state secondary school has been signed on mutual recognition of the equivalence of documents of education the District shall issues the certificate. However if there is no such an agreement, an applicant should also provide position on the equivalence of education issued by the Centre for Recognition of Documents of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2003/596/20170901>.

<sup>5</sup> See more at: <http://www.studyin.sk/> (also in EN language).

The academic recognition of Diplomas of tertiary education is in competence of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Slovak Republic – in case that the respective HEI in Slovakia offers the same or similar study program as the one completed abroad or by Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (Centre on Recognition of Diplomas) – in case there is no similar study program offered.

An applicant, among other documents, has to provide certified copy of a leaving certificate or diploma (certifying the completion of higher or secondary education) obtained outside Slovakia with apostille issued by the competent body in the country of origin. Submitted documents must be translated by a sworn translator into Slovak language. After submitting the application with all the required documents, the respective institution shall decide within two months to: recognize the leaving certificate or diploma, refuse to recognize the leaving certificate or diploma, award a supplementary examination to verify the knowledge and skills of the applicant in subjects, or in their parts, which were not studied by the applicant in a school outside Slovakia. Due to the fact that there is a bilateral agreement between Ukraine and Slovak Republic on mutual recognition of previous education a procedure is simplified. After submitting the application with all the required documents, the Centre on Recognition of Diplomas, the respective higher education institution or District Office shall recognize the diploma within 15 days.

Another non written admission condition applicable to Ukrainian students is that they have to have 18 years when applying to the university. Due to the fact that as Ukrainian students finish school at 16-17 and at this age they are not legally responsible and the adult person has to be responsible for them. Underage students have problems with receiving scholarship and accommodation, so most of them usually live with the family or relatives.

Unless stipulated to the contrary in the Instructions, every candidate can submit an application for study at one or more faculties or universities. In the event of overlapping dates of admission examinations at different faculties, the risk shall be borne by the candidate. Pursuant to the Higher Education Act, only the higher education institutions have a reserved right to provide, organize, or ensure higher education and, therefore, only they are authorized to admit students to higher education. By request, the Faculty study departments will provide candidates with detailed information at the publicized addresses and telephone numbers, or these can be learned from the relevant Internet pages of universities.

Every faculty determines its own criteria for students' admission; however the application process is the same for natives and foreigners (including those with the status of foreign Slovakian). Recently due to the low number of students an admission process for many majors was significantly simplified in many universities.

*"The admission tests as such no longer exist. It is the admission procedure. The university comes with an application and, on the basis of criteria that must be mandatory; university creates a ranking of students. However, only few students were not accepted in the last years."*



*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

*"In some majors there is just an admission process, but for some majors (political science, international relations and languages) there are also admission tests."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

Upon delivery and registration of the application, the Faculty shall send the candidate detailed instructions on the admission examination, or the syllabus and propositions, and conceivably the study material. The Dean of the Faculty shall decide about admission to a study program of the candidate. The result of the admission examination shall be announced, as a rule, on the day of the admission examination, or on the following day, on the official bulletin board of the Faculty. Many faculties announce results of the admission procedure on their web pages. The decision about the outcome of the admission procedure must be issued in writing, within 30 days from the verification of compliance with the study admission criteria. Foreign applicants, who do not meet all the requirements for admission, may be required to attend preparatory courses, including Slovak language courses.

In general, the student's nationality alone does not affect the determination of the tuition fee. Students studying full-time in public universities in Slovakia without exceeding the standard length of study do not pay tuition fees, if they study a program offered in Slovak language (similar to Slovak students). This makes university education in Slovakia particularly attractive for the Ukrainian students who predominantly are in the Slovak program. The Ministry of Education pays public universities for each student who studies at programs in Slovak language. Tuition fees for study program offered in foreign languages are set by each HEI individually. Fees vary from 500 € to 12 000 € per one academic year. Updated information on fees can be obtained from international relations offices of the respective HEIs. Private colleges are eligible to require tuition and study fees from their students. The amount of tuition and fees associated with the study is not legally limited. The law also does not specify the conditions for the tuition fees. The sole responsibility of a private college is to publish the tuition fee and the fees related to the study for the next academic year at least two months before the deadline for submitting applications for study.

Slovakia offers foreign students of these types of scholarships:

- Scholarships of the Government of the Slovak Republic,
- Bilateral Programs,
- National Scholarship Program,
- Scholarships offered within the framework of bilateral program of cooperation.

The only scholarship scheme that is available for full time Ukrainian students in Slovak universities (not including students on mobility programs) is Scholarship of the Government of the Slovak Republic that is why we will describe this scholarship opportunity in more details.

Scholarships of the Government of the Slovak Republic is a part of Slovakia's official development assistance, which itself is a program and project activity of the Ministry

of Foreign and European Affairs within the international community.<sup>6</sup> The Slovak government adopted the Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014 - 2018 and the Objectives of Bilateral Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic 2017, which committed the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic to deliver on the objectives of bilateral development cooperation by awarding government scholarships. A government scholarship may be awarded to a national of a partnering country who is a full-time student at a public university located in the Slovak Republic (given that the previous level of education was not completed in Slovakia) or a participant in language education for the purposes of university studies. The applicant has to have valid residence permit (either for a purpose of study or as third party national granted Slovak Living Abroad status) or the right to stay on the territory of the Slovak Republic for a period in excess of three months. The size of the scholarship is equal to at least the subsistence minimum defined for a single adults and is awarded only for one year during the program.<sup>7</sup>

According to the data provided by government official responsible for promotion of higher education abroad every year 48 scholarships are offered for the third countries - Africa, primarily Kenya, Sudan, Palestine and Ukraine as an accession country. The scholarships are distributed by individual country and approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs every year. Every country receives a maximum of 5-6 scholarships and usually 1-2 places. There are about 250 foreign students that are benefiting from this scheme at the moment. Larger numbers are for compatriots where there are 70 places given by the countries. Countrywide scholarships work in countries such as Serbia, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, and Poland. The offers of Ministry of Education are provided by the contact institutions in those countries and these institutions nominate the students. They usually nominate a higher number than the number of scholarships. The Commission, which was composed of representatives of universities and the various sectors rate candidates.

A government officer responsible for promotion of higher education abroad pointed that the interest of Ukrainian students in the scholarship was also before the outbreak of military conflict in Ukraine because in Slovakia is a higher standard of living and they do not plan to expand scholarship opportunities in the nearest future.

*"The surge of interest in scholarships is not expected. Scholarships depend on the number of funds. Our policy is quite open. This is already the maximum that could be offered under the legislation to third-country nationals."*

*From the expert interview with a government officer responsible for promotion of higher education abroad*

As to the other sources of finance that can be used by students, student loans are usually not available for Ukrainian Students in Slovak Republic, the only exception are students who have a status of Slovakian living abroad. Some enterprises (particularly

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<sup>6</sup> Act No. 392/2015 Coll. on Development Cooperation and on amendment of certain acts and Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport Decree No. 50/2016 defining the details of awarding government scholarships entered into force on 1 January 2016.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/9577.pdf>.

in IT sector) are contracting students already during their studies and covering their costs related to study and students has to work for the company when she/he leaves the school. Private foundations do not support foreign students in Slovakia. There are some charity funds, also helping foreigners. Some of the projects are financed by the AMIF fund (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), NGOs and IOM are helping by legal, social, health aid and in other areas of live to foreigners with different residence status. Students in social need can ask them for a help, but financial help is very limited (100 EUR per month/person and only for 6 months period maximum).

The internationalization of higher education is an independent objective of Ministry of Education, which includes academic mobility, a system of support for the presentation of the Slovak university space as part of the European university and research area, the development of existing programs such as the National Scholarship Program, as well as programs supporting the return or acquisition of experts from abroad to the Slovak academic environment. The Ministry is a strategic partner which shapes the basic framework for the university education and supports the internationalization. Currently there is ongoing project scheme for the support of the internationalization of the universities. Ministry of Education is gathering information on foreign students, but there is no intention of Ministry or government to increase the number of Ukrainian students or the number of students of any other nationality.

*"There are no strategic goals that would have the ambition to have a much larger number of foreign students here. The fact is that young people from Slovakia are studying abroad and it is perceived by the need to acquire foreign students to replace them, to have a balance. If a group of foreign students is growing here, this is in line with national policies (education, migration, labour market ). However, it is not strategically managed according to needed fields of study, so far. Each foreign student is welcomed, whatever field of study is applying for. It's completely open."*

*From the expert interview with government official responsible for internationalization of higher education*

In Slovak Republic there is a separate institution, Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA), which is in charge of the promotion of Slovak higher education abroad in the framework of contracts with the Ministry of Education in the last 10 years. Primarily, information on foreign language study programs has been published within one book on the website of SAIA which Ukrainians are less interested in, because they are interested in studying in Slovak language (i.e. free of charge). However the brochure that contains the most needed information for applicants for study is in a very high in demand. Ukrainian students are contacting SAIA for the purpose of signing up for a particular school, conditions of staying in the Slovak Republic, finding out how much funding is available and on financial issues related to studying in Slovak Republic, and how to handle administrative issues.

SAIA's website contains processed information for the stay of foreigners in Slovakia from several governmental web pages, that is why many universities have a link to SAIA's web pages. Although some schools are promoting themselves abroad, SAIA help them and promotes Slovak higher education in those places, where normally

universities are not going. They participate in educational fairs where they promote the opportunities for study at our schools abroad.

Due to sharp decrease in the number of Slovak students the situation in the promotion has changed in recent years, as the universities have already begun to promote themselves using various channels.

Some universities directly target Ukrainian students by having web pages in Ukrainian, developing professional contacts with separate universities in Ukraine, advertising education possibilities at the border or on the territory of Ukraine including in secondary schools, hiring a separate employee who is responsible for promotion and who has a good command of Ukrainian language.

*"The Ukrainian language is part of the UNI website. There are information for applicants for submission of applications, dates and an intensive course of the Slovak language."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

*"Our University has targeted activities near the border with Slovakia- on Ukrainian side. There are few billboards. There was also a presentation at two secondary schools in Ukraine held last year."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

Some well known public universities do not target Ukrainian students directly, because due to good reputation they are already in the demand among international students.

*"There is no particular focus on Ukrainian students. There are good contacts in place with Ukrainian universities as part of research projects. There is long-term cooperation, but it is not a specific communication plan towards Ukraine."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

*"In general, we do not need to actively look for the students, since university has a very good reputation and we are trying to be the best university of Slovak Republic. We promote and share information of our study programs only if we are addressed directly or asked to do so. We have a lot of international projects and student exchanges, so no big problems with new students that are coming."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

Universities rarely do promotion through the agencies, due to previous bad experience, but if they do, the intermediary should have a brilliant reputation.

*"There are many intermediaries who do recruitment of Ukrainians. Sometimes they appeal to the university, sometimes they work independently. University does not seek them actively. In the past there were problems with the abuse of students who had no idea of the price range of university education in the country and so university dropped from the official cooperation, even they cooperate with some*

*well-established and provide them with official information."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

*"The university cooperates with external organization which provides some services related to the recruitment of students from eastern countries – mainly from Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Belarus and Russia. It's a well-established cooperation. It is agency and a language school which offers a complex service for incoming students. All services related to their stay in Slovakia. It is led by the former graduate of this university. They wouldn't cooperate with unverified subject."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

At the same time some representatives admitted that Slovak Embassy in Kiev and the Consulate in Uzhgorod were not helpful in promoting information about education opportunities abroad and others were promoting education only through the embassies in neighbouring countries.

It should be noted that public universities are more interested in promoting themselves abroad than private ones. Private universities are not interested in Ukrainian students as higher education they provide is very expensive for Ukrainians. Moreover, due to complicated migration policies, private universities usually do not invest a lot into the promotion in third countries and they prefer to cooperate with universities from EU (for example, German universities).

*"We have considered recruitment of students directly in Ukraine via some UA agency in the past, but it remained only at the level of consideration. Unless the conditions change in Slovakia, so we can compete with public universities, we think that such investment would not bring us a much profit – only a few Ukrainian students can afford to cover the costs."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of private university*

Universities have different understanding of the role of Ukrainian students in the internationalization of higher education in Slovak Republic and their view not always matches that of the Ministry of Education.

*"The university has a strategy of internationalization, where the number of study programs provided in foreign languages is determined. These are paid. And we would like to have more of them and to have more foreign students is also a priority."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

*"The university has an internationalization strategy which defines engagement of foreign students from Ukraine as one of priorities. The main internal tasks of university is to increase the number of foreign students (including Ukrainians) and to improve the environment for them."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

### **Enhancement of human capital potential**

After being admitted to the university, students are usually supported by the study department of universities in the process of renewal their residence permits. There is no unified procedure for adaptation and integration measure for students during their studies and the practice depends on the universities. Students may get support with accommodation facilities, filling in the application form and other things.

*"The university has one worker who speaks in Ukrainian and his job is to help in the beginning."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

*"We assist in the process of accommodation, adaptations to study, organize introductory courses of the Slovak language before the beginning of the academic year."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

Although The Slovak Republic has a well-written Integration strategy there is no provision that would influence the process of integration of Ukrainian students while being in the university. Probably due to the fact that its implementation is under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor, Social affairs, and Family of the Slovak Republic, most of the activities are directed to equal access to employment opportunities and access to social services.

Recently more effort has been done to improve the knowledge of Slovak language of Ukrainian students. But the main objective is not to build a multicultural society but rather to overcome a small language barrier so that they can fully communicate and study. At the same time there are no specific tools at national level. Several universities introduced language courses for enrolment of foreign students and during the first semesters of study. Before the beginning of each academic year, the universities run an entry course of the Slovak language free of charge for foreign students (however, they have to pay for accommodation and meals). Some universities are developing new initiatives of language courses before the arrival to Slovak Republic.

*"In Ukraine, university will run courses of the Slovak language in order that new Ukrainians come to Slovakia with better language skills and to help them in a very early adaptation, and it will be much cheaper for them to study in Ukraine"*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

Also Migration center in Kosice organizes free courses of the Slovak language, although in limited scale.

As being noted by the representatives of universities the study results of UA students are comparable to Slovak students. On average there are both good and bad students and it doesn't matter what nationality they are. As being noted Ukrainian

students are more motivated and study harder, however they can experience more problems due to language barrier.

*"It is very difficult to generalize their success in the study. Every student is an individual. Although initially they are the weaker students, the progress that is reached between the start and the end of the study is higher than achieved by Slovak students. Years of experience show that Ukrainian students belong to the better half of students, but do not reach the top."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

*"Ukrainians are good students and often better in science subjects such as mathematics, chemistry. They have some problems in social science subjects, but it is probably due to problems of understanding Slovak language. Globally, there is not a big difference in the quality of Ukrainian students compared to Slovak students."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

Usually university representatives do not see any obstacle to integration of Ukrainian students. However this is applicable to those universities where foreign students do not constitute a large share of students. However universities with increasing cohort of Ukrainian student are already experiencing some changes in the integration process.

*"When there were less Ukrainian students there was higher integration with Slovak students. Now when there are more Ukrainian students they start to create their own communities."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

One of the problems for Ukrainian students is the issue of health insurance. Since Ukrainian students are only entitled to commercial insurance (which is very expensive) and are not insured in the Slovak system of health insurance. A lot of students stay uninsured and this poses a big risk to their health.

*"We had a case when we had to transport very sick Ukrainian student with high temperature to Ukraine, because she was not insured and refused health treatment in Slovak Republic."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

In the law on employment services, there are exact cases in which a student can enter an employment relationship. He/she must have a temporary stay for study purposes. It does not specify whether a student is a secondary school, university or just a language school. The problem arose, as abuses of temporary residence for study purposes were often made by foreigners especially those in language school, who were instead of studying performing low-skilled work in the service sector. However, the recent amendments to the law now oblige language learners to get a national visa instead of study residence permit. The student is subject to the limitations in the maximum number of hours worked. A university student can enter a 20-hour working week contract (it was 10 hours a year ago before the transposition

of the Directive (EU) 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing).

Most of the students use this opportunity and work alongside the study, mostly in the private sector, however universities don't have exact data on how many students work. Although Ukrainian students often have part-time job in this respect they are not different from Slovak students.

*"They don't have exact quantitative data how many students work, but most of them have some part time jobs, same as Slovak students. They didn't experience many cases that students would come to Slovakia for study and misused this to work there."*

*From the expert interview with the representative of public university*

Study is always on the first place and because foreign students know that they can easily lose the stay permit if they fail. If a student fails to attend college studies (third-country national with a residence permit), he/she must notify the police department that the purpose for which the stay was granted was terminated within three working days of the occurrence. Every third-country national who has been granted a temporary residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic may apply for a change of purpose for that temporary stay during his/her term to another without having to travel to the country of origin<sup>8</sup>. But if they don't manage to do that they have to leave the country.

It is possible to achieve good study results and to work at the same time, but it depends on the particular individual. According to key informants from HEI, there are only few cases when students would come to Slovakia for study and misused this to work there. Universities are also helping students to get the practical experience e.g. they are trainees at ministries, NGOs or private companies, and if the host organizations are satisfied, they offer them a part-time job, either on some projects or unlimited. Almost 70% of students are undergoing a practical training course of at least for one semester during their studies.

After the graduation the study residence permit is valid only 3-working day so Ukrainian students have three options to legally stay in Slovak Republic. First option is to leave the country and come back on visa-free travel and look for the job. Another two, is to apply for a change of purpose for that temporary stay for employment or for a job search without having to travel to the country of origin for employment. In most cases, students are looking for a job (if they wish to stay in Slovakia and work after studies) during the studies. For example, IT companies are contracting students even in the 4-th year of their study period, so student finishing the school has the job from the 1<sup>st</sup> day after graduation. The third option, to stay for a job search, was recently more liberalized in accordance with the EU Directive 2016/801. Previously

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<sup>8</sup> For more info see:

<http://www.iom.sk/sk/novinky-a-podujatia/881-studia-emn-zmeny-pobytoveho-statusu-v-slovenskej-republike>



the maximum duration of the stay for the job search was 30 days and now it is 9 months. This step should contribute to promoting employability in the labor market over longer periods of job search for graduates. State representatives do not expect other advantages as they consider that this innovation is already the maximum.

It is clearly stated in the law that graduates from Slovak universities are exempt from requirement to have a work permit and thus an employer does not have to initiate a labor market test<sup>9</sup> when hiring such a graduate. The graduate has only to change the purpose of residence permit for employment at the Border and Aliens Police. In this respect Ukrainians are seen as any other foreigners and there is no special treatment based on the nationality.

As witnessed by university representatives Ukrainian students are successfully entering the Slovak labor market. Ukrainian graduates mostly work in international corporations, in sections at ministries dealing with foreign affairs, in research institutions, or in chambers of commerce that have relations with their country. There is an opinion that it is easier to overcome bureaucratic hurdles of employment of foreigner for a big company that is why some companies in Slovak Republic still distinguish if graduate is a foreigner.

Although many students work in the field of their study, but some of them could be found in other fields, like services. In the labor market sometimes it happens that Ukrainians replace Slovaks in workplaces where there is a low salary. Compared to wages in Ukraine there is still much higher salaries here.

If the foreign graduate of Slovak University could not find an employment in the labor market there are no active labor market policies in place that could help him. It is perceived that free access to labor market (without a need to get a residence permit) is already a very favorable condition.

*"In the area of active measures, nothing is targeted at this group. Quite motivating is that graduate does not need a work permit, has a good basis to start living here and integrate into society. If it proves an education certificate obtained in Slovakia, it has barrier-free access to the labour market."*

*From the in-depth interview with the representative of Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family*

For the access to unemployment benefits, conditions for entitlement of the benefit are the same for all claimants, irrespective of their nationality and type of residence. Among such an requirements is that the insurance period should be two years which should be a problem for a recent graduate. Another, inconsistency is that foreigner have the same rights to the use of employment services as any citizen of the Slovak Republic if he/she have been granted a temporary residence permit for employment purposes. Practical receipt of a benefit is often unrealistic, as termination of employment cease the purpose of residence, which will result in the

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<sup>9</sup> This mean that employer does not have to register a vacancy in the Labor Office for 15 days prior to employment in order to check whether there is a Slovak who can be hired as is deemed necessary under a standard procedure.

abolition of the foreigner's temporary stay in the Slovak Republic and the necessity of his/her departure.<sup>10</sup>

Policy makers are aware of the problems in employment of high skilled migrants including graduates of Slovak Universities connected to migration procedure. That is why one of the provisions of Action plan of Integration policy for the period 2017-2018 is making the Slovak labor market more attractive in terms of the migration policy of the state with a view to 2020 and at the same time to consolidate the integration of aliens by simplifying administrative procedures in relation to obtaining residence and work permits (particularly taking into account persons from third countries who have obtained a university diploma at Slovak schools).<sup>11</sup> Among other objectives of international policy is to promote equal access to employment for legally residing foreign nationals, inter alia by ensuring equal treatment as regards recruitment, career advancement, working conditions, including pay and health and safety at work. Although the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family is required to submit a comprehensive report on the state of fulfillment of the Slovak Republic's Integration Policy objectives by 30 April each year, starting in 2015, the latest report available at the Ministry web-site is for 2016.

As stated by the representative of Ministry of Labor and representative of employer association the number of Ukrainian students is not too large to endanger natives at the national labor market. However, both of them admit that there are deficit professions, such as IT specialist and health workers, and it would be beneficial if universities could prepare more graduates in this field. However, universities cannot react quickly to the labor market needs and continues preparing students who have already saturated labor market. This is the reason why migration of employers of needed qualification is more realistic solution of labor market needs in Slovak Republic.

### **Policies coherence**

As being noticed by our informants the policies connected with student migration are changing however not in all spheres. It's slowly changing (positively) at the Interior Ministry, but it's still complicated in the Ministry of Health (students' health insurance) and at the Labor Ministry (possibilities to work, social security etc.) In his interview representative of Ministry of Interior stated that migration policy must respond to the challenges of the labor market, the challenges of education. Migration policy is a tool for these policies. The Ministry of Interior is very much in favor of liberalizing those policies that are beneficial to the state. In favor of further increase of UA students in SK are the universities and business. At the same time for the Ministries migration is rather a sensitive topic. Ministry of Education is open for further internationalization of universities in Slovakia, but you cannot find any written strategy that would like to have more Ukrainians or third country nationals studying in

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.mic.iom.sk/sk/socialne-veci/socialne-poistenie/388-davka-v-nezamestnanosti.html>

<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/ministerstvo/integracia-cudzincov/dokumenty/akcny-plan-integracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky-podmienkach-ministerstva-prace-socialnych-veci-rodiny-slovenskej-republiky-roky-2017-2018.pdf>

Slovakia. Also Slovak Republic is interested in attracting more highly skilled foreigners. Ukrainian students in Slovak Republic are not seen as a potential source of high-skilled labor now. To some extent it might be due to uncertainty of future career plans of Ukrainian students as Slovak Republic is less developed than other countries in the EU and may be perceived as transit not a destination country for students. On the other hand there is no link between education and labour market deficient professions in the case of third-country nationals, which is also a problem for Slovak students as well. Slovakia has a long-term problem with education system adaptation to labour market needs.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic under the Higher Education Act annually develops, updates and publishes the long-term intention in the field of education, research, development, arts and other creative activity in the field of higher education ("long-term ministry intention"), where internalization is a separate objective<sup>12</sup>. However internationalization does not mean getting more foreign students. Ministry of Education is gathering information on foreign students, but the ministry or government does not plan to increase the number of Ukrainian students. However, the government supports the increase of students by granting them access to free education at public universities.

On the basis of a request from the state and the universities, changes were introduced to bring foreign students to Slovak Republic. As assessed by university representatives there is no need to change the policy at the moment as a lot of things in the law changed positively recently. At the same time representatives of Aliens and Border police admitted that the rules cannot be liberalized further. It is now necessary to stretch the application of the Act into practice to the maximum level.

While public universities are clearly benefiting from the growth of numbers of students, the most burdened are those who have to manage the increased number of third country nationals coming to Slovak Republic and this is the Border and Aliens Police and the Embassies which were undersized for a long time. However, the government in its Migration Strategy till 2021 expressed an interest in supporting the arrival of foreign students both from the perspective of labor market and from a knowledge-based migration perspective. Now is planned to increase the number of Embassies and the number of consuls to be able to give earlier appointments for selected groups of visa applicants, for example, for the next day.

According to the words of the representative of Ministry of Interior, students (including secondary schools, universities, students through Erasmus +, language courses) account for approximately 25-30% of the total number of foreigners. The increase in the number of foreign students was not accompanied by the increase of capacities of Border and Aliens Police. At present, Border and Aliens Police have twelve workplaces, before that, the Border and Aliens Police had their office in each district directorate and it was 79 workplaces back to the 1998.

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<sup>12</sup> Available at (in SK language): <https://www.minedu.sk/dlhodoby-zamer-ministerstva-a-jeho-aktualizacie/>

Currently administrative obstacles, namely the granting of residence permit by the Aliens Police, remain one of the problems mentioned by most university representatives. The topic of Border Police and simplification of administrative procedures related to residence of foreign students in Slovakia and getting them here easier is becoming more discussed in the society however it takes time for new measures to be implemented due to political and security reasons.

Migration policy and employment policy for foreigners are in one line. Slovak Republic is interested in highly skilled foreigners from culturally close countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia.

According to strategic document "Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until the year 2020" controlled economic migration is primarily determined by the needs of the Slovak Republic. In the following years the economic migration must be based on the active and flexible control of receiving of aliens who decide to come to Slovak Republic. The economic migration control must resolutely react to the challenges brought by the global competition for talents and this especially through an active search and creation of preconditions for their arrival in Slovakia. The Slovak Republic will adopt policies aimed at an active support for economic migrants and employment of migrants from third countries in compliance with the needs of the national economy and labor market with an emphasis on receiving and employment of highly<sup>13</sup> qualified employees, scientific workers, and other qualified migrants as necessary.

However there is no any official document that would regulate the cooperation of Slovak Republic with third countries (non-member countries) with a view to acquiring a qualified labour force for the labor market of the Slovak Republic. The basic criterion applicable to the acceptance of foreigners within the economic migration is their potential for the development of the Slovak economy and society while preferring those migrants who have the qualifications and competencies necessary to satisfy the lasting demand for shortage professions on the national labor market with an emphasis on culturally related countries.<sup>14</sup>

According to the document measures to be realized concentrate on: 1) making the process of visa and residence permit issue more efficient through an improvement of coordination of the activities among representative offices and relevant departments of the Aliens Police Office, 2) creation of economic immigration rules through the definition of so called "Slovak card" (a modification of the EU Blue Card) for qualified and highly qualified immigrants and implementation of the point system that will serve as a flexible tool for determination of priorities within receiving of individual categories of immigrants, 3) execution of regular analyses of the needs of the national economy and the economic contribution of individual groups of economic migrants (according to the purpose of residence), based on which the adoption of regulatory and control measures will be considered.

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<sup>13</sup> Available in SK and EN languages at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky>

<sup>14</sup> Available in SK and EN languages at: <https://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky>

Thus migration and labor market policies are rather coherent. At the moment employers report vacancies and if there is a shortage, foreigners are allowed to enter in higher numbers. In this respect migration policy is driven by the internal labor demand. Practically, there are no obstacles in the area of employing foreigners on the labor market today and therefore there is no need for further changes. As assessed by the representative of the Ministry of Labor the number of Ukrainians is not so high as to endanger the domestic labor force, moreover it might be beneficial to bring new ideas into the working process. Business is continually pressing on liberalization of the immigration policies as inflow of foreigners stop employers to increase wages and makes them more competitive in world markets. It is perceived that is it easier to employ a candidate from a cultural and also a near-distance country, because it is easier to return him/her home after leaving the job. In this respect Ukrainian workers are more desirable. For example, based on the blue cards statistics, there is a marginal increase in health and the IT sector workers and in comparison with other nationalities, the Ukrainians predominate here. But those are mainly workers that studied outside Slovak Republic. When we consider labor market and education policies we see significantly less coherence in these two spheres concerning Ukrainian students in Slovakia.

According to the forecast of labor market till 2021 Centre for Labor, Social Affairs and the Family of the Slovak Republic in a few years there will be more university graduates and job for professionals with tertiary education<sup>15</sup>. Despite the overproduction of high-skilled workers there is no regulation that would require universities to adjust the intake of students at state financed places. Thus problems in the labour market in Slovak Republic do not result from insufficient job creation, but from the inadequate interconnection of the education system with the needs of the labor market. For example, universities are not able to produce enough IT students at the same time there is the production of graduate students who are already saturated with the labor market caused by low requirements for university applicants. In this situation of the deficit of IT specialist is by hiring more workers from other countries especially from EU job market (Poles, Romanians, Bulgarians are involved, since no restriction to employ them). The option of adjusting education system and preparing well-integrated and culturally close Ukrainian students is not considered at all.

Although within the system of government scholarships there are some limitations for the most popular majors (such as economics or law), Ministry of Education still gives scholarships to foreign students for study fields, regardless the needs of universities and labor market. It would be more optimal if they could use the evaluation of the labor market and study programs and get them in a line. There was no revision in the area of scholarships for some time already.

State policy should purposefully direct the flow of students to those schools where it is needed through certain concessions in granting residence permits and scholarship.

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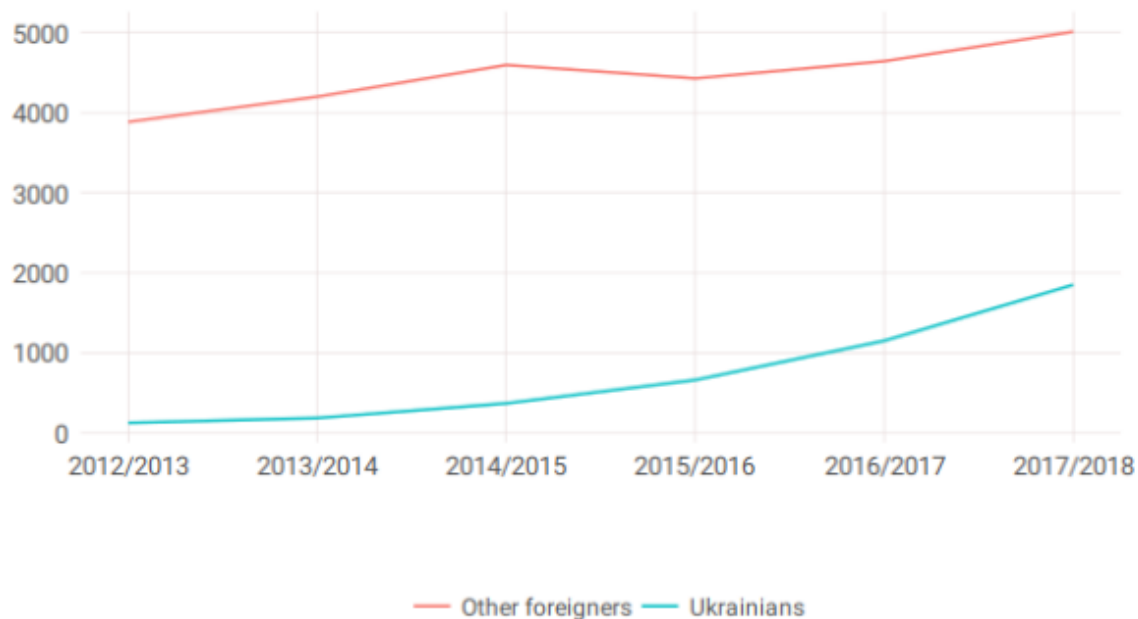
[http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/narodny-projekt-prognozy-vyvoja-na-trhu-prace-v-SlovakRepublic.html?page\\_id=456054](http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/narodny-projekt-prognozy-vyvoja-na-trhu-prace-v-SlovakRepublic.html?page_id=456054)

## Ukrainians students and graduates – numbers, profile, plans

### Selection of human capital

The number of full-time Ukrainian students in Slovakia was increasing over the last five years.

Figure 1. The number of Ukrainian students in Slovak Republic



*Source: Authors based on data from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (2018)*

The increase was both in absolute numbers of Ukrainians students (from 188 full-time students in 2013/2014 to 1851 students in 2017/2018) and in the share of Ukrainian students among all foreign students in Slovak Republic (from 3% in 2013/2014 to almost a quarter of all students in 2017/2018). This tenfold increase in the number of Ukrainian students was in line with the decrease of Slovak students due to demographic changes and out migration of Slovak students to the neighboring Czech Republic.

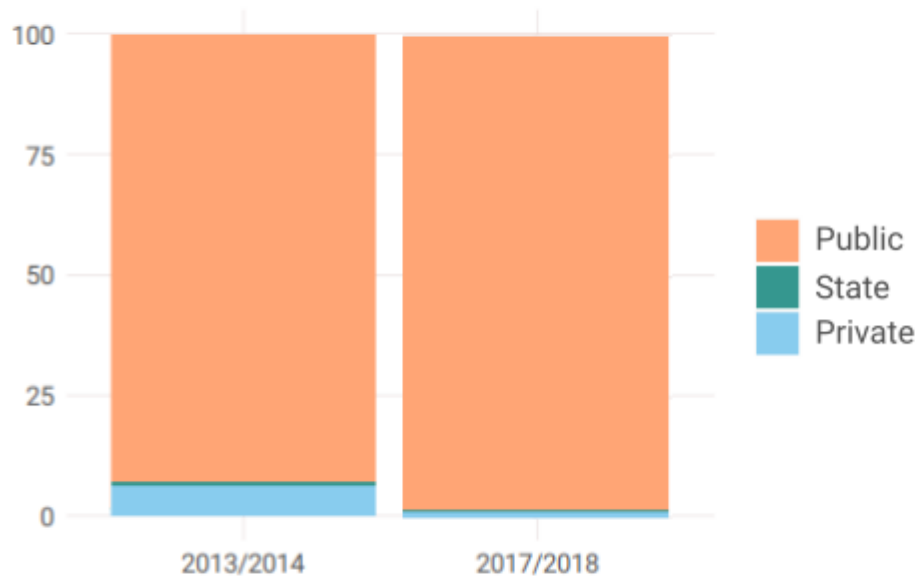
Figure 2. The number of students in Slovak Republic



*Source: Authors based on data from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (2018)*

During the last five years the share of Ukrainian students who were studying in private universities decreased from 6% to 1% in the whole cohort of Ukrainian student in Slovak republic. As the number of Ukrainians in private universities was always very low, the increase was primarily due to the efforts of public universities to substitute Slovak students for Ukrainian ones.

Figure 3. Ukrainian students in Slovak Republic (by the type of university)



Source: Authors based on data from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (2018)

Moreover there was no substantial increase in government scholarship for full time students from Ukraine. Although the share of Ukrainians among other nationalities increased slightly (from 2% in 2012/2013 to 8% in 2016/2017) the increase of the number of grantees from 1 in 2012/2013 to 6 in 2016/2017 does not explain significant rise in the total number of students from Ukraine in Slovak Republic.

As the results of online survey show Ukrainian students who came to Slovak Republic for studies were choosing higher education abroad primarily due to aspiration of better employment in the EU either due to the possession of the diploma itself or due to acquisition of new knowledge. Almost half of the respondents claimed that unsatisfactory living conditions (healthcare, transportations system, availability and quality of housing) were among three main reasons why they decided to study abroad. At the same time students rarely admitted that they would prefer to study due to differences in education systems in Ukraine and Slovak Republic as for example equipment in the universities or easier admissions. The possibility to improve their competitiveness in Ukrainian labor market due to education abroad is not important for most of the informants from on-line survey. Despite the well-established stereotype armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine was decisive factor for leaving Ukraine for education in another country for only each tenth respondent although most of the respondents lived in the country for up to 4 years.



Figure 4. What factored into your decision to study abroad?



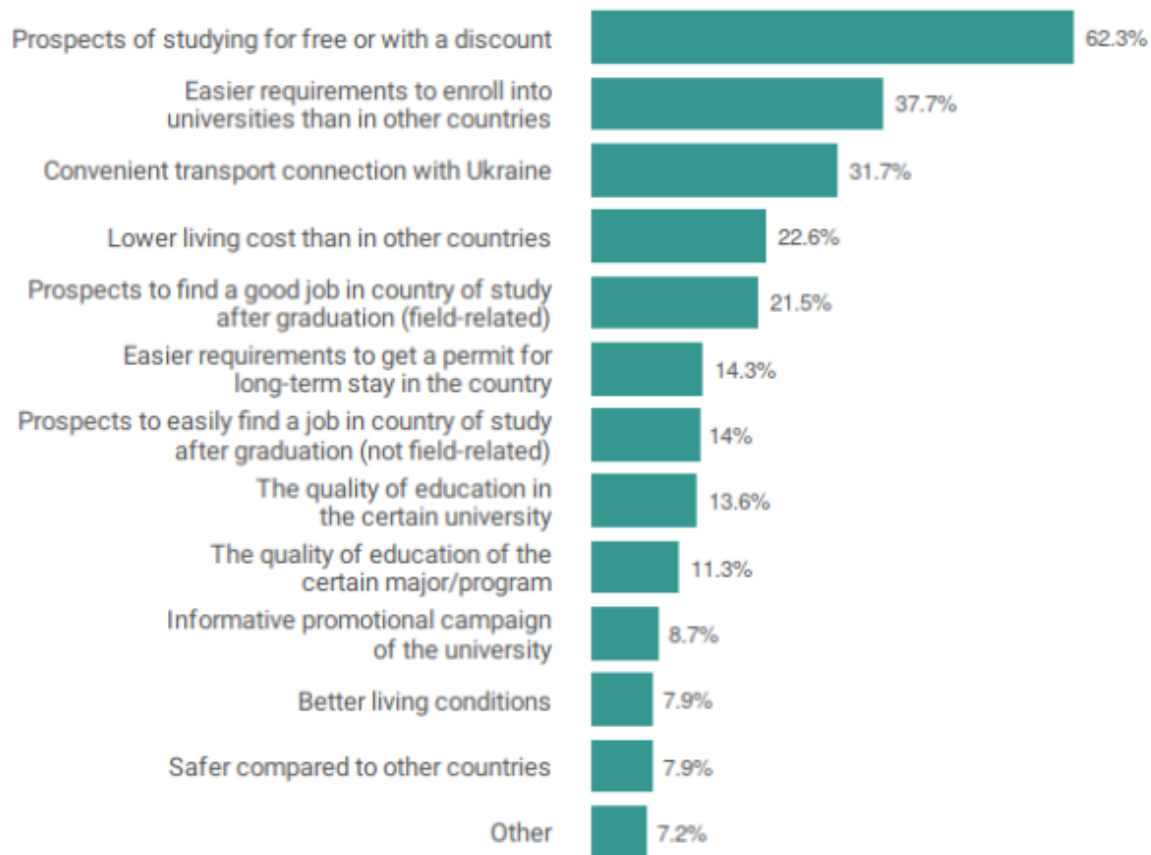
Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=265

Note: Respondents were asked to choose up to 3 answers from the given list.

While choosing Slovak Republic as a country for continuing their education the availability of education outperforms future labor market perspectives in the range of the most important factors. Ukrainian students chose Slovak Republic for financial availability of education and for easy admission procedure. Moreover a substantial number of students and graduates said that they choose Slovakia for convenient transport connection with Ukraine. In fact better living conditions that were one of the top factors pushing students out of Ukraine is not important for the choice of the country. This probably means that any country considered for the higher education abroad has better living conditions than Ukraine. The results of the online survey do not support another common thought that Ukrainian student choose Slovak Republic in order to reunite with their family whose members were labor migrant in Slovakia

before. Only a few students have chosen willingness to be closer to a relative who lives in Slovakia as an important factor for the country choice.

Figure 5. What factored into your decision to study in Slovak Republic and not other countries abroad?



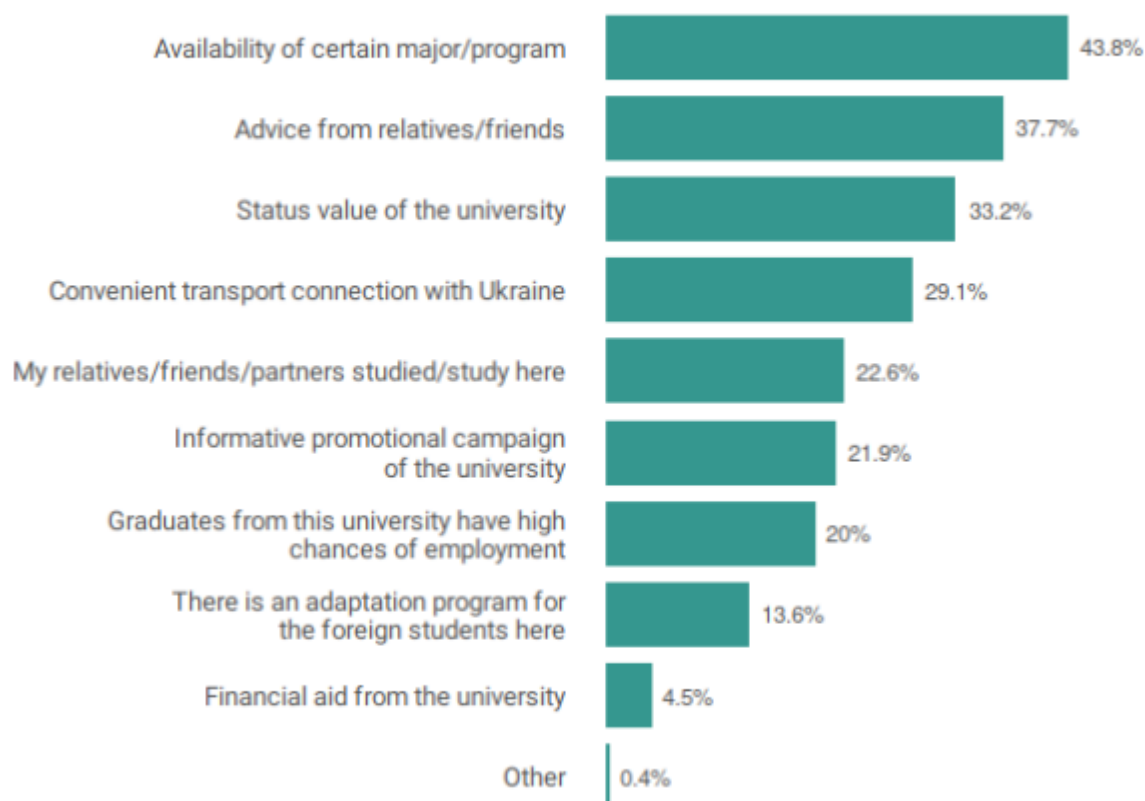
Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=265

Note: Respondents were asked to choose up to 3 answers from the given list.

Surprisingly many students said that they were choosing university by the availability of particular major. But at the same time they relied heavily on the opinion of relatives or friends and on the status of university and rarely checked the information on the employability of graduates from this university. Although financial availability of education was the most important aspect in the process of choosing a country not many students were choosing universities on the basis of availability of financial support. Probably this is the result of general high accessibility of higher education in

Slovak universities due to possibility to study at state-funded places and simple admission procedure.

Figure 6. What were the main reasons for you to choose your university?



Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=265

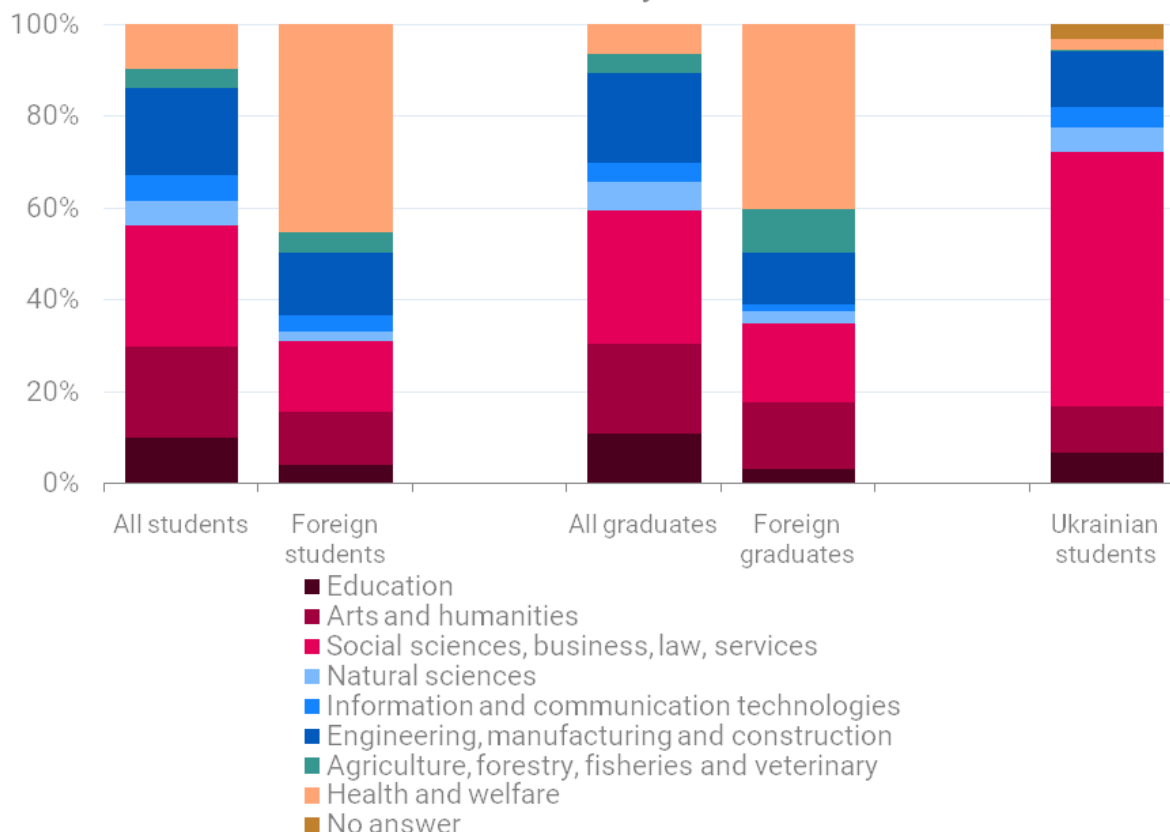
Note: Respondents were asked to choose up to 3 answers from the given list.

### Human capital enhancement

Unfortunately information on the number of Ukrainian students in Slovakia by major is not available. But if we compare the distribution of foreign students with the distribution of natives by the wide groups of specialties we see that foreigners are more likely to study medicine. This is in line with the information from expert interviews with representatives of universities, who admitted that very often foreigners are coming to Slovak Republic to study medicine but Ukrainians have different choice for majors and prefer more to study social sciences or humanities. According to the information from the on-line survey of Ukrainian students in Slovak Republic students by their choice of specialties resemble more Slovak students than students from other

countries. However Ukrainians are even more likely to study social sciences than Slovak Students.

Figure 7. Students and graduates in Slovak Republic by their major



Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018 (N=265)*; Centre of Scientific and Technical Information of Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic

Unfortunately we were not able to find any data on the spheres where Ukrainian graduates work after the graduation however according to the available data at the beginning of 2017 most graduates who register as unemployed after studies find a job in 7-9 months after leaving the school.

At the same time there is a forecast of future labor market needs in Slovak republic that could help gauge the match between the distribution of Ukrainian students by the majors and the projected labor market needs. According to the Act No. 5/2004 on employment services and on the amendment of certain laws as amended, paragraph 12 requires the Centre for Labor, Social Affairs and the Family of the Slovak Republic (UPSVAR) to carry out analysis and make the forecast of the

development on the labor market in Slovakia. The latest publicly available forecast was performed in 2016 and covers the period till 2021<sup>16</sup>.

According to this document the offer of graduates in 2016 was approximately 24 thousand and this number will be approximately constant every year till 2021. In 2017 and 2019, the number of additional jobs for higher education graduates should be lower than the number of graduates entering the labor market. In 2017, the labor market expects nearly 24,000 university graduates, but more than 22,500 additional jobs at college positions suitable for college graduates. In the year 2019, nearly 23,000 university graduates should come and additional jobs at college positions suitable for high school graduates should be 22,000. So under the status quo there will be "overproduction" of tertiary education students until the year 2021. From specific education sections, sections such as General Medicine and Economy and Business Administration will dominate the number of graduates entering the labor market. It is expected that in each of them more than 5,000 graduates will cumulate on the labor market by 2021. They will be followed by law graduates, who are about 4,800 in the labor market by 2021.<sup>17</sup>

One of the highest total additional staffing needs till 2021 of around 19 000 people is in the IT area, including such sections such as IT, Informatics, Computer Engineering, Information Systems, Computer Systems, Telecommunications, Economic Informatics, and so on. However, this demand will be very tightly concentrated in metropolitan regions. In the Bratislava Region there will be an additional need for IT workforce at approximately 8,000 people, in Košice it will be 4,900 people.<sup>18</sup>

Among Ukrainian students who come to Slovak Republic every third student knows language at the level sufficient for academic use. Although many students know Slovak language at the level which is enough for everyday use and integration in the Slovak society still the average level of language might be not enough for efficient human capital accumulation.

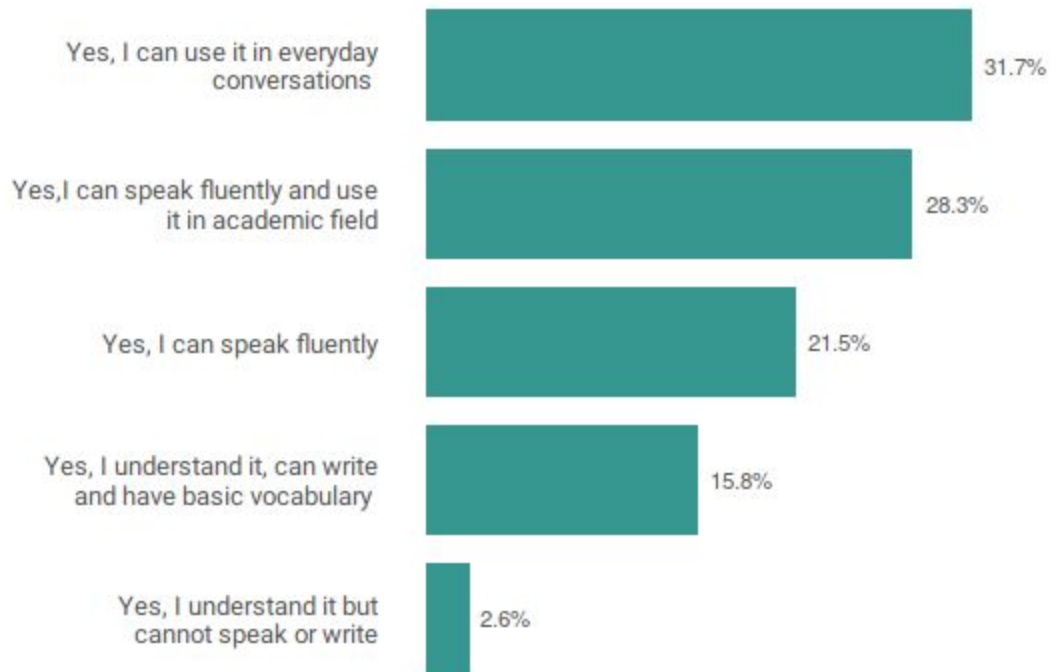
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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/narodny-projekt-prognozy-vyvoja-na-trhu-prace-v-sr.html?page\\_id=456054](http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/narodny-projekt-prognozy-vyvoja-na-trhu-prace-v-sr.html?page_id=456054)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

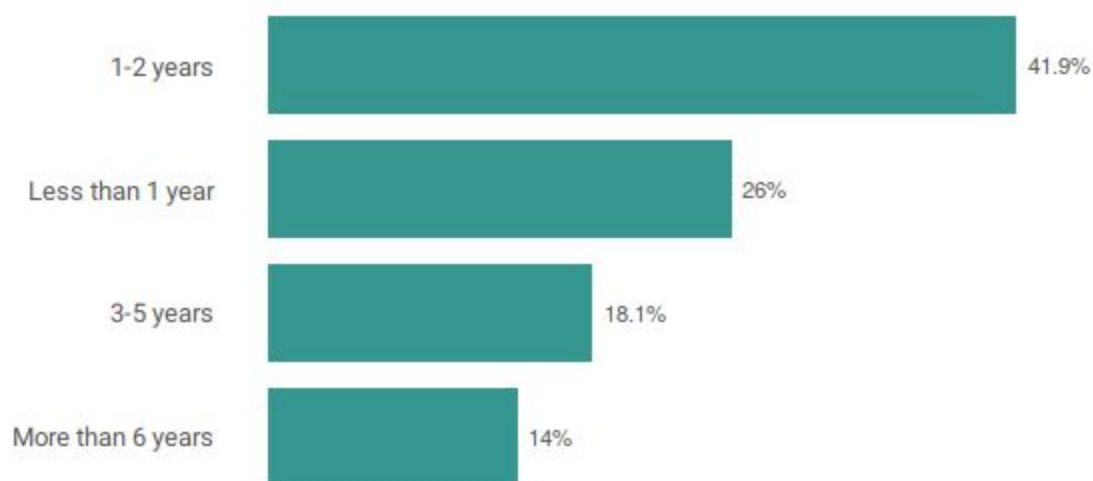
Figure 8. Do you speak Slovak language?



Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=265

To some extent relatively low level of language proficiency might be explained by the fact that more than half of the students live in the country for less than 2 years and thus are coming to the country with relatively poor level of national language knowledge. Although the level of language proficiency improves with time bad language skills at the beginning might be crucial for the development of human and social capital.

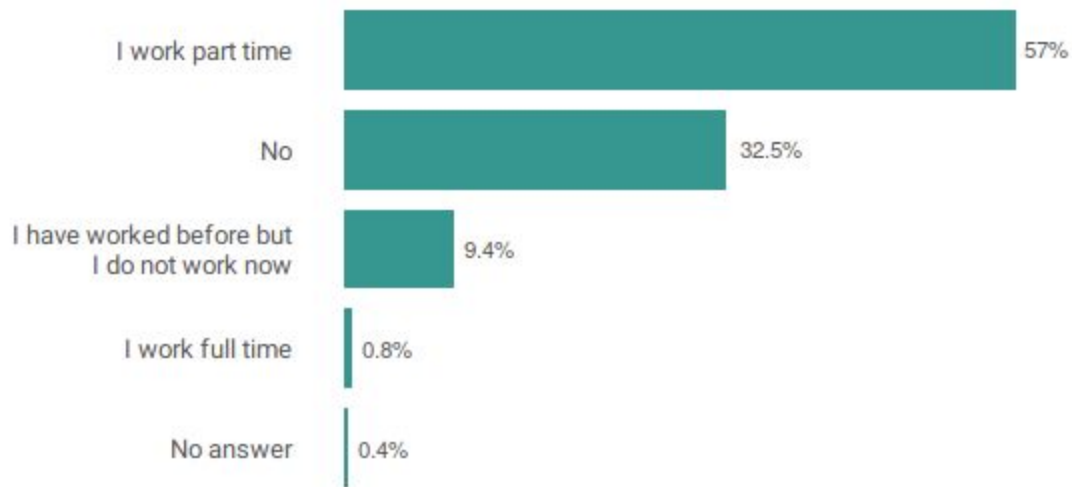
Figure 9. How long have you been living in Slovak Republic?



Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=265

Ukrainian students are often using the possibility granted by the EU directive to work part-time during the period of their studying. Approximately three quarters of students had some working experience while studying. This means that they were not only able to earn money to support their stay in Slovakia but also were starting gaining labor market experience while studying.

Figure 10. Do you combine study with work?

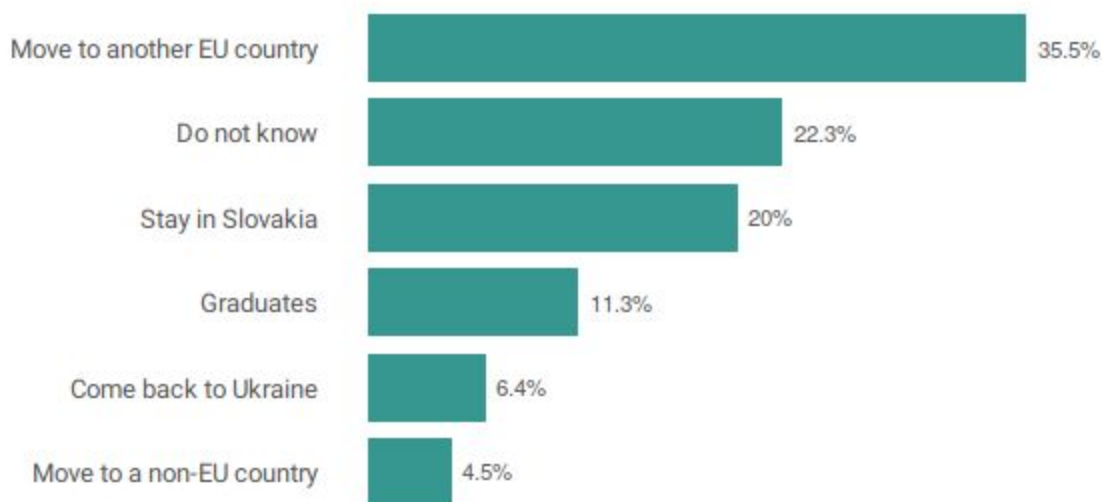


Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=265

Most of the Ukrainian students in Slovakia have intention to move to other EU country after the graduation. Almost every fifth student said that he/she would like to stay in Slovak Republic and only a small share (less than every tenth student) said that he/she would like to come back to Ukraine. Almost a quarter of all informants have not decided on their future plans yet.



Figure 11. What are your plans after you finish your studies?



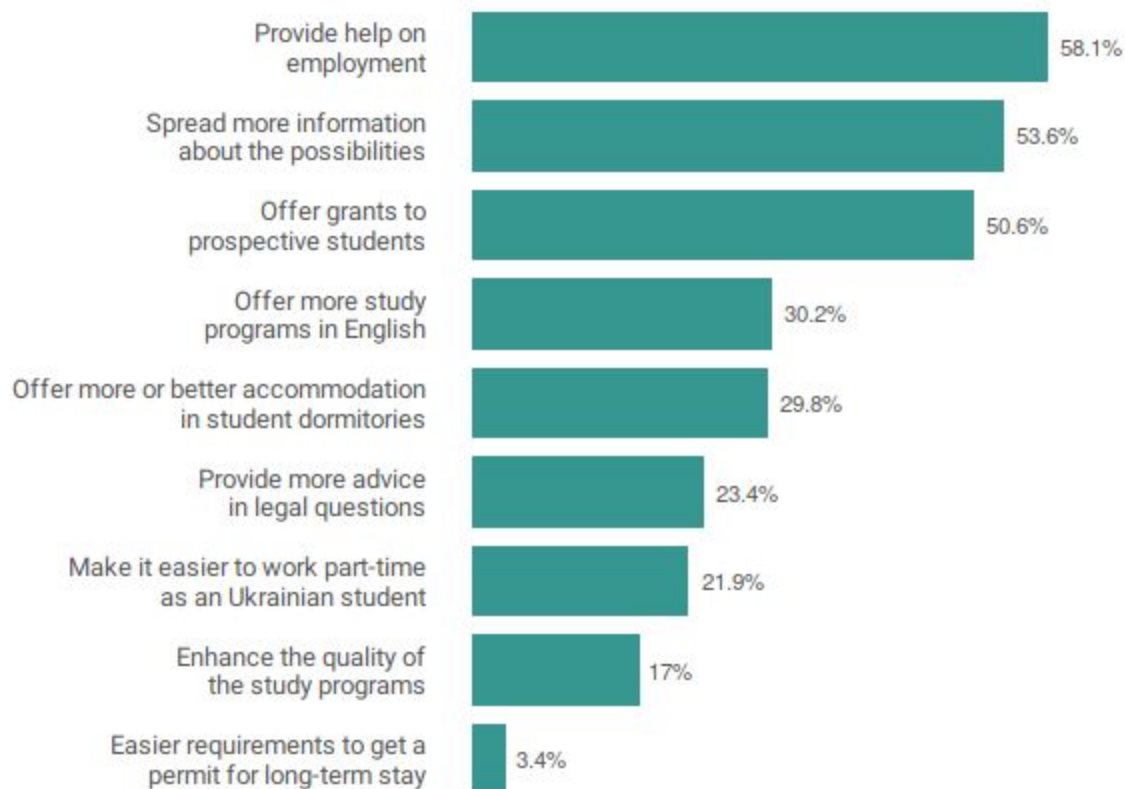
Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=235

Note: Only current students are included.

Those who said that they want to stay in Slovak Republic mostly were motivated by job related factors namely by higher wages and by the possibility to find a job not necessary field related. At the same time not many students see Slovak Republic as a country that has better job opportunities in the professional field. Family related reasons such as a family member or a partner that lives in Slovakia were not popular among Ukrainian students. Rarely students said that unstable political situation and armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine was the reason why they would prefer to stay in Slovakia. Among those few who would like to come back to Ukraine after the graduation the most popular reason was willingness to use their new knowledge for home country and to live in the cultural environment where they come from.

Among the weak sides of education in Slovak Republic students see the lack of support in job search and transition from university to labor market. Moreover respondents think that more students could be attracted by widening the opportunities to get additional financial support and by improving the promotion of information on study possibilities in Slovak Republic in Ukraine. At the same time the quality of education and legal requirement for stay after the graduation are not perceived as a problem by Ukrainian students, however this can be partially due to the fact that among the respondents early stage students dominate.

**Figure 12. If Slovak Republic wanted to encourage more Ukrainian students to come and study in Slovak Republic, what should it do?**



Source: *Ukrainian Students Migration to Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic: human capital perspectives, 2018*. N=265

Note: Respondents were asked to choose up to 3 answers from the given list.

### **Data coherence**

The rise of Ukrainian students was reflecting demographic changes in the cohort of native students in Slovakia and out migration of Slovak students to Czech Republic which resulted in the decrease of pipeline of students to Slovak universities. Thus Ukrainian students were filling the gap in the students and helped universities to overcome the decrease in finance resources which are heavily dependents on the number of students irrespective of their nationality. The increase in the number of Ukrainian students was mainly driven by public universities and organizations promoting education abroad as lately the number of scholarships did not increase significantly and the share of students studying in private universities decreased. Easy access to the higher education was main reason why Ukrainian students were choosing Slovakia as a destination country and big share of them sees Slovakia as first country in their migration to the EU in general.

According to the data the behavior of public universities and easy access to higher education did not correspond to the labor market needs of Slovak Republic. According to the latest forecast of labor market needs in few years there will be more tertiary education graduates than job vacancies that need higher education. Surprisingly, regardless of such imbalances in the labor market section of General Medicine and Economy and Business Administration are dominated by the number of graduates and these particular sections are extremely popular among foreign students and Ukrainian students respectively. At the same time there is deficit of IT specialist and this major is not so popular among foreigners and Ukrainian students particularly. It is often claimed that even talented students may experience problems due to poor language knowledge and later transfer from math intensive (including IT) to social and humanitarian majors.

Due to the low number of graduates in the sample we cannot compare their outcomes after the graduation with the current plans of Ukrainian students in Slovakia, but this task should be done when the number of graduates will be big enough.

## Discussion

The large number of Ukrainian students who come to Slovakia for continuing their studies at tertiary level choose this country for easy access to higher education: possibility to study for free at public universities, simple admission procedure and high probability of being accepted and convenient connection with Ukraine. The motivation to get an education abroad is driven by the opportunity to get employment in the EU after the graduation. However, it seems that in students' plans Slovakia often is not a country of final destination but rather a convenient country for the first step towards migration out of Ukraine.

In this situation it seems that migration, education and labor market policies are in line with students' plans however one should assess to what extent current situation is not caused by policy design. Migration and education policies make it relatively easy for students to come to the country. Lately migration policy became more favorable for students to stay after the graduation by giving them additional time for job search and by providing free access to labor market for graduates. At the same time labor market policies do not prioritize students as potential labor migrants due to high level of uncertainty. Students' intentions after the graduation are not clear to policy makers and preparing more foreign students of certain major is a risky long-term investment. So at the end labor market policies are directed at attracting labor migrants from abroad and integrate them in Slovak society than to make more effort to match education and labor market policies and smoothly insert both well-integrated foreign and native students into Slovakian labor market.

However, it should be remembered that a big share of students have not decided yet on their future plans so that they can still make a decision in favor of some country or change their current answer (unfortunately due to low number of graduates in the sample we cannot compare current plans and their realization on practice). At the same time such a high share of Ukrainian students who do not want to stay in Slovakia after the graduation or have not decided yet may be explained by not very favorable policies for students' integration and consequent labor market inclusion. As noted by the respondents the education in Slovak Republic may be made more attractive if there was assistance with future employment of students. At the same time only a few students said that requirements for getting a permit are too complicated. So most of the students see a need to improve a process of transition from school to labor market, some of them say that improvements can be done in education and only a few see migration regulations as an obstacle. The vision of students is in line with the coherence of the policies themselves and with recent developments in each sphere towards student migration.

## **Policy recommendations**

Many inconsistencies in migration, education and labor market policies arise from different strategic views at student migrants of different agencies. Universities are continuously stating that foreign students, especially from culturally close countries, are not different from native students in their access to higher education as they see foreign students as source of financial stability. At the same time Ministry of Education has an objective of internationalization of higher education however we could not find any link of this objective with bringing more foreign students, including Ukrainian, to the country. Universities are very independent on deciding how and who accept for studies. The weak coordination of universities intake and labor market needs results in that foreign students are not viewed as potential labor market entrants instead high-skilled migrants from third countries are more preferred to fill the gap in skills needed for Slovak economy. The new changes in the law that deal with granting students more accesses to labor market were introduced in order to make the transposition of EU legislation in national one. The fact that Slovak Republic was among the last countries to amend its legislation could be an evidence to the low priority of foreign students transition to labor market. Policy makers in migration sphere see migration regulation as a tool that could help reach strategic goals in education and economic development and are rather open to new changes lately however this strategic view on student migration is not defined.

Before introduction any further changes in the sphere of foreign students a strategic priority should be selected as this is the most optimal way to coordinate policies of different agencies. Based on such a strategic view several paces of policy development can be distinguished.

If educating more foreign students is considered to be a development aid to third countries than efforts should concentrate at:

- Directing students from Ukraine to those areas and majors that are the most beneficial for Ukrainian economy. This means more cooperation with Ukrainian government on selecting students accompanied by state scholarships from Slovak Republic.
- Developing special programs that would help Ukrainian student build their social capital that will be beneficial for Ukrainian-Slovakian relationships in future.
- Promoting return of Ukrainian students and preparing them for reintegration in Ukrainian society.

If intake of more foreign students is a part of internationalization and aims to bring more diversity into classes and to integrate Slovakian higher education to common educational space than:

- State subsidies to universities should depend not on the number of foreign students but on the number and quality of English speaking courses and on the diversity of foreign students by the nationality.

- Concentrate more on expanding student mobility programs than attracting more full-time students.

If foreign students are seen as future workers in the internal labor market of Slovak republic:

- Ministry of Education should change the principles of financial subsidies to public universities and grant resources based more on the employability of graduates not on the number of students.
- Regularly analyze the needs of the national economy and the economic contribution of foreign students and graduates, based on which consider changes to regulatory measures and motivate foreign students come and benefit Slovak economy ensuring the balance on the labor market. Make the forecast more comprehensible for general public (including students and their parents from third countries) and provide data for further analysis by scientists and analysts.
- Improve and make the collection and processing of the data about the labor market more efficient and available to the expert public and citizens. Connect the residence registration database with the registration database of tax authorities, social insurance and health insurance agencies, and bureaus for labor, social issues and family.
- Improve the cooperation between universities and labor market representative in order to educate foreign students in compliance with the needs of the national economy and labor market.
- Direct foreign students to those sectors where there is a deficit of highly skilled workers for example by using quotas for state funded places.
- Grant access for foreign students to active labor market measures (for example provide career guidance for students and graduates, facilitate the contact between students and employers).
- Review the rules of access to unemployment benefits so that foreign students had means to support themselves while searching for better job match on the labor market.
- Define of the rights and obligations of foreign students, including the social assurance and the access to health care and the labor market so that students were able to achieve, as soon as possible, a full-bodied status within the society.
- Streamline graduate practice and practice during the course of study so that graduates have more opportunities to demonstrate their skills and possibly to work.

If education of foreign students is seen as a perspective business activity:

- Motivate universities provide attractive English-speaking study programs of high quality that are in demand of foreign students from different countries;
- Do not provide subsidies nor to public and private universities based on the number of foreign students.

Some policy changes should be implemented regardless the strategic objective of student migration. One of the direction may be simplification of administrative procedures connected with coming to Slovak Republic. As suggested by the migration strategy this may include creation of information and consultancy centers (including in the country of origin) in order to improve their access to the information about the entry and residence, and living and working conditions. Less expensive policy instrument may be the development of immigration portals, internet (multilingual) sites of involved departments, and an active involvement of the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad and consular offices of the Slovak Republic in these issues. The process of residence permit issue may be more efficient if representative offices and relevant departments of the Aliens Police Office will coordinate more. However it is not always enough to better use information and communication technologies. In some cases the staffing needs should be reviewed and if needed increased according to the increase of the number of foreigners willing to come to and living in Slovak Republic. Setting up a contact point or information point at the Alien Police office so that the alien can consult or have all the necessary documents before submitting the application may help to reduce queues. As a result of these activities the procedure of getting, renewing or changing the purpose of residence should not be more complicated than in the neighboring EU countries.

Another group of policies should be directed at changing the perception of immigration as a danger in society. Among possible activities in this direction might be setting up a transparent system for determination of priorities within receiving of individual categories of immigrants (for example based on points as suggested in migration strategy). Another activity that can increase the confidence in migration system may be introduction of electronic ordering of procedures on residence permit at Alien Police at exact date and time.

Giving the growing number of migrants from Ukraine to Slovakia transport links between Slovakia and Ukraine still can be improved and bilateral activities can be directed at solving long waiting times on the SK-UA border

Summing up, Ukrainian students should not be seen as native students in their access to higher education system as this perspective leads not only to inefficient use of public finances, but also to overlooking that fact that Ukrainian student, as foreigners have other needs and ability than natives in adapting in society and accessing labor market. Not accounting this fact and absence of the strategic view leads to underutilization of the development potential of students both for Slovak Republic and Ukraine so coordinated policies are critical.

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