

Office of Rail Transport

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Studying abroad and the right to discounts on Polish railways

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Entitlement to concessionary travel on public collective transport is not regulated at the international level. This means that each country has its own regulations in this aspect. Having the right to a discount in one country does not mean that such rights are automatically transferred to another country, even if they are EU countries. This issue is particularly important for students studying outside of Poland.

The Polish student card will probably not entitle the student to a discount on public transport in another country, because - unlike a passport - it is a document valid within the borders of the Republic of Poland. Foreign students from other countries, who come to Poland as tourists (occasionally) and use public transport, also do not have the right to a student discount in Poland, regardless of the type of student card they have.

In Poland the student discount for domestic rail travel is 51% and is valid only until the age of 26, provided that the student has a valid student card issued by a Polish university. During a ticket inspection, one can present both its physical (plastic card with a valid hologram) and virtual version (student ID card in the mObywatel application). A student ID card cannot be replaced with e.g. a certificate from a university about studying.

However, the possibility to use the International Student Identity Card (ISIC) in Poland raises some doubts. As a document confirming the right to a reduced train fares in Poland, it is allowed only for persons studying abroad, provided that:

- they have Polish citizenship, or
- are citizens of the European Union and have the right of permanent residence in Poland, or
- they are a family member of a European Union citizen who has the right of permanent residence in Poland.

These persons have to present to the inspector the ISIC card confirming their studies at a foreign university, together with an identity card or other document allowing to establish their identity and age and - in the case of a foreigner with citizenship in another EU country - also with a document confirming the right of permanent residence in Poland (their own or their family member's). ISIC currently has two forms: a traditional plastic card (the ISIC card) and a card displayed on a mobile device (virtual ISIC card, ISIC virtual ID). Both forms of ISIC card will constitute a document confirming the right to discounts in trains.

In light of current regulations, the ISIC card is not a substitute for a student card issued by Polish educational institutions. Moreover, an ISIC card cannot be used on Polish public transport by a student from another country, who does not have the right of permanent residence in Poland or is not a family member of an EU citizen with the right of permanent residence in Poland (e.g. a foreign tourist). Polish students who visit other countries occasionally can use cheaper tickets only in accordance with the regulations of a given country.

It should also be remembered that Polish student discounts for eligible persons are only valid for travel within Poland (also on an international train). They cannot be used when buying a direct international ticket (e.g. Warsaw - Berlin).

LEGAL BASIS

- Act of 20 June 1992 on entitlements to reduced travel by means of public collective transport (Journal of Laws 2018, Item 295)
- Ordinance of the Minister of Infrastructure and Construction of 20 April 2017 on the types of documents certifying entitlement to the use of reduced travel by means of public collective transport (Journal of Laws 2017, Item 810).