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**THE PROMOTION OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND  
THE CONSEQUENCES FOR POLAND'S MIGRATION PROBLEM**

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**Abstract:** The promotion of general education and university education – as part of the new educational reform – is a result primarily of the low formal education levels for the adult population, which were ascertained at the end of the 1990s.

Fundamentally, the necessity to improve the level of education of Polish citizens is beyond question. However, this "catching up development" over such a short time period causes several problems:

In this context, the key question has to be whether the Polish economy is capable of efficiently absorbing the current and - more to the point - the expected future university graduate figures, i.e., can it give these people jobs according to their qualifications? There is also the question of whether the aspirations and career wishes – which are now significantly increased – can be fulfilled. The experiences of the last decade have shown that the actual life prospects and individual opportunities for development were decisive for the migratory behaviour of highly qualified people. In order to answer these questions, a comparison will be made between the currently observed structure of the demand for manpower and the supply of university graduates.

In summary, it can be concluded that a "boisterous" development in the university sector (without taking into account the existing demand barriers) led to a substantial "supersaturating" of the labour market. Consequently, at the present, a university degree is – unlike in the 1990s – neither a guarantee of a good salary, even less so of a career, nor of even finding a job at all!

Increasing unemployment figures among people with a university education and within the framework of university graduates is officially regarded as a new and increasingly disturbing phenomenon of the last few years. For Polish society, this means a substantial waste of human capital. What is more, it cannot be ignored that the loss of human capital can take the form of a "brain drain". In this context, attention should be drawn to a continuously growing demand for highly qualified persons on the part of the "old " EU states. This frequently leads to organised recruiting campaigns in professions where there are shortages – as currently observable in the health sector. As evidenced by previous reports, the existence of demand does not by itself spark off migration. However, the current danger of a "brain drain" must be taken seriously.

The authors hope that some ideas are also relevant for certain developments in Bulgaria.

**Key words:** general education, university education, new educational reform, human capital, migration problem

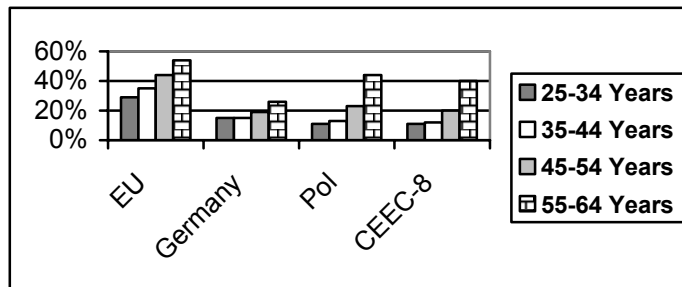
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The promotion of general education and university education – as part of the new educational reform – is a result primarily of the low formal education levels for the adult

population, which were ascertained at the end of the 1990s. However, these low levels can be brought into more perspective by breaking them down into age groups.

**Diagram:** Share of population that did not complete secondary level II (classes 10-13) according to age groups - 2000



Source: own elaboration based on Europäische Kommission/Eurydice/Eurostat (Ed.): Schlüsselzahlen zum Bildungswesen in Europa 2002, Luxembourg 2002, in: [http://www.eurydice.org/Doc\\_intermediaires/indicators/de/frameset\\_key\\_data.html](http://www.eurydice.org/Doc_intermediaires/indicators/de/frameset_key_data.html), Chapter A, p.A4.

The above diagram presents a totally different perspective. At the onset of the new reform, the share of the population that had not completed the secondary level II (classes 10-13) was only high for the age group of 55-64 years, i.e., 44%.

This figure was higher than the average level of the CEEC-8, but was, at the same time, lower than the average of the "old" EU countries. The percentage of the younger generations without completed secondary level schooling is noticeably low: in the age group 25-34 years, it was approx. 11% and in the age group 35-44 years, it was 13%. In reverse, then, it can be claimed that these age groups in particular have a significantly high formal level of education (i.e., having at least completed the secondary level II (classes 10-13) vis à vis the average of the "old" EU states and Germany, too. Here, then, the successes of the Polish education expansion of the 1990s again become measurable. Since the education expansion in the secondary field involved a certain automatism with regard to developments in the university field, it is not surprising that this expanded continuously during the following years. The number of universities increased from 246 in 1997/1998 to 377 in the scholastic year 2002/2003 and further to 400 in 2003/2004.

This development is still linked to the establishing of universities in the non-public sector. Correspondingly, during the same period, student figures increased from 1091.8 thousand to 1800.5 thousand and further to 1858.7 in 2003/2004. Furthermore, the coefficient of the "gross scholarization" in 1997/1998, i.e., 29.4%, rose significantly to over 45% in 2002/2003<sup>6</sup>.

Since the onset of the 1990s, the total number of students has increased 4.5-fold and the number of graduates 6-fold<sup>7</sup>. As a consequence of this exemplary development, Poland was already able in 2001, i.e., **before** the structural changes in the secondary level II took effect<sup>8</sup>, to claim

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS) (Ed.): Das kleine statistische Jahrbuch Polens 2003, in: [http://www.stat.gov.pl/serwis/polska/2003/rocznik9/edu\\_k.htm](http://www.stat.gov.pl/serwis/polska/2003/rocznik9/edu_k.htm) (Edukacja i wychowanie/edukacja), p.2f; Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS) (Ed.): Das kleine statistische Jahrbuch Polens 2004, in: <http://www.stat.gov.pl/serwis/polska/2004/dzial9/rys16.htm>; O.V., in: <http://www.eurydice.org/Eurybase/Application/gettext.asp?tablen...> (Point 6.5. Dane statystyczne, p.1). The share in Germany in June 2001 was approx. 20 percent.

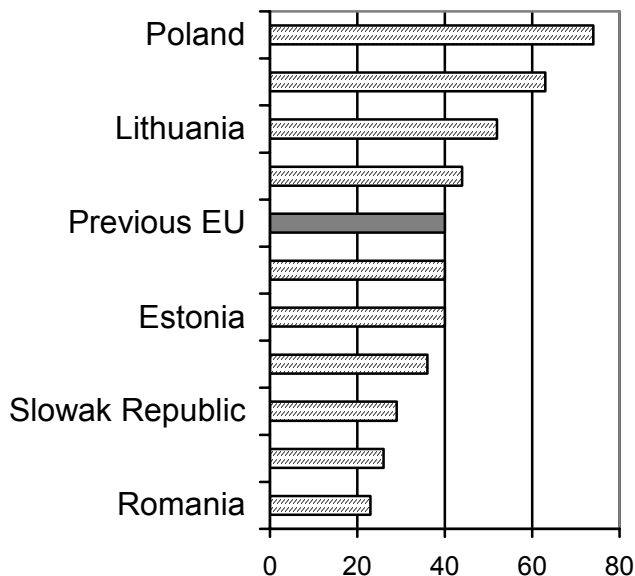
<sup>7</sup> Cf. Kabaj, M.: Strategie i programy przeciwdziałania bezrobociu w Unii Europejskiej i w Polsce, Warszawa 2004, 2004, p.216.

<sup>8</sup> In this context, it should be remembered that these reforms serve to open up access to university education even further.

the highest number of university graduates – both in comparison with the other CEECs

and with a significant lead over the previous EU average.

**Diagram: Completed tertiary education in 2001 per 1,000 persons aged between 20 and 29 years**



Source: Plünnecke, A.; Werner, D.: Das Humankapital der EU-Beitrittskandidaten (iw-trends Nr.1/2004), in:

<http://www.iwkoeln.de/data/pdf/content/trends01-04-7.pdf>, p.3.

This diagram allows us the conclusion that the assumption that there is a lack of educational participation in the university sector no longer holds true.<sup>9</sup>

Quite apart from this fact, the government programme "Development of Human Resources 2004-2006" includes quantitative directives with regard to further expansion of university education: It is assumed therein that the coefficient of the gross scholarization in the university sector will reach approx. 50% in 2005 and approx. 65% in 2010.<sup>10</sup> This would imply a further increase in the number of students of approx. 700-800 thousand, whereby in 2010, the figure of approx. 2.5-2.6 million

students would be reached. According to Kabaj's calculations, the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants will be approx. 660 – and, thus, "the highest figure in the world" – twice as high as the average in the "old" EU in 1999/2000.<sup>11</sup>

Fundamentally, the necessity to improve the level of education of Polish citizens is beyond question. However, this "catching up development" over such a short time period causes several problems:

In this context, the key question has to be whether the Polish economy is capable of efficiently absorbing the current and – more to the point – the expected future university graduate figures, i.e., can it give these people jobs according to their qualifications?<sup>12</sup> There is also the question of whether the aspirations and career

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Kabaj, M.: a.a.O., 2004, p.216.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ministerstwo Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej (Ed.): Sektorowy Program Operacyjny. Rozwój Zasobów Ludzkich 2004-2006, Warszawa 2003, p.65.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kabaj, M.: a.a.O., 2004, p.221.

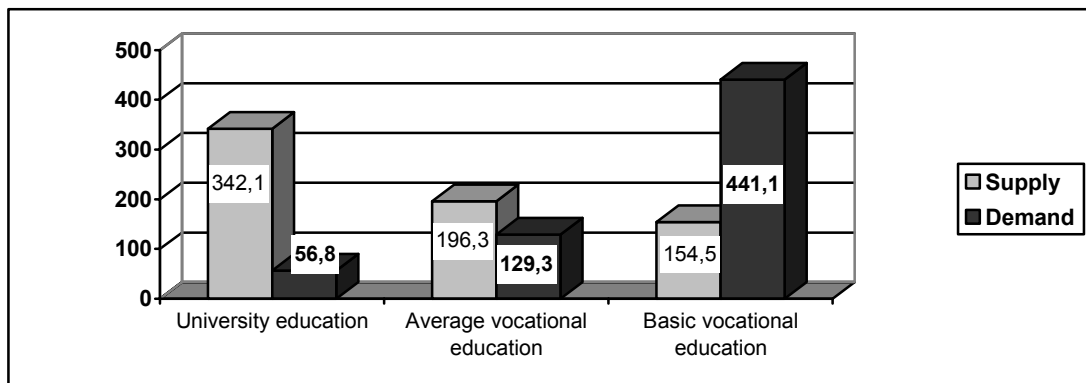
<sup>12</sup> Cf. Kabaj, M.: a.a.O., 2004, p.218.

wishes – which are now significantly increased – can be fulfilled. The experiences of the last decade have shown that the actual life prospects and individual opportunities for development were decisive for the migratory behaviour of highly qualified people. In order to answer these questions, a comparison will be made between the currently observed structure of the demand for manpower<sup>13</sup> and the supply of university graduates.

The share of the effective demand for manpower holding a university degree has increased with regard to the total demand from 5.5% in 1998 to 8% in 2002. The share of university graduates in 2002 rose to 38.0% of the total figures for school leavers who had at least completed the secondary level II

(classes 10-13).<sup>14</sup> The following diagram shows this comparison lucidly in absolute figures.

**Diagram: Supply and demand for graduates/school leavers according to educational level in 2002 (in thousands)**



Source: Own representation based on Kabaj, M.: Strategie i programy przeciwdziałania bezrobociu w Unii Europejskiej i w Polsce. Warszawa 2004 n 230

<sup>13</sup> The demand for manpower is regarded here as a real demand, i.e. the number of allocated jobs is observed. It should be taken into consideration that finding employment can refer to both graduates and to unemployed persons. For an interesting survey on Education between Image and Identity see Vukovic, G., Ferjan, M.: Educational Institutions: Between Image and Identity, in Florjancic, J., Paape, B., (eds)., Organisation and Management, Frankfurt, 2003, p.87ff; see also the exemplary articles in on the necessary education in tourism management in Ovsenik, R., Kiereta, I. Destination Management, Frankfurt 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kabaj, M.: a.a.O., 2004, p.229.

The comparison between the supply of university graduates, which lies at 342.1 thousand, and the number of persons with a university degree who actually gained employment in 2002 results in the conclusion that the Polish economy has not created enough jobs for the number of university graduates coming onto the labour market.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the supply of university graduates in 2002 was over proportional<sup>16</sup> vis à vis the corresponding demand. In the next few years, the supply of university graduates will be determined by the current educational structure.<sup>17</sup> Since, in 2002, the share of students (49.6%) was dominant (32% in 1998), this would imply that the established mismatch between the effective workforce demand and the supply of university graduates is going to increase further.

This mismatch is reflected in the development tendencies of the unemployment figures according to educational level.

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<sup>15</sup> With regard to the figure of 342.1 thousand, this also involves graduates from distance learning universities or students who have undertaken evening studies, possibly whilst being in employment. Despite this restriction, the a.m. tendency claim remains unaffected. The corresponding comparison for vocational education (particularly basic vocational level school leavers) is dealt with in the following sub-section.

<sup>16</sup> Reference is made to a general economic stagnation in Poland. On account of the falling growth rates in previous years, a drop in the employment rate as well as the dismantling of jobs could be observed. In 2000 the actual demand was approx. 61.4 thousand against a supply of 261.1 thousand graduates. See: Kabaj, M.: *Optymalizacja struktur kształcenia zawodowego i popytu na prace. Czy grozi nam masowe bezrobocie absolwentów szkół wyższych?*, in: Jeruszka, U. (Ed.), *Optymalizacja kształcenia zawodowego z punktu widzenia potrzeb rynku pracy*, Warszawa 2002, 2002, p.40.

<sup>17</sup> This is defined as the share of school pupils/students at the respective educational institutions upwards of secondary level II (classes 10-13) in the total number of students/pupils of all educational institutions upwards of secondary level II.

**Table:Registered unemployed according to educational level in the years 1995-2003 (as of 31.12. of the previous year)**

Education	Registered unemployed			
	1995	2000	2002	2003
Total in thousands	2628.8	2702.6	3217.0	3175.7
Of which according to educational level in %				
University level	1.5	2.6	3.9	4.4
Post secondary and average vocational level	20.2	20.8	21.2	21.2
Average general educational level	7.2	6.2	6.2	6.5
Basic vocational level	39.0	37.0	36.2	35.5
Primary educational level	32.1	33.4	32.5	32.4

Source: Główny Urząd Statystyczny (GUS) (Ed.): Das kleine statistische Jahrbuch Polens 2004, in: <http://www.stat.gov.pl/serwis/polska/2004/dzial5/obrazy5/rys17.htm>, Tab.12 (92).

Unemployment for university graduates is, with a share of 4.4% (i.e., 139.73 thousand) of the total unemployment figures, lowest, whereby initially the correlation between the degree of education and unemployment is confirmed. A closer look, however, reveals that unemployment amongst people with a university degree displays a systematically increasing dynamic. It should be considered, though, that factual unemployment is estimated to be higher, since, according to various estimates, every second unemployed person with a university degree does not register as unemployed.<sup>18</sup> The highest rates of

unemployment can be found amongst graduates of those specialised areas which, a few years ago, were in great demand – e.g., "management and marketing", "economics", "administration". As these specialised areas continue to be very popular with students for their studies<sup>19</sup>, this

via "connections". See: Marciniak, J.: Zatrudnienie. Struktura bezrobocia. Jednak to dyplom daje prace, in: <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/dzialy/2.html?numer=889>, p.1. Also see diagram V in the annexes.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Jawor, A.: Szanse absolwentów szkół wyższych na rynku pracy, in: Polityka społeczna, Jg. 29 (336), No.3, Warszawa 2002, p.37. In the academic year 2002/2003, approx. 15.2% of students (disregarding the students at the polytechnics) selected the study programme "Management and Marketing", making it the most popular choice. "Education" ranked second with approx. 9% of total students and "Economics" came third with 7.5%. In this context, attention is drawn to the field of distance learning and evening study courses – which have to be paid for: in these courses, 20% of students studied "Management and Marketing"

<sup>18</sup> The reasons behind this failing to register as "unemployed" are seen by Kabaj to be, amongst other things, prestige reasons. The persons involved hope to shortly find a job or they believe that the employment centres are not likely to find a suitable job for them. Also, many graduates believe that they can find a job

again throws up the problem of the lack of coordination between educational policy and the education available with the actual requirements of the labour market.

In summary, it can be concluded that a "boisterous" development in the university sector (without taking into account the existing demand barriers) led to a substantial "supersaturating" of the labour market. Consequently, at the present, a university degree is – unlike in the 1990s – neither a guarantee of a good salary, even less so of a career, nor of even finding a job at all!<sup>20</sup>

Increasing unemployment figures among people with a university education and within the framework of university graduates is officially regarded as a new and increasingly disturbing phenomenon of the last few years. For Polish society, this means a substantial waste of human capital.<sup>21</sup> What is more, it cannot be ignored that the loss of human capital can take the form of a "brain drain". In this context, attention should be drawn to a continuously growing demand for highly qualified persons on the part of the "old " EU states. This frequently leads to organised recruiting campaigns in professions where there are shortages – as currently observable in the health sector.<sup>22</sup> As evidenced by previous

reports,<sup>23</sup> the existence of demand does not by itself spark off migration. However, the current danger of a "brain drain" must be taken seriously.

On the basis of established developments, university graduates increasingly regard their life prospects as unfulfilling. In this context, the current "holding out" attitude in Poland - unlike in the 1990s – is gaining a negative option value which is leading to an increased tendency to consider emigration and possibly to actually go through with it.<sup>24</sup>

The "brain drain" problem is not limited to the persons who have completed their university education but also to those students who are still studying at university. In order to assess their tendency to emigrate, reference is made to Jalowiecki's findings on educational quality in the university sector. The first indication for the quality of education at university level is provided by a comparison of the annual spending per student in Poland and with other EU countries.

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and 12% "Education". A current high participation in the area of educational studies is a problem in as much as that, as of 2006, the first age-groups of the demographic dip will reach school age (it is estimated that the number of children and youngsters will drop by about 21% in comparison with 1998). Cf. Pomianek, T.; Rozmus, A.; Witkowski, K.; Bienia, M.: Raport. Rynek pracy w Polsce i Unii Europejskiej, 3. erweiterte und aktualisierte Auflage, Rzeszow 2004, p.27ff.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Kabaj, M.: a.a.O., 2004, p.218f.

<sup>21</sup> Unemployment means that university graduates lose the opportunity to gain practical career experience. What is more, they quickly lose their aptitude for professions on account of this lack of experience. Cf. Ministerstwo Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej (Ed.): a.a.O., 2003, p.32.

<sup>22</sup> Currently, Polish doctors are being recruited particularly in Sweden and Denmark. See: Ciesla, J.; Rybak, A.: Operacja emigracja, in: Polityka, Nr.41/2004, in: <http://polityka.onet.pl/162,1192132,1,0,2473-2004-41,artykul.html>, p.2.

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<sup>23</sup> See the criticism of Piore's approach to the dual labour market, considering IT employees as an example.

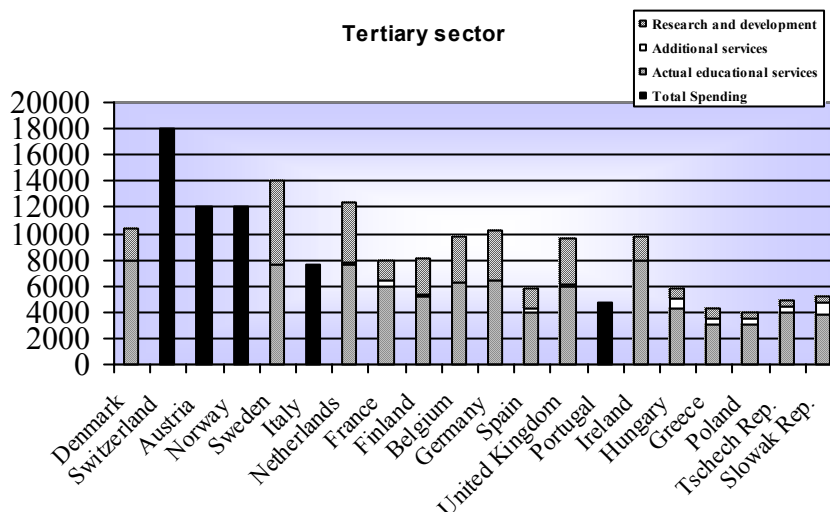
<sup>24</sup> The health sector provides a lucid example.

According to the chief professional body of doctors in Poland, of approx. 90 thousand physicians, 17 thousand are interested in emigrating. Up to the end of August 2004, approx. 1.6 thousand doctors had applied for a job abroad (mainly anaesthesiologists, internists, surgeons). See: Fandrejewska, A.: Leczenie lekarza rynkiem, in: Wprost Online, No. 1133 (15 August 2004), in:

<http://www.wprost.pl/ar/?O=64650&C=57>, p.1; Ciesla, J.; Rybak, A.: a.a.O., p.2.

Diagram:

### Annual spending on educational institutions per student in US-Dollar (purchasing power adjusted)



Source: OECD (Ed.): Bildung auf einen Blick. OECD-Indikatoren 2002, 2002, p.162.

As the diagram clearly shows, Poland is, with regard to how much it spends on its students, the "tail ender" in Europe. The share of public spending in the university sector was, in 1999, 0.74% of the GDP, i.e., it remained significantly below the level of 1990. Taking into consideration spending in the following years (0.68% of the GDP in 2000 and 0.65% of the GDP in 2002, it is evident that, currently, the educational expansion is not only unaccompanied by a corresponding increase of state spending on university education, but actually accompanied by a systematically shrinking financing share.<sup>25</sup>

An increasing problem at the moment has been identified as an insufficient number of university teachers. This is linked – still – to the poor financial incentives in the education sector. In the light of the strong growth dynamic of the student figures, this leads to systematically worsening teacher-student ratios. Whereas at the start of the 1990s, the number of students per

university teacher was 6, it is currently 20. Demographical data indicate increasingly ageing professors, which is likely to aggravate the already existing problems.<sup>26</sup> On account of the poor salaries in the state university sector, university teachers are increasingly taking on additional teaching jobs, whereby certain synergy effects are created, but nevertheless a certain threat is posed to the quality of education.

Accusations of poor tutorship, poor preparation and implementation of classes at university are rife. Key criticism is aimed at the fact that the focus is – still – on the appropriation of "encyclopaedic knowledge". This involves the student gaining a good level of general knowledge yet failing to gain the ability to put that knowledge into practice.<sup>27</sup>

The problem of educational quality in the Polish university sector is also made visible by the present situation on the labour market. Particularly in the context of

<sup>25</sup> Reference is made here to Poland's significantly lower GDP in comparison with the old EU countries. See: Pomianek, T.; Rozmus, A.; Witkowski, K.; Bienia, M.: a.a.O., S.29; Kabaj, M.: a.a.O., 2004, p.222.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ministerstwo Gospodarki, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej (Ed.): a.a.O., 2003, p.65; Kabaj, M.: a.a.O., 2004, p.216.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Pomianek, T.; Rozmus, A.; Witkowski, K.; Bienia, M.: a.a.O., p.31.



increased competition between highly qualified people, many employers regard a degree from a Polish university as inadequate. In other words, foreign qualifications and degrees seriously improve the career prospects of the university graduates. This indicates that students will be even more interested in visiting "good" foreign universities for a few semesters or even in taking a full degree there. In this context, reference is made to Poland's accession to the European Union. This has resulted, on the one hand, in Poland becoming more involved in the EU community programmes for increasing mobility in the educational sector<sup>28</sup> and, on the other, means a general lowering of legal and – to some extent – financial barriers which existed for undertaking a period of study abroad "off a student's own bat".<sup>29</sup> A general improvement of access to studying abroad for Polish students is, basically, both positive and desirable. However, the dangers should not be overlooked which are emanating from the tense situation on the current labour market for highly qualified people. This has the consequence that Polish students regard their own development opportunities and life prospects in Poland as inadequate. On

<sup>28</sup> The Socrates programme serves to increase mobility in the area of general education. The Erasmus part of the Socrates Programme allows university students to study for 3 to 12 months abroad. Poland has formally participated in the Socrates programme since 1998.

<sup>29</sup> Since Poland's access to the EU, Polish students enjoy the same rights regarding access to university education as do other EU citizens. This facilitates the formalities (visa) which are involved with the visit abroad. The lowering of financial barriers for Polish students is composed of certain "old" EU countries, e.g. United Kingdom, allowing significantly varying study fees for foreigners from outside the EU (from approx. 8 to 19 thousand pounds according to which study programme) and for EU citizens (approx. 1 thousand pounds). The newly acquired EU status means that study fees for "good" foreign universities (e.g. Oxford) compare with – or are even lower – than those required for certain distance learning and evening class studies or for the private universities in Poland. See: Pszczolkowska, D.: Polacy ruszyli na studia do Wielkiej Brytanii, in: <http://praca.gazeta.pl/praca/2029020,56280,2181779.html>.

this account, the fear expressed by Jalowicki that some students will stay abroad permanently, is more pertinent now than ever. However, it should be stressed that degrees gained from foreign universities can increase the opportunities of finding a job in the target migration country; there is a danger that Polish students will be "snapped up" – particularly in those professional areas where there is a lack of candidates (e.g., students of medicine).

Polish students' interest in working in the "old" EU countries is confirmed by the results of current surveys. According to one survey, which was implemented in June 2004 on behalf of the Office of the Committee for European Integration (UKIE),<sup>30</sup> the "real" migration potential was estimated to be 15% of the students interviewed. "Real migration potential" refers to those persons who have already undertaken certain activities with a view to emigrating, who have friends abroad and who realise what costs for emigration would be involved. Amongst 1329 persons who expressed a general interest in working abroad, the poor wages in Poland (25%) and the weak situation of the labour market (23%) dominated – as expected – as motives for migrating.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the survey delivered results about the duration of the planned stay abroad. 18% of the students wanted to work in an EU country permanently – this percentage can be regarded as "high".<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The survey included 2014 students at state universities of the 10 largest academic centres in Poland. See: Urząd Komitetu Integracji Europejskiej (Ed.): Gotowość i potencjał migracyjny młodzieży, Warszawa 2004, in: <http://www2.ukie.gov.pl/WWW/news.nsf/0/A5B997CDA41F96...> (Power-Point-Presentation on migratory potential of students), p.10f.

<sup>31</sup> 20% of interested persons indicated better working conditions abroad as their migration motive.

<sup>32</sup> Results of a further survey, which was undertaken with students from the four largest universities in Warsaw, made this clear; it was established that 50% of those asked were prepared to go abroad.

When perusing the above results of the surveys, it should be borne in mind that the intention to emigrate does not necessarily result in a person actually emigrating. Yet it must be stressed that the currently continuing expansion in the university sector will only serve to increase the existing "mismatch" on the labour market.

As this will very likely result in career prospects for highly qualified persons deteriorating further, it can be regarded as a substantial "push factor" for migration. In this context, then, the currently planned educational policy harbours the danger of an increasing brain drain in the future.

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