

FINAL REPORT

EVALUATION OF SELECTED INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED AS PART OF POLISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN 2011-2013: SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME FOR SPECIALISED EASTERN STUDIES AT THE CENTRE FOR EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

Consortium:

EGO – Evaluation for Government Organizations, CLP

IDEA Foundation



Research commissioned by:



Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland



Polish aid

Warsaw 2014

Summary

The evaluation was commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of Polish Development Cooperation. It was carried out from August until December 2014 by a consortium comprising two entities: IDEA of Development Foundation and EGO – Evaluation for Government Organisations clp., a limited partnership specialising in research. The evaluation focused on selected initiatives carried out in the framework of four components of Polish Development Cooperation in 2011-13, including the *Scholarship Programme for Students of Specialised Eastern Studies at the University of Warsaw*.

General project assessment

The general assessment of the *Scholarship programme for Students of Specialised Eastern Studies at the University of Warsaw* (SES UW), a project run by the Centre for East European Studies, is positive. The programme addresses the actual needs of the beneficiaries. Graduates develop academic and professional careers and thus prove that the initiative is sustainable. The project has contributed to creating “leaders of change” in the participants’ countries of origin and has yielded image benefits for Poland. Thanks to its relatively long history and high (in the students’ opinion) quality of offered services, the programme is now a recognisable brand in the project’s participants’ home countries.

Concurrently, in the course of the evaluation process, the research team drew conclusions and produced recommendations whose implementation could contribute to strengthening the effects of the Programme as well as improving its adjustment to the beneficiaries’ needs.

Key recommendations for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

At present, the Programme for UW SES students clearly extends beyond the scope of a typical scholarship project and the specificity of implementing project activities. This leads to problems with its implementation. It is recommended that an in-depth analysis of project objectives be performed at the ministerial level (in cooperation with UW). The next step should be a joint (MFA, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, UW) optimisation of the scope of initiatives financed under the project.

Key recommendations for project originators

The Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MSHE) should consider making a number of operational changes to improve the Programme’s implementation. The most important include providing a precise definition of its objectives (in cooperation with the MFA and UW), systematisation of the thematic structure and scope of implemented initiatives, followed by enforcement of agreed on premises. The system of project financing also needs improvement (the implementation of multi-annual projects in place of annual projects should be considered).

Key recommendations for the University of Warsaw (entity responsible for the project)

Following a joint reassessment of the strategy together with the MFA and MSHE, the UW should introduce a number of organisational modifications. The most important ones include the following:

- systematisation of the Programme’s reporting process,
- intensification of information and promotion activities,
- establishment of a comprehensive system of cooperation with graduates
- introduction of cyclical surveys of the educational needs and career plans of scholarship students.

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1. Introduction

General information about the evaluation

The evaluation was commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of Polish Development Cooperation. It was carried out by a consortium comprising two entities: IDEA Foundation and EGO – Evaluation for Government Organisations clp, a research company. The evaluation was carried out in August-December, 2014.

The aim of the evaluation according to its Terms of Reference was to help identify the main factors that impact the effectiveness of projects carried out as part of development cooperation and to present conclusions and recommendations for annual planning and multiannual programming of Polish aid.

The evaluation concerned selected initiatives implemented in four components of Polish development cooperation **in the years 2011-2013**, i.e. :

- **Component 1**, within which the *Scholarship Programme for Students of Specialised Eastern Studies at the University of Warsaw* project was examined;
- **Component 2**, within which projects completed in 2011-2013 in the field of **small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) in Georgia** were examined;
- **Component 3**, within which projects completed in 2011-2013 in the field of **small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) in Ukraine** were examined;
- **Component 4**, within which **the performance by the Belarusian Radio Racyja of the 2013 coproduction agreement** with the MFA was examined.

Methodology

In performing the evaluation research, we adhered to key norms and standards developed by OECD-DAC (Development Assistance Committee) - NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION¹. Taking into account the requirements set out in the Terms of Reference and the overall objective of delivering high quality results, the contractor decided to employ multiple research methods and techniques. By adopting this approach, the contractor was able to triangulate methods and techniques both with respect to data collection and analysis and to forming conclusions. The research methodology covered the following: **Desk Research, IDI (Individual In-Depth Interview)** (a total of 114 individual interviews were conducted), **CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview)**, **Experts' Panel, SWOT/TOWS analysis, case studies**.

As part of the evaluation, the contractor suggested several additional research methods suited for specific research components, including focus groups, bulletin board, strategic workshops, workshop of media experts, and linguistic and semiotic auditing. Their implementation enabled to supplement the research material to verify preliminary conclusions and recommendations.

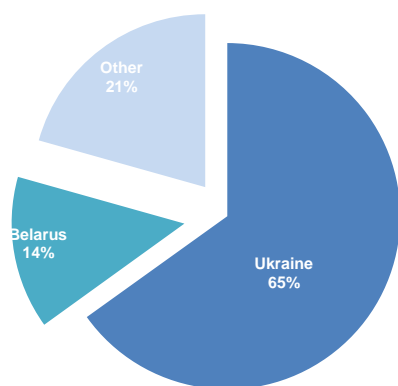
¹ *Evaluating Development Co-operation: Summary of key norms and standards*, OECD
<http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/41612905.pdf>

2. Scholarship programme

The objective of the evaluation was to examine the Scholarship Programme for students of the Specialised Eastern Studies (SES) at the University of Warsaw (UW). The project concerns a two-year Master's study programme with associated activities at the Centre for East European Studies (CEES) run in Poland. The evaluation focused on initiatives co-financed by the MFA with special emphasis on the results and effects of initiatives implemented in 2013. Whenever applicable, the evaluation also covered the results and effects of initiatives co-financed by MFA in 2011-2012 as well as the initiatives taken in 2014 whenever it was possible to examine them. When analysing the context of the evaluation, consideration was also given to how the SES UW Programme was implemented earlier². The Programme is addressed to candidates from countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

An analysis of the initiatives taken in 2013 indicates that Ukrainian citizens made up the majority of participants of the Scholarship Programme completed under the project, with Belarussians representing the second largest group. These were also the largest two groups in other editions under analysis.

Chart 1. Nationality of participants of SES CEES UW in 2013



Finally, it should be noted that **the programme has been running since the 2001/2002 academic year that is for a very long time**. According to UW data, over 1000 candidates from 25 countries have applied for scholarships awarded through competitions. Over 280 students received scholarships in 2001-2013. **The project's sustainability is one of its key values apart from the high quality of study courses.**

2.1 General assessment of implemented projects

The overall assessment of the SES programme's implementation is positive. According to analyses, the programme meets the beneficiaries' actual needs. The data collected also confirms its sustainability. After completing their programme studies, its participants continue their academic and professional careers, thereby proving the initiative's sustainability. The implementation of the project has brought measurable benefits in terms of image and has been a formative factor for "leaders of change" further supporting the objectives of Polish Development Cooperation. One important outcome of the programme, although it has not been fully used so far, is a network of several hundreds of graduates, often representing the intellectual

² In earlier years, the programme was implemented according to a different formula (funds were directly allocated to UW in the Budget Act) from the one currently used. This vital fact impacts the way in which the project is now implemented, specifically the wide scope of supported initiatives.

elites, who could significantly influence changes in their countries and promote a positive image of Poland. With regards to efficiency of the programme's implementation, the evaluating team has not found any notable negligence. Clearly the program's structure could and perhaps should be revised with a view to optimising it; but no incidents were found of allocating funds to initiatives that did not yield effects and results.³ **One identified problem seems to be the shortage of skills of SES employees when it comes to properly describing and demonstrating the effects of the programme and placing it within the specific framework applicable to project initiatives.**

Undoubtedly, one of the programme's greatest strengths to date is the powerful, recognisable brand of the CEES UW and the SES scholarship programme itself built over the years. Analyses have shown that **the programme enjoys high renown in the potential beneficiaries' home countries.** Other strong points of the initiative include the high quality of its educational offer, i.e. an **interesting and educationally relevant study programme implemented by experienced staff.**

One of the main **areas requiring optimisation is the management of the programme's implementation, especially when it comes to cooperation with its graduates.** The potential of the programme's graduates has not been fully tapped into because of the lack of structured and systematic actions. As well as being a source of additional information about the initiative's effects, a properly organised cooperation with former project participants could greatly enhance the quality of the SES programme. **In the authors' view, cooperation with graduates represents a major opportunity for the programme's development thus helping to implement, to the fullest extent possible, the Polish development cooperation objectives.**

Certain organisational and financial solutions were considered unclear or ill-suited to the project's objectives and thus judged a potential threat and as something negative. **The assumed annual formula of the project does not seem to offer the right solution to implementing the SES programme, implying financial instability and thus posing a risk to the project's sustainability.**

³ Cancelling the programme of European Parliament traineeships for scholarship students should be considered because the formula has exhausted itself.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality – an interesting and absorbing curriculum and competent teaching staff⁴ • Good brand name, recognisable in the potential participants’ home countries based on years of operation, established contacts and positive assessment by graduates • Potential of the University of Warsaw in terms of staff and premises • Experience of SES staff in implementing programmes supporting people from the Eastern Partnership countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor fit of venture structure into project framework • Insufficient cooperation with graduates (due to lack of systemic approach and suitable resources) • Complicated project management system (MFA, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange at UW), posing risk of tensions and delays • SES staff lacking skills and knowledge of implementing project initiatives • Insufficient use of modern methods of programme promotion (the Internet, social media)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poland’s growing role as the leader of Europe’s Eastern policy • Economic and social development of Poland (making studying in Poland increasingly attractive) • Network of graduates that can potentially support the fulfilment of Polish development aid objectives • Projected further increase of funding for development aid⁵ and the usefulness of the initiative in view of specific development aid objectives • Location of studies at UW in Warsaw, contact with experienced lecturers⁶ (e.g. central public administration officials) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International situation (escalation of the conflict between Europe and Russia preventing implementation of the programme in its present formula and scope)⁷ • Instability of funding • Development of competition (e.g. similar scholarship programmes in other EU countries)

⁴ Based on information received from scholarship students.

⁵ Arising from Poland’s international commitments as to funds allocated to development assistance.

⁶ Scholarship students highly praised classes run by practitioners (e.g. ex-diplomats). They also indicated the need to increase the number of classes devoted to practical subjects (e.g. European integration, diplomacy).

2.2 Research findings - response to evaluation questions

What were the criteria used for including scholarship students in all/individual project initiatives?

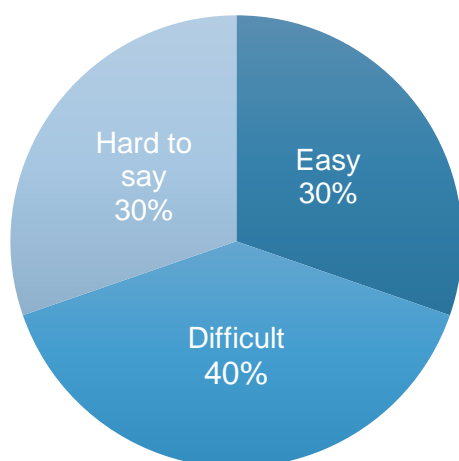
Individuals applying for the scholarship programme must meet a number of criteria defined by the University of Warsaw. These requirements were both formal and substantive. Candidates can apply from all states in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Preference is given to persons with a record of academic achievements or organisation initiatives and whose experience and achievements to date indicate that they will apply their newly-acquired specialised knowledge in their home countries to different areas of academic and public life. Candidates also had to fulfil additional specific criteria to qualify for the scholarship programme.

The recruitment process is organised in stages. A review of submitted applications is followed by a written test and an interview. The second and third stages are organized at diplomatic posts of the Republic of Poland by examination boards delegated by UW. After admission to the main Eastern Studies scholarship programme, participants can also take part in other activities performed in its framework, such as study visits, conferences, or foreign language classes.

In the opinion of persons in charge of the programme the recruitment procedure, being both transparent and demanding, attracts top candidates assuring a high quality of the program.

With regards to the assessed level of difficulty of the recruitment procedure, assessments formulated in the conducted survey are more varied. Relatively most often these criteria are considered difficult (40%). A smaller group found them easy (30%) and the same group of students (30%) could not provide an unequivocal assessment.

Chart 2. Assessment of SES UW qualifying requirements



Source: CAWI survey [N=33]

⁷ Propaganda attacks against SES UW published in *Ria Novosti* illustrate the negative consequences of a change in the political situation, namely the deteriorating relations with Russia. Such activities, downplayed in Poland, could be a source of problems for potential programme participants or graduates.

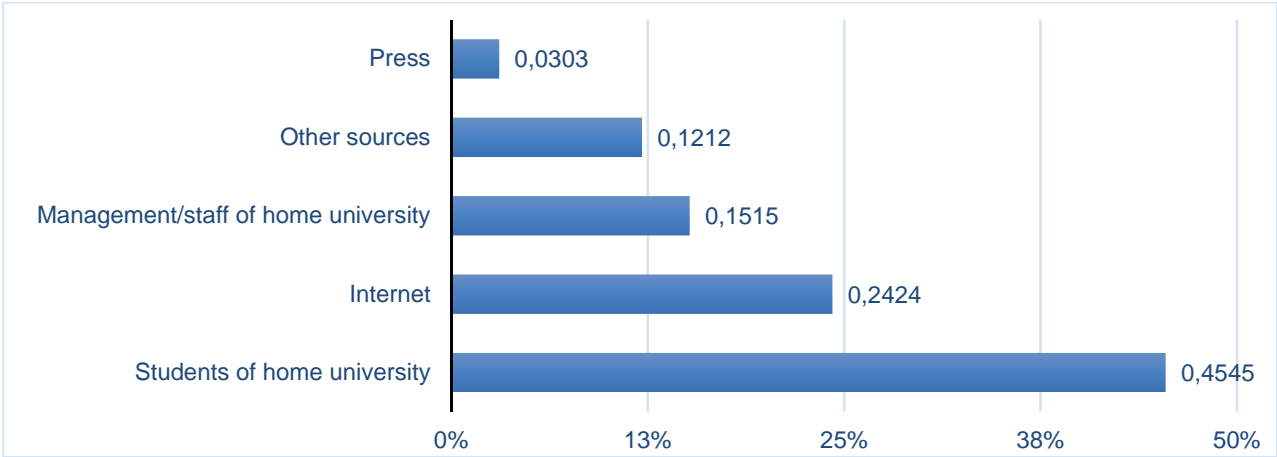
Additional separate recruitment processes were organised for some of the other initiatives carried out under the SES programme, such as: East Summer School, East Winter School, European Parliament traineeships, or Eastern Studies in Ukraine.

Another issue related to programme recruitment is the question of information and promotion activities.

With respect to these, UW publishes relevant information on its website as well as compiles and distributes information and promotion in the form of printed materials via the Republic of Poland’s diplomatic posts. Project coordinators indicate that the programme’s former participants (the so-called viral marketing) represent one of the most effective and efficient channels for distributing information about the project. While the above-mentioned activities are regarded by the UW as fully sufficient, the programme participants had a different opinion on the matter. Considering the rapid advancement of social digitisation, particularly the online activity of young people who are the programme’s potential participants, the declared strategy of basing information and promotion on printed materials distributed through diplomatic posts of the Republic of Poland is considered insufficient. Activities aimed at developing other forms of disseminating information, e.g. through schools of higher education in the potential participants’ home countries, but mostly by means of online techniques and platforms have to be undertaken⁸.

The above mentioned conclusions are supported by the results of the CAWI survey of present and former programme students. For them, the main source of information about the possibility of participating in the SES UW scholarship programme was other students from their university- 45%. One in four students indicated the Internet. About 15% found out about the possibility of studying at CEES, UW from the management/staff of their own school. Only a few persons indicated the press and other sources, including only one person who learnt about the studies from the Polish embassy located in his country.

Chart 3. Distribution of responses to the question: How did you learn about the possibility of participating in the SES CEES UW scholarship programme?



Source: CAWI survey [N=33]

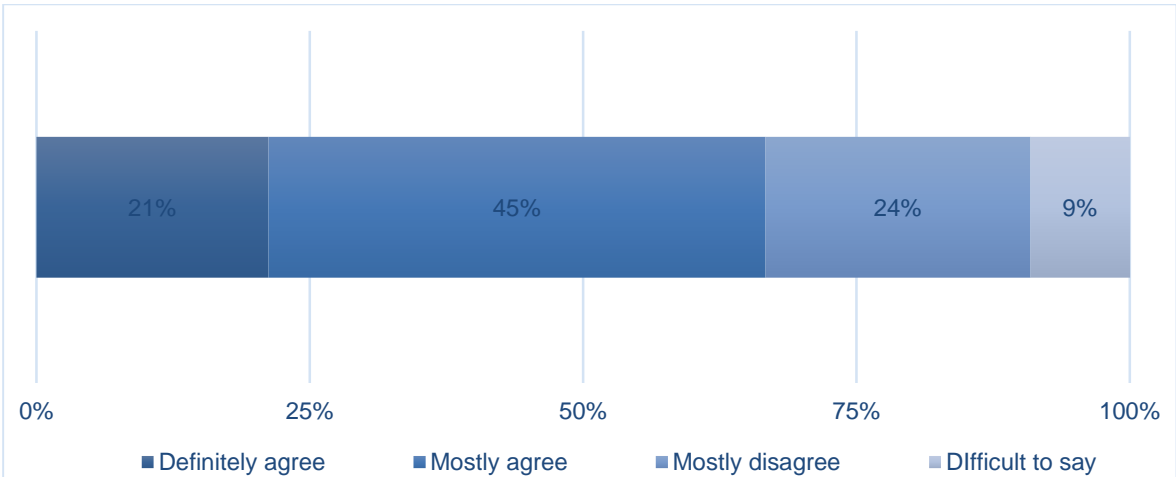
⁸ However, it should be noted that in 2013 SES UW undertook certain actions in this field, for example, by setting up a social media page.

(How) Were the educational needs of students participating in the programme identified (including their medium and long- term career plans)?

The students’ educational needs were not sufficiently examined and identified. The University of Warsaw raised the matter mostly at the programme recruitment stage. Apart from questions asked at the qualification stage, the issue was discussed only occasionally. In this respect, **a positive assessment should be given to the initiatives undertaken by the Centre’s lecturers.** As indicated by focus group participants, the openness of the academic staff allowed driving class discussion towards topics of particular interest for the students. At the same time, the choice of topics within the course curriculum was adjusted to meet students’ individual interests.

According to the CAWI surveys, about 2/3 of students confirm **that in the course of the scholarship programme their educational needs were identified** with 21% of students definitely agreeing with this statement. Roughly one in four disagreed.

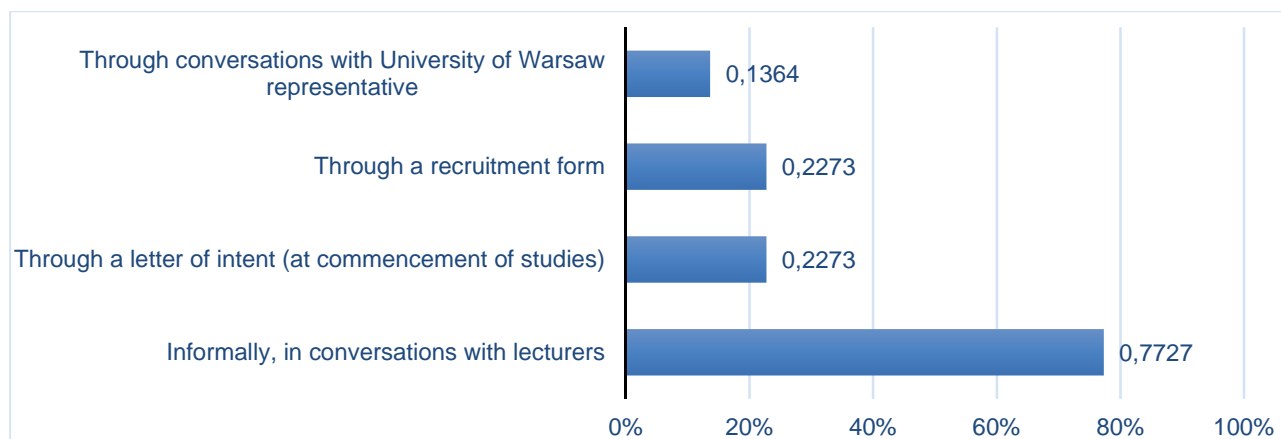
Chart 4. Distribution of responses to the question: were your individual education needs (including your career plans) identified in the course of your participation in the SES UW scholarship program ?



Source: CAWI survey [N=33]

However, it should be noted that as mentioned earlier the examination of student needs was not systematic. Those respondents who declared that their needs were identified said most often that it occurred informally, in conversation with lecturers. Nearly one in four indicated that it occurred at commencement of studies. For 14% of students, it occurred in conversation with a UW representative.

Chart 5. Distribution of responses to the question: *How were your educational needs identified?*

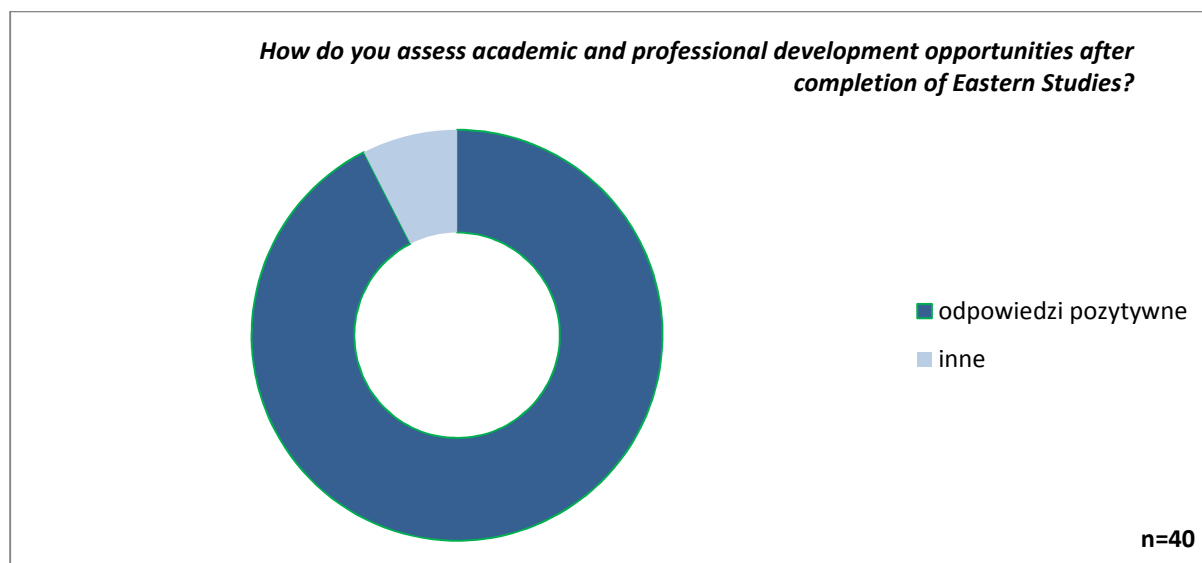


Source: CAWI survey [N=22]

Note: The results sum total is not 100% as respondents could give multiple answers.

Surveys conducted by UW in 2013 also considered career plans. One of the survey’s questions was about opportunities for further academic and professional development after completing the programme, thereby addressing the respondents’ medium and long-term career plans. In this respect, the vast majority of graduates gave positive answers.

Chart 16. How do you assess academic and professional development opportunities after completion of Eastern Studies



Odpowiedzi pozytywne – positive answers
Inne – other

The majority (42%) of respondents who assumed that completing the programme had a positive impact on their academic and professional development had plans to continue their academic development defined in broad terms. A substantial percentage (33%) of respondents indicated plans to pursue careers unrelated to the academia. Most respondents in this group chose working in diplomacy as their career path⁹.

⁹ A former minister of Ukraine is among the East Summer School’s graduates.

To sum up, most of the initiatives aimed at identifying the educational needs and career plans of the programme participants were not carried out on a systematic basis. There is no data available on how the survey information was used to modify the programme’s assumptions to adjust it to the identified educational needs of its participants.

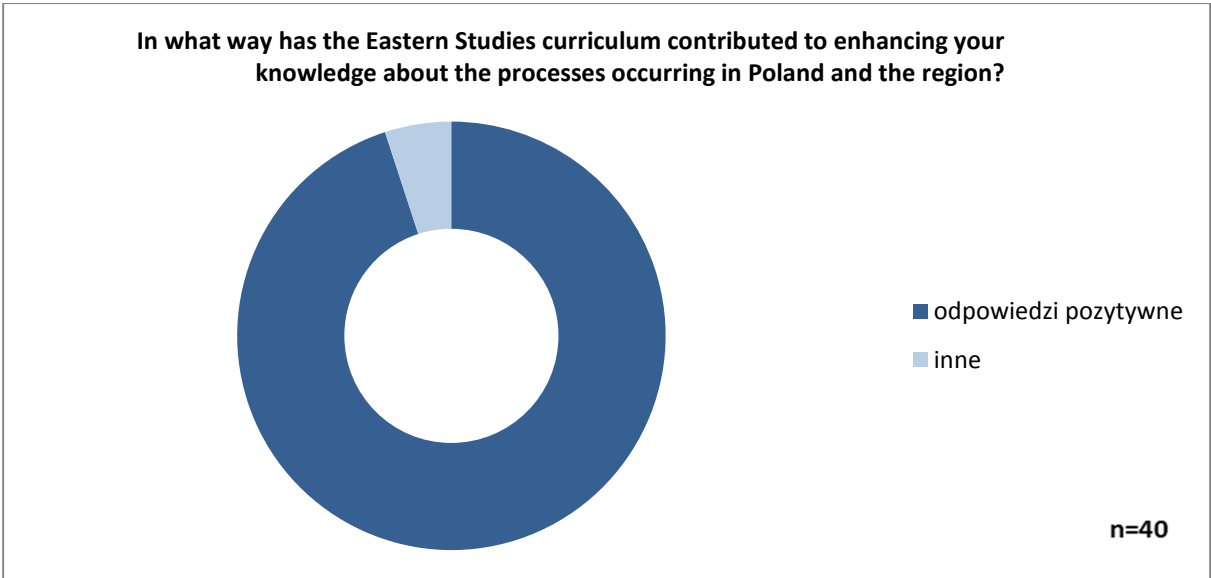
UW representatives in charge of the programme indicated **objective difficulties standing in the way of using this information**. In their opinion, the process of planning and approving the programme implemented as part of SES UW is too long to enable them flexibly to respond to identified needs. The UW employees believe that this results not so much from the programme’s requirements, but rather from the assumptions underlying the development of study programmes in Poland. While the above arguments support the opinion that the programme cannot be quickly modified to reflect the acquired information, they do not lead to a conclusion that such modification is entirely impossible. Surveys conducted in this area should be regarded as ex-post evaluation and **their results should be used at a later time during successive editions of the studies**. It is recommended that the SES UW management become more engaged in systematic activities in this regard.

Did the initiatives taken address the needs? Which ones in particular and to what extent?

A deficit of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the educational needs and plans for continued academic and professional development has led to objective difficulties with identifying elements of the programme that best fit these needs. Nonetheless it is possible to try to answer this question, at least partially, based on surveys conducted as part of the present evaluation.

Programme participants give a definitely positive assessment of the educational and academic programme scope. When answering a UW survey question about the impact of participation in the programme on expanding and deepening the respondents’ knowledge, the vast majority of answers were positive (95%).

Chart 27. In what way has the Eastern Studies curriculum contributed to enhancing your knowledge about the processes occurring in Poland and the region?



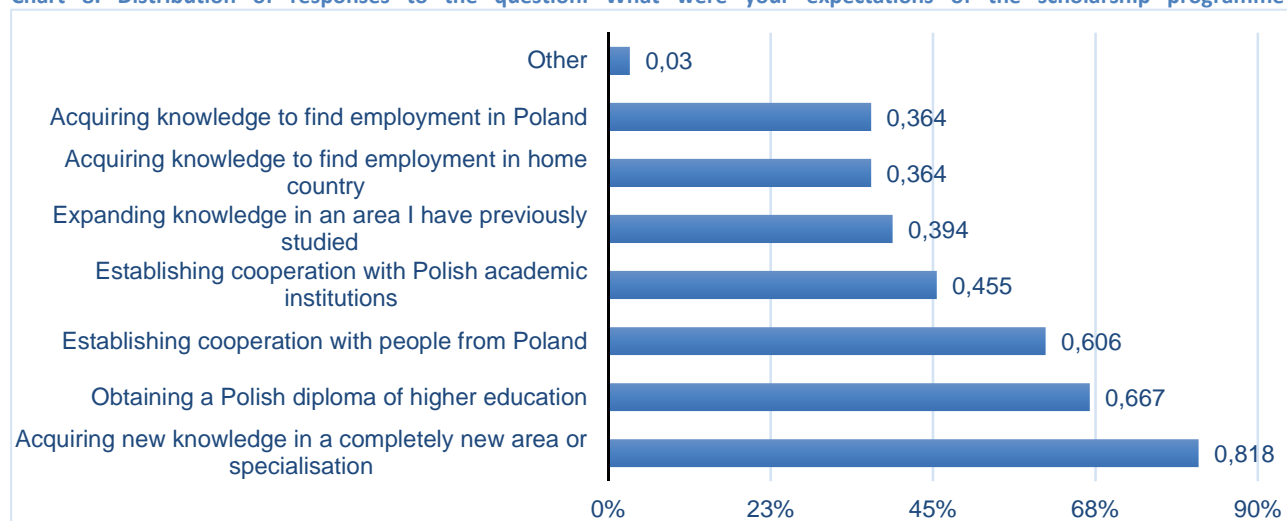
Odpowiedzi pozytywne – positive answers
Inne – other

During in-depth interviews conducted as part of this evaluation, **virtually all respondents declared that the programme has enabled them to acquire specialised knowledge suiting their needs**. This knowledge is

useful for the participants' professional careers and could not have been acquired in their home countries. Another competence which the interviewees said was important for their career advancement were language skills they acquired by participating in the surveyed project. However, it should be noted that not all students were willing to develop their skills in regional languages (it could be treated as an option in favour of extending Polish, English and Russian language classes). **Furthermore, very high assessment was given to study visits** which enabled the participants to apply their newly-acquired knowledge. The visits also provided an opportunity for a more informal interaction with the teaching staff (which could open up possibilities of further professional and academic development when they complete their programme studies). **The series of lectures delivered by visiting professors was also evaluated very highly.**

The CAWI study revealed, in turn, that CEES students varied with regards to their expectations of the SES study course. Their most frequently declared motivation (by around 82% students and graduates) was the desire to acquire new knowledge in a completely new area or specialisation. For over 2/3 of students, the possibility of obtaining a Polish higher education diploma was an important aspect of studying at UW. Forming cooperation with people in Poland was another important expectation of studying in Poland (for 61%). The less commonly named expectations (by 39-46% students or graduates) included desire to form cooperation with Polish academic institutions as well as expanding existing knowledge in a specific area. Interestingly, the least commonly named expectation of studying at UW was the desire to acquire knowledge in order to facilitate finding employment. Regardless of whether the employment would be found in their home country or Poland, just over 1/3 of students declared this expectation of their study course at UW.

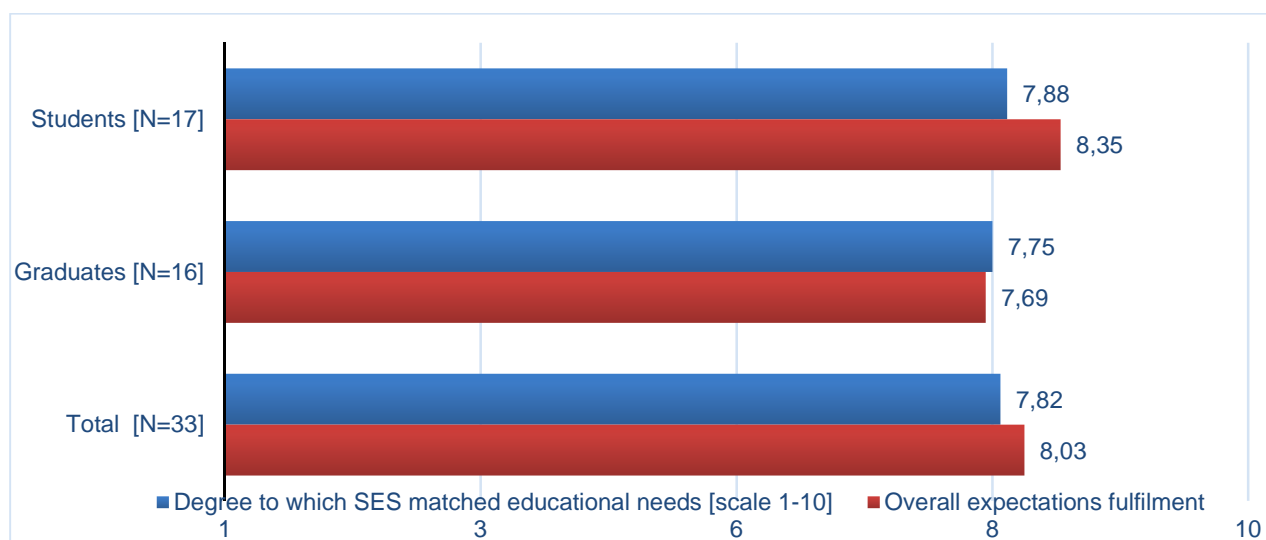
Chart 8. Distribution of responses to the question: What were your expectations of the scholarship programme?



Source: CAWI survey [N=33]

Based on answers given in the CAWI survey, the overall fulfilment of the above mentioned expectations was high. Programme participants were asked separately about the overall fulfilment of their expectations and about the extent to which SES UW responded to their educational needs. In both cases, the average rate was close to 8 (on a scale of 1 to 10). Current students and graduates provided only slightly different answers to this question.

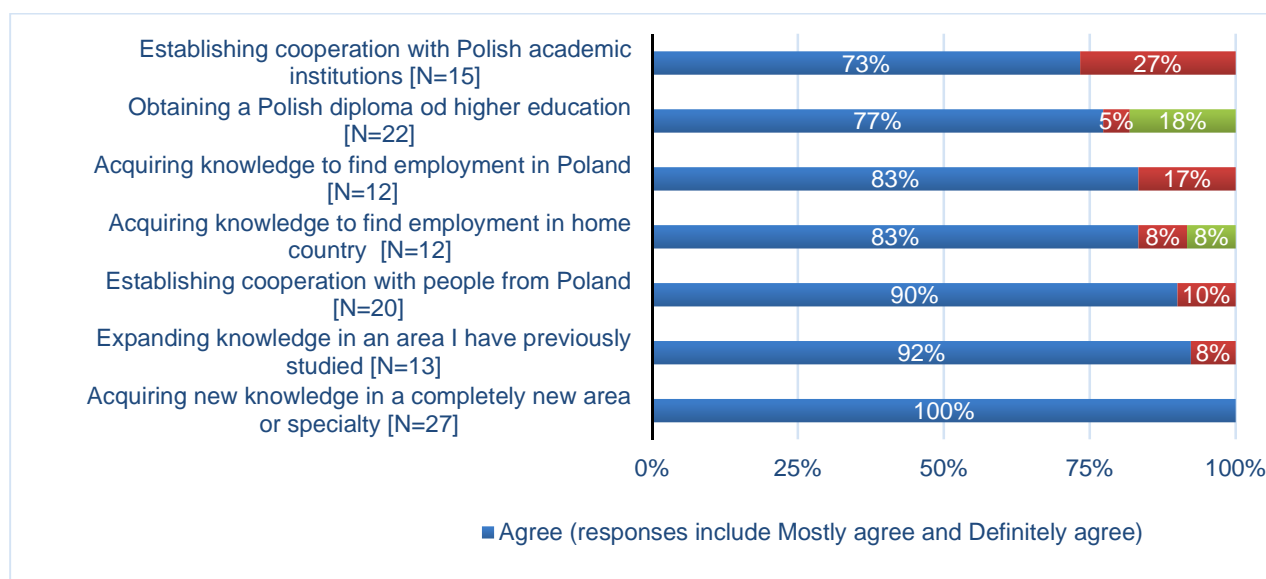
Chart 9. Distribution of responses to the question: How were your educational needs identified?



Source: CAWI survey

Further insight into the above matter is gained by analysing the fulfilment of specific expectations from SES UW. It appears that the scholarship programme has fulfilled the expectations of all respondents who wanted to gain knowledge in a new specialisation. Similarly, the study course fulfilled the expectations of a strong majority of people who wanted to expand their knowledge in an area they had previously studied. The programme also fulfilled the expectations of a majority (90%) of people who wanted to establish cooperation with people from Poland. The expectations of people looking to acquire knowledge in order to find employment (in their home country or in Poland) were met less often. It should be noted that **88% of graduates (14 out of 16 respondents) were employed at the time of survey**, including one person who combined work with running his own business. Establishing cooperation with Polish academic institutions was an expectation that was met relatively least often. Fifteen people voiced such expectation, of which 11 rated its fulfilment positively, including 4 who gave definitively positive responses.

Chart 10. Degree of fulfilment of specific expectations of SES UW scholarship programme participants



No (responses include mostly no and definitely no)

Trudno powiedzieć – hard to say

Source: CAWI survey

To sum up, the initiatives that were part of the project were assessed by its participants as being relevant to their academic and professional career needs. However, attention should be given to a prompt introduction of monitoring and surveying of the above mentioned needs, as well as to examining the extent to which they are met by specific programme elements. **The highly positive rating of the SES UW programme as regards this aspect can only be maintained by constantly and comprehensively optimising and modifying the project's scope in order to address the deficits identified in partner countries.** These actions should also be taken to assess the relevance of the programme's specific elements.

Which initiatives (and why) have contributed to the professional development of students in the largest measure? How was this development measured? Did the qualifications acquired during the scholarship programme influence the graduates' development? Which ones and how?

The questions asked in the survey to identify the effectiveness of activities relevant for the programme's participants' professional development and the most effective elements impacting the graduates' future development are similar and thus may be dealt with in one answer.

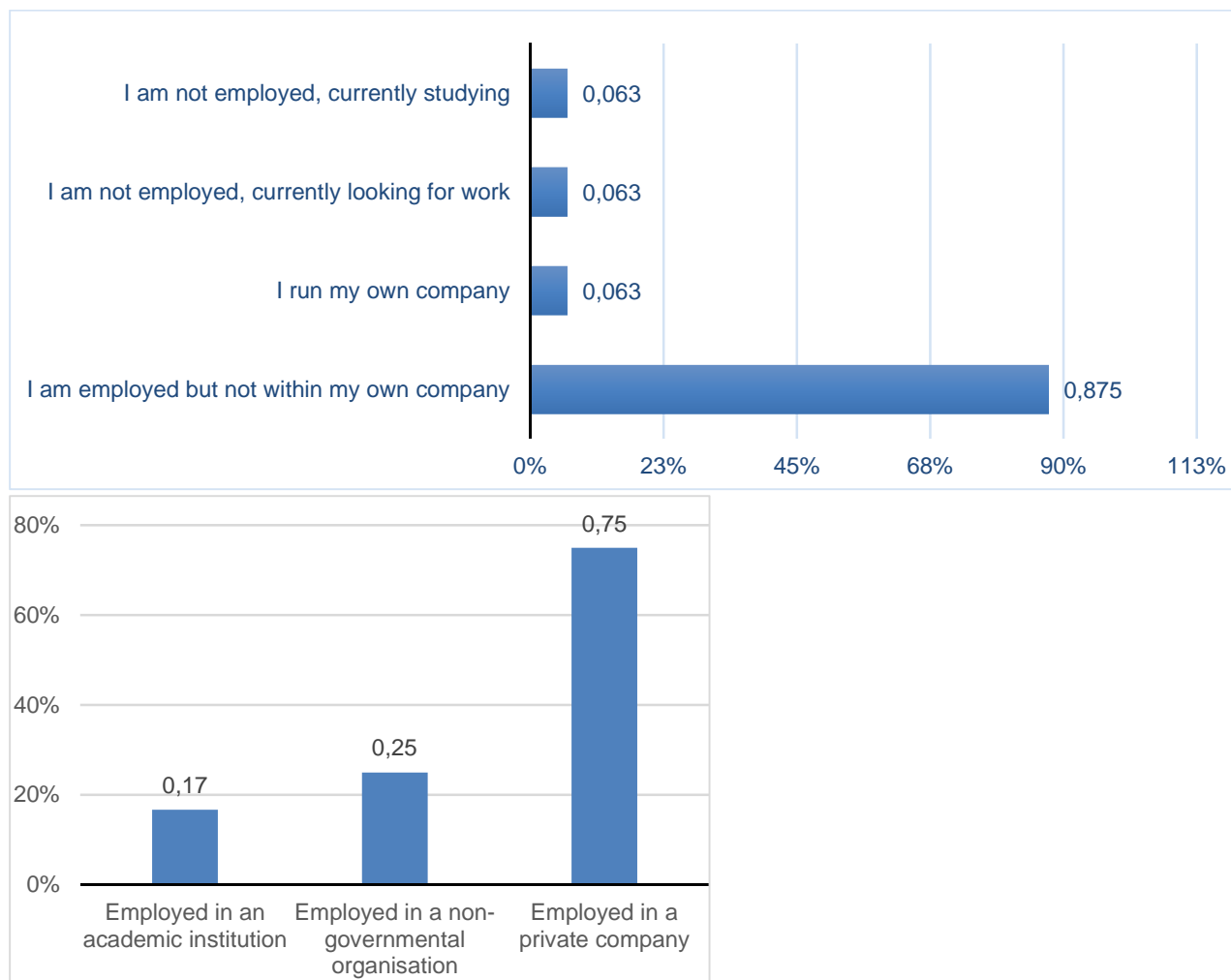
An answer to the above questions is difficult and carries a big risk of error because the careers of the programmes' graduates have not been monitored systematically. Nonetheless those surveys that have been conducted (either as part of this evaluation or as part of informal activities of the SES UW management) prompt an attempt to **indicate the programme's elements and the qualifications acquired** which are rated as potentially **having a major positive impact on the careers of graduates. These include:**

- **Specialist knowledge** (about the subject matter covered by the studies) acquired through participation in lectures;
- **Language skills** acquired through participation in language courses;
- **Participation in a multicultural group**, which on the one hand led to acquiring valuable knowledge, and on the other, with appropriate integration and networking activity, facilitated further academic and professional development;
- **UW academic staff** including highly knowledgeable and experienced persons, open to discussions and accepting various perspectives.

The results of academic performance assessment formulated by respondents of the aforementioned survey conducted independently by UW in 2013 merit consideration since a substantial group of programme participants said they would like to continue their careers as academics. The vast majority of the survey's respondents were willing to continue their academic development and inclined to pursue their academic careers either by working in research institutes or by undertaking postgraduate studies.

In the context of analysing the professional development of graduates, it should be noted that the vast majority of them are employed (88%) and one person runs his own business and is employed. Most of those employed (9 persons) work in private companies. Three work in a non-governmental organisation. Two declared working for an academic institution.

Chart 11. Employment of SES UW graduates

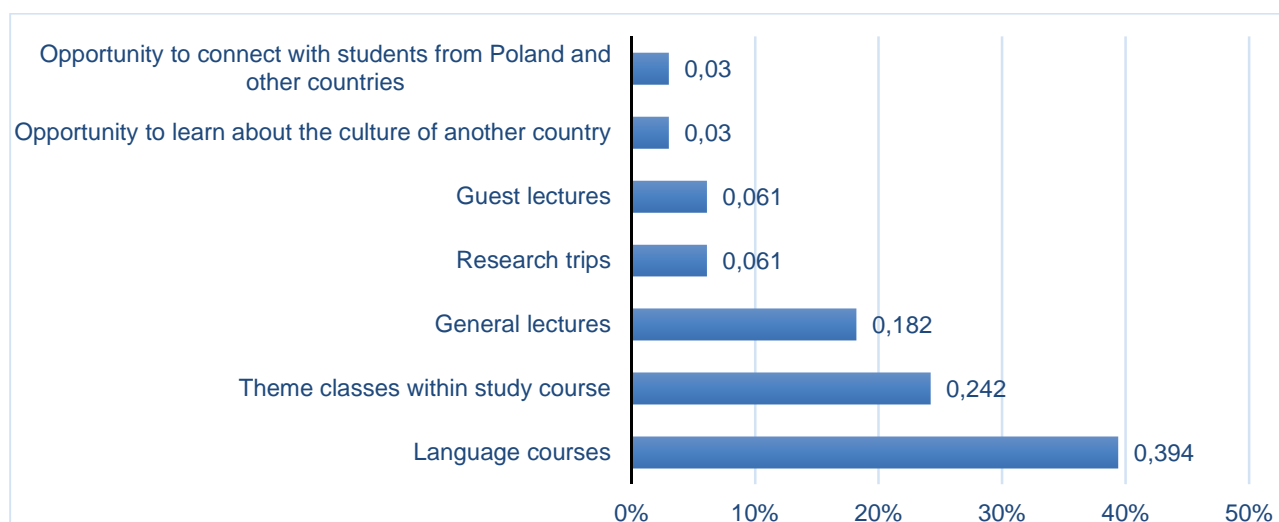


Source: CAWI survey, graduates only [Upper panel: N=16; Bottom panel: N=12]
 Note: The results sum total is not 100% as respondents could give multiple answers.

All programme participants were asked about the element they found to be most useful in their professional development. Language courses were relatively the most often indicated element in the CAWI survey¹⁰ (by 39% students or graduates). The second most frequent element was subject classes (24% of respondents). The third element was general lectures. Other elements were indicated only sporadically.

¹⁰ During the studies, students can participate in English, Russian and Polish language courses (students said that they especially valued Polish language courses). Additionally, students can learn the less popular regional languages.

Chart 13. The most useful element of studies with regards to professional development of participants



Source: CAWI survey [N=33]

To sum up, participation in the programme had a generally positive impact on the participants' professional development and career. An analysis of the individual elements of the programme with respect to the subject matter of the questions asked in the survey was divided into two basic activity groups. The first group comprises core project initiatives, namely the scholarship programme itself, lectures, language courses, seminar visits, etc. The second group comprises other initiatives, associated with the scholarship programme: bulletin publication costs, publishing, magazines, the Lew Sapieha Award, etc. In the interviews conducted for this evaluation as well as the surveys done earlier by UW, respondents provided positive assessments of the usefulness and efficiency of the initiatives classified in the first group. No such information is available as regards the above initiatives relating to other activities¹¹

After the project ended, is contact being maintained with the graduates of the Scholarship Programme? How is their progress tracked?

Monitoring student development is becoming a management standard at all of the world's leading schools of higher education. Tracking graduate progress is of key importance in the context of implementing the mission of higher education institutions which is to provide knowledge and skills that students need in their future professional careers. There are tangible benefits to be gained from such monitoring. Most rankings rate higher education institutions taking into account the level of employment of their graduates¹². The SES UW Scholarship program is implemented under somewhat different conditions. Perhaps the "ranking competition" is not a priority for the people who implement the programme. However, considering the project's objectives it seems necessary to monitor the careers of students also in the context of this initiative. On the one hand, it will enable an examining the effects of the programme's implementation and, on the other, it could contribute to improving its quality. **Monitoring the careers of graduates can provide useful and objective feedback that can improve the project from the point of view of its immediate beneficiaries – students.** It should also be noted that strengthening ties between the university and its graduates, including foreign graduates, has become a development priority set out in the Mid-Term

¹¹ This should not be understood as a negative assessment of elements not indicated by respondents as being the most relevant.

¹² Garver M., Spralls III S., Divine R., *Need-Based Segmentation Analysis of University Career Services: Implications for Increasing Student Participation*, Research In Higher Education Journal

Strategy of the University of Warsaw for 2014-2018¹³ In addition, **monitoring the careers of graduates is very important from the point of view of the donor and of accountability of spending public funds allocated under Polish development assistance.**

At this point it should be noted that monitoring the careers of SES UW graduates should be undertaken by the management of the University and UW institutes delegated to the task. A survey team has made a successful attempt at getting hold of the results of such survey. However, it transpired that questionnaires filled by SES students are missing from the last survey conducted by UW. One explanation that can be given for this situation is that students coming from the East are very reluctant to take part in surveys of this type (without the tremendous support that we have received from the SES project management team, our survey would also have been a failure¹⁴).

In almost all individual interviews conducted with school representatives, officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, the programme students and graduates, monitoring graduates' careers was indicated as a very important matter. Yet UW does not conduct a systematic activity to keep track of graduates' careers or to keep in touch with them. Representatives of SES UW have access to information about the achievements of individual participants, but this knowledge is not complete. At the same time, they keep in touch with students on their own initiative.

An excellent and outright positive illustration of such actions is sending information to graduates when one of them is looking for employment or for an employee and notifies the course manager of this fact. Companies also send in such requests. However, if such initiatives were systematic or planned they could yield greater results. This is reflected in the interviews conducted with programme participants. They mention attempts at maintaining contact by the school, while also indicating their informal and rather spontaneous character. These relations are similarly perceived by UW representatives:

"there are contacts, [but] these are rather social ..."

In the CAWI survey, 9 out of 16 graduates declared they maintained contact with representatives of the University of Warsaw. Importantly, 7 of them said that this contact is of academic nature. A few also indicated that their contacts were professional and social. The form of contact is mostly electronic. Only two persons said they met regularly.

- Selected academic career paths of SES graduates
- Scholarship student from Belarus - PhD, research fellow at the Polish Academy of Sciences
- Scholarship student from Ukraine - PhD, research fellow at the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences
- Scholarship student from Ukraine - historian, author, editor-in-chief of the portal Historians in UA
- Scholarship student from Azerbaijan - PhD, research fellow at the University of Warsaw
- Scholarship student from Belarus - renowned independent Belarusian historian from Minsk, researcher of World War II, and many other subjects, from nearly all post-Soviet and post-communist states
- Scholarship holder from Belarus - PhD, research fellow at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences
- Scholarship student from Belarus - PhD, political scientist, research fellow at the Belarusian Centre for European Studies

¹³ See Resolution No. 248 of the University of Warsaw's Senate, dated 25 June 2014, on Mid-Term Strategy of the University of Warsaw for 2014-2018.

¹⁴ For example, before SES staff began sending reminders that the CAWI questionnaire had to be filled out; we had literally one filled out questionnaire.

Representatives of the University of Warsaw indicated graduate reunions as an important and desirable potential monitoring tool that could improve the situation in the area described.

“Other things matter, such as having the money for a graduate reunion, to keep them together (...) so that they could show what they’ve achieved since, what they’ve written, etc...”

A reunion that took place in 2010 illustrates the positive effects of such initiatives. During the reunion a survey was conducted among its participants. The survey results provided very valuable knowledge and positive information about the graduates’ careers.

“... When we had a graduate reunion three years ago, we were surprised to find that everybody is working (...) in the industry. The industry understood broadly: the media, a fair number in the academia, public administration, diplomacy (...). A large number pursue the academic path, winning doctoral scholarships with relative ease (...) some [work] in the media...”

According to UW representatives, this form of monitoring graduate progress i.e. a reunion combined with conducting a survey among its participants is very appropriate for the special nature of the programme. In their view, Internet-based research is likely to generate incomplete information because some of the participants distrust this communication platform.

‘...we have a delicate matter... our graduates are from the East and not everything can or should be done over the Internet...’

To sum up, it seems that monitoring graduates’ careers and cooperating with them should be one of the programme’s priorities. Orderly and systematic research activity in this area is required. Developing and subsequently carrying out regular analyses that provide basic information about the graduates and their activity. Making graduate reunions a permanent feature of the programme would be the right step in this context. People in charge of the programme have indicated that this would be one of the most important and desirable changes.

“...What bothers me most is the inability to organise graduate reunions, the fact that there are no funds to organise reunions..”.

Creating a strong network of graduates and students will ensure access to the desired information about the programme effects. It will also strengthen the graduates’ ties with the school and increase the school’s exposure. These initiatives will also implement the objectives of the Polish development aid and will maximise the effects achieved in the context of enhancing Poland’s positive image abroad and building a network of unofficial “ambassadors” of our country. In monitoring the careers of graduates, one should bear in mind that the results of analyses could be distorted. According to professional literature, people who have found employment are much more willing to share information about their life situation than those who have not done well in life. In addition, the condition of graduates is greatly influenced by the current political or social and economic situation¹⁵.

¹⁵ Hanover Research (2012), *Best Practices in Career Services for Graduating Students*, Washington.

What initiatives contributed, in the greatest measure, to strengthening the image of Poland as a donor of development assistance? Why?

Development assistance, in addition to implementing the main declared goal understood as disinterested support of poorer countries by rich countries, also generates certain benefits for the donor countries. As seen by recent trends, development assistance is being perceived less as a charity operation and more as cooperation that generates benefits for both sides. Development assistance provided by a donor that contributes to its positive image (“soft power”) is a case in point. This could lead to tangible political and economic benefits understood as a smart strategy (“soft power”¹⁶).

An example of such positive added effect of intervention could and should be the building of Poland’s positive image as a country that has successfully completed its political transition and now can serve as an example to be followed. In this context Poland’s image as a donor of development assistance should also be enhanced.

Poland’s development assistance strategy defines its priorities as supporting democracy and human rights and sharing experiences stemming from transition, especially in the Eastern Partnership countries and North Africa. The SES UW scholarship programme fits very well with such priorities. Literature describes this type of initiatives as generating benefits for both sides. Financing education in Poland for young people from developing countries, enabling them, on the one hand, to acquire the desired skills, and on the other, raising their awareness and understanding of global issues and interdependence between states, should bring Poland measurable benefits in terms of its public image, and in the longer term, social and economic benefits.

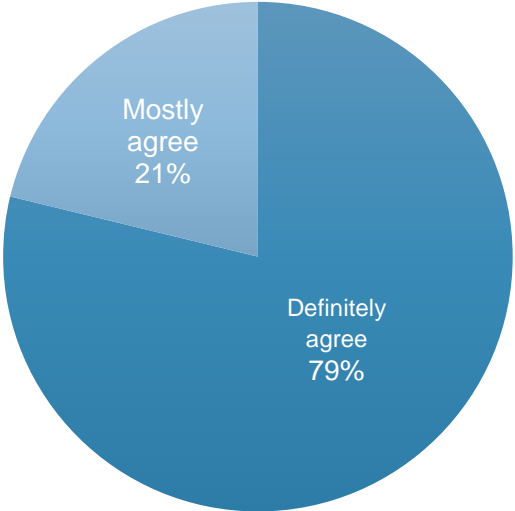
Surveys completed under the project support the argument that the SES UW programme has had a positive impact on Poland’s image. In nearly all in-depth interviews conducted with the present and former project participants, the respondents indicated the above-mentioned positive effect. In the respondents’ opinion, the implementation of this type of projects places Poland in a very high position in the context of education and economic cooperation. Thanks to it, Poland promotes its history and language, while the programme participants disseminate information about the program’s value and the possibility of applying for it.

“... I would say that Poland has gained very much [thanks to the programme] in the area of promoting culture, language... it is an education and economic cooperation, which is very important”

The CAWI surveys conducted with study participants also confirm the students’ and graduates’ positive perception of Poland. All of them are in general agreement that Poland is an open country that fosters cooperation with other countries on many levels.

¹⁶ Smart power refers to theories developed by Joseph Nye, a US political scientist working for institutions specialising in international affairs. He distinguishes two basic kinds of state power: “hard power” that is a state’s potential generated by geostrategic and economic factors; “soft power” that is the ability of a state to win allies and influence thanks to the attractiveness of its culture, policy and ideology. According to this theory, “hard power” and “soft power” if aptly used together create the so-called smart power. See Joseph Nye: *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* – persuasive means of political influence (culture, propaganda, diplomacy) Polish edition Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2007.

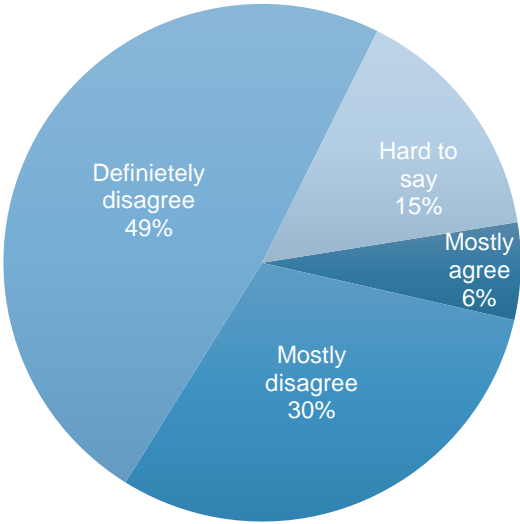
Chart 14. To what degree do you agree with the following statements: *Poland fosters development of cooperation with other states*



Source: CAWI survey [N=33]

In the survey itself, we decided to formulate the question in a challenging way to prevent respondents from giving the conformist “agree” response. Even then the resulting picture is very positive. Participants of the SES UW studies said in their survey responses that it is not true that the scholarship programme has no impact on Poland’s image abroad. Only 6% of respondents agree that this statement is true.

Chart 15. To what extent do you agree with the following statements: *The initiatives aimed at creating scholarship programmes for foreign students have no influence on Poland’s image abroad*



Source: CAWI survey [N=33]

Conducted interviews and desk research point to the fact that the program, besides generating the above-described positive result, unfortunately also brought some negative consequences. According to respondents, sometimes the SES UW or, more broadly speaking this type of programs, is regarded as

hostile and harmful for the participants' home countries. They are being presented as projects that lead to "brain drain"¹⁷ by "buying" the brightest of citizens.

The press in the broad sense of the term can provide plenty of information in the context of analysing the influence of SES UW implementation. Both domestic and foreign media publish articles about the program under survey that are not limited to just announcing successive recruitments. In those articles, the program is presented in a wider context, i.e. as a component of Poland's Eastern policy, with some publications going as far as presenting it as part of the EU's Eastern policy.

The scholarship program and the studies receive both positive and negative coverage in the media. **The Russian media in particular carry rather controversial and negative reports about present the scholarship programme and the studies. Given the current political situation, media reports of this type should be regarded as propaganda pieces and the more critical certain sources are of SES UW, the better this speaks about the program itself. Only important initiatives that generate measurable benefits in terms of Poland's image and policy will be noticed by adversaries and only with respect to such activities will they attempt to belittle their value through disinformation and different forms of libel.** Unfortunately such reports can also exert a negative impact on public opinion about Poland and the program itself in the countries of the so-called former Eastern Bloc, which is a point worth noting. Reports published by the Ria-Novosti agency serve as examples of such negative and controversial acts¹⁸. Interestingly, the publications have met with a strong and spontaneous protest by SES UW graduates.

On the other hand, positive assessments about the operation of the program and the studies have also been expressed.

*"...cooperation is developing dynamically at the level of science, scholarships, NGOs and local government. This is very important. Ukrainians have high regard for us because of this. The average Ukrainian when he thinks about the West, thinks about Germany or France, but not about us, about Poland... Our scholarship programs for the East have been outright successful in Eastern policy in its practical part... this is the Polish state's surest strategic investment. All others can suddenly fall through or falter like cooperation with Ukraine's president, but the education of young people from those countries in Poland is a sure and reliable investment..."*¹⁹

The surveys conducted indicate that through better organisation and intensification of cooperation with the programme graduates positive effects can be strengthened. The creation of such network is particularly important in the context of the changing geopolitical situation linked to Russian troops' aggression on Ukraine's territory and the associated strong anti-Polish campaign. The creation of a network of "informal ambassadors" of our country (comprising scholarship program graduates) who collaborate with each other can counterbalance the disinformation activities carried out by pro-government Russian media.

What academic effects has the scholarship programme generated?

The effects are two-dimensional – on the one hand, they are the sum of the academic performance of the programme participants who have experienced a change in their professional careers. On the other hand, it is the cumulated academic effect achieved thanks to the implementation of the entire SES UW program.

¹⁷ Brain drain is a term used to describe the phenomenon of encouraging scientists and high-level specialists from poorer countries to move to richer countries in search of better employment.

¹⁸ J.Korejba, *Polish school of sabotage: training agents for CIS and Russia*, Ria Novosti, http://ria.ru/cj_analytics/20140723/1017232308.html (23.07.2014), Komorowski's doctrine: *transforming Ukraine into a Polish vassal*. http://ria.ru/cj_analytics/20140625/1013551095.html (25.06.2014) and others.

¹⁹ A. Tycner, *Rosja wygrała bitwę (Russia won the battle)* published in *Rzeczpospolita* (03.12.2013)

From the perspective of the program's objectives, it seems more appropriate to focus on the individual academic effects of its participants.

Individual academic effects, or the potential academic effects, were the subject of the aforementioned survey conducted independently by UW in 2013. In the survey, respondents were asked to rate their opportunities for academic and professional development upon completion of Eastern Studies. **The vast majority of responses were positive.** Among the responses containing a definitely positive assessment of opportunities for further development, around 33% indicated opportunities of broadly defined academic development.

When analysing the academic effects of the programme participants and comparing them with the effects of further professional development, one potentially worrying fact should be noted. The key objective of the programme is to educate the future leaders of change in partner states. Upon completing the project, and acquiring the relevant skills and learning about potential development opportunities generated by a state founded on democratic principles, as was the case of Poland, they should return to their home countries to implement the afore mentioned change. Meanwhile, interviews with UW employees in charge of the programme implementation as well as an analysis of graduates' exemplary career paths demonstrate that **a large group of participants, upon completion of the initiative, remains in Poland and continues their academic career in Polish schools of higher education, the media, and research institutions.** Considering the key objective of the programme, this phenomenon should be assessed negatively (although it is a positive effect for the Polish economy). At the same time, the effect could be illusory to a certain degree. It is easier to monitor the professional development of the people who remained in Poland than those who returned to their home countries.

"...As for scholarship students, very many of them follow the academic path with relative ease. I would even prefer it if not so many won doctoral scholarships. I would prefer it if as many as possible returned home to change their worlds..."

2.3 Case study

Graduate from Azerbaijan

For many, the Eastern Studies programme marks the beginning of their academic careers. This was also the case of the program's graduate from Azerbaijan. After finishing the SES UW in Poland, she continued her academic work and now she holds a PhD. She saw SES UW as an opportunity for a student from a post-Soviet state to join the international student community. There, students can meet (through the program) representatives of other nations that are in political conflict. Thanks to the program students can meet, get to know each other and even become friends. According to the participants, the study programme was very interesting and the nature of the lectures was academic, while in the course of study students had an opportunity to meet outstanding people. This is particularly important for people coming from the post-Soviet region, because the education and information policy in those countries differs from the one in European countries.

Before coming to Poland, the student worked as a journalist. When she was accepted for the program, she decided to evaluate using academic standards the information policy of her country. Thanks to the program she learned how to approach her work as a researcher in an unbiased and objective way. She visited archives where she found amazing (as she described them) materials concerning the post-Soviet region.

The program allowed her to begin an academic career. She has initiated several research projects, which brought together fellow researchers from different countries of the former Soviet Union. Even though

much time has lapsed since the end of the program, the graduate often participated in the program's conferences and listens to lectures by professors.

“SES UW for fellow researchers from the post-Soviet region is like the Vatican for Catholics. In the SES UW we are learning a different way of thinking, initiating interesting projects and simply getting to know each other.”

Graduate from Armenia

For the second graduate, the studies created an opportunity to get to know different points of view - what they were taught in their countries they can now see that in Poland is taught in a completely different way. The studies have helped her to overcome stereotypes - especially towards the neighbours. Student integration occurred mostly spontaneously, because students were grouped according to their specialisations (from 3 to 6 specialisations); the groups were very small and mixed (Polish students and scholarship students). Additionally, there were conferences and study groups which facilitated integration.

SES teaches a more global approach. She rates the study programme positively. The studies contributed to her overall development, *“they greatly expanded my horizons and I learned a lot.”* Here newly-acquired knowledge and “relationship capital” were useful in her career plans (she currently works at the University of Warsaw).

“Thanks to the studies I know that there is no single right view (as we were taught back at home) but that there can be many views on a single matter...”

“SES helps to build the image of Poland as a friendly country that fosters the development of your people.”

2.4 Conclusions and recommendations

Recommendation	Method of execution	Grounds	Recipient
Conducting an in-depth analysis of the project objectives, followed by optimising the scope of initiatives implemented under the project / programme and streamlining its funding system	<p>Initiatives implemented with the SES programme should be analysed and compared against the project propositions established for development aid projects implemented by MFA and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MSHE).</p> <p>Objectives to be achieved by this initiative should be defined at the ministerial level (following a consultation with UW). The research team (given the usefulness of the evaluated initiative) calls for a wider definition of objectives than the narrowly defined scholarship programme.</p> <p>Following the above analysis, a decision should be taken to possibly change the project proposition of the SES programme in order to facilitate optimised achievement of its objectives. Funds that will be released as a result of such change should be applied towards covering a part of the costs associated with the implementation of activities suggested below (recommendations on the system of cooperation with graduates and graduate reunions).</p> <p>The programme implementation system should be</p>	<p>Now the SES UW program greatly exceeds the framework of “a scholarship program”.</p> <p>Actually it is a project that supports the teaching and academic centre, which by educating students from former Soviet Union republics presents, among others, the history of Central and Eastern Europe from the Polish perspective and promotes democratic principles of state organisation. This formula cannot be easily fitted into the narrow framework defined by the assumptions underlying the project of the scholarship program. It should also be noted that the currently implemented activities, even though difficult to include and manage in the project's current framework will definitely contribute to the</p>	MFA, MSHE, UW

	<p>improved in order to ensure timely UW funding.</p> <p>It is also recommended to replace the annual financial plan with multi-year projects.</p>	<p>implementation of development assistance objectives in a wider scope than if they were to be implemented under a “straightforward” scholarship program.</p>	
<p>Systematisation of the reporting process within the programme implementation.</p>	<p>Precise definition of objectives and project scope should be reflected in the process and scope of reporting its effects (the role of UW). In the first year SES UW should be assisted by experts (UW or outside experts) who could advise on methodology and effect measurement, as well as the appropriate presentation of the final measurements.</p>		<p>SES UW</p>
<p>Intensification of informational and promotion activity performed by the University of Warsaw</p>	<p>Continuation and expansion of online informational and promotional activity. UW should both support the existing channels of information distribution and seek new internet platforms allowing then to reach potential programme participants.</p>		<p>UW (SES UW and the Office of Promotion UW)</p>
<p>More precise definition of recruitment criteria</p>	<p>More precise definition of recruitment criteria by precisely stating that command of the Polish language can also be confirmed by a statement from the candidate.</p>		<p>SES UW, MSHE</p>
<p>Establishment of a comprehensive system of cooperation with programme graduates</p>	<p>Implementation of a system of cooperation should be based on the existing internet platforms (official studies website, social media profile).</p> <p>In cooperation with relevant UW institutions, SES UW should also define and implement systematic monitoring of graduate progress.</p> <p>Cyclically, every 2-3 years, an in-depth evaluation research should be considered.</p> <p>Within the programme implementation, UW should establish a regular organisation of graduate reunions.</p>		<p>SES UW, MFA, MSHE</p>
<p>Introduction of cyclical surveys of the programme participants' educational needs and career plans</p>	<p>Initiatives aimed at investigating students' educational needs and career plans should be implemented by SES UW in cooperation with PEJK UW, responsible for the implementation of research of this type at university level.</p>		<p>SEW UW, Careers Office UW, PEJK²⁰ UW</p>
<p>Cancellation of the initiative of European Parliament traineeships for SES scholarship students</p>	<p>Conclude implementation of the initiative European Parliament traineeships for SES scholarship students.</p>		<p>SES UW, Agency for Evaluation and Quality of Education UW</p>

²⁰ Education Assessment and Quality Centre of the University of Warsaw