



Work Package 2:

Research and Contextualisation

# Partner Research Report

## Poland

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## Declaration

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## 1. Background and introduction

### 1.1 The report aims to:

- a) understand current national strategies which support the transition from non-compulsory or mature learners to Higher Education and build on, or develop new, strategies and resources;
- b) identify existing models, structures, strategies and pedagogies in the partner country along with good practice, strengths and weaknesses;
- c) provide information for the comparative study and then to develop supportive strategies and resources for both the transition of these groups to HE and completion of their first year of HE study.

The study uses a mixed research method approach that incorporates and combines both quantitative and qualitative data as using just quantitative data offers limited scope for comparative studies and that these statistics can only be appreciated by understanding the cultural and institutional context in which they occur.

Therefore, report covers the collection and contextualising of secondary research in relation to existing structures in Poland in relation to access/transition from secondary to higher level education (including a typical student journey). This refers to existing policies, strategies, structures, models and pedagogies in Poland along with examples of good practice/success stories, strengths and weaknesses. These are policies or projects introduced at national level as well as those run by individual institutions.

Within such collected secondary data there is a range of information derived from regional, national and EU governmental agencies, findings of various research projects as well as good practices of other relevant institutions in the examined domain.

### 1.2 Introducing the theme

After collapse of communism in 1989, Poland's higher education (HE) system has experienced fundamental changes in terms of management methods, teaching quality assurance, international cooperation and, especially, enormous growth in number of universities and students.

The emergence of democracy and free market rules has resulted in implementation of academic and institutional autonomy of higher education institutions (HEIs). It was then followed by rapid increase



in number of private universities as well as significant growth of enrolment in public ones. It was a response to the public demand for higher education diplomas, which were perceived in general as a tool for the youth's inevitable social and economical advancement. Consequently, between 1990 and 2010 the number of students has raised almost five times (from 0,4 million to 1,9 million). This uncontrollable trend, however, appeared not to reflect labour market needs as growing demand for manual workers and other professionals was observed. Unsatisfactory teaching quality in some HEIs (mostly private ones), in parallel with the oversupply of university graduates, in particular students finishing humanities and social science studies, have led to large proportion of unemployed youth with higher education diplomas. In the same time, as a result of demographic decline in recent years enrolment for universities is lower year by year. Therefore HEIs are trying to enhance non-traditional groups (elder people etc.) and foreigners to study in Poland.

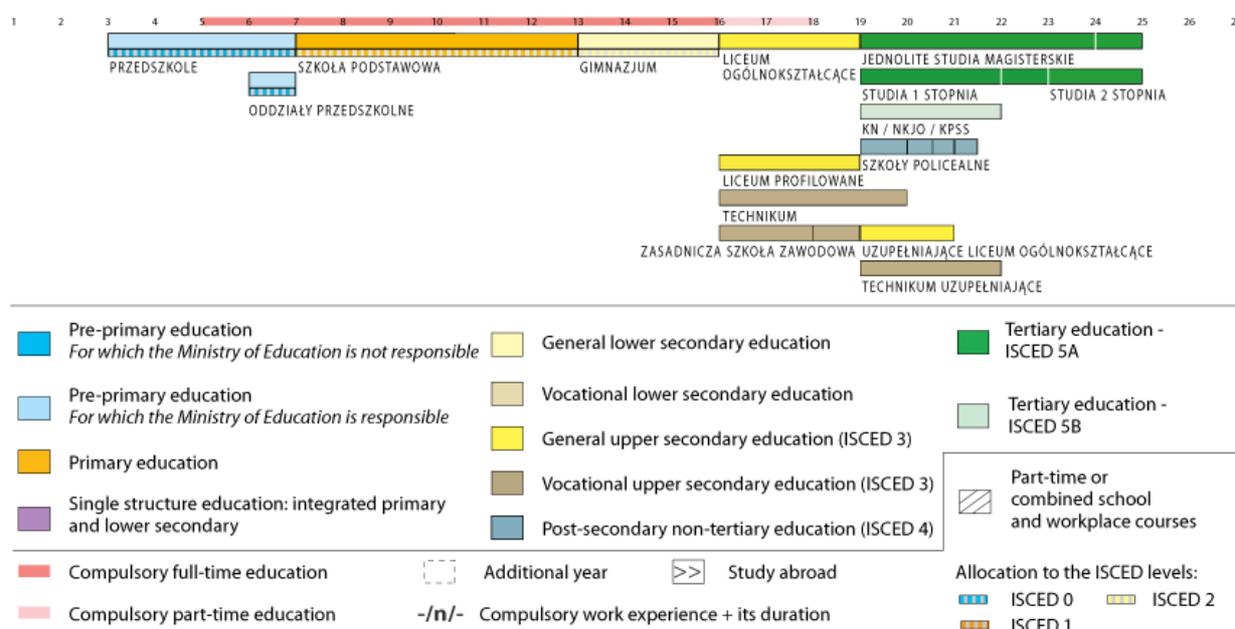
Therefore, in the context of decreasing number of students the Polish authorities have to challenge the following problems:

- 1) adjusting HEIs' educational offer to labour market conditions,
- 2) raising enrolment among non-traditional groups of students, like mature students or foreigners, and
- 3) diminishing students' dropout rates.

## 2. Theoretical guidelines

According to Polish law, especially constitutional guarantees, every citizen has the right to education. Education in Poland is obligatory for all between 5/6 and 18 years old. It is free of charge in public schools.

The present educational system was introduced after implementation of the Act of 8 January 1999 on the Implementation of the Education System of the Education System Reform (with further amendments)<sup>1</sup> and it includes the following stages:



Tab 1. Organization of the education system in Poland<sup>2</sup>

### a) pre-primary education (*przedszkole*)

Pre-schools are attended by children between 3 and 5/6 years old. However, pre-school education is only compulsory for children of 5/6 year old (so called 0 class).

### b) primary education (*szkoła podstawowa*)

Education in primary school starts at the age of 6/7 and last until children are 13 (classes 1-6). It is compulsory that children do one year of formal education (0 class) before entering 1st class at no

<sup>1</sup> Organization of the education system in Poland 2009/2010, EACEA Eurydice Report, p. 26, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/PL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/PL_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Organization of the education system in Poland 2009/2010, EACEA Eurydice Report, p. 28, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/PL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/PL_EN.pdf)



later than 7 years of age. At the end of 6th class, pupils take a compulsory exam that determines their access to lower secondary school.

c) secondary education:

In the framework of the secondary education there are two levels:

- lower secondary schools (*gimnazjum*)  
The education at this stage lasts 3 years, from age 13 to 16. After that education pupils are awarded certificate of completion of education in the gymnasium. They also take another compulsory exam to determine the upper secondary level school they will attend.
- upper secondary schools  
Secondary education is provided in 3-year general lyceums (*liceum ogólnokształcące*) or in vocational secondary schools such as the 3-year specialized lyceum and 4-year *technikum* - secondary technical school. The pupils are learnt in these schools from 16 to 19/20 years old. In addition, there are basic vocational schools (*zasadnicza szkoła zawodowa*) for pupils who haven't quite satisfactory effects in earlier stage of education and want to get only vocational education. The length of program in such school is 2-3 years, from 16 to 18 years old.

The secondary education level is ended by awarding certificate named maturity certificate (*matura*) issued by general lyceum (most popular), specialized lyceum or technical secondary school. In case of failing the final exams students are given certificate of completion of education in these schools.

The only type of post-primary school that does not give access to higher education is the basic vocational school. The graduates of these schools may continue their education in different types of complementary secondary schools: complementary lyceum or complementary technical secondary school. Following completion of education in these schools they can pass the maturity examination and obtain a maturity certificate and thus become eligible for entrance to higher education.

d) tertiary education (*szkoła wyższa*)

The present organization of higher education in Poland is based on the law on higher education of 27 July 2005. There are various types of higher education institutions (HEIs), i.e. universities, technical universities (polytechnics), medical universities, economic academies, art schools etc. They include both public (state) and non-public institutions.

Since beginning of 1990s, when the Higher Education Act of 1990 enabled the creation of non-state higher education institutions (the Catholic University of Lublin was the only exceptional non-public high school in Poland before 1990), the total number of HEIs (and thus students) has grown four times, with a small decline during last few years due to population decrease:

HEIs	Institutions				Students (in thousand)			
	1990/91	2000/01	2005/06	2009/10	1990/91	2000/01	2005/06	2009/10
HEIs total	112	310	445	461	403,8	1584.8	1953.8	1900.0
Non-public HEIs	10	195	315	330	13.6	472.3	620.8	633.1

Tab 2. HEIs and their students in 1990-2010<sup>3</sup>

As of 2009/2010 there were in total 461 higher education institutions, including 131 public and 330 non-public higher education entities. They were attended by over 1.90 mln students, including 1.27 mln students of state higher education institutions (66.7 percent of all students) and 0.63 million students of private higher education institutions (33.3 percent of all students).

When the Schools of Higher Professional Education Act came into force in 1997, courses of higher professional education were created. Thus, at present, there are both university-type and non-university type (professional education) institutions in Poland.

Since 1999 the Bologna Process has been established in Poland. In 2004 it brought the division in high education between first level courses, which are awarded the professional title of bachelor (*licencjat*) or equivalent after 3-4 years' study and the second level courses, which are awarded the professional title of *magister* or equivalent after 1 to 2-year complementary courses and, eventually PhD (*doktor*):

- university level first stage:  
First level studies are organized both by university-type higher education institutions and the institutions of higher professional education. The graduates are awarded the professional title of bachelor (after 3 years of study) or engineer (after 3,4 or 5 years of study) following a thesis or diploma project. The graduates can continue their education at university-type institutions and non-university-type institutions in complementary courses of the second level and obtain the title of master.
- university level second stage:  
The studies of the second stage are organized in the university-type and non-university-type higher education institutions as complementary studies lasting for 1.5-2 years. They are offered to holders of the professional titles of bachelor (or equivalent). The graduates are awarded the title of master or one of its equivalents after submitting and defending a thesis or a diploma

<sup>3</sup> Notatka na temat szkół wyższych w Polsce, Central Statistical Office, 2011, p. 2;

[http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/e\\_not\\_nt\\_szkol\\_wyzszych\\_w\\_Polsce.pdf](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/e_not_nt_szkol_wyzszych_w_Polsce.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Organization of the education system in Poland 2009/2010, EACEA Eurydice Report, p.49, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/PL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/PL_EN.pdf)



project. Until 2004, the graduates of master-level courses obtained the diploma of completion of higher studies. There are also unified 5-year master level courses. The most popular of them are: medicine, law, psychology<sup>4</sup>.

On the contrary to non-public HEIs that offer paid studying with tuition fee being often quite high (eg. 2 000 euro per year), public ones do not charge tuition fee for full-time degree programmes and full-time PhD programmes. However, candidates who did not manage to get to regular full-time mode of studies at public universities can also attend paid part-time degree programmes (so called evening or weekend studies). Furthermore, public HEIs may charge fees for:

- programmes which are repeated by students as a result of their unsatisfactory learning achievements;
- programmes or courses taught in a foreign language;
- courses which are not included in a study programme.

These fees are one of most important sources of financing of public schools, especially on popular faculties like law or psychology.

Interestingly, there are no registration fees at public HEIs. However, in practice, public HEIs charge fees related to the process of admission to degree programmes. The maximum amount of such fees is determined annually in a regulation of the minister responsible for higher education<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>Organization of the education system in Poland 2009/2010, EACEA Eurydice Report, p. 28-30, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/PL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/PL_EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>Organization of the education system in Poland 2009/2010, EACEA Eurydice Report, p. 134; [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/PL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/PL_EN.pdf)



### 3. Examples

#### 3.1. National/institutional policies and practices

The conducted analysis has revealed that in the Polish higher education system the groups that need special attention in terms of transition to higher education were mature students, students from disadvantaged areas (rural areas) and foreigners.

##### 3.1.1. Mature students

In Poland there is no legal or commonly accepted definition of the term 'mature student'<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, legislative framework doesn't identify and address the problems of mature students and students without prior formal learning either. In contrary, education institutions are obliged to require strictly to fulfilling formal conditions, especially secondary school certificate, graduated at indicated level. In consequence, higher education entities cannot and do not recognize prior non-formal learning. There is only one exception – however the recognition of prior learning is not legally regulated at national level, but it can be used for progression in higher education, it is observed within the recognition and validation of foreign language skills acquired and certified outside the formal system (e.g. in foreign language schools). The powers of some higher education institutions decided, that specified non-formal certificates which may be recognised and validated as certificate of good knowledge and linguistic skills. The problem of mature students and their specific needs and obstacles during studies are not recognized by law either.

Mature students have completely different attitudes and possibilities to study – at first they are usually engaged in work and their family status requires spending more time at home.

The best and quite obvious way to mature students could be part-time studies. In Poland part-time studies have following forms:

- students enrolled in distance education (i.e. students usually work and spend only part of their time on higher education studies);
- students enrolled in evening courses at higher education institutions. These courses are offered by higher education institutions in addition to courses for full-time students;
- students enrolled in weekend courses at higher education institutions. These courses are offered by higher education institutions in addition to courses for full-time students.

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<sup>6</sup> However, one can observe authorities efforts to define that group of students. According to the new proposal (not yet legally binding) of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education as of November 2012 'mature students' are those of 25 or more years old, i.e. the age which is usually the time of finishing higher education. Therefore, for the purpose of this report students of 25 years old or older are considered as 'mature students'.



In Poland part-time students represent more than 40 percent of the total student population – it's quite big amount, but it doesn't mean they are mature students. These forms of studies are paid, so graduates with worse final score of exams after secondary school are forced to choose them when they have too poor effect to study in normal, unpaid, limited by ministry of HE number at high schools. It also means they are often young, just after secondary school.

As written in Eurydice Report<sup>7</sup>, adult students in formal education the of part-time students is double higher in older age group (30 +) than among young students. It can also be noted that in Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, more than 90 percent of students aged 30 and over take part-time studies.

There are many possible ad practiced in Europe strategies to help mature students in their specific situation as students. These initiatives to encourage alternative modes of study are for instance as follows:

- part-time education,
- distance education,
- supports,
- credit loans, guaranteed by state
- tutorials,
- infrastructure (e.g. primary schools for students children),
- preparatory courses,
- study leave.

No kind of such aid is dedicated especially to mature students in Poland at the governmental level.

Interestingly, there are very few initiatives at HE institutions level, but they are rather concerned with postgraduate studies, within framework of lifelong learning courses. Authorities of the Law Faculty of the University of Lodz started in 2006 postgraduate training dedicated to employees of one of largest employer in the region – Mining Company Belchatow. This one-year course on commercial and civil law was very well appriized by the Faculty and also by company, for whom it was organized.

On the other hand, the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education has announced the project of new regulation in January 2013, which is to facilitate access to HE for mature students who have skills and knowledge attained in other than formal way during studies. This idea is based on the Europe 2020 strategy<sup>8</sup>, the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning<sup>9</sup>, as well as Strategy of Human Resources Development and other research findings. In these documents too early higher educational 'deactivation' in Poland has been affirmed, since only 5 percent of students are those before 25 years old.

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<sup>7</sup> *Adults in Formal Education: Policies and Practices in Europe*, EACEA Eurydice Report, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/128EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/128EN.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> The EU's Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth was launched by the European Commission in March 2010 and approved by the Heads of States and Governments of EU countries in June 2010. See: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/documents/related-document-type/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/documents/related-document-type/index_en.htm)

<sup>9</sup> See: J. Hawley, M. Souto Otero, C. Duchemin, *2010 update of the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning - Final Report*. Project of the European Commission, DG Education and Culture in co-operation with The European Centre for Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77643.pdf>



In order to include mature people in HE system the following ministerial solutions have been proposed:

- a mature person attending a HE will take part in less number of classes than a 'regular' student in order to make time of HE shorter or less intensive,
- equalizing 'old' (before reform from 1999) certificate of graduating secondary school with contemporary certificates,
- in order to achieve an adequate level of HE a mature student will get ECTS points for vocational training, work experience or other manner of getting skills and knowledge but no more than 50 percent in particular educational programme (major); the number of such mature students will not exceed 20 percent of a particular major course.
- evaluation of this service will be done by Polish Accreditation Commission (board which consists of Polish scientists and academics appointed by HEIs at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education).
- procedures of vocational and other skills approval will be made under the regulation established by HEIs boards.

The implementation of the above postulates is a subject of further ministerial debates.

### 3.1.2. Students from disadvantaged areas (rural areas)

According to various research findings the main factors that limit or make impossible access to HE in Poland are as follows:

- territorial barriers (rural areas),
- economic barriers (less and less youngsters enrolling to unpaid studies due to cutting expenses on public education),
- age barriers (studying still remains unpopular among the elderly people),
- bureaucratic barriers (lack of programmes and proposals of alternative, more convenient ways of studying, applied for different groups of potential students)<sup>10</sup>.

However, it seems the particular attention when analysing HE accessibility is students' place of settlement. There is a significant disproportion in participation in higher education (and, thus, in receiving university degree) between populations inhabiting urbanised and non-urbanised areas. According to the last 2011 National Census 21percent of people living in urbanized areas have higher education degree, whereas in rural areas they account for 10 percent<sup>11</sup>. This disproportion is especially apparent among disabled people – in 2002 only 15.2 percent of disabled person between 20-24 years old from rural areas studied in HEIs, comparing to 32.3 percent disabled young people living in cities<sup>12</sup>.

Consequently, due to limited access to higher education rural areas can be defined as disadvantaged areas. We can thus distinguish some specific barriers that students living there are facing. These social obstacles can be classified – in comparison to other students – as follows:

<sup>10</sup> Moś W. J., *Edukacja osób niepełnosprawnych na poziomie szkoły wyższej*, [http://www.monografie.pl/glownavspol/monografie\\_2009tV/artykuly/103\\_pdfsam\\_w\\_krengu\\_niepelnosprawnosci\\_tompercent20V.pdf](http://www.monografie.pl/glownavspol/monografie_2009tV/artykuly/103_pdfsam_w_krengu_niepelnosprawnosci_tompercent20V.pdf); Striker M., Wojtaszczyk K., *Obawy przed uczeniem się na odległość. Opinie iódzkich studentów*, <http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul/index/numer/41/id/862>

<sup>11</sup> *Wyniki Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2011. Podstawowe informacje o sytuacji demograficzno-społecznej Ludności Polski oraz zasobach mieszkaniowych*, Central Statistical Office, 2012,, p. 14, [http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/lu\\_nps2011\\_wyniki\\_nsp2011\\_22032012.pdf](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/lu_nps2011_wyniki_nsp2011_22032012.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> J. Nikorowicz, *Równi w pracy*, [www.rowniwpracy.gov.pl/forum/t.1613.html](http://www.rowniwpracy.gov.pl/forum/t.1613.html)



- lack of parents support,
- impoverishment danger,
- lack of knowledge and interest in education,
- pressure of family and environment to earn money and stay in place of birth
- no accommodation,
- costs of transport and life in campus.

There are some initiatives at the governmental level to help such students, concerning financial aid for them.

The most important is project funded by Polish Agency of Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture, started in 1998. This is program of credit loan for students from rural areas – the Agency guarantees payment of the students debts. At this moment 5 148 students are grantees of this program, total amount of guarantee is 71.9 million PLN.

There are also local, regional projects of supports and scholarships for students from rural areas, especially funded from The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It is aid for students from cottages and small towns (at 20 000 habitants), whose families have less than 504 PLN income per capita. Scholarships are admitted for 10 months (time of learning in a year) to cover costs of accommodation and transport.

Another initiative is program of grants for young people from rural areas organized by Agency of Agrarian Estates, National Bank and Polish-American Fund of Liberty (so it is nongovernmental program). It has already 10 editions, thanks to this over than 7 000 young people especially from post-nationalized agrarian areas could begin studying. The scholarships funded within this project are only for 1<sup>st</sup> year students to cover costs of accommodation.

### 3.1.3. Foreign students

Despite the number of foreign students<sup>13</sup> has increased five times up to 21.500 students in 2010 since the beginning of political changes in 1989, the share of foreigners among students (1.2 percent in 2010) still remains, however, one of the lowest among EU countries, where it reaches more than 10 percent on average. As noted in the critical OECD report of 2007 on higher education in Poland, it is mainly due to lack of clearly defined policy of internationalization of universities. Activities conducted by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education are only focused on the participation in EU educational and research programmes and engagement in the Bologna process, whereas no additional incentives for foreigners to study and pursue an academic career in Poland are offered. Furthermore, as a result of lack of promotional strategy abroad information about study opportunities in Poland does not reach much international audience. On the other hand, universities themselves did not offer much as most courses of studies were in Polish and availability of curricula in English as well as joint degree courses with foreign universities are limited. A general low

<sup>13</sup> Foreign students group also cover students who have Polish nationality or origins but they do not hold Polish citizenship and they have not finished their secondary education in Poland.



attractiveness of the Polish labour market as well as strict residence regulations for immigrants does not also enhance to arrive for studies<sup>14</sup>.

In order to apply for studies a person who is not a permanent resident of Poland must hold a secondary school-leaving certificate entitling him/her to enter higher education in their country and it must be officially recognized as being equivalent to a Polish maturity certificate by Polish local educational authorities or on the basis of a bilateral agreement on recognition. Similarly as in case of Polish students there are no entrance examinations for foreigners. However, in the case of fields of study in which special abilities are required, applicants must prove they possess them.

However, as noted above, the most serious obstacle for conducting studies in Poland by foreigners is language requirement: candidates must attend a Polish language course preparing for higher studies organized by one of the institutions recommended by the Minister of National Education or obtain confirmation of the host institution that their command of Polish is sufficient to study.

Existence of such obstacles results in lack of interest in studying in Poland among foreigners. On the other hand one can observe growing interest among foreigners of Polish descent, who in the academic year 2010/2011 accounted for 4.117 people, i.e. 19 percent of all foreign students. Their arrivals are facilitated by preferential, in contrast with other nationals, reception and integration, including educational, procedures. As in case of other returnees willing to come back to the homeland, these policies are not, however, only the result of the Polish state's higher education internationalization and/or immigration policies themselves, but rather authorities' moral obligations towards compatriots remaining in exile and enduring discrimination and suffering because of their descent during and after the World War II. In details, foreigners who evidence Polish origin are entitled to enroll to universities on privileged terms, i.e. free of charge studies and scholarships for the period of being educated. They have also an access to other social and economic resources such as free of charge health care or the right to work and run businesses without permit. Furthermore, in practice students with Polish roots who stay in Poland on the basis of residence permit for a fixed time (short-time permit) can faster obtain settlement permit (permanent permit) or Polish citizenship<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing, 2011, s. 318-339, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/2/48631582.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> P. Hut, E. Jaroszewska, *Studenci zagraniczni w Polsce na tle migracji edukacyjnych na świecie*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2011, s. 2-13, <http://www.isp.org.pl/publikacje-download.454,510.html>



#### 4. Relevance and impact

As noted in European Commission's Eurydice report on higher education systems in Europe, Polish authorities have not implemented so far a specific national strategy concerning transition to HE<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless, some efforts on central level that facilitate the successful transition from secondary to higher education must be noted.

On the contrary to previous regulations concerning access to HE that covered both maturity examinations (*matura*) after completion of education in a secondary school and entrance examinations organized by every particular HEI, the new regulations oblige an applicant to pass maturity exam at minimum score 30 percent in the grading system introduced in 2005. In case of failing the final exams students are given certificate of completion of education in these schools.

Higher education institutions are also entitled to organize entrance examinations and check the knowledge and abilities which were not tested in the maturity examination. However, this possibility is limited for only few higher educational entities where specific ability requirements are demanded for studying, like artistic studies, physical education and architecture, as well as for military and police schools.

HEIs are autonomous in limiting number of students. This matter is decided by the senate of each institution, however the changes year by year cannot be bigger than 3 percent (only by permission given by Minister of Knowledge and Higher Education). The limit accepted by school determines thus the required score of mature exam needed to get in studying in this school. More popular fields and faculties require better results of maturity exams. Despite the obligatory subjects to pass maturity exam at secondary school are Polish language, mathematics and foreign language, HEIs can also indicate the subjects from which the scores will be taken to make a ranking of applicants. Thus students also voluntary undertake other subject exams within maturity examination to raise their possibility of getting to the given faculty or university. This is – in fact – the only one instrument of choosing the qualifications and predispositions of applying graduates to become students. It is worth also to notice that prize-winners of national competitions in various secondary-school subjects are exempt from entrance examinations.

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<sup>16</sup> Organization of the education system in Poland 2009/2010, EACEA Eurydice Report, p. 26, 114-121, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_reports/PL\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/PL_EN.pdf)



## 5. Discussion of findings

Interestingly, the above mentioned measures that have been recently introduced on national level in Poland to facilitate the access to higher education and then limit the number of dropouts among new students seem not to be sufficient. Therefore single public and non-public HEIs as well as educational NGOs conduct various initiatives in this respect.

For instance, in order to prepare young people for studies some HEIs, like University of Lodz or Technical University of Lodz, have established profiled secondary schools (general lyceums)<sup>17</sup>, which are now acknowledged as one of the best in secondary educational sector. There are also some services to support academic skills from pre-entry through to the first year or during the first year of studies, for instance large offer of non-compulsory preparatory courses to equalize secondary school students' knowledge before maturity exams ('Start' course at Physics Faculty at the Warsaw University)<sup>18</sup>. It is worth to mention about special instrument of developing skills for women as underrepresented group on technical higher education level. As a result of the programme 'Girls as engineers!' (*Dziewczyny na politechniki!*), during the first 3 years of the programme the number of female students at polytechnics in Poland grew up by 10 000<sup>19</sup>.

Interestingly, these efforts are a sign of structural transformation undergoing within Polish higher education system in terms of study programmes and curricula. Since the growing demand for graduates of technical studies is observed, Polish HEIs tend to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) courses rather than, the most popular so far, studies in humanities or social sciences. Thanks to support from the European Social Fund almost each of the largest Polish university provide series of STEM courses with high scholarships for every enrolled student. External financial support and broader offer of STEM studies enable non-traditional groups of students (women, disabled persons etc.) to attend these courses<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> See: <http://www.liceum.uni.lodz.pl>, <http://liceum.p.lodz.pl>

<sup>18</sup> See: <http://www.fuw.edu.pl/kurs-start.html>

<sup>19</sup> See: <http://www.dziewczynynapolitechniki.pl>

<sup>20</sup> See: <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/szkolnictwo-wyzsze/kierunki-zamawiane>



## 6. Summary and conclusions

Despite identified challenges of students' transition from secondary education (SE) to higher education (HE) in Poland, there is lack of integrated central policy in this respect. Furthermore, existing single measures conducted on both national and local level within HE sector seem to be insufficient. It is due to fact that in a situation of enormous enrolment for studies, that was observed during last years on Polish universities, HEIs' authorities did not pay much attention to students' transition from SE to HE or their high dropout ratio. However, since demographic decline and decreasing interest of the locals (Polish nationals) in studying in Poland influence HEIs more and more, the issue of successful entry and then completion of studies concerns university authorities again.

Therefore Polish educational authorities should undertake new steps in terms of management, finances and creation of favourable institutional conditions to improve access to higher education. It is worth to mention that there are already some positive examples of inclusion of underrepresented groups to HE (such as mature students, young people from disadvantaged areas or foreigners), that might be used as example of good practices for future developments.



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