

# Ukrainian International Students: Seeking a Ticket to the Top, Not a Ticket Out

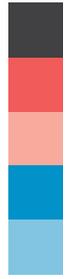
Overview of the Market for International Students in Ukraine



**SPECIAL REPORT**  
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U.S. COMMERCIAL SERVICE KYIV

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The U.S. Commercial Service in Kyiv's (CS Kyiv) Overview of the Market for International Students in Ukraine, "Ukrainian International Students: Seeking a Ticket to the Top, Not a Ticket Out," was developed in the summer of 2016 to provide U.S. educational institutions with information to consider in recruiting Ukrainian students. CS Kyiv produced this report in cooperation with EducationUSA and dozens of domestic recruiting agents to provide real-time information on market trends and the preferences and decision-making processes of prospective students in Ukraine.

This report includes multiple data rich sections. First is an overview of Ukraine's education sector, with insights about the drivers of increased numbers of international students from Ukraine. Next, the report includes information about Ukrainian student enrollment in international institutions. The heart of the report includes the key findings of a survey of nearly 1000 students and a survey of 39 recruiting agents regarding the demand for study abroad programs. This report ends with insight from recruiting agents on the competition for U.S. institutions. Altogether, this information tells a story of students in search of internationally recognized degrees and practical skills that will catapult them to the top of Ukraine's workplace.

Most of the data presented in this report are from an online student survey conducted in cooperation with EducationUSA and an online survey of domestic recruiting agents. CS Kyiv and its partners collected responses from May 16 to July 1, 2016. A cross-section of respondents was sought to provide readers with an understanding of the Ukrainian market from the viewpoint of both prospective and former students and small and large recruiting agents.

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*"In learning, you will teach, and in teaching, you will learn." - Phil Collins*

Welcome to this special report prepared by CS Kyiv, an agency dedicated to delivering services and information that ensure that U.S. businesses can compete and win in the global marketplace. The goal of this report is to provide U.S. educational institutions with insights regarding the demand and key drivers of study abroad programs among Ukrainians.

The U.S. international education sector is one of the most prosperous in the world. Last year nearly a million international students selected the U.S. as their study destination and contributed more than \$30 billion to the U.S. economy. Despite its leading position in education, the U.S.' share of international students has declined from 28 to 22 percent over the last fourteen years (Institute for International Education (IIE), Project Atlas 2015). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) predicts that by 2025 eight million students will be globally mobile versus 2.1 million students in 2000. Therefore, today many U.S. colleges

and universities have begun looking for recruitment opportunities outside of the traditional top markets of China, India, and South Korea (ITA, 2016 Top Markets Report, Education).

Ukraine is a destination for U.S. schools to explore when seeking to diversify their campuses with well-educated students, particularly in the areas of math and science. The country possesses tremendous untapped human capital and despite its recent political and economic challenges, the number of Ukrainians studying abroad has increased by almost 80 percent over the last five years. Motivated by the desire to rebuild their country as it joins the European Union (EU), Ukraine's younger generations are seeking new knowledge, best practices in management, foreign language fluency, and international experience to enhance their lives and compete in an increasingly competitive workplace.

We hope that you find the results of this study useful in forging new partnerships with local Ukrainian institutions and in recruiting talented students.

# 5.7 million students in Ukraine

**Ukraine is a Potentially Rich Source of International Students in Eastern Europe** - Ukraine is the largest wholly European country with nearly 5.7 million students. In addition to its territorial breadth and robust student population, it is also among the world's top ten most intellectually developed nations, ranking fourth globally in the number of people with a higher education.

## The Number of Ukrainian International Students has Grown Steadily since 2009

- The combination of talented high school graduates, largely uncompetitive domestic universities, and demand for graduates with workplace skills has led to increased numbers of international students from Ukraine in the last five years, reaching 47,000 students in more than 30 countries in 2014.

**The U.S. Ranks among the Most Attractive Countries for Ukrainian International Students** - While the U.S. ranks high on the lists of all groups surveyed in this report, America's exact ranking varies by audience. For prospective students the most popular destinations are the U.S., followed by Canada, the U.K, and Western Europe. In contrast, the top destination for former international students includes Western Europe, followed by the U.S., and Eastern Europe. According to agents, Ukrainians are most interested in studying in Eastern Europe, followed by Canada, and then the U.S.

**Recruiting Agents Say that U.S. is Increasingly Popular among Ukrainian International Students** - Though agents do not rank the U.S. as the most favored

destination, they do say interest in the U.S., along with Western Europe, is on the rise. On the other hand, interest in Canada is stable, and interest in Australia is declining. Half of the agents surveyed in this report predict a significant or slight increase in demand to study in the U.S. in 2016.

## Country Choices Depend on Career Development Support and the Reputation of a Country's Overall Education System

- When it comes to the reasons prospective students select countries, the top reasons include a country's reputation for helping a student with career preparation and the strength of a country's overall education system.

## Potential Students Compare Schools Based First on Quality and then on Cost

- When comparing schools the most important factor for most Ukrainians is the quality of education, followed closely by cost. Because tuition is a major factor, prospective students plan to use a variety of means to pay for their education, including scholarships, income from part-time jobs, and family savings.

## Master's Degrees, English Courses, and Bachelor Degrees are the Most Popular Programs among Prospective Students

- Nearly four in ten prospective students seek master's degrees, another two in ten seek intensive English courses, and less than two in ten seek bachelor degrees. The percentage of potential students interested in graduate programs and community colleges is two times as high as those who previously studied in these programs in the last five years.

**Relatively Low Levels of English Language Proficiency in Ukraine Fuel Interest in English Courses** - The percentage of students interested in intensive English language courses is also twice as high as the number of returning students who report previously participating in these programs. Recruiting agents say that this is due to overall low levels of English language proficiency in Ukraine, which ranks 44 among 63 countries in English language proficiency.

**Agents Say that Canada and the U.K. are the U.S.' Top Competitors** - According to agents, Canada is the U.S.' primary competitor in recruiting Ukrainians to study in primary and higher education programs, whereas the U.K. is the major competitor for language schools and programs. One of the main reasons Canada is the U.S.' primary rival is because Canadian schools and universities have intensively promoted their programs in Ukraine for the last five years. As for U.K.'s popularity, the shorter distance from home likely plays a significant role in attracting short-term language students.

**The Major Obstacles for Studying Abroad are Cost, Domestic Economic Problems, and Visa Issues** - Nearly all (90 percent) of prospective students said that the cost of education is a challenge. After this, the biggest challenges include domestic economic problems and problems obtaining visas. Obtaining a visa seems to be especially difficult for students with only a specialist degree.

**Lack of High - Quality Business Education Program in Ukraine Makes it the Number One Field of Study for Former and Future International Students** - When comparing prospective and former international students both groups prioritize business programs. Beyond this, however, the two groups diverge. Prospective students favor engineering/computer science, law, and intensive English languages more than their predecessors.

**Foreign Education Institutions Commonly Partner with Local Recruiting Agents in Ukraine** - There are many recruiting agents in Ukraine and numerous small agencies dominate the market. Last year, most agents recruited up to **20 students to study in America**. Only one in ten agents participating in the survey said they recruited more than forty students to study in the U.S. Most agents concentrate their efforts on serving students who plan to use their parent's income or personal savings to pay for their education.



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