

WESTERN EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR EUROPEANIZATION OF UKRAINE



**CASE STUDIES ON THE ROLE OF GRADUATES OF WESTERN UNIVERSITIES IN SLOVAKIA IN
MODERNIZING THE COUNTRY AND BRINGING IT CLOSER TO THE EU**

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1 Introduction – from black hole in the heart of Europe to Tatra tiger

Slovakia has undergone remarkable changes over the past 20 years and has made considerable progress toward democracy and the free market. After the Velvet Revolution Czechoslovakia's transition process to democracy has started and the initial years after the revolution were turbulent. Subsequently in July 1992 the division of states was declared by the Czech leader, Václav Klaus and the Slovak leader, Vladimír Mečiar. Unfortunately after gaining independence, Slovaks have behaved in a politically self-destructive way and therefore Slovakia was ranked among the worst-performing economies and the least-democratic governments in Central Europe. The government of Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar was increasingly authoritarian and the privatization of state enterprises was deeply corrupt. In its early days as an independent nation the then US secretary of state Madeline Albright called Slovakia a „black hole in the heart of Europe“. Joining the European Union belonged to the priorities of Slovak foreign policy since the establishment of the Slovak Republic. The application for the Slovak Republic into the EU was submitted on 27th of June 1995 at the European Council meeting in Cannes.¹ Worries of western leaders about Slovakia's political system delayed the country's entry to NATO and the EU. Fundamental problem, which was slowing down the process of European integration, was the political situation in Slovakia. The European Commission in 1997 did not decide to invite Slovakia for the negotiations on joining the EU because of not the implementation of the political Copenhagen criteria.

Change for the better started with the government change in 1998, when the government of Mečiar was ousted by a coalition led by Mikuláš Dzurinda. Progress in communication and fulfilment of integration goals started with new government, whose priority was to overcome negative decision of the European Commission. Series of neoliberal, free market reforms including introduction of a flat tax, liberalization of the labour market, deregulation of business and partial privatization of social security were introduced. First visible result in an effort to join the EU was the creation of The European Commission – Slovakia High Level Working Group, under the command of state secretary Ján Fígel and Director-General of the European Commission for international affairs François Lamoureux. The main purpose of the working group was to help with acceleration of the EU integration process through the consultations including the general political, economic and legal questions and also specific questions like for example the efficiency of program PHARE. The working group contributed to the identification and solution of key obstacles in the integration process. It was only temporary instrument, which has passed out in 1999 after the fulfilment of its principal goals.² Except the direct contacts with the EU through the consultation with the European Commission, the new government started with revival of bilateral relations with governments of the EU member states. In December 1999, the European Council on the Helsinki summit decided to invite Slovakia for negotiations on joining the EU and those negotiations began in March 2000 in Brussels. For the coordination of accession process were created politic organs and administrative structures on level of resorts, which reflected the needs of the integration process. The responsible organ in the negotiation process was Ministry of Foreign Affairs, led by state secretary for European integration process Ján Fígel, who was at the same time chief negotiator for Slovak EU membership. Pavol Hamžík became a deputy chairman of government for European integration and his main role was to coordinate ministries in the integration process. A deputy chairman for legislation was Lubomír Fogaš, who was responsible for the approximation of law. On the highest

1 SLOVAK REPUBLIC: *European Union*. Available from: <<http://www.slovak-republic.org/eu/>>

2 VILÁGI, A. – BILČÍK, V.: *Fungovanie a koordinácia domácich inštitúcií SR v legislatívnom procese Európskej únie: stav, možnosti a odporúčania*, 2007, pp. 8 – 10

political level was created Ministerial Council for the EU integration and key role in the process played also Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the European Union. For the purpose of the negotiation of different capitols were established 29 working groups, where were working representatives of relevant resorts, and they were coordinated by Working group of chief negotiator.

Negotiations officially ended at the Copenhagen summit in December 2002, concluding chapters of agriculture, finance and budget. In May 2003 was declared a referendum on, where the majority of eligible voters expressed their agreement with the country's entry into the European Union. Slovakia became a member of the European Union on 1st of May 2004.

Since the introduction of reforms, along with the initiation of the integration process into the Western structures, and thanks to cheap and skilled labour, low taxes and a geographical location in the middle of the continent Slovakia has become attractive to foreign investors and the country's economic indicators started to improve. The success of the reforms put through by Dzurinda cabinet were reflected in Slovakia's entry into the OECD in 2000, completion of accession negotiations with the European Union, Slovakia's invitation to join NATO and the entry of major investors into the Slovak market. By 2004 Slovakia had joined the EU and NATO and earned the deserved nickname the “Tatra tiger” (after its mountains). The US President George W. Bush praised Slovakia as a regional role model that other countries should follow.³ And in recognition of these improvements, the World Bank's “Doing Business in 2005” report declared Slovakia the world's leading reformer and ranked it among the top 20 countries with the best business conditions.⁴ In 2009, it adopted Euro as its national currency, joining the Eurozone well ahead of its regional neighbours (Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland) which still use their national currencies. Today, Slovakia belongs among the most integrated European countries.

1.1 EDUCATION PROFILES OF PERSONS IMPORTANT IN SLOVAK PROCESS OF INTEGRATION TO THE EU

Mikuláš Dzurinda⁵

M. Dzurinda was Prime Minister of Slovakia from 30 October 1998 to 4 July 2006. M. He graduated from the College of Transport and Communications in Žilina in 1979. In 1988, he completed his post-graduate scientific research there and was awarded with a Candidate of Sciences degree. In 1993 he completed six week internship in the Institute of Adam Smith and in the Institute of economic relations in London.

Eduard Kukan⁶

E. Kukan served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia from 1998 to 2006. He graduated from The Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 1964. After graduation he received a Doctorate in Law from the Faculty of Law of the Charles University in Prague.

Ján Fígel⁷

J. Fígel led Slovakia's accession negotiations with the European Union until 2003. He also represented the Slovak government in the European Convention which drafted the European Constitution. In 2004

3 SARKANOVA, H.: *Leveraging Slovak professionals abroad for Slovakia's development*. 2014, pp. 12 – 13

4 KACER, R. – TUPY, M. L.: *Out of the Black Hole*. Available from: <<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/out-black-hole>>

5 OSOBNOSTI: *Mikuláš Dzurinda*. Available from: <<http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=154>>

6 OSOBNOSTI: *Eduard Kukan*. Available from: <<http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=3>>

7 OSOBNOSTI: *Ján Fígel*. Available from: <<http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=161>>

he became European Commissioner for Education, Training and Culture. He graduated from the Technical University of Košice in 1983. In 1994 he completed one semester course focused on professional training – European economic integration at the University of Antwerp in Belgium and one semester course in Georgetown University, Washington D. C. in the US focused on international relations.

Pavol Hamžík⁸

P. Hamžík was Foreign Minister of Slovakia from 1996 to 1997 in cabinet of Vladimír Mečiar and also deputy chairman of government for European integration of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda. He studied law at Comenius University in Bratislava, graduated in 1978. He also studied diplomacy in The Diplomatic Academy in Moscow (1989–1991).

Lubomír Fogaš⁹

L. Fogaš was deputy chairman for legislation from 1998 to 2002. He graduated in 1974 in Faculty of law at Comenius University in Bratislava, where he was also awarded with a Candidate of Sciences degree.

1.2 CONCLUSIONS ON PROFILE IMPORTANT POLITICIANS – THE APPEARANCE OF THE FIRST WAVE OF GRADUATES OF FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

From the above presented personal profiles of politicians important in Slovak Europeanization process, it is possible to extract certain specific features and describe general conclusions about the beginning of the first wave of Slovak graduates of foreign universities that successfully accommodated themselves in politics and public administration positions and helped Slovakia to join the EU. First of all, all we have to say that during this period the majority of politicians were graduates of Slovak or Soviet (due to the persisting close relations with Soviet Union) universities, but some of these politicians also represent the first generation of young Slovaks who took advantage of the opportunities which appeared after the Velvet revolution. We can clearly see an appearance of new trend that young individuals started to make use of the opportunity to study or do an internship in western countries (for example Dzurinda, Figeľ) and moreover, they turned back to Slovakia and participated in Slovak democratization process using their academic qualifications. But in general a majority of politicians and people working in EU units were not graduates of foreign universities. Based on informal discussions with colleagues in NGO sector and academia, we assume that main reasons were language barrier, lack of opportunities to travel abroad and financial and bureaucratic limitations such as nonexistence of partnership agreements between universities, necessity of passport arrangements, etc.

Despite the significant progress which was described in the first part of the case study, the situation in Slovakia is still far from ideal and this an opportunity for turning to young professionals from western universities as a powerful force that may counter the shortcomings of Slovakia's national system.¹⁰

⁸ OSOBNOSTI: Pavol Hamžík. Available from: <<http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=187>>

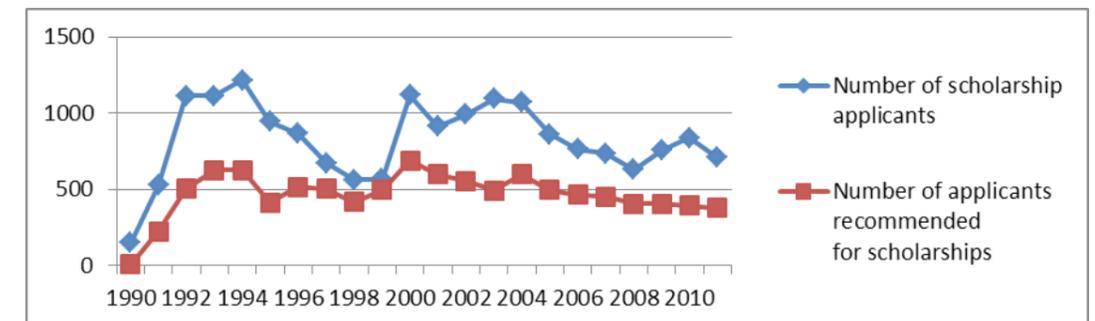
⁹ OSOBNOSTI: Lubomír Fogaš. Available from: <<http://www.osobnosti.sk/index.php?os=zivotopis&ID=166>>

¹⁰ SARKANOVA, H.: *Leveraging Slovak professionals abroad for Slovakia's development*. 2014, pp. 12 – 13

2. Current situation – students enrolled on foreign universities and their possibilities

As before mentioned after the Velvet Revolution and after the collapse of Communism a new opportunities for Czechs and Slovaks have appeared. Also the opportunity for young students to study abroad emerged. Significant increase of interest to study in western universities since 1990 is proved by the data from Annual report of Slovak Academic Information Agency.

Graph 1
Overview of applicants for scholarships based on bilateral intergovernmental agreements on cooperation in education and scholarships offers of foreign governments, for the period 1990–2011



Source: Annual report SAIA 2011, p. 12

Unfortunately there is a lack of quality data on Slovak students currently enrolled on foreign universities. In the case of European Union there are two basic reasons, why we are missing the data and why it is hard to track the information. On the one hand it is because of passport-free movement across the Schengen Area and on the other hand because of free labour movement for all EU members. What is more, the quality of data from countries with VISA programs such as the US is not much better, because it is not systematically tracked and collected in comprehensive manner. However we may find Slovak organizations which are gathering missing data and which are trying to stimulate Slovak professionals abroad (and here we talk only about systematically selected people with solid professional history and relevancy for the Slovak republic) to return back. Access to information and data depends purely on bottom-up approach mostly using social networks, local network clusters and the word of mouth.¹¹

Most comprehensive data are provided by OECD statistics; but even these seem to be incomplete. According to the recent available data published by OECD (2011), the number of Slovak students enrolled on all types of programs of Tertiary Education abroad (including exchange programs such as Erasmus, Socrates, Erasmus Mundus or bilateral exchange programs between universities) is estimated around 40 650 students in 2011. Unsurprisingly, the neighbouring states together with the US, UK and some other Western European countries are the primary destinations of Slovak students. More specific information can be seen in the attachment number 2.

A visible increase in enrolments to EU universities has occurred since EU accession in 2004; on the contrary enrolments to the US universities are declining. Several factors may serve as a potential explanation of the decline. The accession to the European Union thanks to the EU education funding and student exchange programs dramatically reduced the cost of studying at EU universities. In contrast, Slovak students applying to universities in the US face higher tuition fees, other reasons are visa applica-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13 – 14

tion process and geographic distance from home. This negative trend was also confirmed during the interview with Mária Paniaková from Fulbright Association, who added that one of the most important factors which are influencing the decreasing tendency is money – semester in the US universities is more and more expensive every year and students are not able to cover the tuition fee despite financial support of grants.

Most comprehensive data about the applicants for study stays abroad are provided by Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA) statistics, which are including particularly data about their programs. However the yearly number of applicants recommended for scholarship is in average over 500 (see the graph 1), this data can serve as a representative sample of young Slovak students who are interested in studying abroad and we can conclude on the basis of this data the profile of applicants. According to the recent available data published by SAIA (2011 Annual report – information about Academic mobility program), the highest number of applications was received for the Russian Federation (170), Germany (152) and France (81). The highest number of selected scholarship recipients came from the Comenius University in Bratislava (99), University of Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra (53) and the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica (42). The highest number of recommended applicants came from humanities (61 %) and social sciences (25 %). Of those recommended for scholarships 72 % were students in their Bachelor or Master degree study, 16 % PhD students and 4 % university teachers.¹² The data shows that the most interested in studying abroad are students in Bachelor or Master degree, studying humanistic or other social sciences and except western countries are also still interested in Russia. For example Moscow State Institute of International Relations is considered to be one of the most prestigious universities in the area of diplomacy and political sciences. What is more, the Russian Federation acceded to the Bologna Declaration in 2003 which has influenced changes in the Russian university education, where 5 years study programs changed to two levels education – bachelor and master 's degree, continued by the possibility of postgraduate 3 years ' study finished by equivalent degree of PhD.¹³

In general we can say that students have enough possibilities for studying abroad and also there are enough interesting programs which are stimulating education in foreign universities. Most important organization which deals with promoting of education abroad is Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA), which is cooperating with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of SR (hereinafter MŠVVaŠ SR). One of the programs which SAIA is administrating is the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic. It is a governmental program, financed by the MŠVVaŠ providing students with financial help during their study by covering scholarship holders' living costs. Slovak students can count with state-based loans as well. The loans serve to provide funding for tuitions fees or maintenance costs during the study abroad and they are administrated by Education Support Fund (Fond na podporu vzdelávania – FNPV).¹⁴ According to the available information, important attribute of the program is that the amount awarded scholarships in different categories depends on the country of residence and is set so that it covers basic living expenses during mobility, thus approving the applicants may fully concentrate on academic or research activities.¹⁵

12 SAIA: 2011 ANNUAL REPORT. Available from: <http://www.saia.sk/_user/documents/vyročne_spravy/vs-saia-2011.pdf> pp. 11

13 SAIA: Available from: <<http://www.saia.sk/sk/main/studium-v-zahranici/informacie-o-studiu-vo-vybranych-krajinach/rusko>>

14 FOND NA PODPORU VZDELÁVANIA: *Základné informácie*. Available from: <<http://www.fnpv.sk/info-fnpv-pre-studentov>>

15 SAIA: 2013 ANNUAL REPORT. Available from: <http://www.stipendia.sk/_user/documents/NSP/Ro%C4%8Dn%C3%A9%20spr%C3%A1vy%20o%20N%C5%A0P/NSP_vyrocn%C3%A1_sprava_2013.pdf> and RA-

SAIA is also administrating other mobility programs, which will be described in the next part. With the mediation of education and internships in the US is occupying mainly the Fulbright association and Slovak-American Foundation. From the private sector there is very interesting grant program by Tatra banka Foundation, supporting the best students to study at foreign schools and gain experience that they can apply in Slovakia. These programs as well as their alumni organization in case that they exist will be described more precisely in the next chapter.

There are some state programs aimed to involve such young professionals in public sector. Already during the university studies students have the opportunity to contribute to the development of our country. The governmental sector is providing different kinds of internship for students, in this case for us the most relevant is the internship at The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. But we have to also mention that other resorts are providing internships for students as well. Students interested in public sector can also complete an internship at Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency. Although there are different programs for students it is important to point out that they do not secure a possibility of full-time employment in public sector. Internship at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is great opportunity for young professionals interested in public affairs and diplomacy; who wish to gain experience within the program of short-terms internships. Students can complete an internship at the various departments of the ministry in Bratislava but also at one of the Slovak embassies abroad, both types of internships are unpaid. The internships are mainly determined to students from Slovak universities, which have concluded an agreement on cooperation with the ministry. But in particular cases there is also a possibility for Slovak students from foreign universities to conduct this short-term internship based on the individual inquires. The general requirements include filling out the form on personal data, a cover letter justifying the choice of particular unit (both home and foreign) and a curriculum, individual applicants have to provide also language certificate (two foreign languages on high level are required) as well as recommendation from at least two lecturers.¹⁶ Based on the authors experience students from foreign universities have to undergo more bureaucratic and more complicated process of application. There is a difference between student of home universities and foreign universities in the eligibility criteria. Students from home country are elected and recommended by their universities to the ministry and in the case of students from foreign universities the ministry is deciding about the individual applicant. Foreign students are more interested in internship at the embassies at countries where they are studying rather than in home units of the ministry. On the other side the ministry is supporting students enrolled on foreign universities and almost in every case the individual requests are accepted.

As it was described before there is a lot of interesting programs stimulating young people to study abroad, but on the other side initiatives which stimulate the return of young professionals to the home country are quite rare. State programs provide the opportunity to study abroad, but they do not have the follow up action which would stimulate graduates to come back to home country and use their knowledge from foreign universities. The fail on the marked is covered by the nongovernmental organization LEAF which sees and importance in attracting talented graduates from foreign universities to return back to Slovakia. The organization mentioned above will be described more in detail in the next chapter.

As it will be demonstrated in the following chapter of the case study analysis, the network of non-governmental organisations promoting the education abroad and return of experts has expanded sig-

TES: <<http://www.stipendia.sk/sk/main/podmienky-pre-predkladanie-ziadosti/uchadzaci-zo-sr/vyska-stipendia>>

16 MZVaEZSR: *Krátkodobé študentské stáže*. Available from: <https://www.mzv.sk/sk/cinnost_ministerstva/kariera_a_pracovne_ponuky-kratkodobe_studentske_staze>

nificantly during last years and largely substitutes the role of the state, whose activities in that field are not sufficient. Based on comparison of the feature of the scholarship placements and focus of the universities of applicants we can assume that all of them generally support the similar initiatives and work with the same profiles of student. Majority of students conducting the scholarships at Western universities are humanity and economic fields only rarely technical and science studies. However, each of them has different specific goal and operates on a different dimension and scale, their programs varies from direct scholarship schemes up to mentoring and advisory. They have a common aim of increasing the presence of Slovak students on foreign universities.

2.1 SLOVAK ACADEMIC INFORMATION AGENCY (SAIA)

Most important non-governmental organization which deals with promoting of education abroad is SAIA. It is a non-profit organisation implementing programmes and providing services aimed at enhancement of the civil society cooperating with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of SR.

SAIA came to existence in 1990's because of changing conditions in the society, which called for an independent information agency to guarantee access to information and provide advisory service on opportunities for study abroad. SAIA has developed an open and transparent application system for distribution of scholarships offered to Slovakia by foreign governments and various non-profit organisations. SAIA also played an important role in Slovakia's entry into the European Union. We can mentioned that during this process SAIA started to develop contacts with possible partners from EU member countries and became a member of the National Convent on European Future of Slovakia. SAIA also cooperated with the EC Delegation, administered a program of travel grants to support involvement of Slovak NGOs in international events in Europe.¹⁷ Gradually SAIA tried to transfer its experience and know-how to new organisations that were involved in the fields in which SAIA had hitherto been engaged. SAIA later became a part of the European network of EURAXESS Service Centres, with funding from the European Commission and Ministry of Education.

Currently SAIA runs offices in six university towns with 20 employees. Overall budget for scholarships and projects in all programmes in 2012 was over 2 million €, including operational and other programme costs.¹⁸ In particular for scholarships and grants exactly 1 422 566,59 € was spent in 2012 and 1 395 769,28 € in 2013.¹⁹

The organisation provides services connected to development and protection of spiritual values related to helping internationalisation of education and scientific research and enhancement of civil society in Slovakia. There is no Alumni organization in SAIA what makes hard to track information about students who completed studies in foreign countries. All information is therefore based on the annual reports available on the SAIA website.

SAIA PROGRAMMES²⁰:

- 1. Academic Mobility** – it is financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of SR. Since 1990, more than 10 250 scholarship applicants for study abroad have been

17 SAIA: *2002 Annual report*. Available from: <http://www.saia.sk/_user/documents/vyrocnne_spravy/V5-SAIA-2002.pdf> pp. 3

18 SAIA: *From the history*. Available from: <<http://www.saia.sk/en/pages/about-us/from-the-history>>

19 SAIA: *2013 Annual report*. Available from: <http://www.saia.sk/_user/documents/vyrocnne_spravy/V5-2013_final.pdf> pp. 43

20 SAIA: *SAIA programmes*. Available from: <<http://www.saia.sk/en/main/saia/>>

recommended and nominated in selection rounds. For the academic year 2011/2012, the total number of applicants was 707, of who 378 were recommended for awarding the scholarships and 43 persons were designated as proxies.

- 2. Action Austria – Slovakia, Co-operation in Science and Education** – the programme was launched in 1992 with the purpose to promote and further develop cooperation between university and scientific institutions in Slovakia and Austria through grant support to joint projects and individual scholarships. The programme is funded by annual contributions from Slovakia and Austria and SAIA serves as the programme office. Since the beginning of the 4th programming period about 30 projects, 231 individual scholarships of Slovak applicants have been supported.
- 3. CEEPUS** – the Programme started in 1993 and in 2011 CEEPUS III came into force. CEEPUS promotes mobility of students, PhD students and university teachers by supporting cooperating networks and individual mobility. 15 countries participate in the Programme. In Slovakia the Programme is funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of SR and SAIA has been contracted to serve as the National Office. Since 2005 more than 3,100 participants went to study or give lectures at the universities outside Slovakia.
- 4. National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic** – the Programme is financed by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and is aimed to support mobility of Slovak and international students, PhD students, university teachers and researchers. It was created by the decision of the Slovak Government as part of the Action Plan of SR for implementing the Lisbon Strategy. In April 2006, public procurement process resulted in a contract between the Ministry of Education and SAIA, n. o. to implement the Programme in the period 2006 – 2010. In 2009 the Slovak Government approved extension of the Programme under the Modernisation Programme Slovakia 21 and SAIA has become its administrator again. During the Programme's existence a total of 2,088 scholarships and travel grant applications from Slovak applicants. The scholarship shall cover scholarship holders' living costs during their study/research/teaching/artistic stay in foreign country.
- 5. EEA Scholarship programme Slovakia (EEA SP)** – it was established to increase higher education student and staff mobility, as well as strengthen inter-institutional cooperation between higher education institutions and institutions on upper secondary level between Slovakia and Donor States – Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The Programme is funded by the EEA Grants (85%) and state budget of the Slovak Republic (15%) (in total amount €2,255,882). The Programme should be implemented from February 2014 till February 2017. SAIA has been established the Programme Operator of the EEA Scholarship Programme Slovakia by the Government Office of the Slovak Republic as the National Focal Point of EEA Grants in Slovakia based on the public procurement competition.

2.2 THE J. W. FULBRIGHT COMMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The J. W. Fulbright the governht Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic has been established to promote the educational, research and cultural exchanges between the US and the Slovak Republic through the Fulbright Program. Thanks to the program, since 1994 about 250 Slovak students and teachers have had the opportunity to study, teach or conduct research in the US. The operation of the Commission is jointly funded byments of the both countries – the US government contributes about 65 % of the budget with the Slovak Government contributing about 35 %. Within the

commission was also established consulting centre Fulbright Educational Advising Center, which is providing comprehensive, reliable and qualified information about studies in the US and belongs to the worldwide educational networking of the US Department of State, called EducationUSA.²¹

The Slovak Fulbright Association has been established to support the activities of the Commission and to cooperate with the US Embassy in the Slovak Republic. The association exists since 2001 as a private, non-profit membership organization of Fulbright Program alumni and friends, which is providing feedback of former participants.²²

Fulbright programs are based on reciprocal exchange of post gradual students and researchers from Slovakia and the US. The Fulbright Program enables students, scholars, professionals, and teachers to participate in study, research, and teaching exchanges in these countries. There are two types of programs – programs for individuals and programs for institutions. Most relevant program for the case study is **Fulbright Scholarship for Graduate Studies in the USA**. The Scholarship allows six to nine-month research (Visiting Student Researcher) or study program (Master's Degree Study) at the university or other institution in the US. The scholarship is intended for all scientific disciplines except clinical medicine and MBA programs and LL.M, because they are not considering as scientific disciplines. In Slovakia this program has one special condition – applicants must have at least bachelor's degree.²³

2.3 SLOVAK-AMERICAN FOUNDATION (SAF)

In 2010 the Slovak-American Foundation (SAF) was created, with the purpose “to foster the relationship and strengthen the bonds between the United States and the Slovak Republic by providing educational and exchange opportunities that will enrich the economic, social, and political fabric, and help develop knowledge, skills, and abilities that will lead to prosperity.”²⁴ SAF offers two scholarship opportunities in the United States: Professional Internship Program (for university students and recent graduates) and Research Scholar for professors and academic researchers. Within SAF has been also established the Alumni Association of the Slovak-American Foundation and an Alumni Leadership Council was formed to drive alumni initiatives in Slovakia to transfer the participants' newly gained U.S. expertise to support Slovakia's social and economic development.²⁵ Until now there are 19 members in the association. On the website of the Foundation there are published their individual stories and profiles, where you can find information about their career goals, where they were trained, and the impact they hope to make in Slovakia after their program.²⁶ As an example we choose one individual story regarding to the impact to the political life of Slovakia. “*Tomas Bereta's internship was in the field of Public Affairs and Government Relations. While at his internship at Cassidy and Associates, consistently ranked as one of the top government affairs firms in the industry, Tomas had the opportunity to master his critical thinking skills. An experience that he ranks as being one of the top 10 experiences in his life so far is attending the inauguration ceremony of President Obama, where he could see*

21 FULBRIGHT: *The J. W. Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic*. Available from: <http://www.uspages.fulbright.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=59&Itemid=53>

22 FULBRIGHT: *Alumni*. Available from: <http://www.uspages.fulbright.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=56>

23 FULBRIGHT: *Fulbrightovo štípéndium pre postgraduálne štúdiu*. Available from: <http://www.fulbright.sk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50&Itemid=58>

24 SLOVAK-AMERICAN FOUNDATION: *About SAF*. Available from: <<http://slovakamericanfoundation.org/about/>>

25 SLOVAK-AMERICAN FOUNDATION: *Alumni Profiles*. Available from: <<http://slovakamericanfoundation.org/about/alumni.aspx>>

26 *Ibid.*

from up close many well – known U.S. political figures. At present, he works at Fipra International (global network of senior, strategic advisers specializing in public policy and regulatory issues).²⁷ Based on the available information about alumnis we can conclude that studies as well as internships in foreign countries have a positive impact on the job seeking process and young professionals with skills and experience achieved abroad are received by the potential employers very positively. We can see that they completed an internship in different fields as for example natural sciences, architecture, information technologies, economics or humanities and after coming back to Slovakia they are seeking jobs in their specialization mainly in the private sectors or they are establishing their own business; utilizing their experience gained abroad with the hope to have positive impact on the development of Slovakia.

2.4 THE UK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SLOVAKIA

Other example of alumni associations is The UK Alumni Association Slovakia, which was established in 2009 as a non-profit organization with the aim to bring together those who have completed studies or professional training in the UK. The main goal of the association is “to provide an opportunity for professional networking, information exchange, commercial co-operation and mutual support between Slovak professionals who have been to the UK on education and training programs.”²⁸ The association is collaborating with British Embassy Bratislava and British Council. From its activities concentrated to the promotion of studying abroad we can mention the organization of an event for all students of Slovak universities thinking to continue their studies abroad, called Study in the UK: Education is GREAT (Britain)!, where the participants can meet successful Slovak professionals and learn HOW, WHERE and FOR HOW MUCH to study in the United Kingdom.²⁹

2.5 TATRA BANKA FOUNDATION

Tatra banka Foundation is a prestigious philanthropic institution which is supporting the high school and university education, Slovak art and design. It was established in 2004 by the Tatra Banka (commercial bank in Slovakia) and currently is celebrating 10 years since its founding. Over this period, the foundation has supported 1,426 valuable education, art, and design projects. Through its programs and grants is supporting the best students and creating attractive opportunities for the increase of the quality of the education as well as it is bringing inspirational meetings with global experts. The philosophy of the foundation is to improve educational standards and provide opportunities for the best students to excel and is available for all those who want to grow, learn, create and have an ambition to achieve something in life – simply for all those wishing to progress in their field.³⁰ The foundation is administrating different programs and grants and for the case study the most relevant program is successful grant program called Students to the world, which already exists for 7 years. This program is for high school and university students and supports the best students in gaining experience at foreign schools and other educational institutions, with the aim to return back to Slovakia and use that knowledge. Students have a possibility to apply for European universities as well as they can choose the US, Canada, China, New Zealand and etc. universities and they will use the grant funds to pay for their registration fees, tuition fees, travel expenses, accommodation, insurance, and other costs associated

27 SLOVAK-AMERICAN FOUNDATION: *Alumni Profiles*. Available from: <<http://slovakamericanfoundation.org/about/alumni.aspx>>

28 UK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION: *About us*. Available from: <<http://www.ukalumni.sk/about.html>>

29 UK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION: *Education is GREAT Britain*. Available from: <<http://www.ukalumni.sk/studyUK2014.pdf>>

30 TATRA BANKA FOUNDATION PRESS RELEASES: *In 10 years we have supported 1,426 projects*. Available from: <<http://www.tatrabanka.sk/press-news/5186636/in-10-years-we-have-supported-1426-projects.html>>

with their study courses. The maximum amount of individual support for high school students is set at €1,500 and for university students is set at €5,000.³¹ As said Zuzana Böhmerová (Foundation and Sponsorship Manager) about the program: “We are happy that for seven years now we have created opportunities for ambitious students, from which they will definitely profit in their future careers.”³²

2.6 LEAF – FROM TALENT TO INSPIRING STORIES OF LEADERSHIP

LEAF is a non-profit organization focusing on development of young individuals with the potential to grow into shapers of Slovakia, which is focusing on educational and support programs for individual students and young professionals across different life stages. They focus on two areas: Education of students, primarily of high school age and Development of young professionals.³³ Their mission is “to contribute to developing young people with the potential to grow into shapers demonstrating character, excellence, entrepreneurial leadership and civic engagement” and their vision is “to achieve higher quality of life in Slovakia through mindsets and behaviours of most leaders in the private sector and public administration”.³⁴

LEAF’s projects³⁵:

1. **Building a high school(s) for talented students.** (The goal is to build an educational institution that develops the students’ character, excellence, and drive for change.)
2. **Development of talented teenage students.** (The goal is to identify, network and support the development of the most talented students (13–19 years)).
3. **Training and developing high school teachers.** (The goal is to ensure high quality of select existing teachers and to attract high-potential individuals to teaching.)
4. **Supporting and motivating young talented Slovaks abroad to return to Slovakia – Slovak Professionals Abroad Program.** (Supporting Slovaks abroad, connecting them with Slovakia and aiding their return.)
5. **Developing young professionals in existing and start-up companies.** (Our goal is to support the quality of programs and environments to develop young professionals.)

Specific programs regarding to the topic of stimulating education abroad and stimulating the return of young professionals to the home country:

- ◇ **STUDIES AT UNITED WORLD COLLEGES** – The program is designated for Slovak students in their second or third year of study at secondary school and they will receive scholarships for two-year study at United World Colleges (UWC) – international high schools of world-class quality. It is not just a two-year school program, but also an inspiration for finding one’s own path in life, because graduates of these schools build upon their values and the UWC experience and have lasting positive impact on the communities and countries where they live and work. The financial support is provided by organization LEAF and there is a possibility to apply for 7 full scholarships (UWC USA, USA; Pearson UWC, Canada; UWC Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Dilian UWC, Armenia; Robert Bosch UWC,

31 TATRA BANKA FOUNDATION PRESS RELEASES: *We helped 15 high school students study abroad.* Available from: <<http://www.tatrabanka.sk/press-news/5181414/we-helped-15-high-school-students-study-abroad.html>>

32 TATRA BANKA FOUNDATION PRESS RELEASES: *We will send the best students to the world thanks to a grant!* Available from: <<http://www.tatrabanka.sk/press-news/5171833/we-will-send-the-best-students-to-the-world-thanks-to-a-grant!.html>>

33 LEAF: *What we do.* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/what-we-do>>

34 LEAF: *Our mission.* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/new/why>>

35 LEAF: *What we do.* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/what-we-do>>

Germany; UWC of Adriatic, Italy; UWC Maastricht, Holland). Return to Slovakia after completion of study is not a requirement for receiving a scholarship though it is preferred.³⁶

- **JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY CTY ONLINE COURSES** – Organization LEAF in cooperation with The American Fund for Czech and Slovak Leadership Studies offers special scholarships to schools for CTY Online courses, which should help high school students to prepare for university-level study at prestigious universities in Slovakia and abroad. They are offering a limited number of full scholarships in the total amount EUR 4000 for online courses enrolment to the most talented students at eight-year grammar schools, secondary schools and higher primary schools.³⁷
- **SLOVAK PROFESSIONALS ABROAD PROGRAM** – The program seeks to create links between Slovak students and professionals living abroad and Slovakia, and to help those who are considering their return to Slovakia. One part of the program is to identify up to four inspiring Slovak students at universities abroad and support their further development with a scholarship of 5,000 USD. The eligibility criteria are fulfilling the candidates who show a combined potential for character, excellent study or work results, as well as drive for change to improve their surroundings above and beyond what is typically expected. The aim is to support students who will share a story, when they had a chance to demonstrate one of the qualities mentioned above or have an idea for Slovakia which they would like to bring to reality after graduating from school. Study at universities in top ranks of the Shanghai Ranking and work experience (including part-time work during study, internships, start-ups, etc.) are an advantage.³⁸ The program also brings to Slovak students and graduates from universities abroad internships and job offers in Slovakia in all three sectors – governmental, private and NGO sector, showing that successful Slovak students are in high demand in their home country and thus creating an alternative to opportunities offered to these students abroad. This opportunity is provided for the second year. It is designated for the applicant is a student or a graduate of a university outside of the Slovak Republic; with preference given to students whose university appears in the Shanghai Ranking.³⁹ Another possibility how young professionals can contribute to the development of Slovakia, provided by LEAF is assisting on non-profit projects in Slovakia from abroad. The program is intended for young professionals with at least three years of work experience living abroad and it is based on 12 volunteer projects in which it is possible to get involved over long distance. The average level of involvement is two to four hours per week, although most projects offer flexibility to the volunteer.⁴⁰

36 LEAF: *Studies at UWC – an inspiration for finding one’s own path in life.* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/new/uwc-scholarships>>

37 LEAF: *JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY CTY online courses – opportunity for academic growth.* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/new/scholarships-cty-online>>

38 LEAF: *Scholarships for Slovak university students abroad.* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/new/scholarships-for-university-students-abroad>>

39 LEAF: *Have you thought about opportunities in Slovakia?* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/new/internships-in-slovakia>>

40 LEAF: *Do you want to help from abroad? do you seek the right opportunity?* Available from: <<http://www.leaf.sk/en/new/assist-nonprofit-projects-in-slovakia>>

3. Graduates of Western universities – analysis of individual stories (based on questioner and interviews)

The next chapter provides data from the questionnaire and is completed with the information from interview with Mária Paniaková from Fulbright Commission and Michal Kovács working for Slovak professionals abroad program in organization LEAF.

Twelve graduates of western Universities took part in the research and all of them spend at least one year at the foreign university. They studied at various universities in the US, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland. According to the Ms. Paniaková students are seeking for so-called big names universities and in general they are mostly interested in most prestige universities which are well known in Slovakia. Applicants usually argue that “when so much money is spent, it has to worth”. She said students often want to fill in all three applications for the most prestigious universities despite the fact they do not need to be necessarily most appropriate for their professional and career plans. It is as well difficult to convince students to change their opinion. As well, in reality very often less known universities are better in specific areas. That is why more experienced academics and researchers, are not seeking “big names” universities. On the other side the most prestigious universities are very well known to employers. Slovak reality shows that ranking and university prestige plays a role in job offers from employers. Also Ms. Kovács have agreed that there is a positive correlation between university ranking (or university name) and the employment. For the employers it is prestigious to hire a graduate of “big name” university. The interest of applicants in prestigious universities is also proved by our research, because our respondents were studying for example on Princeton University, Harvard Law School and etc. Two thirds of participants studied degree program. The tuition fees were mostly covered by the scholarship of on EU or North American country (5 responses), the graduates were covering the fees by themselves (3 responses) or by other not specified ways (3 responses) in only one case it was covered by private funds. On the other side in any case it was covered by the scholarship of the Slovak government, despite Slovakia is offering different types of financial support. Two thirds of participants in the research came back home to Slovakia after graduation and five of them were required to do it because the study program conditions. As Ms. Paniaková explained, all participants of the Fulbright program are required to return back to Slovakia by the condition of the scholarship, because they grant visa that require to return back from the US for two years. She specified that researchers generally return back to home university to their previous position after program ends and also approximately one half of students return back and stay in Slovakia, or at least in Europe (often in Czech Republic). Presently the majority of respondents of our questioner live in Slovakia, some of them live in Czech Republic as well and one of them lives in Mexico. Ms. Paniaková completed this information on the bases of their experiences from Fulbright programs. According to her, study program graduates are required to return back, but more than half of them are seeking jobs abroad, mainly in EU countries due to the European free market, the most frequently in Czech Republic. So we can conclude that Slovakia is suffering by the brain drain. In her opinion the possible motivator factors why to seek for job in Slovakia are family relationships and good job offers (good terms, mainly with competitive salary). Mr. Kovács added that incentives to Western universities’ graduates for seeking for employment in Slovakia could be job opportunities (job content, salary, possibility of learning new things and self-development, composition of team – the possibility to learn something from team leader), patriotism, family, friends and cultural proximity. On the other side according to his opinion there could be also some impediments as for example problem to fit in company culture, problem of transferability of knowledge, financial evaluation, insufficient personal and carrier growth. In general we can say that there are only individual and subjective impediments for working in

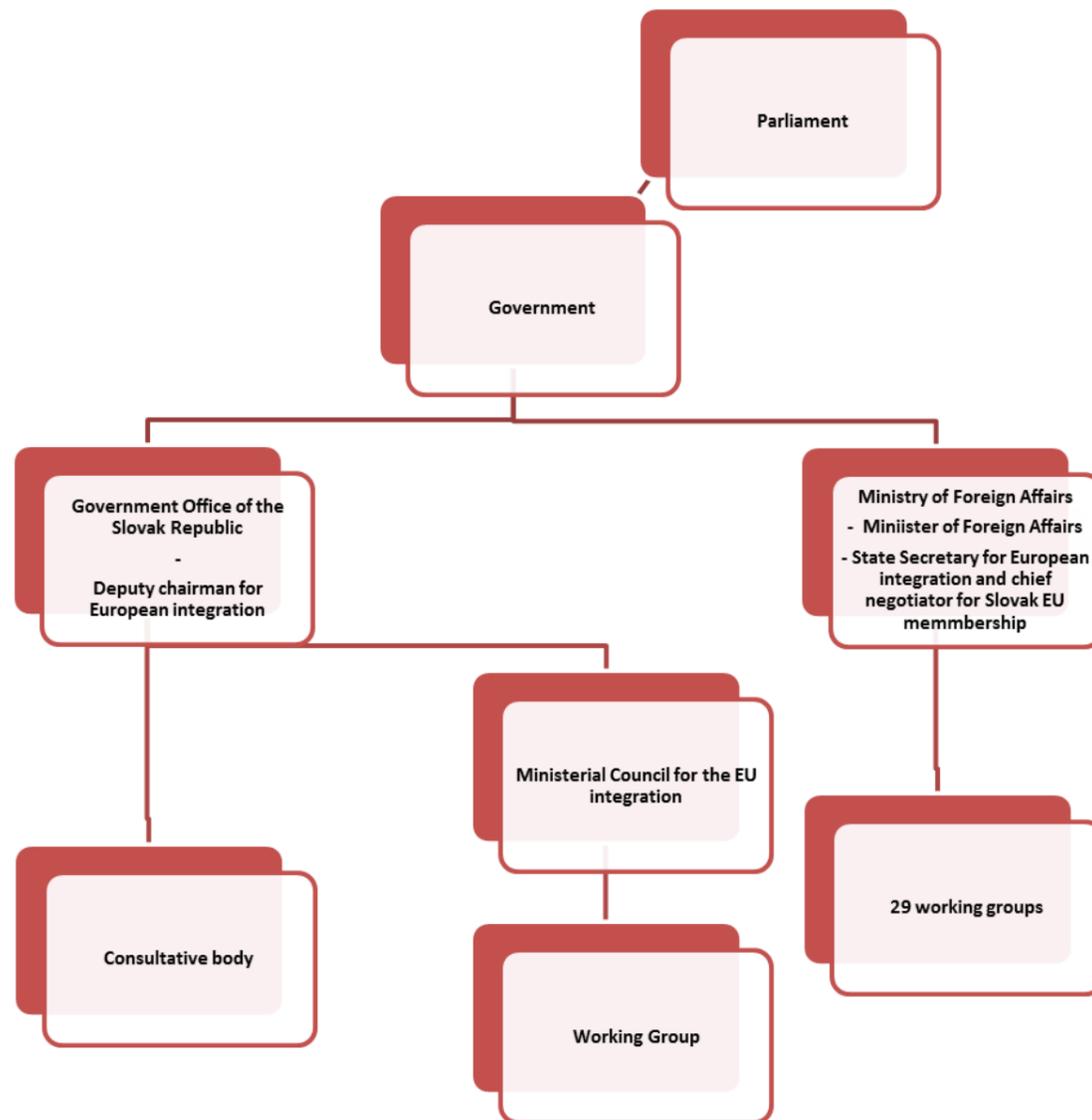
the in the public sector or higher education institutions for graduates of western universities and there are no formal hindrances.

The most important reason to study abroad was selected the low quality of education in Slovakia (5 responses), following by interest to improve professional skills (4) and better career opportunities abroad (2). The research confirms the information from SAIA which was described before, the majority of respondents studied social sciences or humanities, but also graduates of economics, law or public policy were included into the research. Two thirds of respondents confirm that they currently work in the same field that they had their specialization in. The majority of them were after graduation trying to find job in public sector (5) and business (4) followed by the NGO sector (2). The reality was quite different only two of them found job in public sector, five in business, two in NGO and rest of them found other not specified type of job. All of them agree that their study abroad was a help in job seeking process, despite the fact that not all of them found it easy to find a job after graduation and comeback to Slovakia. At the same time they agree that they use very much the experience and knowledge from the western country in their professional activities and they come across with positive bias based on their Western studies. Mr. Kovács confirmed that graduates of Western universities are more interesting for potential employers, because of their knowledge. Employers expect that they are more innovative, because the study systems are different in Western universities. On the other side young professionals often think that there is no demand for them to work in Slovakia.

Ten from twelve respondents specified the satisfaction from what they do as their mid-term/ long-term professional ambition, followed by influence, recognition and respect. Simultaneously they are convinced that thanks to their western studies they can bring a change to their professional fields and partially they have already succeeded. To contribute to the quality change of Slovakia they are disposed to sacrifice their time and money. Respect and recognition, competitive salary and connection and influence could make a job in public sector attractive for them but majority of them is convinced that they can contribute more to the quality change in Slovakia being outside the public sector. Ms. Paniaková completed that alumni in most cases bring with them from western countries new standards and values and a lot of energy to implement and enforce them in Slovakia but in reality this vision very often quickly disappear, because there are too many barriers. Mr. Kovács added that environment and culture influence your future decisions, so if you are satisfied with the environment where you study you are trying to create it again at home and the liberal and democratic environment characteristic for western countries is very example for development of Slovakia. It means that graduates of Western universities may often serve as bottom-up change agents who challenge and improve the status quo in country.

Attachments

Picture 1 Coordination of EU integration process in SR



18

Table 2. Slovak students enrolled on foreign universities

| | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|------|------|------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Australia | 0 | 0 | 25 | 54 | 109 | 135 | 113 | 121 | 106 | 91 | 80 | 77 | 69 | 69 |
| Austria | 573 | 718 | 892 | 1081 | 1217 | 1387 | 1515 | 1214 | 1228 | 1301 | 1470 | 1468 | 1638 | 1672 |
| Belgium | 0 | 29,946 | 35 | 44 | 54 | 47 | 59 | 243 | 90 | 86 | 68 | 94 | 142 | 155 |
| Canada | 9 | 10 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 162 | 0 | 174 | 132 | 165,37 | 155,73 | 171 | 138 |
| Czech Republic | 1038 | 1150 | 1771 | 3695 | 4918 | 6938 | 7723 | 10119 | 14664 | 16505 | 18621 | 20057 | 22427 | 24544 |
| Denmark | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 12 | 14 | 24 | 41 | 54 | 87 | 150 | 184 | 269 |
| Finland | 6 | 5 | 9 | 14 | 19 | 19 | 22 | 22 | 21 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 26 | 28 |
| France | 139 | 168 | 202 | 263 | 285 | 414 | 438 | 420 | 415 | 380 | 399 | 424 | 414 | 459 |
| Germany | 476 | 752 | 814 | 1033 | 1313 | 1514 | 2900 | 3003,5 | 2969,11 | 2830,38 | 2436,85 | 2237,85 | 2205,15 | 1996,42 |
| Greece | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 8 | 13 |
| Hungary | 529 | 724 | 0 | 1783 | 2071 | 2441 | 2447 | 2341 | 2324 | 2296 | 2178 | 4466 | 4696 | 4758 |
| Iceland | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 15 | 15 | 24 | 17 | 18 |
| Ireland | 0 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 15 | 19 | 32 | 62 | 180 | 169 |
| Italy | 52,44 | 44 | 62 | 73 | 93 | 130 | 148 | 164 | 178 | 186 | 205 | 206 | 190 | 206 |
| Jpapan | 18 | 14 | 20 | 20 | 25 | 23 | 22 | 29 | 23 | 21 | 20 | 21 | 28 | 29 |
| Korea | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 13 | 8 |
| Luxemburg | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 8 | 12 | 17 | 0 |
| Mexico | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Netherlands | 0 | 15 | 19 | 18 | 24 | 67 | 72 | 132 | 163 | 171 | 148 | 195 | 255 | 348 |
| New Zelnd | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 30,18 | 38 | 32,22 | 39 |
| Norway | 4 | 5 | 12 | 16 | 14 | 20 | 44 | 51 | 47 | 35 | 38 | 30 | 30 | 45 |
| Poland | 76 | 57 | 60 | 73 | 109 | 180 | 119 | 126 | 160 | 139 | 119 | 401 | 190 | 254 |
| Portugal | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 15 | 16 | 33 | 27 | 41 | 39 |
| Spain | 5 | 11 | 43 | 72 | 86 | 97 | 79 | 111 | 123 | 127 | 162 | 235 | 286 | 312 |
| Sweden | 13 | 22 | 27 | 29 | 37 | 53 | 162 | 85 | 70 | 85 | 47 | 54 | 71 | 64 |
| Switzerland | 54 | 67 | 88 | 93 | 120 | 159 | 348 | 365 | 330 | 296 | 295 | 300 | 315 | 336 |
| Turkey | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| United Kingdom | 74 | 114,868 | 138 | 130 | 141 | 177 | 486 | 1032 | 1808 | 2518 | 3127 | 3821 | 4133 | 4269 |
| United states | 325,81 | 428,058 | 459,731 | 467,487 | 627 | 610 | 585 | 636,08 | 721,74 | 605,08 | 536,57 | 534,07 | 461,87 | 410,99 |

Source: OECD.StatExtracts: Foreign / international students enrolled. Available from: <<http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=RFOREIGN#>>