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*Students from Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova at Polish universities*

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## ABSTRACT

Since the dissolution of the USSR, students from Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova have been able to study at Polish universities on the basis of bilateral agreements between the Polish government and the governments of the respective countries. The purpose of this article is to analyse the legal basis enabling the citizens of these three countries to obtain education in Poland, analyse the numbers of such students and the principles and procedures they followed to begin studies at Polish universities in 1993–2014. The research hypothesis is as follows: the range of scholarships offered has contributed to an increase in the number of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova at Polish universities. The following research methods were used in this study: analysis of source materials, comparative analysis and statistical data analysis. Analysis of data for the relevant period demonstrated a systematic year-to-year increase in the number of citizens of these three countries arriving to study in Poland. The largest group of students arrived from Ukraine and the smallest – from Moldova. In 1997, the largest share of students of Polish descent was among the students from Belarus, and in 2013 – among the students from Ukraine. The number of government scholarships for Belarusian, Ukrainian and Moldavian students increased, particularly after the launch of the Eastern Partnership. Initially, the greatest number of scholarships were awarded to students from Ukraine, and as of the academic year 2006/2007 – to students from Belarus. Moldavian students received the fewest scholarships. Initially, students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova did not undertake paid-for studies. This situation changed after Poland's inclusion in the EU structures. Starting from the academic year 2006/2007, the number of students undertaking paid-for studies increased systematically, particularly in the case of Ukrainian students. In the case of Belarus and Moldova, the number of scholarship holders and those studying free of charge was higher than the number of students paying for their education. However, the situation was different in the case of Ukrainian students. In 2000/2001, relatively few students undertook paid-for education. In the academic year 2013/2014, the situation reversed. Scholarship holders from Ukraine accounted for a small percentage of students, as did those studying free of charge. Students paying their tuition fees were a predominant group – 76.35% of the total number of university students from Ukraine. Availability of scholarships had a significant impact on the arrivals of Belarusian and Moldavian citizens, but did not contribute to an increase in the number of Ukrainian students.

**Key words:** students, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, scholarships

## INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 1990s, students from Ukraine and Belarus have been among the most numerous groups of foreign nationals entering education in Poland. Students from Moldova have constituted a far smaller group. The relevant recruitment policy consists of several stages: from the university's approval, through the entry of the territory of Poland and legalisation of stay, to the terms under which the foreigners may remain in Poland after graduation. Foreign nationals have a choice of Bachelor's and Master's courses in Poland in the full-time and part-time formula, uniform Master's studies, postgraduate courses, doctoral studies, habilitation and art-related placements, specialised and training, and postgraduate medical placements, additional training courses, including Polish language courses, work placements for students or participation in research and development activities. During their studies in Poland, foreigners may take advantage of the scholarships available. The purpose of this article is to present the legal basis enabling citizens of Belarus and Ukraine to study in Poland, to analyse their numbers, the procedure by which they take up studies and the principles underlying the scholarship system. The research hypothesis is as follows: the range of scholarships offered has contributed to an increase in the number of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova at Polish universities. To test this hypothesis, the author formulated the following research questions: 1/ on what legal basis did students from Belarus and Russia start their education at Polish universities; 2/ at which Polish universities did they study; 3/ what scholarships were available to them; 4/ what percentage of students used the scholarships offered; 5/ did the number and amount of scholarships contribute to the increase in the number of students entering education at Polish universities? This article was written on the basis of the data from GUS (Central Statistical Office), BUWiWM (Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange) and universities.

### LEGAL BASIS FOR ADMISSION TO UNIVERSITIES OF STUDENTS FROM BELARUS, UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and establishment of independent Republics of Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, the Polish government signed appropriate agreements on cooperation in science and education with these states. The agreements were preceded by treaties of good neighbourship and friendly cooperation signed in 1992 [Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Belarus on good neighbourship and friendly cooperation: 1992; Treaty between the Republic of Poland and Ukraine on good neighbourship, friendly relations and cooperation:



1992] and Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Moldova on friendship and cooperation signed on 15 November 1994 [Treaty on friendship and cooperation with the Republic of Moldova: 1994]. These documents stressed the need for developing the cooperation between universities and academic institutions with respect to the exchange of students, academic workers and scholarship holders [Szeptycki 2008: 160; Waszkiewicz 2005: 82–83]. The agreement with Moldova stipulated that the cooperation should be based on the standards specified in OSCE documents and UNESCO conventions.

Closer contacts between Poland and the neighbouring countries were encouraged by the following legislation: the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Poland on cooperation in the fields of culture, science and education of 27 November 1995 [Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Poland on cooperation in the fields of culture, science and education: 1995], the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of Ukraine of 16 May 1997 [Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of Ukraine: 1997] and the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Moldova on cultural and scientific cooperation made in Chişinău on 10 December 1997 [Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Moldova on cultural and scientific cooperation: 1997]. These agreements provided for the development of cooperation between Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Moldovan universities. Detailed arrangements were made only in the case of Ukraine. By signing the Agreement between the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Poland and the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine of 2 July 2001 [Agreement between the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Poland and the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine: 2001], the parties agreed to admit 2 persons for Master's studies, 10 persons for one-term studies and 3 persons for doctoral studies per year, providing them with free tuition, accommodation and health insurance. With respect to Moldova, only one document was made – the Implementation Programme for culture, education and science agreed by the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Moldova for 2006–2008, signed on 14 June 2006. It provided that the Polish side would admit up to 5 Moldovan citizens to free-of-charge university studies and 2 to doctoral studies or academic placement every year. The Moldovan side agreed to admit Polish citizens to academic placement of 45 months' duration in total per year. It was assumed that the subjects and number of persons accepted for doctoral studies and academic placements would be agreed every year [Implementation Programme for culture, education and science agreed by the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Moldova for 2006–2008]. No such programme was arranged with the Republic of Belarus [Adamski 2009: 145].



The entry into the Schengen Agreement and Poland's inclusion in the EU structures altered the status of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. The matters related to the education of foreign nationals in Poland were regulated by the provisions of Article 43 of the Higher Education Act of 27 July 2005 [Higher Education Act: 2005, as amended], whereunder foreigners could study on the same terms as Polish citizens or on a different basis. The former option applied to foreigners holding a valid Pole's Card and having: a permit to settle in the territory of Poland or the right of permanent residence, with the status of refugee granted by the Republic of Poland, under temporary or of supplementary protection, migrant workers – citizens of the member states of the EU, EFTA, EEA and the Swiss Confederation, residents of the European Communities holding a temporary residence permit and citizens of the member states of the EU, EFTA, Swiss Confederation and EEA. The aforementioned persons could apply for grants, including grants for disabled persons, financial aid, rector's scholarship for outstanding students or scholarships awarded by the relevant ministers for academic or sports achievements. The scholarships and grants are awarded on the basis of international agreements or the Governmental Programme of Cooperation with the Polish Diaspora [Dzwonkowski 2006: 230]. The candidates for scholarships are entered by diplomatic posts or institutions from the respective countries, responsible for student exchange. Foreign scholarship holders from a particular country receive the scholarships, on the basis of international agreements, from the ministry or national institution responsible for international student exchange.

Detailed provisions regulating the matter of foreign nationals entering education on the terms and basis other than those applicable to Polish citizens, stated in Article 43 paragraph 3 and Article 4 of the aforementioned Act, are specified in the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 12 October 2006 on starting and completing of studies and training by foreign nationals and their participation in research and development activities [Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education on starting and completing of studies and training by foreign nationals and their participation in research and development activities: 2006, No. 190, item 406; Journal of Laws of 2009, No. 176, item 1365].

Foreign students receive education free of charge or without a scholarship on the basis of intergovernmental agreements or assistance programmes offered to certain countries by the Polish government via appropriate institutions of Polish diplomatic posts [Zdybicka 2013: 210].

The other foreign nationals may enter university education in Poland at a charge. The minimum tuition fee is EUR 2000 per year; this amount may vary between the universities.

Poland does not have just one document regulating all matters concerning admission of foreign students in a consistent and comprehensive manner. Selected proposals regarding foreign students are contained in the Human Capital Development Strategy, specifying the number of students entering education by 2020 [Resolution of the



Council of Ministers concerning the adoption of the “Social Capital Development Strategy 2020”: 2013] and the document adopted by the Council of Ministers in July 2012 – “Poland’s migration policy – *status quo* and proposed actions” where foreign students were described as one of the priorities. Another assumption was the migration of students from the Eastern Partnership and international cooperation in this respect [Wolkonowski 2011: 15]. The issues concerning students of Polish descent are addressed by annual strategic plans of cooperation with Poles residing abroad, referring to educating young people in specialisations in demand in their countries of residence and in Poland, supporting scholarship programmes and promotion of education in Poland. Another document referring to the issues of foreign students is the Governmental Programme of Cooperation with the Polish Diaspora for 2015–2020. The draft of the document mentions plans of supporting the education of persons of Polish descent by the development of a scholarship policy, particularly for citizens of the former Soviet Republics, creating a database of the persons awarded scholarships by the Polish government and a website with advice for foreign students [Draft of the Governmental Cooperation Programme with Polish Diaspora 2015–2020].

The new Act of 12 December 2013 on foreign nationals [Act on foreign nationals: 2013] which entered into force as of 1 July 2014 extended the term of temporary residence permits granted to foreign students. Pursuant to the Act, first-year foreign students are issued with residence permits for a period of 15 months, and the foreign nationals on a scholarship of less than 12 months – for a period of an academic year and three months. Meanwhile, students starting the second year of study or subsequent years receive a temporary residence permit for two years. This way, they may avoid being struck off the list of students if they fail an examination or their residence card is cancelled. The Act also provides the graduates of Polish universities with the possibility of applying for a temporary residence permit for a period of one year to look for a job [Zasady zatrudniania cudzoziemców (Rules for employment of foreign nationals)].

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS, UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA AT POLISH UNIVERSITIES

Students from Ukraine and Belarus have been coming to Poland since the beginning of the 1990s [Mazińska 1998: 110], whereas students from the Republic of Moldova did not enter Polish universities until the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The statistics provided by the Office of Foreign Education (the former name of BUWi-WM used until 1999) indicate the following numbers of students from the former Soviet Republics in the respective academic years: 1989/1990 – 135, 1990/1991 – 342 and 1991/1992 – 684 persons. The Office did not keep detailed statistics with a breakdown by country until 1993/1994. According to the later data, the following numbers of students arrived from Belarus in the respective years: 1993/1994 – 328;



1994/1995 – 443; 1995/1996 – 564 persons, whereas from Ukraine: 1993/1994 – 464; 1994/1995 – 505 and in 1995/1996 – 507 persons [Małyżko 2005: 43–49]. Because of unavailability of complete data, the numbers of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, including students of Polish descent, can only be presented for a period starting in the academic year 1997/1998. Citizens of Moldova began studying in Poland after a relevant bilateral agreement was signed in 1997. The number of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova in 1997–2013 is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The number of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, including students of Polish descent in 1997–2013

Year	Total number of foreign students	Number of students from Belarus	Number of students of Polish descent	Number of students from Ukraine	Number of students of Polish descent	Number of students from Moldova	Number of students of Polish descent
1997	5,443	600	520	855	574	22	20
1998	5,541	693	586	868	563	23	20
1999	6,025	831	688	1,073	694	33	26
2000	6,669	997	735	1,272	769	44	37
2001	7,380	1,002	786	1,693	815	55	41
2002	7,608	1,088	998	1,809	998	64	47
2003	8,160	1,171	955	1,880	910	70	53
2004	8,826	1,211	919	1,963	863	79	58
2005	10,092	1,305	932	1,989	814	77	56
2006	11,752	1,544	909	2,224	732	73	45
2007	13,695	1,676	910	2,470	719	79	42
2008	15,862	1,902	927	2,831	703	83	47
2009	17,000	2,329	1,018	3,499	779	90	45
2010	24,474	2,605	1,077	4,879	955	98	48
2011	24,253	2,937	1,309	6,321	1,185	97	46
2012	29,172	3,388	1,546	9,747	1,570	101	46
2013	35,983	3,743	1,674	15,123	1,993	99	43

Source: own elaboration based on the study titled “Universities and their finances”, Central Office of Statistics 1998–2014.

The data presented in Table 1 suggest that students from Belarus accounted for 11.02% of foreigners studying in Poland in 1997 compared with only 10.4% in 2013. As the number of foreign students grew, so did the number of students of Polish descent, who were able to take up studies on the terms applicable to Polish citizens. In 1997, students of Polish descent accounted for 86% of the total, compared to 44.7% in 2013.

Students from Ukraine constituted 15.7% of the total number of foreign students in Poland compared with 42% in 2013. Ukrainian students of Polish descent accounted for 10.5% of the total in 1997 and 4.58% in 2013.

Moldovian students began arriving in Poland in 1997, when they constituted 0.40% of the total number of foreign students in Poland, compared with 0.27% in 2013. Students of Polish descent made up 90% of all arrivals from Moldova in 1997 and 43% in 2013.



Overall, students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova accounted for 27.12% of foreign nationals studying in Poland in 1997. Their share increased steadily to reach 52.72% of the total in 2013. This means that more than a half of foreigners studying in Poland arrived from the neighbouring countries. In absolute terms, students from Ukraine dominated both in 1997 and in 2013. They also constituted the largest share among the students of Polish descent entering Polish universities [Wołkonowski 2011: 79]. Nearly 100% of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova took up full-time studies. They mostly studied for a bachelor's degree (first-tier studies) at public universities. The most popular subjects included Management, International Relationships, Administration, Journalism, Economics, Political Sciences and Eastern Studies. The foreign nationals took up studies at the largest and best Polish universities: the University of Warsaw, the Jagiellonian University, University of Wrocław, Adam Mickiewicz University, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University and the University of Białystok.

The number of Ukrainian, Belarusian and Moldovan students of other than Polish descent increased every year; they were awarded scholarships or attended paid-for courses [Raport o sytuacji Polaków za granicą 2009 rok (Report on the situation of Poles abroad for 2009), 134]. The new scholarship programmes, such as the Eastern Partnership initiative and schemes of other NGOs, were designed to encourage greater numbers of foreign arrivals.

#### SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMMES FOR STUDENTS

The first scholarship programmes started in the early 1990s [Małyszko 2005: 39–40]. The number of scholarships granted grew rapidly because the scholarship award procedure was perceived as implementation of Polish foreign policy involving the revival of Polish intelligentsia in the East [Wizimirska 1996: 211; Wyszyński 2011: 124]. The number of scholarships awarded to students from Ukraine were as follows: 1993/1994 – 368, 1994/1995 – 452; 1995/1996 – 443; 1996/1997 – 468; 1997/1998 – 465; 1998/1999 – 397, 1999/2000 – 459. Due to the gaps in documentation it is impossible to present the number of scholarships awarded to Belarussian [Małyszko 2005: 43] and Moldovan students in that period. The number of government scholarships increased every year; they were received mainly by persons of Polish descent [Klimaszewski 2012: 189]. After the Eastern Partnership was launched, the following scholarships were added to the existing schemes: scholarships for students doing a degree in Eastern Studies, the Stefan Banach Scholarship Programme, a scheme for doctoral studies in Arts and Humanities [scholarships for students from the Eastern Partnership countries]. Apart from the government scholarships, other means of assistance were also available to students. These included the Lane Kirkland Scholarship Programme and the Scholarship of the Museum of Polish History [Wasilewski 2011: 60–61].



Table 2. The number of scholarship holders from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova in 2001–2014 studying free of charge and at a charge

Academic year	Country	RP scholarship holders	Other scholarships	Free of charge	At a charge
2000/2001	Belarus	428	0	301	13
	Moldova	36	0	8	0
	Ukraine	436	0	199	18
2001/2002	Belarus	397	0	500	11
	Moldova	41	0	17	0
	Ukraine	497	0	282	45
2002/2003	Belarus	676	0	616	22
	Moldova	51	0	16	1
	Ukraine	505	0	952	371
2003/2004	Belarus	394	0	589	34
	Moldova	46	0	22	1
	Ukraine	468	0	1,347	87
2004/2005	Belarus	416	0	778	56
	Moldova	51	0	25	3
	Ukraine	476	0	671	209
2005/2006	Belarus	456	26	804	62
	Moldova	35	0	31	2
	Ukraine	448	34	1,152	212
2006/2007	Belarus	772	0	630	320
	Moldova	50	0	24	13
	Ukraine	411	0	834	773
2007/2008	Belarus	724	0	543	174
	Moldova	42	0	14	12
	Ukraine	385	15	540	610
2008/2009	Belarus	797	0	629	290
	Moldova	41	0	24	17
	Ukraine	364	0	789	605
2009/2010	Belarus	883	65	687	564
	Moldova	39	4	15	19
	Ukraine	368	122	903	649
2010/2011	Belarus	835	106	769	836
	Moldova	33	1	27	25
	Ukraine	391	144	1,022	2,013
2011/2012	Belarus	951	147	876	869
	Moldova	36	1	26	34
	Ukraine	452	173	1,492	3,999
2012/2013	Belarus	1,008	155	1,010	1,019
	Moldova	31	0	21	29
	Ukraine	538	638	1,563	6,228
2013/2014	Belarus	1,087	99	1,212	1,254
	Moldova	32	2	26	39
	Ukraine	604	539	2,258	10,973

Source: own elaboration based on materials from the Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange

The data shown in Table 2 suggest that the number of scholarships awarded to students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova starting from the academic year 2000/2001 was not constant but fluctuated from one year to the next. It was not until the Eastern Partnership was launched, i.e. in the academic year 2008/2009 that it began to increase steadily. In 2013, the Minister of Science and Higher Education in collaboration with





the Minister of Foreign Affairs created a new scholarship programme for the citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries undertaking doctoral studies in the field of humanities and social sciences: sociology, political studies, law and journalism [Miodunka 2000: 42]. It was assumed that a maximum of 120 citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries may participate in the programme [Scholarships for citizens of Eastern Partnership member states]. In the same year, another initiative was launched at the University of Warsaw – the Stefan Banach Scholarship Programme. It was addressed to students undertaking two-year postgraduate studies of natural and economical sciences, engineering, European studies and European law at public universities. The programme also provided students with the possibility of participating in placements in Poland as part of the Erasmus Programme. The range of scholarship programmes available in Poland was presented on the websites of Polish embassies in Minsk, Kiev and Chişinău. Since the academic year 2000/2001, the largest number of government scholarships were awarded to students from Belarus and the smallest – to Moldovan students.

Apart from the government scholarships, the number of grants awarded by other institutions was increasing steadily from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They were awarded to undergraduate students and those doing supplementary and uniform studies. One of the best-known schemes is the Lane Kirkland Scholarship Programme. In the first, pilot year, it was participated by only 12 Ukrainians. The operator of the 2001/2002 edition became the Polish-American Fulbright Programme and scholarships were available to students from Belarus, the Russian Federation (only from the Kaliningrad Oblast), Slovakia and Lithuania. Since 2013, the Education for Democracy Foundation has been the Programme operator. Between 2000 and 2014, scholarships were awarded to 309 Ukrainians, 130 citizens of Belarus and 16 students from Moldova [Lane Kirkland Scholarship Programme]. Most of the scholarships were received by students of International Affairs, Administration, Journalism, Economy, Political Science and Management, whereas students of Law, Agriculture, Health Studies and Insurance were awarded less frequently. The scholarship holders studied in five major centres of education in Poland: Warsaw, Cracow, Poznań, Lublin and Wrocław [Furier 1998: 104]. Between the academic year 2000/2001 and 2013/2014, the number of students who entered education free of charge and without a scholarship steadily increased. In 2000/2001, they consisted mostly of Belarussian citizens, and in 2013/2014 – of Ukrainians. Initially, students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova were not interested in paid-for studies. This situation changed after Poland's inclusion in the EU structures. Starting from the academic year 2006/2007, the number of students undertaking paid-for studies increased systematically. Over the entire period investigated, students from Ukraine accounted for most of such cases. In the academic year 2013/2014, they constituted a far larger group than the students entering education in Poland free of charge or receiving a scholarship. In the case of Belarus, the number of scholarship holders and those studying free of charge was slightly higher than of the students paying for their education. The same applied to the number of students from Moldova. However, the situation was different in



the case of Ukrainian students. In 2000/2001, the number of Ukrainians undertaking paid-for education was small (18 persons). The largest group consisted of Polish government scholarship holders – 436, whereas 199 persons studied free of charge. In the academic year 2013/2014, the situation reversed. Scholarship holders from Ukraine accounted for a mere 7.95%, those studying free of charge – 15.70% and students paying for their education – 76.35% of the students at Polish universities. This proves that the scholarships offered by the Polish side caused an increase in the number of students from Belarus and Moldova. However, they did not play a major role in the case of Ukrainians undertaking studies in Poland.

### CONCLUSIONS

In the 1990s, students from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine entered education in Poland on the basis of relevant agreements and programmes signed by Poland and the governments of these countries. After Poland's inclusion in the EU structures and the adoption of the Schengen Agreement, students from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine had to undergo the entry procedure applicable to foreign nationals. The conditions governing their stay and study in Poland were specified by appropriate acts and regulations. Despite the difficulties involved in the migration process, the number of students arriving from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine increased systematically. The largest group of students arrived from Ukraine and the smallest – from Moldova. In 1997, the largest share of students of Polish descent was among the students from Belarus, and in 2013 – among the students from Ukraine. Foreign nationals studying at Polish universities have been awarded scholarships since the early 1990s. The number of government scholarships for Belarusian, Ukrainian and Moldovan students increased, particularly after the launch of the Eastern Partnership. As well as that, students could also take advantage of funds from other organisations, e.g. the Lane Kirkland scheme. From the beginning of the period investigated, the number of foreign nationals undertaking studies free of charge and without a scholarship grew steadily. In 2000/2001, they consisted mostly of Belarusian citizens, and in 2013/2014 – of Ukrainians. Initially, students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova did not undertake paid-for studies. This situation changed after Poland's inclusion in the EU structures. Starting from the academic year 2006/2007, the number of students undertaking paid-for studies increased systematically. They mostly consisted of students arriving from Ukraine. In the case of Belarus, the number of scholarship holders and those studying free of charge was slightly lower than of the students paying for their education. The same applied to the number of students from Moldova. In the academic year 2000/2001, only 18 Ukrainians undertook paid-for studies, whereas in 2013/2014, Ukrainian students paying for their education accounted for 76.35% of Ukrainians studying at universities. The research hypothesis formulated in this article, stating that the range of scholarships offered has contributed to an increase



in the number of students from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova at Polish universities, was proved partially correct. The scholarships offered by the Polish government and other organisations contributed to an increase in the number of students from Belarus and Moldova at Polish universities. However, they did not play a major role in the case of Ukrainians undertaking studies in Poland. As a EU member state, Poland became an attractive country in which to undertake university studies.

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