

## **Poland's graduate tracking system**

Poland's country-wide system for tracking higher education graduates, referred to as ELA, provides credible information regarding the labour-market outcomes of university graduates over five years after they finish their studies. The system's findings are based on data drawn from the Social Insurance Institution (precise information on employment and wages) and from an extensive repository of data on Polish higher education and science named POL-on. ELA was designed and implemented by the National Information Processing Institute, commissioned to do so by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Launched in 2016, the system is continually developed and expanded to include new functionalities. Initially, ELA supplied data regarding only individual classes of university graduates. Since its sixth edition of July 2021, the system has offered the possibility to compare the work situations of different classes of graduates easily and quickly at the same stages of their professional careers. Since autumn 2021, ELA has tracked doctoral students and holders of the doctoral degree. The system's most recent enhancement is the capacity to provide information on the employment outcomes of undergraduate and graduate students. In the case of those who finished their studies, ELA delays processing their data for two years to give them time to find a job.

ELA generates reports on higher education graduates that concern such aspects as their employment and unemployment, remuneration, work experience, or work in relation to the place of residence. The system is thus a reliable source of information on graduates' wage levels, how quickly they find a job or what their form of employment is. ELA enables users to search for information at the scale of the entire country as well as at the level of individual universities and fields of study. The system takes account of the economic differentiation of Poland and the fact that wages in our country vary heavily depending on where one lives. It uses the Relative Remuneration Indicator that determines the relation of the average earnings of the graduates of a given field of study to the average earnings found in those graduates' county. The data returned by the system allows users, therefore, to roughly assess the living standards of graduates. It is possible to judge, for example, whether they can afford to rent or buy an apartment, whose price depends largely on its location.

ELA's users include secondary school graduates looking to make an informed decision regarding their future studies, the academic community, analysts, and entrepreneurs. The system's data feeds into university rankings and helps the Ministry of Education and Science to adapt its education policies to the needs of the labour market. The Ministry uses the information to – for example – determine which public vocational universities stand out in terms of effective teaching and thus merit additional funding.

The system is advanced and user-friendly. Its tools make it possible to produce reports, rankings, and infographics, depending on the user's needs. A free ELA application for mobile devices is also available.

ELA can be accessed at <https://ela.nauka.gov.pl/en>.

## **Academic Career Offices**

Academic Career Offices in Polish higher education institutions. Career offices are separate organizational units in most universities. The five most common tasks carried out by career offices: I. providing information about job, internship, apprenticeship, and volunteer opportunities II. Career counselling III. Graduate tracking: IV. Workshops or training on job search methods and preparation for the recruitment process V. Workshops and training in soft skills (so-called transversal skills). Career counselling is a key area of career offices. Among the techniques used in individual career counselling, consultation of application documents, interviewing and simulation of a job interview dominate. Many uses competency testing. The comprehensiveness of the offer of individual career counselling, understood as the variety of techniques used, increases with the number of students at a given university. Academic Career Offices also offer online career counselling. The greater the number of students at a given university, the more popular this method is.

## **Other types of counselling**

Academic Career Offices offer services in the field of educational counselling, understood as counselling students or candidates for studies in the field of further education opportunities: choice of next degree or specialization in the context of labour market requirements. Slightly less frequently, they undertake, either on their own or by inviting outside specialists, consultation or counselling on entrepreneurship and self-employment. Some of them carry out other types of counselling, among others: psychological counselling, including psychological counselling: in a vocational context; counselling on undertaking volunteer activities; personal counselling; counselling on the art market; counselling for migrants; counselling in English; counselling on labour law; counselling on choosing internships and apprenticeships.

## **Psychological assistance to students**

The Ministry's efforts to provide psychological assistance to students in 2020-2021 included commissioning and funding the "PSRP Comfort Zone" project to organize psychological support for students. As part of the project, the Polish Students' Parliament also developed an interactive map highlighting psychological aid stations and other forms of support offered across the country.

The Independent Students' Association has launched the #StudenciDlaZdrowia project concerning mental and physical health among students. As part of free specialist advice, students can take part in training and on-line interviews with specialists in various fields, including psychologists.

Student councils also contribute to providing legal aid and psychological support to students. Students who have themselves gone through a mental crisis share their experiences and help others to find specialist help. At universities conducting studies in the field of psychology, students in the last year of studies also provide psychological support and advice.

Providing psychological support to both students and university employees is currently one of the most important actions that should be taken in order to avoid worsening psychological problems that affect the academic community in the era of epidemics.

Recognizing the importance of the problem in question, the Ministry formulated and addressed to the supervised universities recommendations - Psychological Package, the purpose of which is to initiate activities at universities and to create a certain standard of access to psychological help and other forms of support.

More info at <https://psrp.org.pl/eng/>

## **Benefits for students financed from the state budget**

Financial support for student education is implemented primarily through a general system of non-refundable benefits granted by universities from funds provided for this purpose from the state budget - based on the Law - Higher Education and Science Law.

Under this system, a student may apply to a university for benefits in the form of a social scholarship, a rector's scholarship, an aid payment, and, in the case of disability, a scholarship for disabled persons.

A student in a difficult material situation may receive a social grant at the university, which, in addition, may be increased in justified cases, such as when the student incurs additional costs associated with studying outside the place of permanent residence.

In addition, together with the social scholarship, a student may receive other benefits in the form of a rector's scholarship, a scholarship for disabled persons and a financial aid, if he or she meets the criteria specified for each of these benefits in the above-mentioned law and the university's regulations on benefits for students.

In addition, a student may apply for accommodation in the student's dormitory (also with a spouse and child) or food in the university's student cafeteria.

Benefits for students from non-budgetary funds

Universities may also award student's tax-free scholarships for academic performance from their own scholarship fund established from non-budgetary funds based on statutory provisions.

In addition, scholarships exempt from personal income tax may also be awarded to students by local government units (e.g., municipalities) based on a resolution adopted, and, with regard to scholarships for academic or sports performance, also by individuals or legal entities that are not state or local government legal entities (e.g., foundations).

In addition to scholarships for academic or sports performance, non-governmental organizations may also award other scholarships to students exempt from income tax up to an amount not exceeding PLN 3,800 in a tax year.

## Student loans

Student loans are a complementary, to the system of non-repayable material aid, form of support for the education of students and doctoral students.

A preferential student loan can be applied for regardless of other scholarship benefits received. It is sufficient that the income per person in the family does not exceed PLN 3,000 net in the year of applying for the loan (in the 2022/2023 academic year). A student under the age of 30 or a doctoral student under the age of 35 may apply for the loan.

The student loan is granted by selected commercial banks. The student himself decides in what amount of funds he wants to receive from the bank during his studies. One can choose an amount from PLN 400 to PLN 1,000 per month.

Repayment begins only two years after graduation on very favourable financial terms - the interest is only half of the NBP bill rediscount rate, and the repayment period is spread over the period of twice the loan collection, so every month the graduate repays half of what he received monthly during his studies. During the loan collection period and the two-year grace period, the interest is covered entirely by the state budget.

More info at <https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/swiadczenia-dla-studentow-od-semestru-letniego-roku-akademickiego-20212022>;

<https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/stypendia-ministra-dla-studentow-za-znaczone-osiagniecia>

<https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja-i-nauka/kredyty-studenckie>

Unfortunately, all websites are in Polish.

## Resumo PL:

A Polónia tem um sistema de acompanhamento dos graduados-ELA (<https://ela.nauka.gov.pl/en>), que permite prestar informação aos empregadores por um período de 5 anos após a conclusão do ciclo de estudos. O sistema foi lançado em 2016 e tem vindo a beneficiar de upgrades, e desde a possibilidade de comparabilidade de situações de emprego, de salários, o tempo de empregabilidade, o sistema permite numa última instância alimentar os rankings das Universidades e apoio a Ministério da Educação e Ciência polaco na tomada de decisão e adaptação da política às necessidades do mercado de trabalho.

As IES dispõem de Academic Career Offices que asseguram a informação sobre emprego, estágios, oportunidades de voluntariado, aconselhamento sobre carreiras, graduate tracking, workshops ou formação sobre métodos de procura de emprego e preparação para processos de recrutamento, workshops sobre soft skills. As técnicas abrangem desde a preparação de documentos, simulação de entrevistas, testar competências. Oferecem, ainda, outro tipo de serviços mais orientados para a área académica como a escolha de outro grau, ou de uma especialização, em contexto de mercado de trabalho ou académico, e este trabalho é feito com staff das IES, ou especialistas consultores, externos peritos em empreendedorismo. Disponibilizam, igualmente, aconselhamento psicológico em contexto vocacional, sobre atividades de voluntariado, ao nível pessoal, sobre mercado de arte, para migrantes, em inglês, sobre lei do trabalho e escolha de estágios e aprendizagens.

O Ministério criou um projeto em 2020-2021 de apoio psicológico aos estudantes designado por “PSRP Comfort Zone”. Como parte do projeto o Polish Student Parliament desenvolveu um mapa interativo identificando pontos de apoio psicológico de forma a cobrir o país. A associação de estudantes independente lançou um projeto sobre saúde mental e física no qual os estudantes de medicina e psicóloga prestam apoio e fazem formação online e entrevistas.

O Ministério, endereçou um conjunto de recomendações às Universidades “Psychological Package (<https://77psrp.org.pl/en>)” com o objetivo de as mesmas criarem um acesso permanente e sustentado de serviços de apoio psicológico e outras formas de apoio.

Relativamente aos apoios financeiros, os estudantes do ES beneficiam de um apoio financeiro do orçamento do estado disponibilizados às universidades para esse efeito. Os estudantes podem beneficiar de bolsas sociais, bolsas reitorais, ajuda no pagamento, e apoios para estudantes com necessidades especiais. Um estudante carenciado pode ainda beneficiar da bolsa extra da universidade para fazer face aos custos de alojamento fora do seu local de residência. Podem, ainda, beneficiar de alojamento individual ou familiar (cônjuge e filhos) ou alimentação. As IES podem, ainda, atribuir bolsa sem impostos por desempenho académico e de desempenho desportivo.

O sistema de empréstimos é complementar, ao sistema de bolsas, independentemente se o estudante beneficia ou não do mesmo, e são geridos diretamente pelas entidades bancárias previamente selecionadas. O pagamento dos empréstimos inicia-se 2 anos após a conclusão do ciclo de estudos, em condições financeiras favoráveis, a taxa de juro é reduzida para metade e todos os meses o graduado paga metade do que recebeu por mês durante os seus estudos (ou seja, duplica o tempo de pagamento).