



ANALYSIS OF UKRAINIAN STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RZESZÓW (POLAND) AND KEY ASPECTS OF EIUS PROJECT EVENTS



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INTRODUCTION

During peacetime, the primary factors influencing the choice of Poland as a study destination for Ukrainian youth seeking education abroad were primarily geographical and cultural proximity, a belief in the high quality of education, and the opportunity to obtain a diploma from a European Union member state¹. In 2019, there were over 39,000 Ukrainian students in Poland, accounting for half of all international students in the country. From that point, both the number and share of Ukrainian students among international students gradually declined.

However, Russia's aggression against Ukraine caused a significant increase in the Ukrainian population in Poland, which also boosted interest among young Ukrainians in the educational opportunities offered by Polish universities. In the 2022/23 academic year, the number of Ukrainian students rose by over 12,119, reaching 48,150² and accounting for approximately 47% of all international students.

During the 2022/23 academic year, Ukrainian students were the dominant group at both undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as in integrated master's programs. Most enrolled in part-time programs at private universities. The proportion of Ukrainian students in full-time programs among all international students at private universities was 34.1%. Most Ukrainian students chose to study in major academic cities like Warsaw or Kraków. In the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, they represented 24% of all international students (11,500 individuals). In the next-ranked voivodeship (Małopolskie), this number was 6,400 fewer than in Mazowieckie. More than 4,000 Ukrainian students also enrolled in universities in the Dolnośląskie, Lubelskie, Wielkopolskie, and Łódzkie voivodeships. The majority pursued undergraduate studies, with far fewer in graduate or integrated master's programs (75% in undergraduate studies, 20% in graduate studies, and 5% in integrated master's programs during the 2022/23 academic year)³.

¹<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/konferencje/regionalna-inicjatywa-doskonalosci/zadania/studenci-z-ukrainy-w-systemie-szkolnictwa-wyzszego-w-wojewodztwie-podkarpackim> (accessed on October 17, 2024)

²<https://opi.org.pl/duzy-wzrost-liczby-studentow-z-ukrainy-nowy-raport-opi-cudzoziemcy-na-uczelniach-w-polsce/> (accessed on October 17, 2024)

³ Ibidem.

In the 2023/24 academic year, 1.245 million students were enrolled in Polish universities, including 107,000 international students. Most international students came from European countries, with the largest group being from Ukraine (46,200, or 43.1% of all international students)⁴.

The Podkarpackie Voivodeship, located near the Ukrainian border, plays a key role in cross-border cooperation and socio-economic development. Its eastern border also serves as an external boundary for NATO and the European Union, increasing its geopolitical significance. The unprecedented influx of refugees, the largest since World War II, posed a significant challenge to public administration, local governments, security institutions, and citizens alike⁵.

According to the Statistical Office in Rzeszów, at the start of the 2022/23 academic year, there were 3,100 international students in Podkarpackie universities, making up 7.3% of the total student population. Most came from countries east of Poland, with 65.9% from Ukraine, 12.6% from Kazakhstan, and 3.5% from Zimbabwe. The University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów hosted the largest number of international students—1,800 individuals (57.6%), followed by the College of Social and Economic Sciences in Przeworsk with 373 students (12.1%), and the University of Rzeszów with 336 students (10.9%).

In the academic year 2023/2024, the number of international students at the University of Rzeszów was 178, including 91 students with Ukrainian citizenship (51%).

Since the arrival of Ukrainian students at the University of Rzeszów, various initiatives have been undertaken to support young refugees in continuing their education. Both the university administration and the student community have made efforts to provide Ukrainian students with all necessary support and assistance related to academic activities⁶.

Students organized in Scientific Circles, the University Legal Clinic, and ELSA Rzeszów initiated assistance for those in need from Ukraine. This included organizing a collection drive within the Social Sciences College Institutes of the University of Rzeszów, gathering long-

⁴<https://naukawpolsce.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C103242%2Cgus-w-ub-roku-akademickim-w-polsce-ksztalcilo-sie-124-mln-studentow.html> (accessed on October 18, 2024)

⁵ <https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/konferencje/regionalna-inicjatywa-doskonosci/o-projekcie> (accessed on October 18, 2024)

⁶<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/kolegia/kolegium-nauk-przyrodniczych/kolegium/aktualnosci/drogie-studentki-i-drodzy-studenci-z-ukrainy.36224> (accessed on October 19, 2024)

lasting food, cosmetics, cleaning supplies, medical dressings, toys for children, and other items⁷.

Detailed information on available support for people from Ukraine was also published on the university's website, including information on legalizing residence in Poland⁸. It was noted that these processes are handled directly between students and the relevant institutions, and the University of Rzeszów does not mediate or possess the legal tools to secure the necessary documentation for foreigners⁹.

The University of Rzeszów has been actively engaged in assisting refugees from Ukraine. One notable initiative was the project titled "Skills - Language - Culture. Innovations in the Diagnosis and Education of Adult Ukrainian Citizens," carried out as part of the "CHANCE – New Opportunities for Adults" program, co-financed by the European Union under the Knowledge Education Development Operational Program 2014–2020. Participants improved their Polish language skills to facilitate effective communication. Training sessions were also provided, covering topics such as Polish institutions, job-seeking basics, legal employment in Poland, Polish culture, financial aspects, and transportation and communication. Participants could also access free legal advice and psychological support. This aid targeted individuals adjusting to new social conditions caused by the need to flee the war, many of whom were unfamiliar with the Polish language or local realities, including the functioning of public offices and institutions¹⁰.

The academic community continues to organize or co-organize various initiatives to support the integration of Ukrainian students into university life and the broader Polish society. These activities include projects, workshops, seminars, and cultural and educational events that

⁷<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/kolegia/kolegium-nauk-spoecznych/kolegium/aktualnosci/-studenci-ur-dla-ukrainy,36281> (accessed on October 19, 2024)

⁸<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/kolegia/kolegium-nauk-spoecznych/jednostki-naukowe/instytut-nauk-prawnych/aktualnosci/studenci-ur-dla-ukrainy-standwithukraine,36267> (accessed on October 19, 2024)

⁹ <https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/kandydat/rekrutacja-cudzoziemcow/legalizacja-pobytu> (accessed on October 19, 2024)

¹⁰<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/universytet/aktualnosci/kurs-jezyka-polskiego-i-cykl-szkolen-dla-obywateli-ukrainy,40874> (accessed on October 22, 2024).

help them adapt to their new environment, foster intercultural relationships, and strengthen their sense of belonging within the academic community¹¹.

Below is an overview of the **analysis of existing data describing the status quo of students with Ukrainian citizenship who have undertaken studies at the University of Rzeszów**. The text also **highlights the key aspects of events organized within the EIUS project**. The target groups of these events included:

1. Students with Ukrainian citizenship studying at the University of Rzeszów,
2. Polish citizens studying at the University of Rzeszów,
3. Academic teachers employed at the University of Rzeszów.

REPORT - ANALYSIS OF DATA OF UKRAINIAN STUDENTS STUDYING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RZESZÓW

The text below presents an analysis of secondary data available at the University of Rzeszów, characterizing the group of Ukrainian students.

1. Nationality
 - a. Ukraine,
 - b. Poland,
 - c. Portugal,
 - d. Russian Federation.

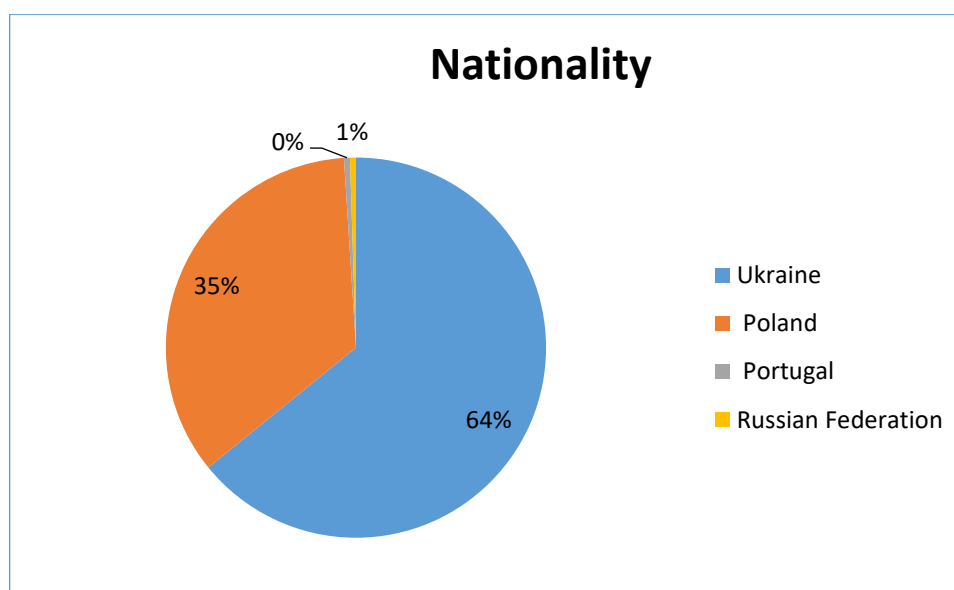
¹¹<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/uniwersytet/aktualnosci/polsko-ukrainski-studencki-dialog-naukowy,37806>;
<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/konferencje/regionalna-inicjatywa-doskonosci/o-projekcie>;
<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/kolegia/kolegium-nauk-spoecznych/jednostki-naukowe/instytut-ekonomii-i-finansow/aktualnosci/round-table-domestic-teaching-staff>; <https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/kolegia/kolegium-nauk-spoecznych/jednostki-naukowe/instytut-ekonomii-i-finansow/aktualnosci/world-cafe-ukrainian-students-ur>;
<https://www.ur.edu.pl/pl/kolegia/kolegium-nauk-spoecznych/jednostki-naukowe/instytut-ekonomii-i-finansow/aktualnosci/workshop-domestic-students> (accessed on October 22, 2024).

Results:

Nationality	Response rates	Percentages
a) Ukraine	127	64%
b) Poland	69	35%
c) Portugal	1	0,5%
d) Russian Federation	1	0,5%
Total	198	100%

Source: Own elaboration

Fig.1. Structure of respondents by nationality



Source: Own elaboration

A total of 198 Ukrainian students studying at the University of Rzeszów took part in the survey. The above data show that they are predominantly of Ukrainian nationality, which is reflected in their share of 64%, i.e. 127 persons. Polish citizenship is held by 69 students from Ukraine, i.e. 35% of the group of students surveyed. Among the students from Ukraine, there was also 1 student of Russian nationality and 1 student of Portuguese nationality.

2. Citizenship

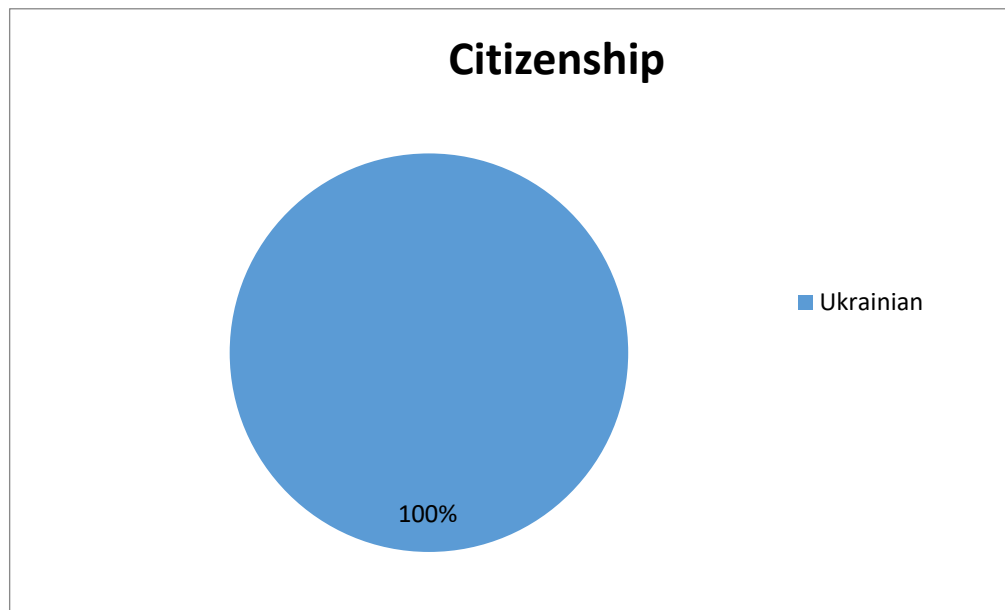
a. Ukrainian.

Results:

Citizenship	Response rates	Percentages
a) Ukrainian	198	100%
Total	198	100%

Source: Own elaboration

Fig.2. Structure of respondents by citizenship



Source: Own elaboration

The chart above provides data on the nationality of the sample of Ukrainian students studying at the University of Rzeszów. The sample consisted of 198 people. As can be seen from the analysis of the above data, 100% of the respondents have Ukrainian citizenship.

3. Mother tongue

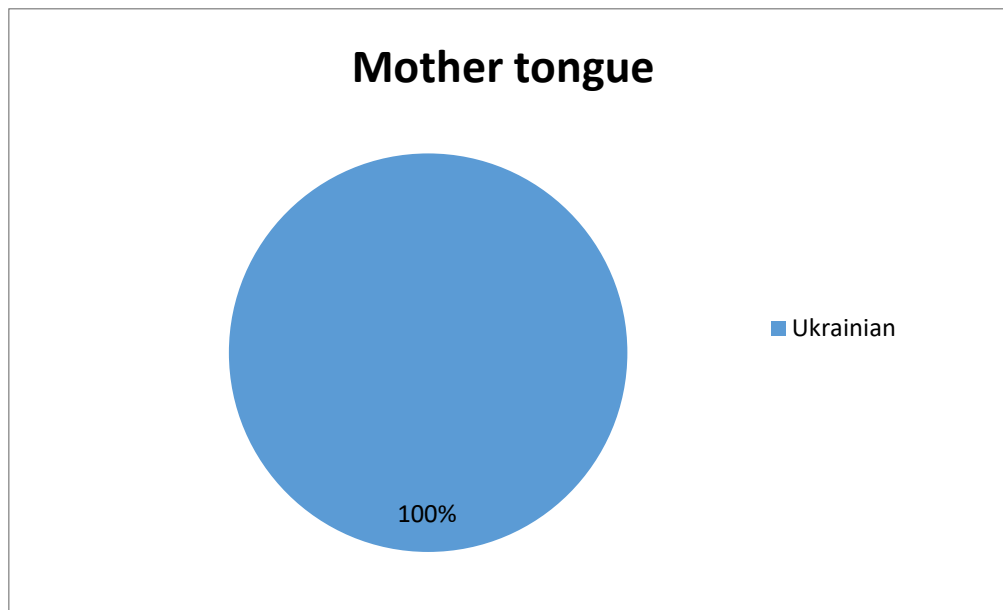
a. Ukrainian.

Results:

Mother tongue	Response rates	Percentages
a) Ukrainian	198	100%
Total	198	100%

Source: Own elaboration

Fig.3. Structure of respondents by mother tongue



Source: Own elaboration

The table above refers to the mother tongue of Ukrainian students studying at the University of Rzeszów. The data collected shows that 100% of the respondents, i.e. 198 people, declared Ukrainian as their mother tongue.

4. Type of study (full-time / part-time)

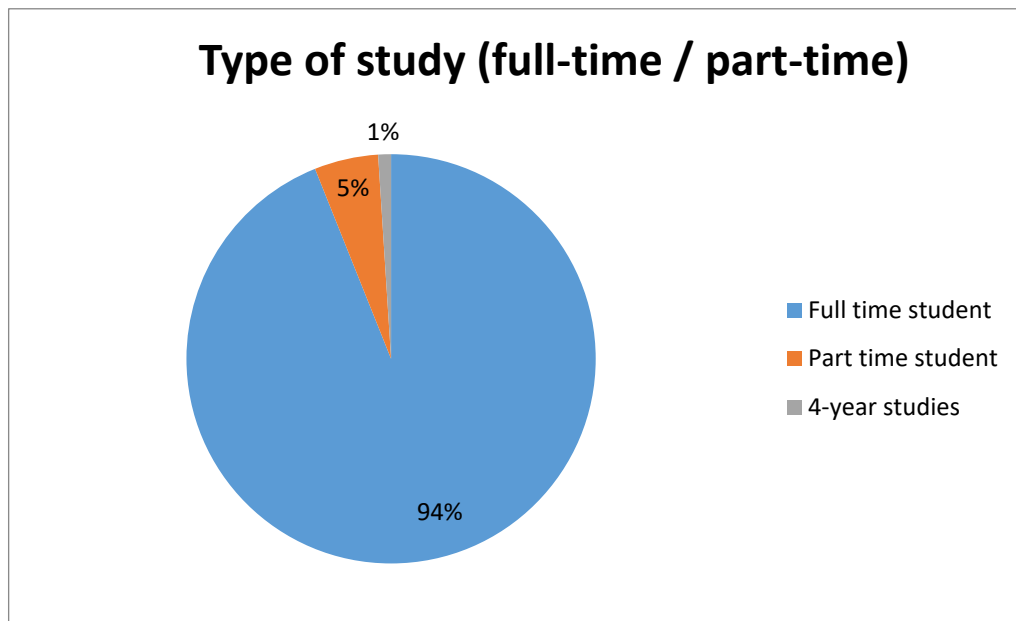
- a. Full time student,
- b. Part time student,
- c. 4-year studies.

Results:

Type of study (full-time / part-time)	Response rates	Percentages
a) Full time student	186	94%
b) Part time student	10	5%
c) 4-year studies	2	1%
Total	198	100%

Source: Own elaboration

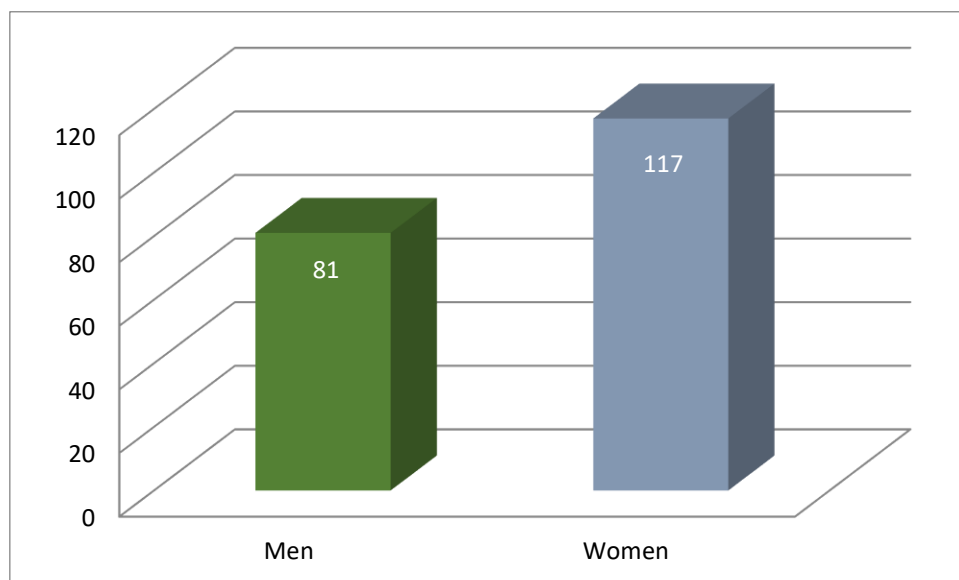
Fig.4. Structure of respondents by type of study



Source: Own elaboration

A total of 198 Ukrainian students studying at the University of Rzeszów took part in the survey. From the above data it can be seen that the vast majority of Ukrainian students - 95%, or 186 people - chose to study full-time. Only 5%, i.e. 10 people, chose part-time studies and 2 people (1%) chose 4-year studies.

Fig. 5. Structure of respondents by gender

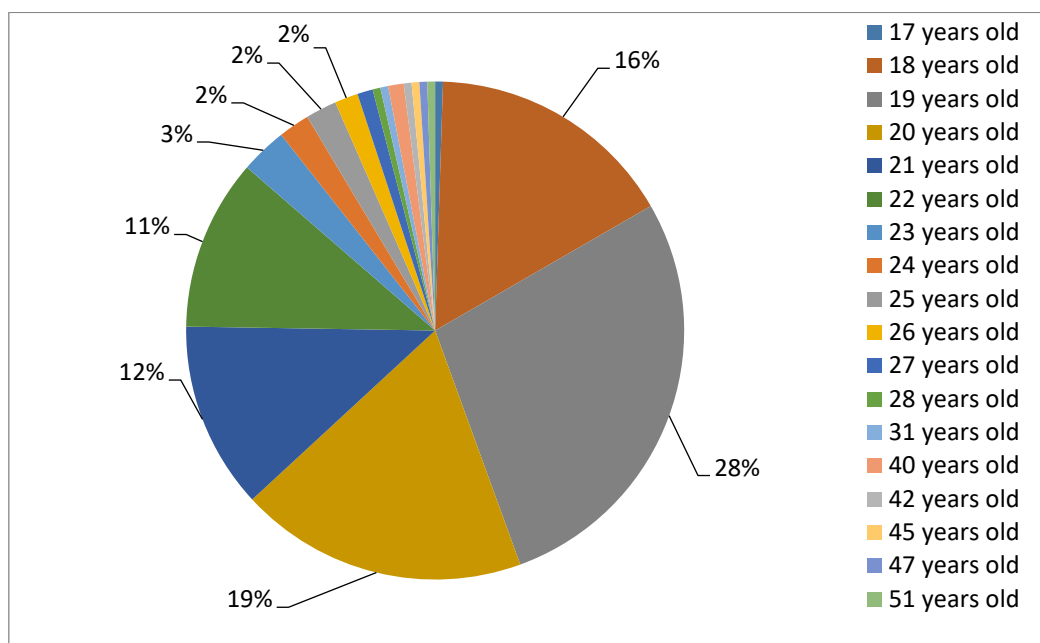


Source: Own study.

The above chart presents data regarding the gender of the respondents. The sample consists of 198 individuals from Ukraine. As the analysis shows, women make up the majority of the sample, with 117 individuals,

representing 59%. On the other hand, there are only 81 men among the students from Ukraine at the University of Rzeszów, which constitutes 41%. This distribution may be attributed to the 2022 Military Mobilization Law in Ukraine, which applies to men aged 18 to 60.

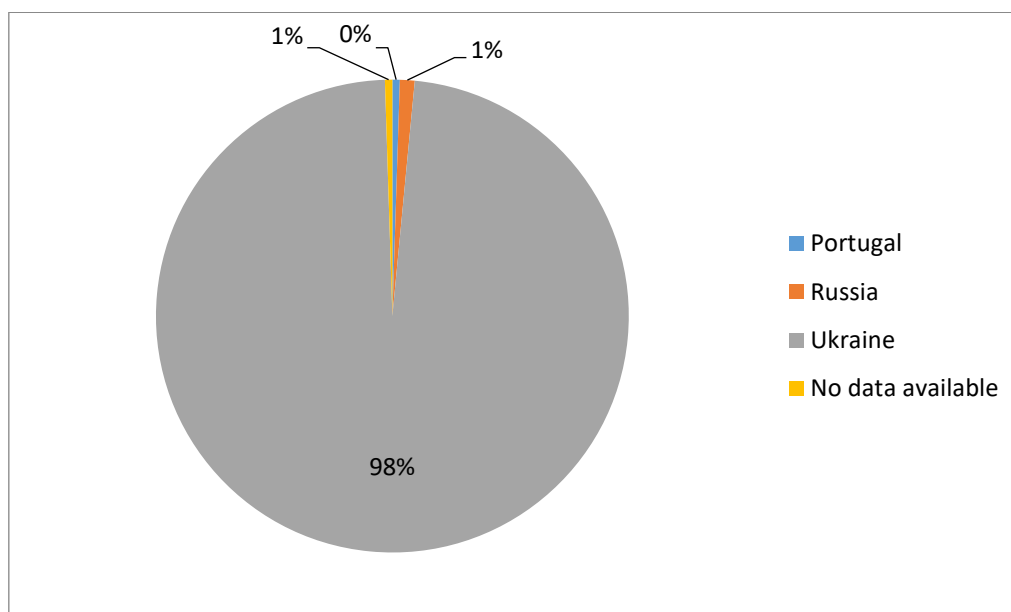
Fig. 6. Structure of respondents by age



Source: Own study.

The above chart presents data regarding the age distribution of the group of students from Ukraine studying at the University of Rzeszów. The largest group consists of 19-year-old students (55 individuals). The second largest group is 20-year-old students (37 individuals), and the third largest group consists of 18-year-old students (32 individuals). Meanwhile, students aged 21 and 22 are also significantly represented: 21 years old (24 individuals), 22 years old (22 individuals). After the age of 22, the number of students decreases significantly, down to individual cases in older age groups (e.g., 40, 42, 45, 47, 51 years — each of these groups includes only one person). Students aged 17 to 22 make up the majority of the surveyed students, which is typical for university students. The very few individuals over the age of 25 indicate that most students at the University of Rzeszów choose to pursue higher education immediately after graduating from high school.

Fig. 7. Structure of respondents by country of birth



Source: Own study.

A total of 198 students from Ukraine studying at the University of Rzeszów participated in the study. Of the surveyed students, 194 were born in Ukraine, representing 98% of all respondents. One student was born in Portugal, two in Russia, and one person did not provide a place of birth. The results show a clear predominance of students born in Ukraine (98% of the respondents), which is significant in the context of the ongoing war. This demographic suggests that their experiences and attitudes may be strongly influenced by the current geopolitical situation and the need to flee their home country.

The statistical analysis of the chart indicates a high level of homogeneity in the sample, which limits the generalizability of the results to other national groups. However, since the primary goal of the study was to understand the situation of students from Ukraine studying at the University of Rzeszów in the context of the war, such a sample structure is expected.

It is also worth mentioning that during the study, the birthplaces of students in Ukraine were analysed. The results are very diverse. The Ukrainian students were born both in large cities, such as Lviv (31 individuals), Kyiv (10 individuals), Ternopil (6 individuals), Kharkiv (4 individuals), Kryvyi Rih (3 individuals), Odesa (2 individuals), Zaporizhzhia (2 individuals), as well as in small towns and villages, such as Zelena, Samara, Kostryna.

The analysis included 198 students from Ukraine. Several people study two fields, which gives the number of studies taken at the level of 207. This is important for the analysis. The part of the analysis concerning studies, fields of study and their types was related to the number of fields (207). On the other hand, the analysis concerning students was calculated in relation to the number of the sample (198 Ukrainian students).

In total, 198 students study in 48 fields. Several people study two fields, which gives 207 selected studies. Among Ukrainian students, the most popular field is Tourism and Recreation. 23 Ukrainian students study in it (11%). The second most popular field is Economics. Currently, 13 students from Ukraine study in this field (6.3%). Mathematics is also very popular, with 12 Ukrainian students (5.8%). Internal Security is a field with 10 students (4.8%). It is the fourth most popular field of study among Ukrainian students. In addition to these fields, the following are also quite popular: Visual Arts, Physiotherapy and Medical field (9 students each), Administration,

Informatics and Pedagogy (8 students each). Table number 1 presents all fields of study where you can find at least one Ukrainian student.

Tab. 1. Number of Ukrainian students studying in fields of study

Field of study	Number of people studying a given field	Percentage share of the field*
Tourism and Recreation	23	11.1%
Economics	13	6.3%
Mathematics	12	5.8%
Internal Security	10	4.8%
Medical field	9	4.3%
Physiotherapy	9	4.3%
Visual Arts	9	4.3%
Administration	8	3.9%
Informatics	8	3.9%
Pedagogy	8	3.9%
Logistics in the agri-food sector	7	3.4%
Cultural Studies	6	2.9%
Informatics and Econometrics	6	2.9%
Archeology	5	2.4%
Emergency Medicine	5	2.4%
Graphics	5	2.4%
International Relations	5	2.4%
Artistic education in the field of musical art.	4	1.9%
Biotechnology	4	1.9%
English Philology	4	1.9%
Renewable energy sources and waste management	4	1.9%
Law	3	1.4%
Physical education	3	1.4%
Political Science	3	1.4%
Social Work	3	1.4%
Instrumentalism	3	1.4%
Finance and Accounting	2	1.0%
Germanic Philology	2	1.0%
History	2	1.0%
Journalism and Social Communication	2	1.0%
Russian Philology	2	1.0%
Optometry	2	1.0%
Biological Sciences	1	0.5%
Applied Polish Studies	1	0.5%
Dietetics	1	0.5%
Environmental Protection	1	0.5%
Food Technology and human nutrition	1	0.5%
Landscape Architecture	1	0.5%
Musical arts	1	0.5%
Painting	1	0.5%

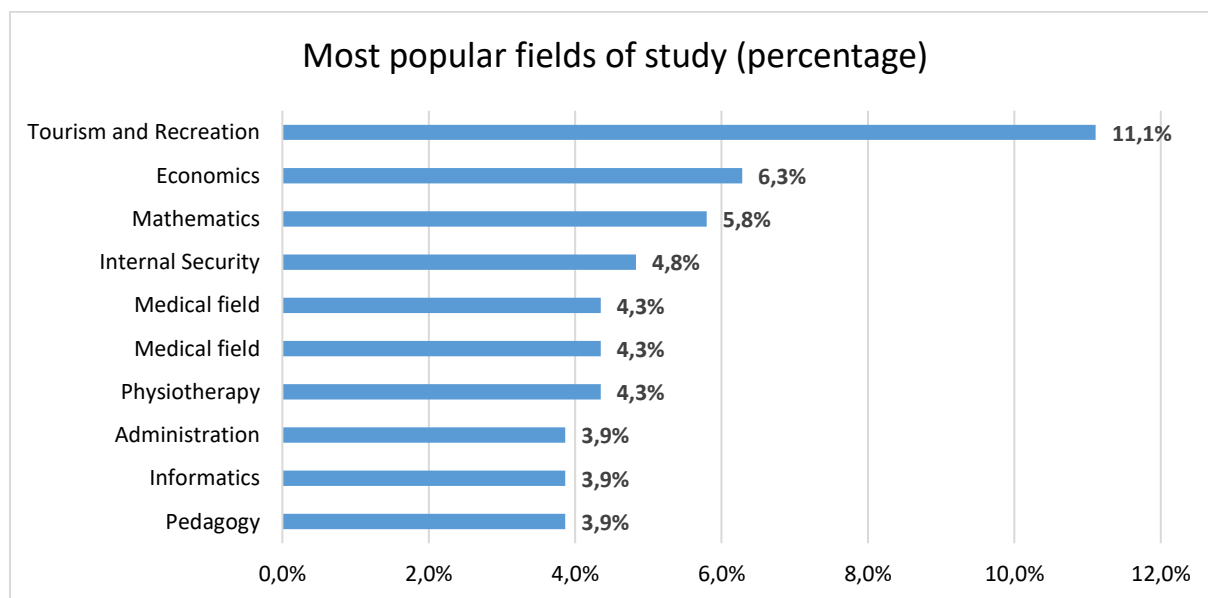
Public Health	1	0.5%
Sociology	1	0.5%
Teaching foreign languages - English and Russian	1	0.5%
Sociology	1	0.5%
Mechatronics	1	0.5%
Applied linguistics	1	0.5%
Diagnostic systems in medicine	1	0.5%
Historical and cultural tourism	1	0.5%
Total	207	100.0%

* The number of students was related to the total number of selected fields of study, i.e. 207. Not to the number of Ukrainian students, i.e. 198. This is dictated by the fact that some of them study two fields of study.

Source: Own study.

However, below on the chart number 8 the most popular fields of study chosen by students from Ukraine are presented. It should be said that all of them are full-time students. This means that there are no people who combine studies with another factor that distracts from gaining knowledge.

Fig.8. The most popular fields of study chosen by students from Ukraine



Source: Own study.

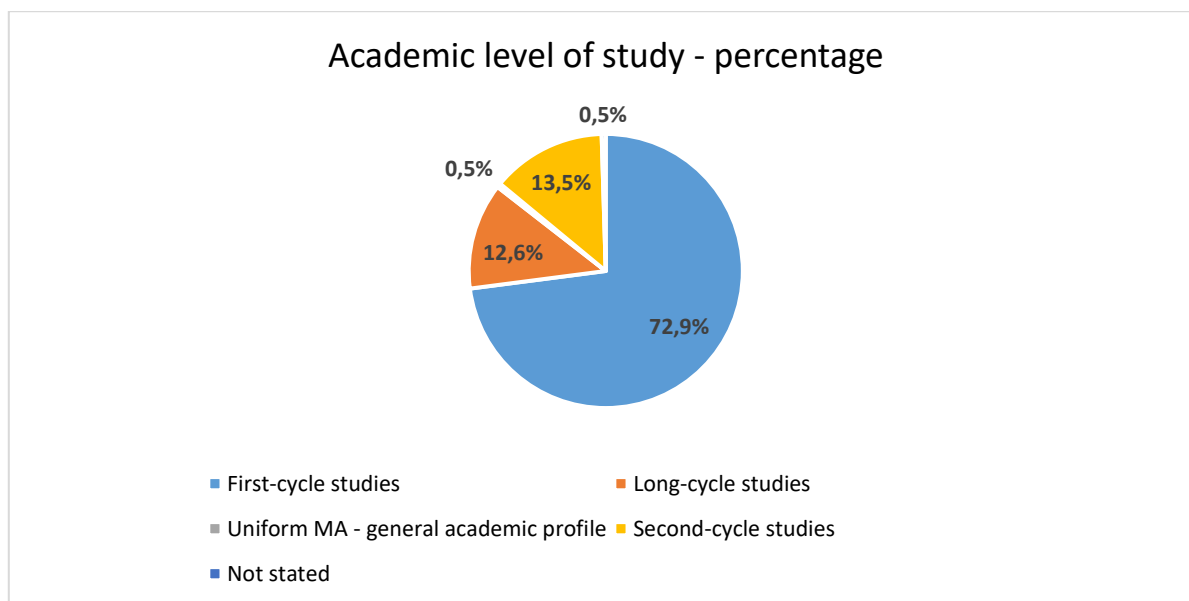
By assessing the choices of individual fields of study, one can formulate a general scientific interpretation that the choices of students from Ukraine are consistent with the decisions of Polish students.

As for the least popular fields of study, we can mention the following: Biological Sciences, Applied Polish Studies, Dietetics, Environmental Protection, Food Technology and human nutrition, Landscape Architecture, Musical arts, Painting, Public Health, Sociology, Teaching foreign languages - English and Russian, Sociology, Mechatronics, Applied linguistics, Diagnostic systems in medicine, Historical and cultural tourism. There is one student from Ukraine studying in each of these fields.

Analyzing the choices of Ukrainian students, it can be stated that their choices are identical to the choices of Polish students.

When assessing the level of studies that Ukrainian students are currently at, the vast majority of them are studying first-cycle studies (72.9%). This is primarily due to the fact that the "3+2" education system is currently in force in most fields of study in Poland. 13.5% of people are studying second-cycle studies, i.e. master's studies. Therefore, a total of 86.4% of Ukrainian students study in the "3+2" system. 12.6% of Ukrainian students are studying uniform master's studies.

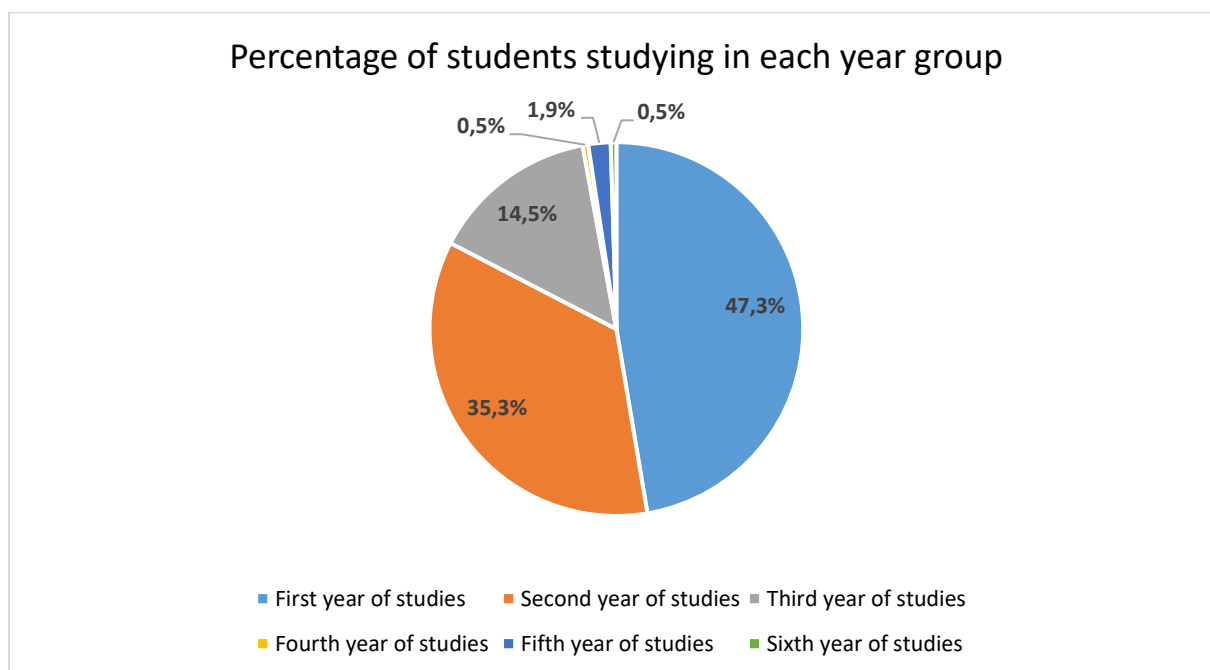
Fig. 9. Academic level of study percentage



Source: Own study.

Almost half of students from Ukraine (47.3%) are in their first year of studies. 35.3% of students are in their second year. 14.5% are third year students. So definitely the largest number of people are in their first years of studies. This means that the popularity of studying outside Ukraine is growing, first of all. Secondly, in previous years there was no large influx compared to the current year. The uncertain situation resulting from the war in Ukraine certainly influences the decision to go abroad to study.

Fig. 10. Structure of students in particular years of studies

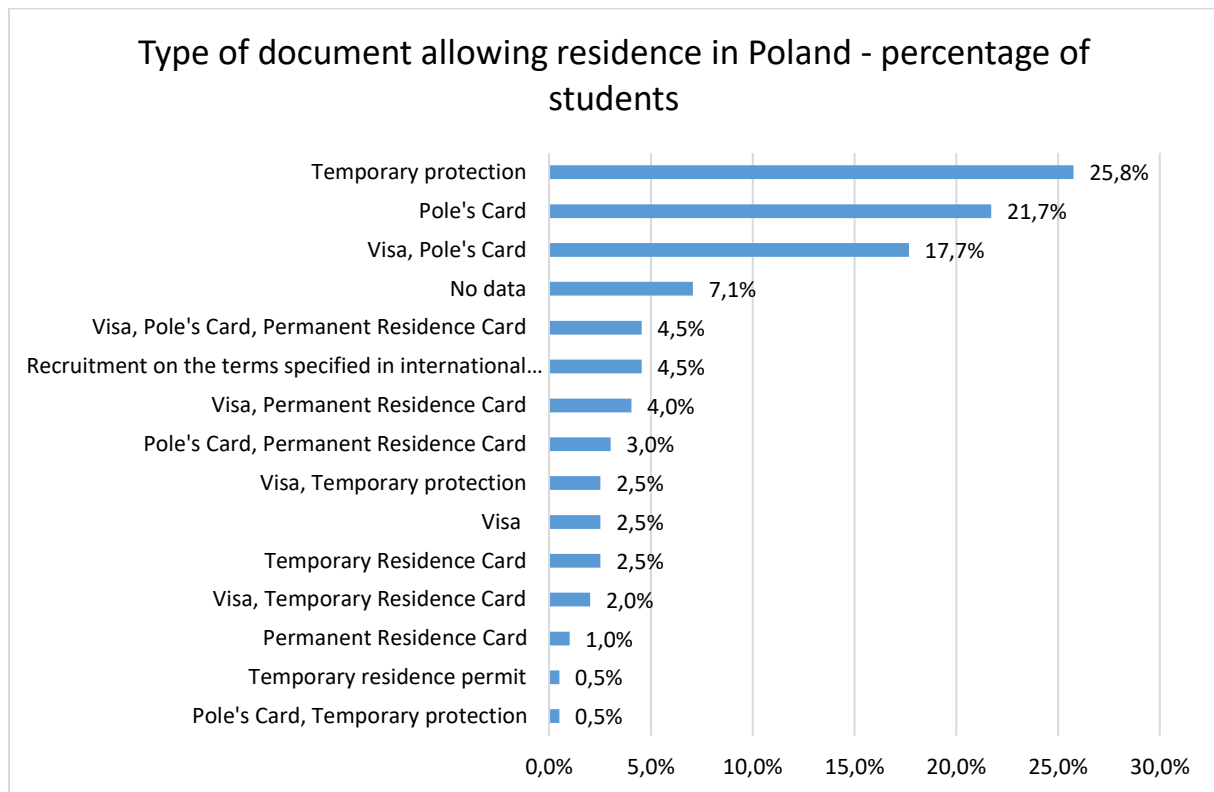


* The structure is calculated in relation to all selected fields of study (207 fields of study), not in relation to the number of people. Due to studying two different fields of study in two different years, double studying was not eliminated. In such a case, one of the fields of study would have to be eliminated, which would affect the changes in the analysis of individual years – difficulty in choosing which field (year of study) to eliminate as less important.

Source: Own study.

The largest number of people from Ukraine have temporary protection (25.8%). 21.7% of Ukrainian students have a Pole's Card. 17.7% of students from Ukraine have a visa and a Pole's Card. Other documents allowing for residence in Poland and studying are not very popular. The percentage of students with several documents ranges from 0.5% to 4.5% of students.

Fig. 11. The structure of documents allowing residence in Poland



* The share was calculated based on a sample of 198 students (studies in two fields of study were omitted in order not to increase the sample size).

Source: Own study.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENTS ORGANIZED WITHIN THE EIUS PROJECT FOR THE TARGET GROUPS MENTIONED EARLIER

The text below, divided into three sections, presents the key aspects of the events organized within the EIUS project for the previously mentioned target groups.

1. WORKSHOP - Event date: 18/04/2024

Domestic students (UR)

INTRODUCTION

On 18.04.2024, the campus of the Institute of Economics and Finance hosted a workshop - Domestic students (UR) - Workshops for students of Polish nationality studying at the University of Rzeszów as part of the international project entitled European Inclusion of Ukrainian Students as part of the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Higher Education (HED) project, Project Number: 2023-1-SK01-KA220-HED-00015755. The invitation to the Workshop was sent by e-mail to all students of the University of Rzeszów via the 'Virtual University' platform to a total of 14,427 people. In addition, information about the workshop was published on the main website of the University of Rzeszów under 'Calendar of Events', on the websites of the individual Colleges and the Institute of Economics and Finance, as well as on the Facebook page of the UR Institute of Economics and Finance. In accordance with the regulations, recruitment was done electronically (a special email address was created for the project: eius@ur.edu.pl). A minimum of 25 participants was expected. The order in which applications were received was the deciding factor. We received 30 applications, of which three people did not confirm their attendance. In the end, the workshop was attended by 27 Polish students, 3 academics (Dr Anna Barwińska Małajowicz, Prof. UR, Dr Rafał Pitera, M.Sc. Radosław Pyrek) and 1 administrator (M.Sc. Natalia Kłos). The workshop facilitator for the day was Natalia Kłos, MA. Participants had to sign a consent for the use of their image, a consent for the processing of personal data and a RODO information clause.

OBJECTIVE AND METHOD

The students were introduced to the main aims of the project and the purpose of the Workshop. In order to lighten the atmosphere and integrate the group, an integration game - an icebreaker

- was played. The main topic of the workshop was the European integration of Ukrainian students with students from a given partner country, in our case with students of Polish nationality studying at the University of Rzeszów. The whole discussion in the main part was based on SWOT analysis. During the workshop the students were divided into 4 groups and each group developed one of the 4 key elements of the SWOT analysis: Strengths; Weaknesses; Opportunities; Threats.

Each category was divided into 3 areas within which 2 questions had to be answered. Then, on the basis of their answers and their own observations, the students had to draw conclusions about the area chosen for the group (strengths or weaknesses and opportunities or threats).

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

The first group worked on development: Strengths. The students identified the exchange of experiences and interests, getting to know and accept other nationalities and the possibility to work in an international team as dominant strengths. The language barrier, which seems to be a major obstacle to communication, turned out to be a good excuse to find another way of communicating, for example by communicating in English, which allows students to polish their language not only in class but also in everyday life. Another positive aspect of student integration is cooperation in science. Joint research, research projects, international conferences and workshops related to learning the languages of the cooperating countries are a new experience for the students, teaching them to work in an international team. Such cooperation brings benefits to both sides. Ukrainian students feel accepted and included in the academic community, while Polish students have the opportunity to exchange social and scientific experiences, often make new friends, learn about other cultures and, in a way, break down certain social barriers. Another important aspect of the cooperation is a better understanding of foreign cultures, openness to differences, increased tolerance among students and a desire to integrate and cooperate.

The second group undertook an analysis of Weaknesses. The students working in this group decided to engage in a rather controversial discussion, as their position was different from that of the other groups. Their arguments revolved around the statement that the Ukrainian community received too many social benefits from the Polish state and that their expectations were therefore constantly increasing. The main objection was that, in their view, Ukrainian students had a somewhat easier university admissions system and guaranteed places in halls of

residence, thus limiting the number of places available to Polish students. The students noted that the language barrier often causes great difficulties in communication and that some people of Ukrainian nationality do not want to learn our language, do not try to speak understandably and expect Polish students to know Ukrainian. It was noted that students of Ukrainian nationality are treated more favourably by their lecturers and are sometimes given preferential treatment. This causes conflict, dissatisfaction and frustration among Polish students due to unequal treatment. It was also claimed that only a small group of Ukrainian students are interested in extra-curricular activities, so that attempts at integration are sometimes ineffective. It was also pointed out that there are differences in educational levels and curricula and that students are not familiar with Polish law. On the other hand, students also identified systemic deficiencies and insufficient psychological support for both sides.

The third group discussed Opportunities. Students highlighted the opportunity to break down social and language barriers and to develop soft skills, i.e. psycho-social skills that allow for effective communication, relationship building, conflict resolution and adaptation to different situations, in this case cooperation between students of different nationalities. Making contact with people from outside the EU and learning about their views, exchanging experiences, getting to know a new culture, gaining experience in communicating with foreign audiences and the possibility of working together and jointly creating projects, conferences, workshops with an international scope were pointed out as a big plus of such relationships. The students rightly pointed out that such integration and the opportunity to study at the University of Rzeszów could prove to be an opportunity for us to develop our English language courses, change our world view and contribute to the growing importance of the University of Rzeszów on the international stage. Helping students from Ukraine, who currently do not have the opportunity to stay and study in their own country, will undoubtedly help to increase the level of empathy and tolerance among our students.

The final group looked at the development of Threats. The conclusions of the threat analysis were, according to the students, mainly the risk of prejudice and stereotyping and social isolation. Threats can also be related to cultural and language barriers, reluctance or intolerance of Polish students, and lack of support and understanding of their situation. Lack of acceptance and social exclusion can therefore lead to mental health problems. On the other hand, better treatment and more frequent recognition of Ukrainian students, rather than levelling the playing

field and opportunities for all, can be a threat. The result is frustration and automatic dislike on the part of Polish students. As a probable risk factor, the students pointed to the possibility of an even greater influx of Ukrainians into our country and the threat of them trying to introduce their culture into Polish society and, as a result, dominating our culture. However, they stressed that this was from their point of view and experience, and that they had not noticed any problems with communication, exclusion or lack of support for Ukrainian students in their environment.

CONCLUSION

Summarising the Workshop - Domestic Students (UR) and the work of all groups, the following conclusions can be drawn. The discussion that took place made it possible to see different perspectives on the perception of European integration of Ukrainian students. Students dared to express their opinions, which in some cases could appear somewhat controversial. The interesting discussion became for many a source of information they had not heard before. Often the problems are related to individuals and this casts a shadow over the whole Ukrainian community. The language and cultural barrier is also a big challenge for both sides, but it also gives new perspectives, forces us to give something of ourselves, to make an effort, perhaps to seek a compromise by talking in a neutral language such as English. Collaboration with Ukrainian students offers the opportunity to conduct joint research, research projects, organise international conferences and workshops. On the other hand, there are weaknesses and risks, such as cultural and social tensions, language problems, difficulties of adaptation, competition for resources and political conflicts. Students have often noted that people of Ukrainian origin are often treated better by lecturers and often have extra privileges or a so-called concessionary rate for exams or credits. This causes their dissatisfaction. Often it is the Ukrainian students who do not want to be treated better, as they feel rejected by the group and prefer to strive for equal opportunities and acceptance in the group. The issue of financial support was also raised. There is concern about a reduction in the financial resources available, such as scholarships or halls of residence. To counteract negative reactions, the university should conduct information campaigns explaining the reasons for and benefits of supporting Ukrainian students, and aim for a balance of support for all students. More attention is needed to minimise risks, and support activities such as language courses, intercultural workshops and psychological support are needed. One interesting initiative would be to set up mentoring programmes. Students who have been part of our academic community for a long time could help new Ukrainian students to

adapt. In addition, awareness-raising campaigns and the promotion of inclusive values could reduce stereotypes and prejudices. Additional Polish language classes and teaching materials can help overcome language and educational barriers..

A record of the workshop was made and posted on the University of Rzeszow website and FB, along with photos of the event.

2. WORLD CAFE - Event date: 09/05/2024

INTRODUCTION

On May 9, 2024, a meeting was organized as part of the project number 2023-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000157553. The workshops were organized for students of the University of Rzeszów of Ukrainian nationality. The workshops were called WORLD CAFE, and their formula took the form of a discussion. The workshops were held in a stationary formula. They were conducted in the building of the Institute of Economics and Finance of the University of Rzeszów, ul. M. Ćwiklińska 2 in Rzeszów (Campus Zalesie). The workshops were conducted by employees of the Institute of Economics and Finance - people actively involved in the implementation of the project on the side of the University of Rzeszów.

The event was promoted among all employees of the University of Rzeszów – through information on the websites of individual colleges. The current employment structure of the university is about 2,192 employees.

Additionally, the information was provided to students of the university regardless of nationality, which gives the number of informed people around 15,000 (social media, website, posters). In the target group, the information was sent to 207 students of Ukrainian nationality. Here, the information, in addition to announcements on websites, social media and posters, was sent by e-mail to the e-mail addresses of all students of Ukrainian nationality studying at the University of Rzeszów.

The selection of people to participate in the workshops was dictated by the provisions in the project. The implementation of the World Cafe workshops was related to the participation of students of academic nationality in the event. And this factor was taken into account when

selecting people for the event. This was the only criterion for the selection and selection of people. Apart from this criterion, there were no restrictions.

The selection from among the entire student community of the University of Rzeszów was therefore dictated solely by the conditions specified in the project. That is, any student of Ukrainian nationality who had an active student status at the time of application could apply for the project. Applications were submitted electronically to the e-mail address: eius@ur.edu.pl.

Student applications for the World Cafe event were submitted on a first-come, first-served basis. Ultimately, 16 students submitted applications for the World Cafe event, of which one did not confirm participation.

Ultimately, 15 people took part in the event, which is the minimum number of required students of Ukrainian nationality.

Each person registering has consented to the processing of personal data and accepted the regulations related to the event.

A total of 19 people participated in the event.

The group of students of Ukrainian nationality consisted of 15 people, which is the minimum number of required workshop participants.

In addition to Ukrainian students, the event that took place on May 9, 2024 was attended by academic staff: Prof. Anna Barwińska- Małajowicz, Dr. Rafał Pitera, MA Radosław Pyrek, and one administrative employee: MA Natalia Kłos.

The structure of workshop participants was as follows:

- 79% students of Ukrainian nationality;
- 16% academic staff;
- 5% other university employees.

The workshop took place on May 9, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. in Room C6 of the building of the Institute of Economics and Finance of the University of Rzeszów, ul. M. Ćwiklińska 2 in Rzeszów (Campus Zalesie).

OBJECTIVE AND METHOD

The meeting took the form of a discussion and was conducted in accordance with the roundtable method, which enables parallel exchange of opinions and uses SWOT analysis to understand the main challenges and opportunities related to the presence of Ukrainian students at Polish universities. In this type of discussion, participants meet on equal terms, which promotes the free exchange of thoughts, opinions and analyses from different perspectives. Thanks to the use of this approach during the conducted workshops, among others, the equality of participants, an open exchange of views, and an open discussion were maintained.

The main objective of the meeting was to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats resulting from the admission of students from Ukraine to Polish universities. The analyses included, among others: their previous experiences of studying at Polish universities. Issues of their relations with students of other nationalities and their previous experiences in contacts with academic teachers, administrative staff and people from outside the university were raised.

The discussions were divided into several thematic areas, the participants of the meeting (Ukrainian students) looked at their current situation. Each session focused on different aspects, such as the impact of students' experiences on academic classes, challenges related to trauma, the need to develop empathy, and building a diverse and inclusive academic environment. One of the aspects was also the exchange of experiences related to their stay in Poland - both positive and negative aspects that they had to deal with.

WORLD CAFE DISCUSSION

Observing the WORLD CAFE event, in relation to the previous workshops, it should be noted that the students from Ukraine (most of them) were initially very stressed. Despite attempts to break the so-called ice, it was only during the workshop part and closer contact between the workshop leaders and the students (including questions whether they needed help, attempts to talk, etc.) that one could observe greater openness and freedom of the students.

Additionally, in some cases, language deficiencies could be observed – students asked for an explanation of what particular terms meant.

In general, the workshops took place in a nice and relaxed atmosphere. However, developing such a relaxed atmosphere required much greater commitment than during the workshops in which the participants were students of Polish nationality. This may, after all, indicate a certain language barrier. It can also be said that this was the result of the fact that the participants in

the World Cafe workshops were students of different fields and not all of them knew each other. In the previous workshops, almost all of the students participating in the workshops were from the same Institute (except for one person).

The first part of the World Cafe analyzed strengths. It discussed how the presence of students from Ukraine can enrich academic reality, and how their presence translates into everyday life in Poland – for them and Poles. In the next part of the meeting, the weak points were discussed. In this section, several challenges related to the integration of Ukrainian students were identified, which may affect the quality of education and interpersonal relations at universities. The section on opportunities related to the influx of Ukrainian students to Poland discussed the potential benefits of the presence of Ukrainian students and the ways in which universities can enrich their teaching methods. Cultural diversity is a great opportunity for the enrichment of society in almost every country. In the last session, Ukrainian students discussed the potential threats and difficulties related to their presence in Poland. Cultural and social differences can lead to tensions between students, but also with other people in everyday life. The experiences of Ukrainian students can be difficult for Polish colleagues to understand, which can lead to conflicts and social isolation. It is necessary to implement a social integration strategy that will allow for a better understanding of national differences. The lack of resources supporting Ukrainian students can affect their social and academic integration.

Below are all the most frequently mentioned answers that were given by Ukrainian students during the WORLD CAFE event . The answers related to the workshop topics were collected in the form of a SWOT analysis – strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the inclusion of Ukrainian students.

By making a synthetic summary of all areas, it can be stated that **the greatest advantages (strengths)** in the case of the inclusion of students from Ukraine in Poland are:

- studying together,
- participating in various events with students of different nationalities,
- better knowledge of Polish and English,
- integration, exchange of experiences and problem-solving together with students of Polish nationality,
- higher education obtained in Poland,

- cool and nice colleagues who willingly "accept" us into their circles.
- meetings and conversations between students of different nationalities.

weaknesses **most frequently** mentioned were:

- little understanding of the needs of students from Ukraine,
- few students of Ukrainian nationality are involved in integration,
- language barriers of Ukrainians,
- no information in Ukrainian,
- unwillingness of some teachers to work with foreigners.
- few integration events aimed at the Ukrainian community.

When it comes to the possible **opportunities** brought by the inclusion of students from Ukraine in Poland, and also in the entire European Union, the most frequently mentioned factors were:

- getting to know the Polish language in a more in-depth way than learning a foreign language at home.
- the possibility of receiving a scholarship, which gives a real chance to "support oneself",
- Erasmus trip.
- opportunity to work in various European countries.
- better professional future.
- possibility of internship in Poland or another European country,
- the opportunity to visit and learn about the culture and country of Poland,
- cooperation of students in the future as entrepreneurs.

In turn, **the threats** related to the process of inclusion (inflow) of students from Ukraine to the European Union countries, and in particular to Poland, are primarily:

- discrimination by Polish students towards students of other nations,
- accent and fear of rejection by the group,

- being rejected by "local" students,
- the closedness of Ukrainian students in communicating with others,
- difficulties related to cooperation with Polish students and students of nationalities other than Ukrainian.

During the workshops, students mainly pointed to the same elements that create strengths and weaknesses and constitute opportunities and threats.

The vast majority of people taking part in the workshops indicated similar factors. It was very rare for people not to mention, for example, the language barrier, which is a problem in establishing contacts with peers or contacts with people outside the university.

Ukrainian students indicated the same strengths, which in their opinion are higher education, learning Polish and English, or participating in various events with people of other nationalities. Among the most important weaknesses, they most often indicated a poor understanding of their needs, or communication problems resulting from poor knowledge of the Polish language. As potential opportunities, the most frequently indicated were: better knowledge of the Polish language, trips with the Erasmus program, scholarships and work in EU countries. Among the threats, the most frequently indicated were discrimination, but also - importantly - the closedness of the Ukrainian community.

CONCLUSION

WORLD CAFE event , the event's implementation should be described as very successful. An interesting range of answers to the questions asked was received. Students of Ukrainian nationality were eager to engage during the meeting.

It is worth noting that the indicated (provided) answers were mostly similar. Almost all students from Ukraine have similar expectations and struggle with the same problems. Additionally, most of them emphasized similar advantages related to studying at Polish universities. They also indicated similar questions related to potential benefits in the future and difficulties that may arise.

It is worth emphasizing that the statements and attitudes of Ukrainian students do not differ significantly from the answers and attitudes of students of other nations. It should be said that their expectations, problems and aspirations are similar for students of many nationalities. The

issue of the war in Ukraine also rarely came up. This may be related to the fact that a large group of people have been in Poland for a long time and come from the areas of western Ukraine.

It is worth pointing out a certain observed fact. The difficulty in recruiting Ukrainian students is the lack of active phone numbers of people who expressed their willingness to participate in the event. Phones in the university database, which were provided at the time of recruitment for studies, turned out to be inactive in about 30-40%. This means that Ukrainian students, who provide a phone number when applying for studies, later during their studies, when they change their phone number, do not update their data in the administrative units of the University of Rzeszów. This was a certain difficulty, due to the lack of possibility of contacting such people in order to confirm their presence in the World Cafe event (confirmation of participation by e-mail is not as efficient, some people read messages after a few days). This is quite characteristic of students of this nation. Other foreign students, for the most part, update their contact details on an ongoing basis.

3. ROUND TABLE - Event date: 15/05/2024

Introduction

On 15th May 2024 a meeting titled “Round Table – Domestic Teaching Staff” was held on the MS Teams platform, dedicated to academic teaching staff at the University of Rzeszów. This meeting was part of the “European Inclusion of Ukrainian Students” project (Project No. 2023-1-SK01-KA220-HED-000157553).

Objective and Method

The meeting took the form of a discussion, using the “Round Table” method, which facilitates parallel exchanges of opinions using SWOT analysis to understand the main challenges and opportunities related to the presence of Ukrainian students at Polish universities. The primary objective of the meeting was to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to integrating Ukrainian students into Polish universities. Topics of analysis included attitudes of academic teachers toward refugee students, benefits and challenges of their presence, and the needs of both groups, which may contribute to effective integration within higher education.

The discussions were divided into several thematic areas, where participants (academic teachers) examined the situation of Ukrainian students from the perspective of academic and teaching staff. Each session focused on different aspects, such as the impact of student experiences on academic classes, challenges related to trauma, the need for empathy development, and building a diverse and inclusive academic environment.

Round Table Discussion

In the first part of the Round Table, participants analyzed the strengths of Ukrainian students. Discussions focused on how the presence of Ukrainian students can enrich academic life, especially in teaching contexts.

Ukrainian students who have experienced armed conflict bring invaluable experiences that allow other students to better understand the realities of war and its social and political effects. Participants noted that such meetings and joint classes enable critical knowledge exchange and foster empathy. The challenges faced by Ukrainian students contribute to strengthening their determination and commitment, which can inspire other students and the academic staff. The determination to continue studying despite hardships serves as an inspiring example of perseverance and simultaneously enriches the academic atmosphere by adding a unique character to it. The presence of students from diverse cultures and backgrounds, including Ukrainian refugees, supports the development of tolerance and openness among academic teachers and students.

In the next part of the meeting, participants discussed the weaknesses. This section identified several challenges related to the integration of Ukrainian students, which may affect the quality of learning and interpersonal relations at universities. Many Ukrainian students struggle with the consequences of traumatic experiences, such as post-traumatic stress. This negatively affects their ability to study and participate in academic life. Trauma symptoms, such as anxiety and concentration difficulties, can lead to social withdrawal and learning difficulties. Language differences pose a significant challenge for both students and lecturers. The language barrier impacts communication and understanding of educational material, reducing teaching effectiveness. Teachers often face difficulties in evaluating students' written work when their language is imprecise. Teachers emphasized that a lack of adequate psychological support for both students and teaching staff can influence the university atmosphere. Both students and lecturers need emotional support to cope with the challenges resulting from cultural differences and difficult life experiences.

In session titled “Opportunities” the potential benefits of the presence of Ukrainian students were discussed, as well as ways in which universities can enrich their teaching methods.

Cultural diversity is a significant opportunity to enrich the educational process. Introducing discussions, group projects, and case studies can facilitate integration and support experiential learning. Communication technologies, such as e-learning, allow students to access additional educational resources. Organizing intercultural training and workshops on war trauma can help teachers and students better understand the context in which their Ukrainian colleagues function. Such activities foster an environment open to diversity. Mentoring programs, in which more experienced students help new Ukrainian colleagues, can facilitate integration and strengthen intercultural relationships.

In the last session, academic teachers discussed the potential threats associated with the integration of Ukrainian students and challenges in managing diversity at universities. Cultural and social differences may lead to tensions between students. The war experiences of Ukrainian students may be difficult for Polish colleagues to understand, which can lead to conflicts and social isolation. Educational strategies and workshops are needed to better understand these differences. A lack of resources to support Ukrainian students can affect their social and academic integration. Students without access to psychological support may feel excluded and inadequate in their new environment. Teachers are forced to take on additional responsibilities to organize support for students, which can overload their work and limit time for fulfilling other duties.

Conclusion

The presence of Ukrainian students who have experienced armed conflicts brings unique perspectives and values to the Polish academic environment. Their experiences and motivation to study enrich the teaching process and support the development of tolerance and openness. Integrating these students into academic life and appreciating their contributions to the university community are essential to building a more diverse and open educational environment. Initiatives such as Round Table meetings support this process by promoting intercultural dialogue and cooperation for integrative education. Developing psychological support programs, incorporating intercultural elements into the curriculum, and creating an inclusive academic atmosphere are key steps toward the full integration of Ukrainian students and support for their academic and personal development.

The organizers noted that 35 academic teachers attended the online meeting, which was 20 more than the project had initially expected. The participants expressed satisfaction with the

course of the event. Most participants agreed that such meetings should be held more frequently and regularly. Organizing similar events in the future would allow for a better understanding of the challenges associated with the integration of Ukrainian students and help create a more inclusive academic environment. The event results were published on the website of the University of Rzeszów's Institute of Economics and Finance and on the Institute's Facebook page. The promotion of the event aims to raise awareness of the challenges and benefits of accepting Ukrainian students into the Polish academic environment.