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THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF POLAND FOR ECONOMIC MIGRANTS. ASSESSMENT BY EMPLOYERS: RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Sabina Kubiciel-Lodzińska¹, Bogdan Ruszczak²

¹Department of Regional Policy
Faculty of Economy and Management
Opole University of Technology
²Institute of Computer Science
Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Automatic Control and Informatics
Opole University of Technology
e-mail: s.kubiciel@po.opole.pl; b.ruszczak@po.opole.pl

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Abstract

This paper discusses selected results of studies carried out among employers from the Opolskie Voivodeship: a region with an exceptional scale of labour emigration in Poland that is struggling with an increasingly palpable shortage of workers. The study included 263 employers and was carried out in late 2014 and in early 2015. It involved managers, i.e. owners, directors, managers or people responsible for personnel policy in enterprise. The CAWI and PAPI methods were used. The research used a structured interview schedule. The aim was to show how the enterprises evaluated Poland in respect to its attractiveness to foreign workers and specified the main issues that were decisive to the influx of foreigners taking up employment in Poland. More than 46% of representatives of the enterprises involved in the study claimed that Poland is attractive to foreigners interested in taking up work. Respondents were convinced that the main factor attracting foreign workers to Poland was the relative proximity of their country of origin and the related easy access.

ATRAKCYJNOŚĆ POLSKI DLA IMIGRANTÓW ZAROBKOWYCH. OCENA PRACODAWCÓW – WYNIKI BADAŃ EMPIRYCZNYCH

Sabina Kubiciel-Lodzińska¹, Bogdan Ruszczak²

¹Katedra Polityki Regionalnej Wydział Ekonomii i Zarządzania Politechnika Opolska ²Instytut Informatyki Wydział Elektrotechniki, Automatyki i Informatyki Politechnika Opolska

Słowa kluczowe: imigracja, Polska, przedsiębiorstwa, obcokrajowcy, region.

Abstrakt

W pracy omówiono wybrane wyniki badań przeprowadzonych wśród pracodawców z województwa opolskiego – regionu charakteryzującego się wyjątkową skalą emigracji zarobkowej w Polsce, który zmaga się z coraz wyraźniejszym niedoborem pracowników. Badanie zrealizowano pod koniec 2014 r. i na początku 2015 r., wzięło w nim udział 263 pracodawców. Uczestniczyli w nim właściciele, dyrektorzy, menedżerowie lub osoby odpowiedzialne za politykę personalną w przedsiębiorstwie. Wykorzystano metodę CAWI i PAPI, narzędziem badawczym był kwestionariusz wywiadu. Celem badań było m.in. uzyskanie wiedzy w zakresie oceny atrakcyjności Polski dla zagranicznych pracowników oraz wskazanie przez pracodawców głównych motywów napływu cudzoziemców. Ponad 46% respondentów twierdziło, że Polska jest atrakcyjna dla imigrantów zarobkowych. Zdaniem badanych głównym czynnikiem przyciągającym zagranicznych pracowników do Polski jest względna bliskość od ich kraju pochodzenia.

Introduction

Economic migration is growing in importance for developed countries because foreign workers (holding both high and low qualifications) play the two following roles: they comprise additional labour available in the case of a shortage of workers resulting from shifts in the economy or society; and they perform particular types of jobs that native workers do not want or are unable to do (CASTLES, MILLER 2011, p. 297). This is also true for Poland (ORGANIŚCIAK-KRZYKOWSKA et al. 2013). It is transforming from an emigration state into an emigration & immigration destination (IGLICKA 2001). According to estimates from Iglicka, in order to ensure a sufficient number of employees in Poland, more than 5 million people should settle in the country by 2060 (IGLICKA 2013, p. 1). On the other hand, the latest forecast from the Polish Central Statistical Office provides the revised demographic simulation until 2050 taking into account the effects of the "Family 500+" program, which included a higher fertility rate. It does not anticipate the halting of the population drop, but does foresee its significant slowdown. In 2050, the population of Poland may fall to only 35.7 million people, but that is over 1.7 million more than the previous forecast (WALIGÓRSKA, WITKOWSKI 2016, p. 64). The migration scenarios referring to emigration as well as return migration and the immigration of foreigners to Poland might change, and that could affect the size of the future population. Currently, three options are being considered. One considers an increase in emigration and immigration, with a negative migration balance throughout the forecast period. Another also equates immigration with emigration, but considers increases in immigration with an emigration reduction (Population projection... 2014, p. 98, 99).

Poland is more often chosen as a destination for immigration, including in particular labour immigration. In 2004, in the year of accession to the European Union, just over 12,000 work permits for foreigners were issued, while in 2016 their number significantly exceeded 120,000. Even more dynamic growth was recorded in the number of registered declarations of intent to entrust work to

a foreigner (this is a simplified form of the legalization of employment of a foreign labour force). Their number increased from 21 thousand in 2007 to over 1.3 million in 2016 (Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy). The majority were Ukrainians. They received almost 83% of permits and over 96% of declarations. Those who obtain work permits are mainly employed in construction, while those working on statements undertake work primarily in agriculture. In the same period, the unemployment rate in Poland was falling – in December 2004 it was 19%, while in December 2016 it had fallen to 8.2% (*Stopa bezrobocia w latach...*, online), which may indicate a propitious change in the Polish labour market.

There are also more foreigners in Poland who have obtained Polish citizenship. The naturalization rate (defined as the ratio of the number of foreigners who acquired citizenship in a given calendar year to the number of foreigners), according to data from 2015, ranks Poland as 3rd among the 28 EU countries (*Acquisiton of citizenship...* 2017).

The purpose of this paper is to present the current migration situation in Poland based on the example of selected results of studies carried out among enterprises from the Opolskie Voivodeship. The studies involved enterprises assessing Poland with respect to its attractiveness to foreign workers and listed the main factors that determined the influx of foreigners taking up employment in Poland.

The structure of economic migrant inflow to Poland – a statistical approach

The largest group of foreigners who, according to official data, are employed in Poland has Ukrainian descent. The presence of citizens from other countries is definitely less remarkable. The next largest groups for which work permits were issued in the years 2008–2016 were Chinese, Belarussians, Moldovans and Vietnamese (Fig. 1).

A closer look at the case of declarations of intention to entrust work to a foreigner, shows the domination of workers with Ukrainian descent, who in recent years received over 90% of documents (Fig. 2).

In the last couple of years, the growing share of Belarusian and Moldavian citizens among issued statements was noted. The significant change in the industry structure of issued work permits was also observed with the rapidly growing number of construction workers (Fig. 3).

The foreigners obtaining work permits in 2008 were most often employed in manufacturing. In 2016, most of them worked for construction and trade. In the entire period 2008–2016, the significant influence of catering services to the food service sector could be noticed.

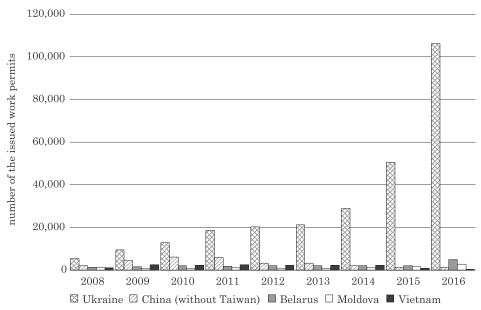


Fig. 1. Work permits for foreigners in relation to citizenship in the years 2008–2016 Source: based on data from Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/ (access:15.01.2018).

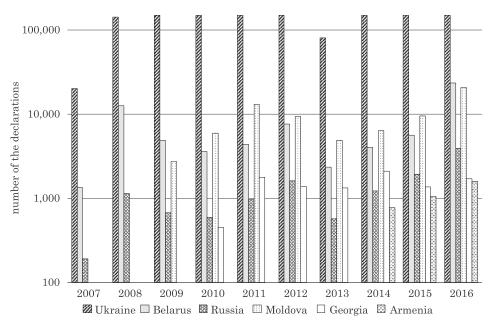


Fig. 2. Number of declarations in relation to the citizenship in the years 2008–2016 Source: based on data from Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/ (access:15.01.2018).

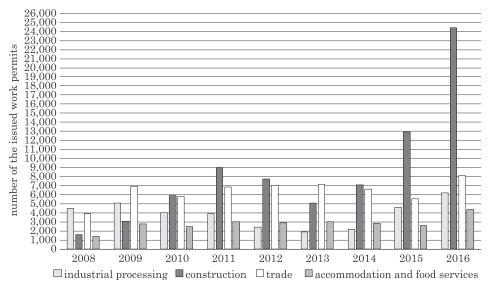


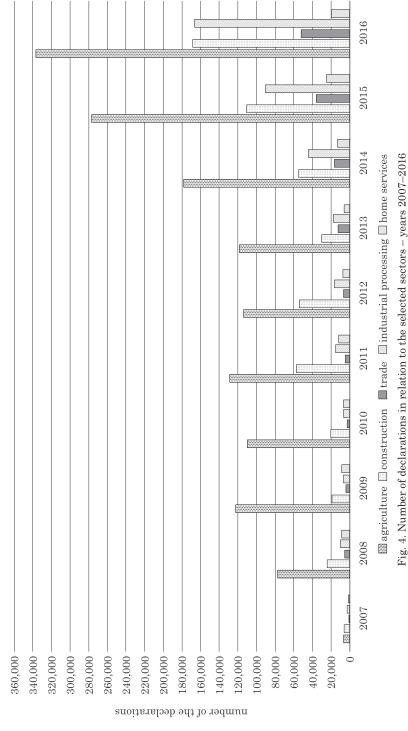
Fig. 3. Work permits in relation to the selected sectors in the years 2008–2016 Source: based on data from Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/ (access:15.01.2018).

On the other hand, foreigners employed in the years 2007–2016, using the declarations, were mainly employed in agriculture. Significant growth was also observed in the construction sector, but the greatest dynamics in the number of issued documents was recorded in industrial processing in 2016 (Fig. 4).

Research Area, Method and Structure of Respondents

The studies, the selected results of which are discussed in this article, have been carried out in enterprises in the Opolskie Voivodeship. This migration region (HEFFNER, SOLGA 2013, p. 43, SOLGA 2013, p. 126, 127) is characterised by a long-standing tradition of departures (usually abroad) having social, demographic and economic consequences. The Opolskie Voivodeship has become a kind of a "laboratory" for the study of migratory processes, in particular economic migration. For several years, this has also been a region where research work on foreign migration, mainly economic (JOŃCZY, KUBICIEL 2010, KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA 2012, 2016, KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA, USTRZYCKI 2013) but also among students (KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA, RUSZCZAK 2016), has been carried out.

The Opole Region is the smallest Voivodeship in Poland – both with regards to its territory and the number of inhabitants. According to the data provided by the Central Statistical Office (CSO), the population only slightly exceeds 1 million, which places the Region in the last position for the country.



Source: based on data from Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, http://psz.praca.gov.pl/rynek-pracy/statystyki-i-analizy/

Furthermore, according to prognoses the Region's population will keep diminishing. It follows from the CSO's prognoses for the years 2014–2050 that the Province will face the largest drop in population, since the number of its inhabitants will decrease in 2050 by over 25 per cent when compared to 2013 (Central Statistical Office 2014) as presented on Figure 5.

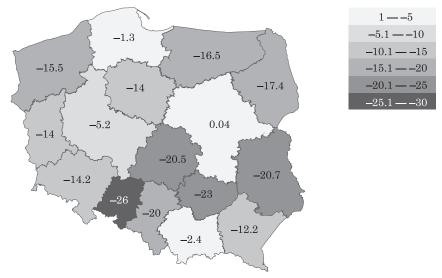


Fig. 5. Population change from 2013 to 2050 by Regions (in percentage) Source: own elaboration based on Central Statistical Office (2014), cited after: KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA, MAJ (2017).

The actual population situation in the Opole Province has outrun in time the unfavourable demographic scenarios presented for the region by the CSO. It has been assessed that the real population numbers have already dropped to less than 1 million and amounted to slightly over 870 thousand (the result having been corrected, taking into account the unregistered emigration) (DYBOWSKA, WIDERA 2015, p. 113). The decline in the total population is accompanied by a change in the populations' structure – a drop in the number of children and an increase in the number of people at post-working age, which can have a serious impact on the labour market (KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA, MAJ 2017, p. 179, 180).

The understanding of determinants and effects of foreign economic migration into the Opolskie Voivodeship is constantly being broadened. In late 2014 and in early 2015, studies regarding the demand for foreign labour in enterprises in that Polish voivodeship were carried out. These are the first studies carried out in the Opolskie Voivodeship including both employers having experience with foreign labour and employers without such exposure. Previous analyses

carried out in the region incorporated only those entities that employed foreign labour (JOŃCZY, KUBICIEL 2010).

Respondents were contacted in several ways. Firstly, via an on-line survey sent to over 900 companies. However, only 44 completed and returned it, i.e. less than 5% of the group. Contacting respondents by email was found to be ineffective. The second method used in the studies was direct contact with enterprises at meetings and training courses organised for them¹. Ultimately, the studies included 263 employers. The research was based on interviewing the company managers, i.e. business owners, senior managers and human resources managers.

The largest group of respondents was micro-enterprises (43%, i.e. 113 entities). Over 1/3 were small companies (88 respondents). Medium and large enterprises comprised a much smaller part of the group: 17.1% (45 companies) and 6.4% (17 companies), respectively².

The respondents were divided according to the segment of the labour market they represented, in line with the theory of the dual labour market (DOERINGER, PIORE 1971, PIORE 1979). In the completed study, inclusion in the relevant segment depended on the profession (nature) in which the company hired or would be willing to hire a foreigner. The company's business profile was taken into consideration in the case of companies that definitely did not intend to use migrant work in the future. In the undertaken research, qualification into the relevant segment depended on the profession in which the company employed or would be willing to employ a foreigner. The assignment to the primary market most often resulted from employing (or the willingness to employ) a foreigner in white-collar professions (such as foreign language teachers, doctors, IT specialists, sales representatives, sports trainers, chemists, technologists, mechanical engineers, marketing specialists, automation specialists, and office workers). The assignment to the secondary labour market most often resulted from employing or the willingness to employ a foreigner in blue-collar professions (including skilled and unskilled workers i.e. construction worker, welder, chef, driver, carpenter, mechanic, locksmith, electrician, barber, hairdresser, or cleaner). Regardless of the sector, the organizations which employed foreigners in 'white collar' positions had been included into the primary sector; whereas enterprises employing foreigners in 'blue collar' jobs were included into the secondary labour market. For simplicity purposes, later in the paper organizations employing foreigners in the 'good' jobs will be referred to as companies from the primary labour market and organizations employing foreigners in the 'bad' jobs will be referred to as from the secondary labour market (KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA, MAJ 2017, p. 182).

¹ The author of the studies was involved e.g. in business meetings organised by local government institutions and associations for enterprises.

² The division of enterprises by size was based on the number of employees. Micro enterprises include an entity employing up to 9 employees, small companies: 10–49 employees, medium-sized enterprises 50–249 employees, large companies: more than 250 employees.

Most of the companies involved in the studies were included in the secondary labour market. Enterprises from this segment accounted for 81% of the respondents (213 entities), while the share of companies from the primary labour market amounted to 19% (50 entities), as presented in detail in Table 1.

 ${\it Table 1}$ Surveyed enterprises according to the employment size and labour market segments

Labour market sector	Micro- enterprises		Small enterprises		Medium-sized enterprises		Large enterprises		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Primary labour market	20	17.7	14	15.9	11	24.4	5	29.4	50	19.0
Secondary labour market	93	82.3	74	84.1	34	75.6	12	70.6	213	81.0
Total	113	100.0	88	100.0	45	100.0	17	100.0	263	100.0

Source: analysis of the results obtained in the study.

The Attractiveness of Poland as the Destination of Economic Migration from the Viewpoint of Surveyed Enterprises

The enterprises that participated in the studies were asked whether they thought Poland was attractive to economic migrants, or did not attract foreigners seeking employment³.

More than 46% of representatives of the enterprises involved in the studies (133 responses) claimed that Poland was attractive to foreigners interested in taking up work (Tab. 2). However, this was true only for those that originated from countries poorer than Poland as they could obtain higher income compared to their countries of origin. Almost 1/3 of respondents (81 responses) said that Poland was becoming more attractive due to the country's increasingly better economic condition. According to nearly 14% (40 responses), Poland was not interesting from the viewpoint of economic migrants, and that foreigners treated the country as a stop along the way to the old EU countries. Roughly 6% of respondents (17 responses) thought Poland was not attractive to foreign workers because it belonged to the rather poorer countries. Slightly more than 4% of those surveyed (12 responses) felt that Poland as an economic destination was attractive only to those foreigners who worked illegally.

Almost half (48.5%, i.e. 114 responses) of respondents representing the secondary labour market considered Poland to be attractive but only to migrants from poorer countries as they would be able to obtain higher income compared to their countries of origin. According to respondents from the primary labour market, apart from the above-mentioned argument (mentioned by 35.8%, i.e.

³ More detailed research results were presented in KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA (2016).

19 responses), the attractiveness of Poland was also demonstrated by the country's increasingly better economic condition (37.7%, i.e. 20 responses) – see Table 2.

More than 15% (8 responses) of respondents from the primary labour market and nearly 14% (32 responses) of those from the secondary labour market argued that Poland was not attractive to economic migrants who treated it as a transit country to Western European countries. Far fewer respondents thought that from the viewpoint of foreigners, Poland was unattractive because it was relatively poor (5.7% of the primary segment and 6% of the secondary segment). About 4% from both segments deemed Poland as attractive but only to those working illegally.

Table 2

The attractiveness of Poland to foreigners seeking work from the viewpoint of surveyed enterprises – according to the labour market segment

Option	Primary labour market		Secondary labour market		Total	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Yes, for those from poorer countries, as they could obtain higher income compared to their countries of origin	19	35.8	114	48.5	133	46.2
Yes, because of Poland's increasingly better economic condition	20	37.7	61	26.0	81	28.1
Yes, but only to those foreigners who worked illegally	2	3.8	10	4.3	12	4.2
No, because Poland is still a poor country	3	5.7	14	6.0	17	5.9
No, Poland is only a stop along the way to Western Europe	8	15.1	32	13.6	40	13.9
Other response	1	1.9	4	1.7	5	1.7
Total	53	100.0	235	100.0	288	100.0

Source: analysis of the results obtained in the study.

During direct interviews forming part of the studies, it was found that most respondents associated the term "foreign worker" with people from Ukraine (thus the high share of responses demonstrating that Poland was an attractive place to work but only to people coming from poorer countries) who came to Poland for a few months (or years), earned money and eventually went back home. Therefore, the dominating position involves circular (temporary, periodic) labour migration. According to the studies, Polish employers perceive migrants as "guest workers", not potential residents. On the one hand, temporary and seasonal migrations are positive for the country of immigration (the quick acquisition of the necessary labour without the need of integration programmes), the country of emigration (money transfers stimulating the demand in the country of origin), and for the migrants themselves (the ability to obtain higher salaries compared with their

country of origin). On the other hand, temporary migration may always become permanent. If it is not followed by integrating actions, then, mainly in the event of the influx of people from countries with a different culture, it may have negative consequences in the form of the creation of non-integrated groups of foreigners. This was the case in e.g. Germany where, as noted by researchers, it was labour that was imported as part of recruitment programmes rather than people. No actions were taken that would favour permanent settlement. Immigrants (mainly men) were treated only as interim workers (guest workers, *Gastarbeiter*) necessary only to perform certain types of work and who would return to their countries of origin as soon as no job was available for them. However, this is not what happened. These people remained in Western Europe and, even though labour immigration stopped, the population of foreigners grew because husbands and fathers were being accompanied by their families (CASTLES 2006, p. 3).

Factors Stimulating the Influx of Economic Migrants to Poland

The factors that stimulate the influx of foreigners to certain areas include the ability to obtain well-paid employment; the presence of compatriots; cultural proximity; and easy access (influx) to such a place (CHISTWICK 1994, p. 105, SPÖRLEIN 2015, p. 524). The distance between the area of the outflow and influx was considered a barrier to migration (although part of the discussion concerned internal migration, it seems this factor is more of a general nature and may be referred to when analysing migrations between countries); however, over the years, this conviction has changed (LEWIS 1982, p. 49, 50). Furthermore, it has been noted that the impact of the distance on the propensity to move depended on the migrant's gender (RAVENSTEIN 1885), status (FRIEDLANDER, ROSHIER 1966) and even profession (TARVER 1964). However, the distance between the places of emigration still affects the selection of the direction of migration (KIM, COHEN 2010).

The vast majority of representatives of surveyed enterprises, i.e. more than 45% (152 responses), were convinced the main factor attracting foreign workers to Poland was its geographic location, meaning the relatively small distance from their country of origin made it easier to reach work. Here, it should be added that the majority of foreigners to whom work permits are issued and for whom declarations of the intention to employ foreigners are registered are citizens of Ukraine. A little more than 19% (63 responses) were of the opinion that foreigners were attracted to Poland due to attractive salaries, while 15% (51 responses) – good working conditions. For more than 8% of respondents (28 responses), an important factor attracting foreigners was their command of Polish, while according to 7.7%, the decisive factor to choose Poland was the ability to find work easily – see Table 3.

 ${\it Table \ 3}$ Factors attracting economic migrants to Poland from the viewpoint of employers – according to the labour market segment

Option	Primary labour market			ry labour rket	Total		
	number	%	number	%	Number	%	
Geographic location	21	35.0	131	47.3	152	45.1	
Good work conditions	9	15.0	42	15.2	51	15.1	
Attractive salaries	18	30.0	47	17.0	65	19.3	
Command of polish	4	6.7	24	8.7	28	8.3	
Ability to find work easily	3	5.0	23	8.3	26	7.7	
Other reason	5	8.3	10	3.6	15	4.5	
Total	60	100.0	277	100.0	337	100.0	

Source: analysis of the results obtained in the study.

Analysing the responses regarding the factors stimulating the influx of foreign workers to Poland and considering the labour market segmentation, it may be concluded that respondents from both the primary and the secondary labour market deemed the geographic location as the most important factor. Yet, in the secondary segment, the share of responses was higher (47.3%, i.e. 131 responses) than on the primary market (35%, i.e. 21 responses). Employers' responses are confirmed by other studies. Spörlein noted that the increase in geographical distances adversely affected decisions regarding migration by people with low qualifications (-94%), but encouraged people with high qualifications (+16%) (SPÖRLEIN 2015, p. 541, 542).

For 1/3 of enterprises from the primary labour market (18 responses), attractive salaries were also of key importance. In comparison, 17% of respondents (47 responses) selected this factor on the secondary labour market. In both segments of the labour market, the third most popular factor (15%) was good working conditions. The command of Polish as a factor stimulating the influx of foreign workers was selected by almost 7% (4 responses) of respondents from the primary labour market and almost 9% (24 responses) from the secondary labour market. Also in the case of the ability to find work easily, this factor was listed more often by employers of the secondary rather than the primary segment (8.3% compared to 5%).

Respondents were convinced that the main factor attracting foreign workers to Poland was the relative proximity of their country of origin and the related easy access. This probably results from the fact that most migrants are Ukrainians (KACZMARCZYK 2015, p. 17). This factor was also selected by nearly 70% of foreigners working in the Opolskie Voivodeship who took part in the studies carried out in 2007–2008 (KUBICIEL-LODZIŃSKA 2012, p. 107). The distance

between the country of origin and the country of destination is an important factor affecting migration; however, its importance is dropping due to the increasing opportunities of quick (and inexpensive) transport (ROTTE, VOGLER 1998, p. 18). This means that if the ageing Europe starts vying for foreign workers, economic migrants will probably choose other countries than Poland.

Conclusion

Poland has been seen as an emigration country. The accession to the European Union and the gradual opening of the labour markets in individual countries of the old EU-15 resulted in the outflow of a significant number of Polish workers, especially young workers (MACHNIS-WALASEK, ORGANIŚCIAK-KRZYKOWSKA 2014). It is estimated that about 2 million people have left Poland (The information on size and the directions... 2016), but the situation is changing. Economic immigration in Poland is an issue of growing importance. It should be noted that while the unemployment rate in Poland fluctuated in 2004–2016, the number of work permits issued to foreigners and declarations of the intention to employ foreigners has been growing steadily every year. This growth was also reported during the period in which the situation in the Polish labour market deteriorated, resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate. Therefore, there seems to be a demand for foreign labour in Poland regardless of the situation in the labour market caused by foreign labour performing certain specific tasks that native workers do not perform. This results from labour market segmentation (DIETZ, KACZMARCZYK 2008, NEUMAN 2014); however, critics of this approach point out that the duality of the labour market enables to demonstrate the movement of people solely as an economic phenomenon that does not take the sending party into account (DE HAAS 2011, p. 12).

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of attraction of foreign labour as a result of labour market duality is confirmed by studies carried out in countries with long-term migration experience. They show that foreign workers do not displace native labour, but are employed precisely because native workers are not available (MARTIS et al. 2012, p. 10, 11). George Borjas claimed that immigration also has a small impact on the employment of native labour because it moves to other sectors from the ones occupied by migrants (BORJAS 1994).

Some migration researchers have thought that, in the case of Poland, "there are no immediate relations between the economic situation and the influx of foreigners (...) that improving conditions in the labour market do not increase the influx of foreign labour, and the deteriorating economic condition does not result in the decrease of the influx" (GÓRNY et al. 2010, p. 225)⁴.

⁴ However, the period taken into account in the analysis of quoted researchers was 1989–2007. It did not include the years witnessing the most rapid increase in the number of documents that

It should be noted, however, that migration is affected not only by the economic development of a relevant country or its policy aimed at migrants, but also by migration networks and the openness of the relevant society to foreigners. Dorota Praszałowicz wrote that "although economic reasons trigger migrations, social reasons are responsible for their continuation" (PRASZAŁOWICZ 2002, p. 27). The social factors that increase the migration-related attractiveness of a relevant country may also include the relations created over centuries between the country of origin and the country of destination. These relationships may be perceived in the context of cultural and historical associations arising from the change of borders. This historical connection with third-country citizens who are arriving in Poland is best visible in relation to migrants from Ukraine. Many people who live behind Poland's Eastern border refer to their Polish roots (WOJTAN 2004, p. 127) or contacts with Poles. This makes Poland culturally close for newcomers from Ukraine, with Ukrainian being a similar language facilitating communication (NOWICKA, WINIARSKA 2010, p. 147, 148). The lack of cultural differences is considered to be a significant factor affecting the influx and integration process (WYSIEŃSKA 2010, p. 19).

Poland has become the new target for economic migrants. It has caused, among many others, the change in Poland's migration policy strategy. Greater emphasis was put on the fight against illegal employment of foreigners, improvement of their safety and the preparation of the labor market needs catalog, which should reveal information on what professions and in what locations labour is missing (OSIECKI 2017). Although, thus far, there has not been an influx on an extensive scale as has been witnessed in Western European countries, there is a regular increase of interest among employers in hiring migrants and, therefore, the number of foreigners working in Poland is increasing. The growing importance of these issues has also been demonstrated by the inclusion of support to migration (including economic and educational migration) in the document specifying the direction of changes in Poland: "Strategy for Responsible Development". It is estimated that, around 2020, Poland will become a net immigration country (DUSZCZYK 2012, p. 111).

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