

# CURRENT PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN POLAND

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**Abstract.** *Internationalization of universities is one of the most important processes which development can be observed in the first decade of the 21st century. This process existed all over the world for many years, and it always was one of the engines which stimulated development of research as well as education. Many European countries entered the international market of higher education just about 30 years ago when some European projects started. It boomed especially after the enlargement of EU in 2004 and participation of many countries in the creation of EHEA and ERA. However, despite many activities and programmes performed, the level of internationalization of higher education institutions in Poland is still disappointing. Effective methods of increasing internationalization of HEIs should therefore be sought. The paper presents an approach to the intensification of the internationalization process. The main goals for the activities in this field were determined. The current state of existing programs of international exchange available for students and some other activities as summer schools, double diploma programmes, foreign language courses and international accreditations were also discussed. Current national and university programmes aiming in intensification of development of the international exchange were also described. Among operational goals of these strategies the following needs were indicated: increasing attractiveness of different universities as partners in international educational and research fields; giving international character for educational and research activities; improving the image of European higher education.*

**Keywords:** *Higher Education, Internationalization, Exchange Programmes.*

## Introduction

In Poland, the number of foreign students is increasing year by year. At present, there are 72.743 foreign students studying here, including 37.918 (54.6%) at public and 33.025 (45.4%) at non-public universities. It means that Poland's share in the global market of international students (5 million) is 1.45%. Internationalization is one of the challenges for Polish universities. That is why it is so important for the position of our country in international exchange to grow.

The proper strategy for acquiring foreign students, competitive to other countries and based on a number of solutions facilitating their stay in Poland, serves this purpose. Achieving success in this field without intense, multidirectional activities of all participants and partners of the education market, can be difficult.

Internationalization of research and education has been one of the most important strategic goals for Polish universities since the turn of the 20th century (Hofman, 2015; PDHES, 2015; PIHE, 2015; Woźnicki, 2010). Poland entered the international market of higher education when it has begun to participate in many European educational projects (e.g. TEMPUS), but especially after joining EU in 2004 and taking part in the creation of EHEA and ERA. For all that, Polish universities still have to overcome quite a large distance in this field that separates them from both European and international universities (Martyniuk, 2011; PDHES, 2015; Siwińska, 2017).

Many interesting programmes have been developed and are being implemented into action (Berkowski & Kosior-Kazberuk, 2015; Berkowski & Kosior-Kazberuk, 2018; Ławicka, 2016; Siwińska, 2014). Some of them are temporary (eg scholarship programmes), others are long-term (eg international accreditations). Some initiatives are centrally supported by the Polish government, eg NAWA, or by the European Union, eg Erasmus+. The initiatives of the universities themselves, such as educational programmes in foreign languages (long-term commitment of students) or summer schools (short-term student involvement) are also important and conducive to internationalization of HEIs.

The paper presents an analysis of the activities undertaken for the internationalization of HEIs due to the educational process. The goals whose implementation is taken to strengthen internationalization were also indicated.

### **Foreign students in Poland**

As it can be seen in Figs 1 and 2, since 2005 the growth of the number of foreign students in Poland has been increasing to more than 72 000 in the last year.

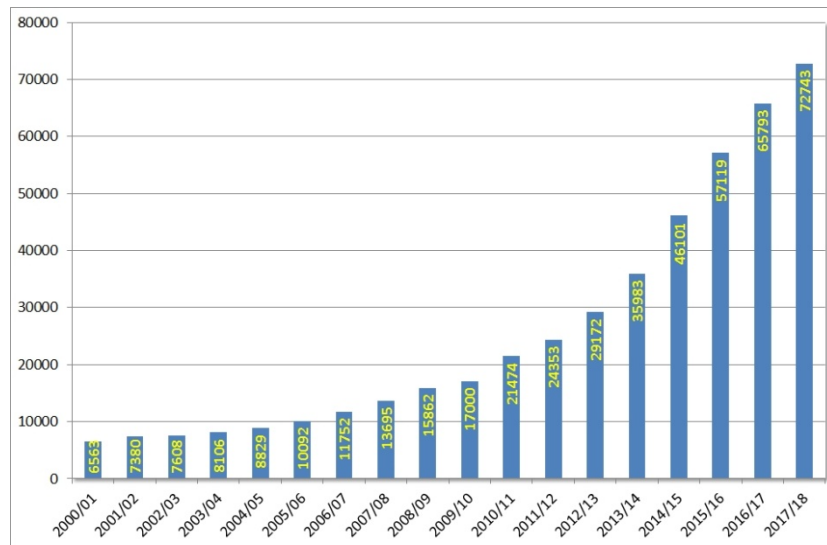


Figure 1 Number of foreign students in Poland 2010-2018 (source: [www.studyinpoland.pl](http://www.studyinpoland.pl))

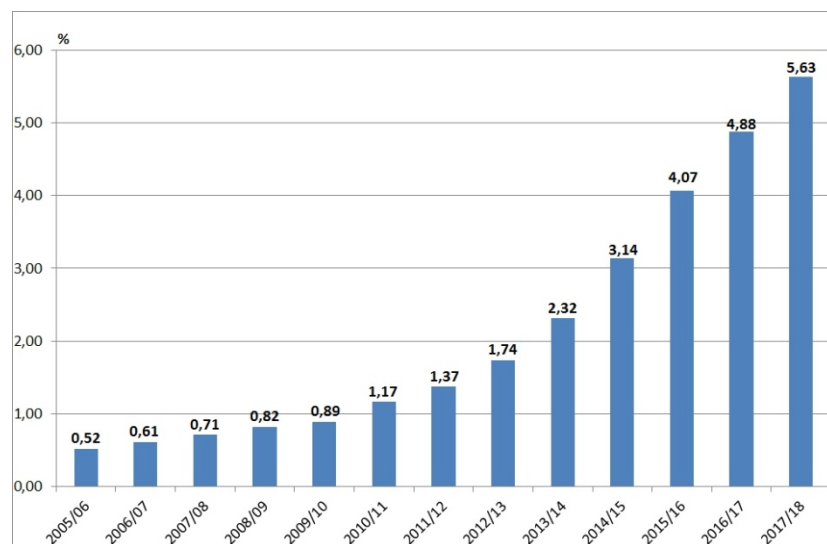
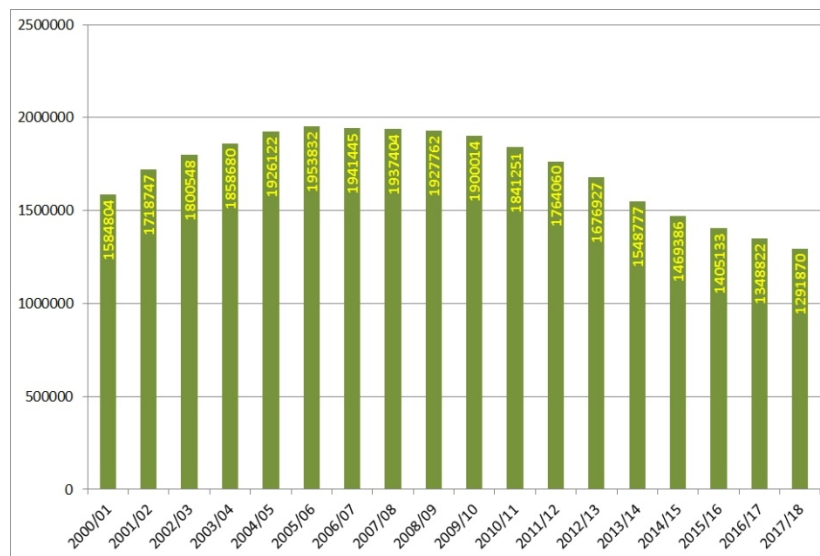


Figure 2 Internationalization factor of Polish universities (source: [www.studyinpoland.pl](http://www.studyinpoland.pl))

Currently, they constitute 5.63% of all students in Poland, while 12 years ago this number was only 0.52%, and in the academic year 2016/17 it was 4.88%. It means a growth of 10.56% in the total number of foreign students year after year. However, the change in this percentages also due to decrease in the total number of students in Poland, which was 4.22% comparing the academic years 2016/17 and 2017/18 (Fig. 3). The foreign students in Poland still constitute a small percentage in comparison even to the neighbouring states such as Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia or Lithuania.



*Figure 3 Total number of students in Poland in 2000-2018 (source: [www.studyinpoland.pl](http://www.studyinpoland.pl))*

### **The main goals for stimulation of internationalization**

In *The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education: 2010–2020*, commissioned in 2009 and 2014 by the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland and the Polish Rectors Foundation (Woźnicki, 2010), the following activities were indicated: increasing the attractiveness of Polish HE institutions as partners in international ERA; giving international character to educational and research activities carried out at Polish universities, as well as improving the global international image of Polish higher education. At the same time, strategic programmes supporting the internationalization have also been developed under the auspices of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (PDHES, 2015; PIHE, 2015). The main goals for the activities in this field are as follows:

- developing activities that will allow the best universities to advance in international rankings which can increase the interest of foreign young people in studying or performing the academic work in Poland;
- launching and supporting a programme of international accreditations;
- creating courses and study programmes conducted entirely in English;
- expanding scholarship programmes financing mobility;
- implementing active policy to promote studying in Poland and facilitating the adaptation of foreigners in Poland.

More detailed aims are described as follows (PDHES, 2015):

- helping higher education institutions to get international accreditations;
- promoting creation of first and second cycle programmes in foreign languages as well as developing joint educational projects;

- extending doctoral programmes to international scale and developing career paths for post-doctoral candidates;
- increasing the number of foreign scientists involved in academic and scientific work in Poland;
- increasing the offer of e-learning study, including MOOC;
- developing better support system for foreign students, developing competencies of administrative employees (e.g. language and cultural competences);
- financial support for graduates and academic staff working abroad at their return to Poland;
- increasing the participation of universities in the implementation of the *Ready, Study, Go!* programme;
- using of state support marketing activities.

It should be mentioned that most of the undertaken activities are in line with European tendencies.

### ***Study in Poland institutional programme***

The *Study in Poland* ([www.studyinpoland.pl](http://www.studyinpoland.pl)) project was created by the *Conference of Rectors of the Academic Schools in Poland* and the *Perspektywy Educational Foundation* in 2005. It is a long-term initiative for promoting Polish higher education and studying in Poland, and is dedicated to all students who want to spend some part of their life in Poland. It is a long-term programme, based mainly on information and promotion activities, or implementation of projects aimed at increasing the number of study programmes in English. Some activities are also dedicated to analysing the process of internationalization of studies in Poland in a statistical way.

### **Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange NAWA**

Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA) was initiated in 2017 with the aim to coordinate all activities connected with the process of internationalization of Polish academic institutions at the national level by:

- supporting international mobility of students, academics and researchers;
- supporting the process of internationalization of Polish HEIs;
- promoting Polish science and higher education in the world;
- promoting and popularizing teaching of Polish language.

The mission of the Agency is to help the development of academic exchange and international cooperation in order to strengthen the potential of Polish science and higher education. Its main aim is to introduce a long-term policy to support

academic mobility and to improve the internationalization of the Polish universities offer, by implementing quality-based programmes addressed to students and academic staff from Poland, as well as from abroad.

### **Existing programmes of international cooperation in the EA at Polish universities**

#### ***ERASMUS+ programme***

The ERASMUS Programmes have been carried out in Poland since 1987. Despite broadening their scope and objectives over almost 30 years, the main idea remains the same - the development of international co-operation among universities. Currently, ERASMUS+ is the most popular programme for international exchange of students and academic and administrative staff. The following types of “ERASMUS+ studies” (KA103) activities are conducted at Polish universities: Action 1: Learning mobility and Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and good practices. Action 1 includes: Mobility of university students and employees (programme countries); Mobility of university students and employees (partner countries); Joint Erasmus Mundus master programmes; Loans for students studying at Master's studies abroad. Action 1 includes: Strategic partnerships; Alliances for knowledge; Creating capacity in the higher education sector. The other type of cooperation are “ERASMUS+” trainings and internships, “ERASMUS+” with partner non-EU countries (KA107).

#### ***Study programmes and courses in foreign languages***

Many Polish universities already offer study programmes entirely in English (Berkowski & Kosior-Kazberuk, 2015), dedicated to foreign students (both the full-time, and Erasmus exchange ones) as well as to Polish students interested in studying in English. Usually, the courses offered are the same as in Polish. However, the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education financially supports the development of innovative inter-disciplinary studies.

#### ***Student exchange programmes within bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements between HE institutions***

The Student Exchange programme offers the opportunity for students to go to one of the partner universities with whom we have signed an exchange agreement for one or two semesters (other than ERASMUS+). A student qualified for exchange at a partner university may participate in all courses offered by this university, both in English and in the native language of a given country.

### ***Double diploma (DD) and T.I.M.E. programmes***

The best example of the DD programme is the T.I.M.E. programme. It was implemented by the well-recognized European universities with an excellent international teaching and scientific reputation. The programme is based on the mutual trust, reciprocity and equal benefits for both partners. The students are awarded with two diplomas that increase their employment opportunities on the European labour market. The programme assumes extending standard study time by one year (e.g., 4 years at the home university and 2 at a partner one), studying in the partner's language and treating foreign students equally with their own students.

### ***Summer schools***

One of the best ways to acquire foreign students to study at the universities are summer schools (Mroczek, 2016). Summer schools have experienced a huge development in recent years - this is very often the result of the need to search for foreign candidates for studies, especially from Asia or South America. In addition, summer schools, very often with very narrow but high quality profiles, allow to fetch the most talented students, promising the opportunity to carry out scientific work. The undeniable advantage of these schools is cooperation between students coming from many different countries and continents.

For example, at Wroclaw University of Science and Technology the following summer schools are organized: TECHSummer2018 (especially dedicated to students from India); Energy, Excellence, Excitement 3E+; Summer School of Architecture; GUT Summer School (dedicated to students from Guilin University of Technology). Bialystok University of Technology has organized the following summer schools: Polish-German-Belarusian Summer School for students from BUT, Belarusian National Technical University, and Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development (3 editions in Poland, Germany and Belarus); Polish-Chinese Summer School (2016, 2017, 2018) for students from BUT, School of Management of Zhejiang University Ningbo Institute of Technology from China; Summer Schools VIPSKILLS (Virtual and Intensive Course Developing Practical Skills of Future Engineers) dedicated for civil and environmental engineering students from BUT, University of Cordoba and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University.

### ***Other programmes useful for internationalization:***

#### **➤ International Visegrad Fund**

International Visegrad Fund was created under the agreement concluded in 2000 by the Visegrad Group, a project aimed at financially supporting international initiatives, between the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic. There can be distinguished:

Intra-Visegrad Scholarships - intended for students from the Visegrad Group countries; Out-Going Scholarships - students from the countries of the Visegrad Group who want to study in a country that is friendly to the Group; In-coming Scholarships - students from outside the Group who want to study in the Group countries.

➤ **Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS)**

The CEEPUS aims to support academic exchange in the field of education and professional development of students and academic teachers. The programme offers:

- ✓ short-term scholarships within Academic Networks;
- ✓ short-term scholarships as part of the "Freemover" internships; short-term scholarships as part of summer schools and intensive courses.

➤ **DAAD Fund**

Although the main task of DAAD is the internationalization of German universities and supporting international academic exchange the fund also offers information on educational opportunities in the Federal Republic of Germany and gives financial support for students, graduates, PhD students and researchers - both Germans and foreigners - as part of scholarship programmes.

➤ **GFPS Fund**

Scientific and Cultural Association in Central and Eastern Europe GFPS-POLAND offers a special scholarship programme financed by the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, awarded to students and doctoral students of all faculties, enables the implementation of their own research project at a German university.

➤ **Campus France Programme**

Scholarship programmes allow Polish students to finance studies in France at the Master 2 level (BGF Master 2nd year) or Double Doctorate (BGF Doctorat en cotutelle) implemented between France and Poland.

➤ **Fulbright Award**

One of the oldest (in Poland since 1959) and the most prestigious programmes of international cooperation is offered by the Polish-U.S. Fulbright Commission. Students and doctoral students are offered the scholarships for studies, and academics for research stays, for a total of 9 months of study trips.

➤ **GE Foundation Scholar-Leaders Programme**

The GE Foundation Scholar-Leaders Programme in Poland is a prestigious programme that offers financial support and development opportunities for talented second-year undergraduate students, who are educated in economics, management, engineering and technology. The programme also offers the development of personal, social and managerial competences under the guidance of specialists from General Electric. Five universities (Gdańsk University of



Technology, Lodz University of Technology, Rzeszów University of Technology, Warsaw Polytechnic and Wrocław University of Science and Technology) take part in the Polish edition of this programme.

➤ **Visiting professors**

Visiting professors is a programme of visits university by eminent scholars and popularizers of science. It is one of the examples of cooperation between the universities, that supports the mobility of researches.

**Polish-Chinese international cooperation in higher education  
- Belt & Road initiative**

Intensive cooperation with Chinese universities takes place mainly within the Belt & Road initiative. Polish and Chinese technical universities established a university consortium, with the aim of conducting joint scientific research *The Sino-Polish University Consortium 'One Belt One Road'*. The consortium consists 23 universities, including 9 Polish universities. The latest initiatives were as follows: Training Programme for Senior Administrative Staff and Art & Design Competition for students.

Other initiative is Confucius Class, launched in October 2017 in Bialystok University of Technology as a part of the project starting the national network of Confucius classes, established at Polish universities as a support to One Belt One Road programme. These classes are meant to teach Chinese to the engineering staff, and are going to become new Confucius Institutes in the future.

**International accreditation of study programmes**

The Polish Accreditation Committee (PKA) has operated in Poland since 2002. It is an independent institution working with the aim of improving education quality. The primary objective of the PKA is to support Polish public and non-public higher education institutions in the developing educational standards matching the best models adopted in the European and global academic area. In 2008 PKA entered the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) and since 2009 has had the status of a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Another institution dedicated exclusively to assessment of technical fields of studies is the Accreditation Commission of Universities of Technology (KAUT). In September 2013 KAUT was authorized by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education (ENAE) to award, along with standard KAUT accreditation, the European EUR-ACE® Label certificate. Since 2016, KAUT has also been a member of ENAE.

However, there is a great tendency among foreign students who come to Poland to select universities or faculties which have a well-known international accreditation. Currently, the Polish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, has opened a project dedicated to support Polish higher education institution in obtaining international accreditations.

## **Conclusions**

Our chances of improving the position on the international student market derive mainly from the fact that a suitably large group of universities recognized internationalization as one of the key goals of their development. This was reflected both in the development strategies of those universities, and in the practice of their divisions of science, education, international cooperation and promotion.

Although the main asset of Poland as a country offering academic education is primarily the high academic level of most universities, making the educational process more attractive through new methods of presenting issues, including students in the process of preparing experiments and research, activating practice groups, and replacing demonstration methods with problem solving enables constant increasing of attractiveness of classes. The cost of living in Poland is still attractive for foreigners' pockets.

The positive influence exerted by international groups on both lecturers and native students is also important. The understanding of the positive impact of various aspects of mobility on the whole of the study process is increasing. Specific changes indicated by lecturers include: the need for better preparation of the classes - selection of reading material for discussion, better reaction to presenting unexpected points of view and ways of argumentation, bringing experiences and knowledge a bit different than in the case of Polish students, implementing global systems of control and assessment, etc.

The most popular student exchange is organized as a part of the long-established ERASMUS+ programme activities, however it is limited by the granted funds. Three other forms of action are nowadays becoming very important: study programmes in foreign languages, double diploma agreements and summer schools. Together with them, the development of full BSc and MSc programmes offered in foreign languages, and obtained international accreditations, seem to be the best solution for increasing the internationalization level of Polish HEIs.

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