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About Dan Thomas

Dan Thomas previously worked as a freelance finance and culture journalist. He has also worked in communications in the international education industry.

77% of US visa applications were accepted compared to 100% in France, 94% in Germany and 93% in the UK

One of Turkey's peak agency associations, UED, claims the USA refused a higher number of student visas for Turks than any other major study destination in 2012. However, it says the situation has started to improve in 2013.

In an annual survey of around 20 of its 80 agent members – representing about 50% of business – UED said Turks experienced a visa acceptance rate of 77% in the US last year. This compared with 100% in France, 94% in Germany, 93% in the UK and 83% in Canada.

UED's coordinator, Gokhan Islamoglu, blamed it on the spike in rejections that followed the arrest last summer of Turks using F1 and J1 visas to work illegally in the US. Many reputable students, agents and US schools were impacted.

"A minority of agents were abusing the student visa route, so during the second half of 2012 the US embassy was extremely careful," he told *The PIE News*.

**"A minority of agents were abusing the student visa route, so the US embassy was extremely careful"**

He said US rejections still felt higher than other markets such as Australia and Canada, but that there had been an "important improvement" in the first three months of 2013. "I cannot say that everything is as good as it was in 2011 or 2010, but there has been an improvement on what was happening eight months ago."

The UED survey more generally offers a snapshot of the Turkish student market for tertiary, language and other forms of education

The UED survey more generally offers a snapshot of the Turkish student market for tertiary, language and other forms of education overseas. Islamoglu said that overall, business had remained static from 2011 to 2012 but that an uptick was on the way. "2013 started very well, and it seems this summer will be one of the best of the last three or four years."

In 2012, language comprised most agent business (34%), with the UK the top destination (48%) followed by the USA (24%) and Malta (6%).

It was followed by summer schools (26%) – again most attended in the UK – work and travel (15%), undergraduate (10%) and graduate (8%). 56% of students wanted to study abroad to further their career prospects while 22% wanted to experience a foreign culture.

On penetrating the market, UED recommends that foreign educators build their brand presence (and translate marketing materials into Turkish); discuss pricing policy with agents; advertise; and always follow up on enquiries.

Islamoglu said agents were key to any recruitment strategy but that managing them effectively was crucial. "In Turkey there are many agents operating in the same sector and choosing your key agents is an important issue. A logical way is to check if your prospective business partners or agents are a member of an association such as UED."

**"Agents are not booking offices who only 'send' students to education providers but also business partners"**



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