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# Curing “Ukraine Fatigue”: Generation Change

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*“A politician thinks of the next election;  
a statesman thinks of the next generation.”*

*Sir Winston Churchill (1874–1965)*

## **Generation gap: burning bridges to the past**

The Europeans say they are tired of Ukraine. New laws are in place and reforms are attempted, but these efforts have surprisingly little effect. No wonder: people with an old mindset can hardly bring in anything new.

The bad news is that people don't change. The good news is that generations do. If European politicians want a successful dialogue with Ukraine, both sides must speak the same language. This is difficult for many politicians brought up in the Soviet Union who manage the country now. So shift your focus: the young people of today are gearing up to meet the challenge.

However, Ukrainian youth are affected by the corrupt and inefficient education system. Their skills do not match the needs of the labor market. There are few places where they can develop: courtesy of outdated Soviet procedures, state institutions foster intellectual stagnation. In contrast, private companies require analytical skills and sharp thinking — for which recent graduates are ill-equipped.

## **There is a way out...**

According to the Pennsylvania State University, studying abroad boosts personal growth, enables new thinking and gives new perspective of the world. But most importantly, it shows to youngsters from transition countries that they can make a societal choice and bring change home.

Were any of the lucky ones tempted to stay in freer and more developed countries and live happily ever after? Some were and did. But the benefits have been worth the risk. First, the receiving countries have gained from the wiz-kids who stayed, which has enhanced their home countries' positive image abroad. One example out of many: among the best employees at Google headquarters is a Ukrainian graduate of the Kyiv-based National Technical University who also has a European degree. Second, the changes brought by those who have returned home more than make up for the loss of those who stayed abroad. The best examples are South Korean graduates of US universities who made the Asian economic miracle possible, and their Chinese peers who converted China into the US' main trade competitor.

Some Ukrainians have already understood this: the Viktor Pinchuk Foundation, established by a renowned Ukrainian businessman, provides financial support for students to earn degrees abroad. The Council of Europe/Agency for Legislative Initiatives' project “Ukrainian School of Political Studies” (USPS) is another great example of endorsement of the new mindset. Unfortunately, as strong as many scholarship candidates are, the resources are far too scarce to meet the needs of the ever-growing number of applicants.

## ...and the EU and US are already helping

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 26,874 Ukrainian students – just 1% of 2,604,875 – studied abroad in 2005. These numbers are not bad. But they could be better. For Turkey, another country with European aspirations and roughly equal student population, this number amounts to almost 3% (60,063 out of 2,106,351).

We have to give the EU and US their due: they have supported Ukrainian efforts to bring up a new generation. According to the American Council, 1,805 Ukrainian students studied in the USA in 2006. However, the number of Turkish students was more than six times greater: 12,474.

The European Union helps Ukraine in two ways. One is funding from the EU – 27, and the other, scholarships from the individual Member States. Administered by the European Commission, the EU – 27 stipends are mostly allocated within the Erasmus Mundus programme. In 2008/2009, 133 Ukrainians benefited from it by pursuing Masters and Doctoral studies in the EU. In addition, six scholarships were offered by the elite European Affairs school, the College of Europe. Finally, the EU covered the costs of Masters studies for 18 Ukrainians within the pilot ENP bursary initiative.

### EU–27 scholarships given to students from Ukraine (2008/2009)

Programme Type	Number of scholarships
<b>Master</b> Erasmus Mundus (component 1)	34
<b>PhD</b> Erasmus Mundus (component 1)	9
<b>Master and professional training</b> Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window	90
<b>Master</b> College of Europe	6
<b>Master</b> ENP pilot scholarship	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>

While these numbers are not too low (for example, Turkish students received only 84 Master's degree scholarships within Jean Monnet programme), there was no financial support for Ukrainians pursuing undergraduate studies. By contrast, about 7,000 Turks went to the EU as a part of the Erasmus undergraduate mobility scheme, to which Turks are entitled and Ukrainians are not.

Among contributing Member States, Germany tops the list with 1,100 scholarships administered by the German Academic Exchange Service. France allocated 150 scholarships. Poland provided 70 government scholarships, in addition to 24 Lane Kirkland Master scholarships. Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia also gave 63 Master and PhD scholarships within their International Visegrad Fund. Other Member States, such as the UK, Sweden, Italy, Netherlands, Spain offered fewer scholarships to Ukrainians (4 – 20 scholarships on average)<sup>1</sup>.

Some Member States also have Cultural Centres in Ukraine, where youngsters can learn European languages and embrace their cultures. The best examples are the British Council, the Alliance Française, and the Goethe Institute, which offer language courses and give information on scholarships to study abroad. However, some centres are still missing, such as the long-awaited Spanish Instituto Cervantes.

<sup>1</sup> The data for the listed countries refer to 2008/2009 academic year.

## Does supply meet demand?

The EU and its Member States support Ukrainian students. This assistance matters a lot. But is there enough for all? The analysis reveals shocking results: the rejection rate for Chevening scholarships in Ukraine is 96%. Only 10 scholarships were allocated for about 250 applications in 2008/2009, according to the British Council. In 2009/2010, the EU – 27's Erasmus Mundus programme rejected 89% of Ukrainian applications (29 admitted students out of 273) in contrast to 64% in Turkey (57 admitted students out of 158).

One possible reason may be the quality of applications. Indeed, Ukrainian students can find it difficult to grasp the requirements of the Western education system. Thus it is even more important to engage with Ukrainian youth at a much earlier stage, for example through the Erasmus undergraduate mobility scheme. Another explanation, however, could be that the amount of scholarships does not match the number of good applications, and so the number of spots could be increased.

## Europe, don't give up!

The European Union has two options. One is to let Ukraine stew in its own juices and sink into further depression and instability. The other is to lend a hand to a young and ambitious elite – the real Ukraine – and help it build the country of tomorrow on European values and principles.

*Start early:* open up the Erasmus undergraduate mobility scheme for Ukrainians. One semester of study abroad can radically change mindsets and lead to years of country's prosperity in due course.

*More for Masters and PhDs:* where possible, both the European Commission and Member States should increase the number of scholarships. The strongest supporters of Ukraine's European future, such as Poland, the UK and Sweden, should consider partial fee waivers for those Ukrainians who can cover part of their education costs. Donors should consider making scholarships conditional to applicants' return to and employment in their home countries.

*European studies:* a Scholarship Fund for Eastern Partnership countries should be launched based on the example of the ENP pilot bursary. This will open an additional window for the future leaders of EaP countries to understand the European Union, its values, principles, and institutions.

*Raise awareness:* a country-wide awareness campaign should be launched. The cultural centres of Member States, such as the Italian Cultural Centre, the Czech Centre, the Austrian Cultural Forum, and the Polish Institute should hold frequent presentations of their scholarship programmes. New cultural centres of the Member States should be opened to give Ukrainian youth access to more languages and cultures.

*The European Union wants Ukraine to be democratic, stable, and prosperous. So do young Ukrainians, and they are asking for the European support.*

*Aim at the Ukrainian youth, teach them and give them time. Be patient: the result will take years to come, but it will be worth the waiting.*

### Scholarships for Ukrainian Students provided by the EU–27, the EU Member States and the USA (for 2008/2009)<sup>2</sup>

Donor	Name of scholarship	Purpose of scholarship				
		Undergraduate course	Master degree	PhD	Professional training	Language course
EU–27	Erasmus Mundus (component 1)		34	9		
	Erasmus Mundus (External Cooperation Window, component 2)		90			
	College of Europe		6			
	ENP Pilot scholarship		18			
<b>EU–27 TOTAL</b>		<b>157</b>				
<b>EU Member States</b>						
Germany	DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service)	1100				
	Bundestag Traineeship				5	
Great Britain	Chevening scholarship		10			
	John Smith fellowship				4	
France	Government and regional scholarships	150				
Italy	Government scholarships					60 months
Sweden	The Swedish Institute		15	4		
Netherlands	MTEC		4		16	
Poland	Government scholarships				65–70	
	Lane Kirkland Programme		24			
Visegrad	Visegrad scholarships		17	46		
Spain	Government Scholarships		3		3	3
USA	Fulbright				52	
	FLEX	290				
	UGRAD	20				
	MUSKIE		16			
	Humphrey				2	
	Short-term courses					300
<b>USA TOTAL</b>		<b>680</b>				

<sup>2</sup> The numbers provided in this table reflect the data collected from web-pages, official reports and phone/e-mail interviews with the US, European Commission and EU Member States officials. Given the lack of publicly available information in some cases and no response from some EU Member States, the data should be treated as illustrating major trends, rather than as a comprehensive guide to US, EU – 27 and Member States' scholarships for Ukraine.