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## Polish emigration to the UK after 2004: Why did so many come?

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# CMR Working Papers

75/133

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## **Polish emigration to the UK after 2004; why did so many come?**

October 2014

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## **Abstract**

Despite the abundance of studies of Polish migration to the UK immediately before and in the aftermath of accession to the EU in 2004, one fundamental question has never been clearly answered: why did so many Poles move to the UK? We sought general explanations rather than inquiring into the range of observed diversity. We begin by putting together statistical and other data from both ends of the flow in order to assess the scale of movement to and from the UK and to help tease out the reasons for what may well have been the largest voluntary migration between two countries. We have used data from both countries and especially the recently published statistics from the 2011 UK Census to present a detailed picture of the characteristics of those involved. Polish statistics suggest a more 'elite' flow to the UK than to other countries. The UK census pictures a maturing settled population, still tending to occupy relatively lower skilled jobs but showing evidence of upward social mobility. The movements are particularly a response to demographic and economic factors in Poland and to a widespread but to some extent hidden shortage of labour in some sectors in the UK. These factors combine with a set of political circumstances in both countries to produce an explanatory framework that may be summarised as "right people, right place, right circumstances".

**Key terms:** post-accession migration, statistics of migration from Poland to the UK, determinants of migration from Poland to the UK

## **Streszczenie**

Pomimo obfitości studiów nad polską migracją do Wielkiej Brytanii w okresie przed- i poakcesyjnym, nie padła wyraźna odpowiedź na jedno fundamentalne pytanie: dlaczego tak wielu Polaków udało się do Wielkiej Brytanii? W opracowaniu zamiast próby wnikięcia w całą różnorodność tego zjawiska, szukaliśmy raczej ogólnych jego wyjaśnień. Rozpoczynamy od przedstawienia statystyk i innych danych dostępnych w obu krajach, zmierzając do oceny wielkości przemieszczeń ludności polskiej, zarówno do jak i z Wielkiej Brytanii, i zarysowania powodów zjawiska, które prawdopodobnie było największą dobrowolną migracją między dwoma krajami. Dane z obu krajów, zwłaszcza ostatnio opublikowane statystyki ze spisu ludności z 2011 r., wykorzystaliśmy do zaprezentowania szczegółowej charakterystyki osób uczestniczących w tych przemieszczeniach. Polskie źródła wskazują na bardziej 'elitarny' profil migrantów udających się do Wielkiej Brytanii na tle innych krajów. Spis brytyjski wskazuje na dojrzewającą osiadłość przybyszów z Polski, nadal podejmujących prace wymagające stosunkowo niskich kwalifikacji, lecz zarazem wykazujących korzystną mobilność społeczną. Analizowane migracje są w szczególności reakcją na sytuację demograficzną i gospodarczą w Polsce oraz głęboki, choć w pewnym stopniu ukryty, niedobór siły roboczej w niektórych sektorach brytyjskiego rynku pracy. Te czynniki wespół z uwarunkowaniami natury politycznej w obu krajach posłużyły jako ramy wyjaśniające analizy i ostatecznie konkluzji, którą można wyrazić następująco: 'odpowiedni ludzie w odpowiednim miejscu, we właściwych okolicznościach'.

**Słowa kluczowe:** migracje poakcesyjne, statystyki migracji z Polski do Wielkiej Brytanii, uwarunkowania migracji z Polski do Wielkiej Brytanii

## **1. Introduction**

A Polish presence in the UK population existed before 2004 which helped to create networks and contacts between the diaspora and those back home. The 1951 UK census recorded 152 000 people born in Poland, a hangover from the Second World War after which many preferred to relocate to or stay in the UK rather than return home. By 1981 the number had shrunk to 88 000 and although unrest and Martial Law in Poland continued a trickle of new migrants into the UK, the inevitable ageing of the post-war group took its toll so that by 2001 the number had fallen to 58 000. The next decade, however, saw an increase in the number of Polish born in the UK to 676,000 in 2011.

The flow between the two countries has certainly been one of the most studied: one website devoted to the subject records almost 500 scholarly pieces on Polish migration, most of it to the UK, most of it after 2004. In both countries the economic costs and benefits of the flows have been closely scrutinised. The focus in the UK has been on the labour market impacts on the domestic population and on the fiscal benefits or otherwise of immigrant workers. The burgeoning literature suggests that the flows have been broadly neutral or even positive for the labour market, with an overall fiscal benefit (for a review of findings, see Salt, 2011).

Several edited collections have brought together a range of empirical studies, mainly concerned with social issues (see, for example, Burrell 2009). A review of the literature finds that almost all aspects of the movement over the last decade have been scrutinised in detail. For the most part, research has been supply side based, focusing on the migrants themselves. Particular attention has been paid to their characteristics, economic and social situations, the networks in which they engage, their health and wellbeing and their integration into the host population. The varied geography of the movement, affecting regions and communities not normally associated with immigration as well as the common honeypots like London, has made for a rich tapestry of analysis.

What persuaded us to write this paper was that, despite the abundance of studies, one fundamental question has never been clearly answered: why did so many Poles come to the UK after 2004? By putting together statistical and other data from both ends of the flow we hope to assess the scale of flows to and from the UK and in turn to tease out the reasons for what may well have been the largest voluntary migration between two countries over a short period.

The paper falls into two main sections: statistical and explanatory. After a brief review of available statistical sources, we attempt to assess the scale of movement as far as data allow. Then, using UK and Polish census data we summarise the main characteristics of the Polish population in the UK and identify the degree of selectivity of those moving to the UK compared with those going to other countries. We then review the main causal factors in Poland which had the effect of creating a push towards the UK. This is followed by discussion of the way in which demand for immigrant labour was articulated in the UK. Finally we suggest that the guiding premise of the migration was employment and that a particular combination of circumstances in both countries orchestrated the flow.

## **2. What statistics are available?**

Inevitably, there are more data available on the numbers and characteristics of migrants in the destination country (UK) than the origin (Poland). Some of the analyses in the UK have been based on quantitative datasets, notably the Labour Force Survey, International Passenger Survey, Worker

Registration Scheme and National Insurance Number issues. The recent publication of the first results of the 2011 Census provides a level of detail of the Polish population hitherto unavailable and only now beginning to enter the literature. Because the census provides us with the first clear snapshot of the Polish stock in the UK, we report below some of its principal findings on those Poles living in the UK in the spring of 2011, paying particular attention to those entering since 2001. However, the availability of statistics from the Polish LFS and census allows us to supplement the UK data as well as enabling a comparison of the characteristics of those who came to the UK with those Poles going elsewhere.

In addition to official statistical sources, a multitude of qualitative surveys exists which form the basis of much of the research on Poland-UK movement and the findings of the main ones are used here. By definition many of them are relatively small scale, often depending on what is possible in PhD research. Others are more ambitious but rarely involve more than a few hundred respondents. Some focus only on Poles, some on those from other accession states as well. Some are geographically focused in particular localities; others sample the range of conditions across selected areas and settlement types.

### **3. How many Poles came to the UK after 2004?**

Estimating the number of Poles who came to the UK is not easy. Neither UK nor Polish data can provide a definitive figure. Stock data may measure only the first arrival (WRS, NINos) or the number at any one time (LFS, Census). It is possible, as seen below, to link different sources to make better estimates but they can never be accurate.

Polish emigration data confirm that the UK was not a major destination at the turn of the nineties. Official emigration<sup>1</sup> from Poland was low, around 200 per annum in 1998-2002; between 2004 and 2012 only 55 000 Poles officially emigrated to Britain and ceased to be counted as official residents of Poland. Temporary migration<sup>2</sup> to the UK was much higher. According to the 2002 census, 786 100 Polish people (2.1 per cent of the total population) were temporary migrants, of whom only 23 700 were in the UK (3.0 per cent of the total). The number of long-term temporary migrants, i.e. those staying in a foreign county for at least one year was 626 000, of whom 15 000 were believed to be in the UK, meaning that Britain ranked sixth among the most attractive countries for Polish migrants.

In subsequent years, the UK came to occupy a much more dominant role as a destination (Table 1) so that by December 2012 an estimated 637 000 had stayed in the UK for more than 3 months. Overall, the net increase in the stock of Britain-based temporary Polish migrants between May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 was between 573- and 588 000.

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<sup>1</sup> In Polish statistical terms, “official emigration” is a far cry from the real world. It requires from an individual to cancel his/her Polish domicile prior to the departure to be counted (i.e. included in the population register) as emigrant, which very few comply with.

<sup>2</sup> Temporary migrants are persons aged 15 or over whose duration of stay in a foreign country at the time of survey was at least three months (two months before 2007) but did not exceed one year and retain their official domicile in Poland.

**Table 1. Estimated stock of temporary migrants from Poland in 2002-2012 by major country of destination**

Year <sup>a</sup>	Country of destination of all temporary migrants (thousand) <sup>b</sup>								
	all destinations		all European Union	United Kingdom	Germany	USA <sup>d</sup>	Ireland	Italy	Netherlands
	total	of which long-term migrants							
2002 <sup>c</sup>	786	626	451	24	294	158	2	39	10
2004	1 000	780	750	150	385	.	15	59	23
2005	1 450	.	1 170	340	430	.	76	70	43
2006	1 950	.	1 550	580	450	.	120	85	55
2007	2 270	.	1 860	690	490	.	200	87	98
2008	2 210	.	1 820	650	490	.	180	88	108
2009	2 100	.	1 690	595	465	.	140	88	98
2010	2 000	.	1 607	580	440	.	133	92	92
2011	2 060	1 600	1 670	625	470	219	120	94	95
2012	2 130	1 650	1 720	637	500	.	118	97	97

Notes: (.) no estimate

<sup>a</sup> on 31st December

<sup>b</sup> Poland's official residents staying abroad more than two months in 2002-2006 and more than three months in 2007-2012

<sup>c</sup> on 20th May

<sup>d</sup> estimates available only for population census years

Source: Central Statistical Office of Poland.

UK data provide a fuller picture. Those recorded in the census and the LFS represent only those living in the UK at the time: many others have come and returned home, some of them on more than one occasion. During the 1990s Poles were already coming into the UK to work, for example, 3 200 in 2000 under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme. Others were in skilled occupations, some 400-600 a year in the late 1990s under the work permit system, rising to 1 761 in 2003, the Polish rate of increase in the intervening period almost five times greater than that for all work permits. The increase was accompanied by a shift in the occupations for which permits were granted. In 2000, almost three quarters (72.8 per cent) were for professional, managerial or associate professional and culture and media occupations. By 2003, although the number in almost all categories had risen, the proportion in elementary occupations had reached 40.9 per cent while that for professional, managerial or associate professional and culture and media occupations had fallen to 44.4 per cent. It appears that in anticipation of 2004, entry policy through the work permit system was already shifting towards lower skilled occupations, implying that job vacancies at that level were already manifest.

The two most used statistical sources for measuring the inflow of Poles are the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) and the issue of National Insurance Numbers (NINos). The WRS was set up by the UK government to register all those coming in to work, on payment of a fee, but excluded the self employed. NINos record all newly entering foreign workers who go on to pay national insurance contributions and do include the self employed. A migrant coming into the UK who already has a NINo from an earlier period of work is excluded from the data. NINos also allow migrants to access the benefits system. Inflow and outflow data are available from the International Passenger Survey (IPS) which is based on stated intention at the time of entry and exit and defines an



immigrant/emigrant as someone who intends to stay/leave for more than a year, having been out of/in the country for a similar period. Compared with WRS and NINo data, where there is no stipulation about length of stay, IPS records show a lower level of inflows.

Over the period 2004-2012 the IPS records a total of 396 000 (+/- 44 000) long term (over one year) Polish immigrants and 165 000 (+/- 27,000) emigrants, with a net balance of 231 000 (+/- 51 000) (Table 2). On average, 44 000 came each year, the highest figure being 88 000 in 2007; since 2009, the number has been just over 30 000 per annum. It is likely that these data underestimate the overall number of long term migrants because of an inadequate sampling frame before 2008 (ONS, 2014), although compared with other sources the number would still be low. Taken together, UK data indicate large annual temporary flows by migrants with at best uncertain stay intentions – a pattern clearly indicated by the series of special surveys carried out in the UK.

**Table 2. Flow of Polish Citizens into and out of the UK, 2004 – 2012**

Year	Inflow		Outflow		Balance	
	Estimate	+/- CI	Estimate	+/- CI	Estimate	+/- CI
<b>Total</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>+ 231</b>	<b>51</b>
2004	16	9	.	.	+ 16	9
2005	49	16	4	4	+ 45	17
2006	60	20	9	7	+ 51	21
2007	88	23	19	9	+ 68	24
2008	55	17	53	19	+ 2	26
2009	32	11	26	9	+ 6	14
2010	34	9	18	6	+ 15	11
2011	33	9	20	8	+ 12	12
2012	30	11	15	7	+ 15	12

Notes: 95% confidence intervals (CI)

Source: Office for National Statistics, based on IPS

By the end of 2005, 185 490 Poles had registered in the WRS and over the next three years a further 401 268 did so. By the time of its demise in April 2011, the WRS had registered 1.134 million A8 citizens, of whom 705 890 (62.2 per cent) were Poles. However, WRS registrations undercount actual numbers coming to work. Those who were self employed were not required to register. Others chose not to register, although they should have done, with surveys variously suggesting that the proportion choosing not to register was as high as 36 per cent (CRONEM, n.d.) and 42 per cent (Pollard et al., 2008). The likelihood of registering varied by geographical location and sector. More likely to register were people living in smaller towns, older workers and those intending to stay for longer periods (CRONEM, n.d.); construction sector workers were also less likely to register since the majority of them were self employed (Drinkwater et al., 2006). On a conservative estimate that a third of those who should have registered did not, it may be that about 920 000 employees came in. To these must be added an unknown number of self employed whose numbers vary by sector, perhaps 55 per cent of construction workers and 10 per cent in hospitality (Drinkwater et al., 2006). LFS data suggest that overall 14 per cent of Poles living and working in the UK were self employed. If we relate this proportion to NINo data (2004-11) it suggests another 140 000 workers on top of those derived from the WRS, giving a total of about 1.14 million by 2011. This is slightly more than the one million NINo issues between 2004 and 2011 (Table 3).

The number of NINo issues was already beginning to rise before accession but it then escalated rapidly, reaching almost a quarter of a million in 2007 (Table 3). By 2011 one million NINos had been issued to Poles and by 2013 the figure had risen to 1.164 million. As the recession took hold the number fell but from 2009 it was relatively stable at around 80 000 until 2013 when it rose to 111 000. It is too early to say if this reflects economic recovery in the UK – unlikely given the scale of the increase (and perhaps the anti-immigration rhetoric from the government and others) - or a slow-down of economic growth in Poland. Although after adjustments there is a broad consensus between them in the number of Poles coming to work, Harris et al. (2010) show that discrepancies between WRS and NINo statistics vary geographically, being particularly great in London (55 per cent difference) where self employment is more likely.

**Table 3. National insurance numbers and worker registration scheme data for Poles, 2002 - 2013**

Year	Ninos	WRS*
2002	4735	-
2003	9461	-
2004	38425	66536
2005	144807	118954
2006	192105	153939
2007	242584	144977
2008	152275	102352
2009	85859	55635
2010	74826	53306
2011	84149	10191
2012	80475	-
2013	111449	-

*Notes: \* 2004 data are for May -Dec. 2011 data are for Jan-Apr*

*Source: Department of Work and Pensions.*

The differences between the aggregated ‘flow’ data from the WRS and NINos and the ‘stock’ data from the Census and LFS give some indication of the scale of temporary migrations and the reasons behind them. NINos record a shift in the ages of those registered. The proportion of those aged 25-34 declined after 2002 while that of the younger 18-24 population increased. This concurs with the Polish data and is consistent with a pattern of young people moving temporarily, probably single and willing to accept shared accommodation, coming to work at the end of their secondary or tertiary education or to pursue further or higher education in the UK.

Although the WRS is an incomplete record of the total Polish labour migration it does give us a dynamic account of which occupations they entered. Table 4 shows the proportions in 2005 and 2010 by sector (two digit level). It is clear that Poles were highly concentrated in certain, mainly less skilled, occupations. In 2005 the top six groups accounted for 83.9 per cent of the total, with process, plant and machinery the largest, followed by elementary administrative and service jobs, then elementary trades and sales occupations. It is possible to break down these groups in more detail (three digit level). The top six accounted for 68.6 per cent of all occupations, among whom process operatives were the most important, then a series of elementary jobs in personal services, agriculture, process and cleaning, along with sales related ones.

**Table 4. WRS Applications approved for Poles (top 6 occupations), 2005, 2010**

2005							
Occupation		Number	Share (%)	Occupation		Number	Share (%)
81	Process, plant and machine operatives	38371	30,1	811	Process operatives	37767	29,7
92	Elementary administration and service occupations	23918	18,8	922	Elementary personal services occupations	15759	12,4
91	Elementary trades, plant and storage relate occupations	20933	16,4	911	Elementary agricultural occupations	9369	7,4
71	Sales occupations	13221	10,4	712	Sales related occupations	8895	7,0
82	Transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives	5177	4,1	913	Elementary process plant occupations	7752	6,1
61	Caring personal service occupations	5165	4,1	923	Elementary cleaning occupations	7599	6,0
00	Total	127325	100,0	00	Total	127325	100,0
2010							
Occupation		Number	Share (%)	Occupation		Number	Share (%)
81	Process, plant and machine operatives	19602	36,6	811	Process operatives	19505	36,4
92	Elementary administration and service occupations	9530	17,8	712	Sales related occupations	5413	10,1
71	Sales occupations	7380	13,8	922	Elementary personal services occupations	5260	9,8
91	Elementary trades, plant and storage relate occupations	7182	13,4	923	Elementary cleaning occupations	4161	7,8
62	Leisure and other personal service occupations	2053	3,8	911	Elementary agricultural occupations	3595	6,7
54	Textiles, printing and other skilled trades	1586	3,0	913	Elementary process plant occupations	2728	5,1
00	Total	53536	100,0	00	Total	53536	100,0

Source: Home Office, Worker Registration Scheme.

The data for 2010 show similar concentrations, indicating that over the intervening period little had changed. Four groups stand out, accounting for 81.6 per cent of registrations. The process, plant and machinery group was still the most important, having increased its representation from 30.1 to 36.6 per cent of the total. The more detailed breakdown shows a growing concentration in a smaller number of occupations. The top six groups accounted for 75.9 per cent of the total, up from 68.6 per cent in 2005. Process operatives were again the most important, increasing from 29.7 to 36.4 per cent of the total. As in 2005, a series of elementary and sales related jobs occupied the bulk of the Polish workforce. Particularly significant in this comparison is the role of the process sector: although there is no comprehensive statistical evidence, some survey evidence suggests that substantial numbers work in food processing (the so-called three 'P' jobs – picking, packing and plucking), which explains the presence of Poles and other A8 citizens in more rural parts of the country.

#### 4. The Polish population in the UK

##### 4.1 The view from Poland

Polish LFS data on 'temporary migrants' allow comparisons of the characteristics of those coming to the UK with those going to other countries and also how they evolved in the years after 2004. The

analysis below shows that the nature of the flows varied as circumstances changed over three distinct periods: 1999-2004 (immediate pre accession), 2004-2007 (early post accession) and 2008-2011 (economic recession).

#### *4.1.1 Age and sex*

A long-lasting trait of Polish migrants departing to the UK is male preponderance. The early accession period saw a strong increase in the proportion of men in the flow (from 52.7 to 65.2 per cent) which then gave way to an almost equally strong decline (to 55.5 per cent). A majority of post-accession migrants were of young working age (81-83 per cent at age 20-34) but in the course of time new migrants included more children and middle-aged adults<sup>3</sup>. Of particular note is that the age profile of the UK-bound Polish migrants shows a large, albeit decreasing over time, predominance in the 20-24 bracket (42 pre accession, 37.8 early post accession and 36.2 per cent recession period). This is in contrast to the older cohorts (25-29 and 30-34) who tended to go to Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.

#### *4.1.2 Education level*

Emigrants with secondary education predominated; their share in all three periods was around 50 per cent. Degree holders were relatively highly represented but their proportion declined with time from 25.2 per cent pre-accession to 17.5 per cent in the later period. The proportion of migrants with basic vocational education was relatively low but rising (from 19.8, to 23.6 and 24.9 per cent). Hence, it appears that the early flow attracted more highly educated people while latterly the flow was less qualified. This is consistent with evidence (below) from UK studies which have suggested that an initial attraction of Polish workers for UK employers was their ability, even in relatively mundane occupations. As they settled in the UK the more able were able to move into jobs higher up the socio-economic ladder, for example from bar staff into hospitality management. This process in turn created low skilled vacancies that could be filled by a less qualified workforce.

#### *4.1.3 Urban/rural residence prior to migration*

A majority of migrants originated from cities but the data indicate a declining trend – from 67.2 to 61.1 and to 56 per cent in the three successive periods. This is consistent with the trend for earlier flows to include a higher proportion of the better educated.

#### *4.1.4 Are they different from the “average” Polish emigrant?*

Comparisons of these characteristics with those of emigrants to other countries uncover major differences which may be analysed by the Migrants Selectivity Index (MSI – see Anacka, Okólski 2008). The MSI measures over- (positive values) or under-representation (negative values) of a given category of migrants relative to the share of that category in a general population.

Table 5 presents the selectivity pattern in the three sub-periods for Polish migrants irrespective of the destination of their movement and for those heading only to the UK. MSI values are based on four variables: sex, age, education and type of residence prior to migration.

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, register statistics show that in 2006 80.3 per cent and in 2012 56.0 per cent of emigrants were 20-39 year old (86.7 per cent and 70.9 per cent for emigrants aged 15+, respectively), while the proportion of children under 15 increased in that period from 9.1 to 22.2 per cent.

**Table 5. MSI for selected characteristics by period of migrant departure and country of destination**

Category/variable	1999-2004*		2004-2007**		2008-2011***	
	All destinations	U.K.	All destinations	U.K.	All destinations	U.K.
Sex (males)	0,2	0,17	0,35	0,37	0,32	0,17
Age (mobile, 20-39)	0,97	1,53	1,32	1,6	1,14	1,46
Age (20-24)	1,56	3,2	1,84	2,78	1,92	2,98
Age (40-44)	0,29	-0,69	-0,07	-0,42	0,06	-0,33
Education (tertiary)	0,02	1,09	0,27	0,78	-0,14	0,18
Education (basic vocational)	0,34	0,07	0,29	-0,08	0,35	0,01
Type of residence (urban areas)	-0,11	0,22	-0,05	0,11	-0,09	-0,01

*Notes: \* persons aged 15+ who left Poland before May 1st, 2004*

*\*\* persons aged 15+ who left Poland between May 1st, 2004 and December 31st, 2007*

*\*\*\* persons aged 15+ who left Poland between January 1st, 2008 and June 30th, 2011*

*Source: Labour Force Survey*

A low to moderate over-representation of male migrants was observed in all three sub-periods for those heading for the UK, although in the third sub-period it was considerably lower. A plausible reason for this might be stabilization of Polish migrants' residence in Britain compared with those going elsewhere, resulting in an intensified family reunification as more women arrived.

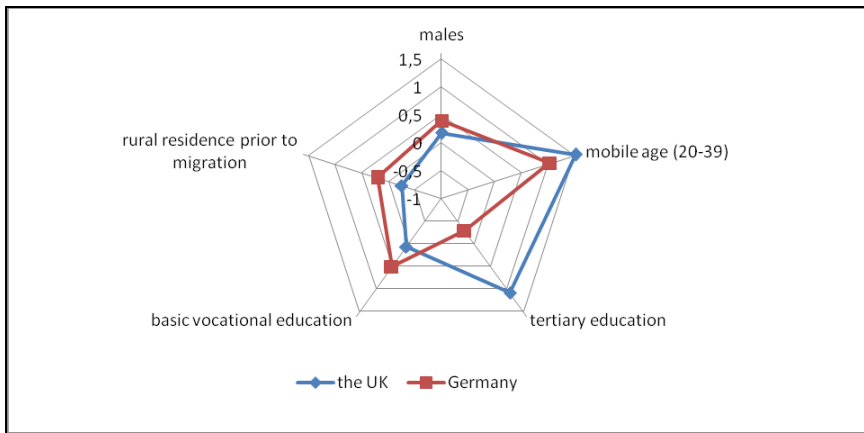
A striking feature of the migration of Poles to the UK is a large over-representation of people aged 20-39 which continued over the three sub-periods and was distinctly higher than in case of moves elsewhere. This surfeit of 20-24 year olds in particular reflects the attractiveness of the UK to Polish new labour entrants, discussed below. In contrast, Polish migrants aged 40-44 (and more so the older ones) were under-represented in the UK-bound flow.

The "otherness" of persons migrating to the UK is particularly noticeable with respect to education level. The British flow was characterised by a very strong over-representation of migrants with a university degree in the first two sub-periods and still (but much lower) over-representation in the last period. This was in sharp contrast to the general pattern where such migrants were under-represented or over-represented to a small degree. For those with a basic vocational education the UK was an "indifferent" whereas the pattern for those going elsewhere was a continuous moderate over-representation. The UK was also more successful than other destinations in attracting migrants from urban areas, although to a lesser extent in the crisis sub-period.

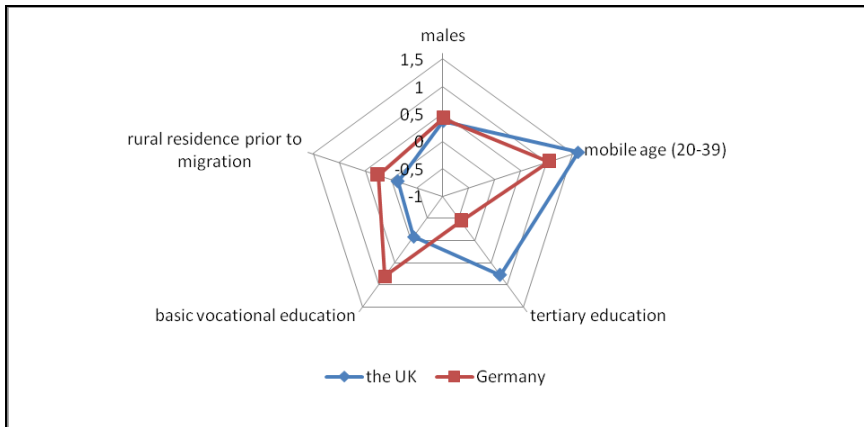
The selectivity of Polish migration flows is particularly noticeable when the UK and Germany - traditionally (until 2004) the main destination for Polish emigrants - are compared as destinations (Figure 1). The most striking contrasts were with respect to the level of migrants' education: unlike the UK, Germany strongly attracted persons with basic vocational education (high positive values of MSI) while those with a university degree were much less likely to go there (high negative values of MSI). In addition, the attraction of the UK for Polish migrants at the most mobile age (20-39) proved to be much stronger than in the case of Germany. Conversely, the UK was less attractive than Germany for residents of rural areas. Other significant characteristic of that selectivity is its stability over time in the both host countries, with apparent resistance to external shocks, such as the EU accession or post-2007 economic recession.

**Figure 1. MSI for selected migrant characteristics in the UK and Germany by period of migrant departure**

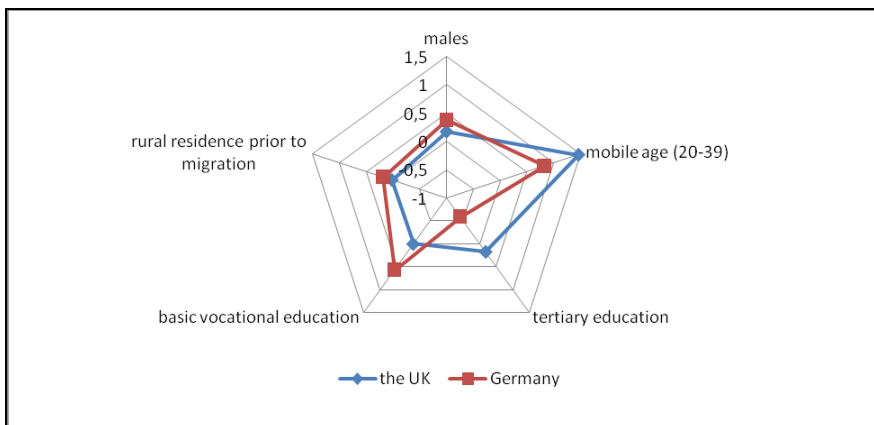
**a. 1999-2004\***



**b. 2004-2007\*\***



**c. 2007-2011\*\*\***



Notes: \* persons aged 15+ who left Poland before May 1st, 2004  
 \*\* persons aged 15+ who left Poland between May 1st, 2004 and December 31st, 2007  
 \*\*\* persons aged 15+ who left Poland between January 1st, 2008 and June 30th, 2011

Source: Labour Force Survey

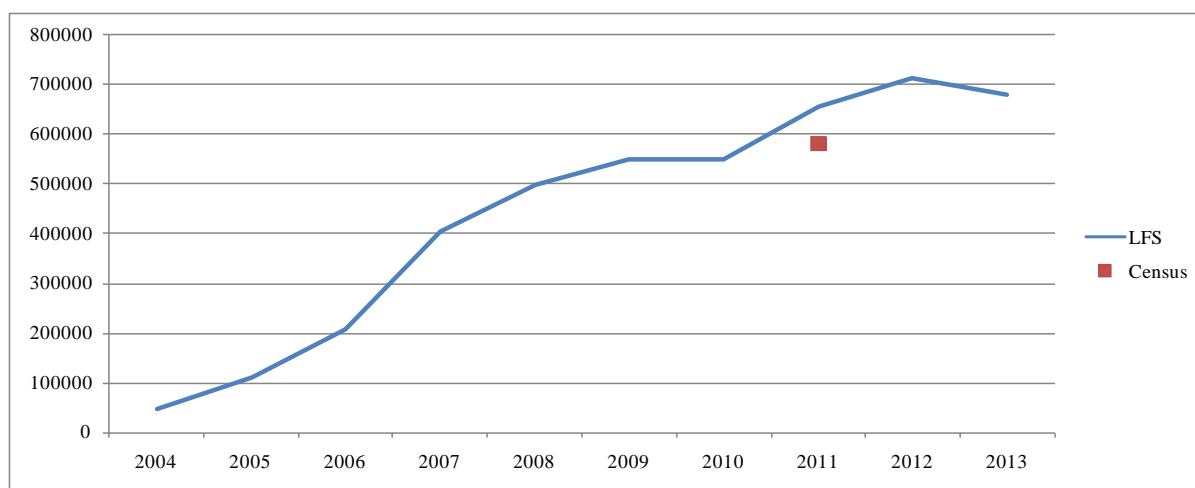
Therefore a stylized portrait, especially in the post-accession period, is of a Polish migrant heading for the UK who is a young male, highly educated and originating from an urban area. However, in the last

of three periods under consideration these characteristics became a little blurred as the nature of migrants evolved.

## 4.2 The view from the UK

Data on the stock of the Polish population by nationality after 2004 are available annually from the UK Labour Force Survey. They show a steady rise in number to 658 000 in 2011, similar to the Census figure for that year, and 679 000 in 2013 (Figure 2) . The results of the 2011 Census provide an opportunity of profiling the new Polish population in the UK. Two new questions in the 2011 Census, on year of arrival and nationality, allow analyses not hitherto possible. The statistics below refer to nationality, not country of birth. However, at the time of writing a detailed breakdown for those in Scotland is not available so that the data below refer to England and Wales only.

**Figure 2. The stock of the Polish population in the UK, according to Labour Force Survey (annual) and Census 2011**



Source: Office for National Statistics.

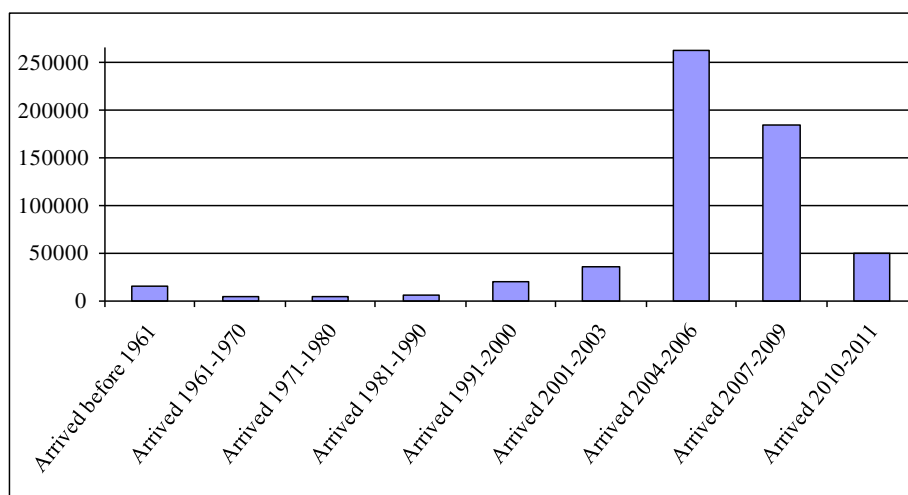
### 4.2.1 Age and Gender

The Polish population in the UK in 2011 is a youthful one: 57.3 per cent were aged 20-34 and only 4.6 per cent were aged 60 and over, the latter reflecting earlier inflows. Children (under 15) comprised 11.4 per cent of the total. Given the even split by gender and the number in the fertile age range, two thirds aged between 20 and 39, further family formation is likely.

### 4.2.2 Year of arrival

Only 8.2 per cent arrived before 2001, although many who had come during this time would have become naturalised. In the run-up to 2004 the number almost doubled. Over a quarter of a million (45.4 per cent of those present in 2011), arrived during 2004-06. In total, almost half a million (85.8 per cent) arrived from 2004 onwards (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Poles in the UK in 2011 by year of arrival**



Source: 2011 Census.

#### 4.2.3 Language

Over two thirds of those arriving between 2001 and 2011 ('new arrivals') said they could speak English well or very well, with only 3 per cent unable to speak the language. Five per cent said their main language was English.

#### 4.2.4 Education level

The new arrivals were well educated, although it is not possible to establish how many were degree holders. Those with UK degrees and some of those with Polish degrees placed themselves in the census Level 4 qualifications category for degree holders (22.6 per cent), while others, with Polish degrees, could opt to tick the 'Other qualifications' category (41.5 per cent) which includes non-degree qualifications. Only 14.3 per cent, particularly those aged 16-24 and 50 and over, had no qualifications.

#### 4.2.5 Housing tenure

The majority of new arrivals (75.6 per cent) were living in private rented or rent free housing. It is possible that many of the latter were in tied accommodation, especially in rural areas, where provision formed part of wage related benefits. Only 9.7 per cent were in social rented housing and the rest (14.7 per cent) were in owned or shared ownership.

#### 4.2.6 Economic activity

The bulk of the new arrivals were economically active in employment (379 287, 81.4 per cent), 12.1 per cent were inactive and only 3.5 per cent were unemployed. Of the inactive, three per cent were full time students. Of those in employment (56 931, 17.7 per cent) were self employed.



#### 4.2.7 Industry and Occupation

By 2011, the new arrivals had spread themselves widely across the main economic sectors (Table 6). The largest group (27 per cent) was in distribution and hospitality, followed by manufacturing (19.2 per cent), business services (16.5 per cent) and public administration, education and health (11.6 per cent). The transport and communication industry hosted almost 10 per cent, but only small numbers were in agriculture (1.3 per cent) and public utilities (1.4 per cent).

**Table 6. Occupation and industry by year of arrival in the UK for Poles who arrived 2001-2011**

	Number	Share (%)
<b>Occupation</b>		
All categories	390815	100,0
1. Managers, directors and senior officials	15512	4,0
2. Professional occupations	22778	5,8
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	19859	5,1
4. Administrative and secretarial occupations	21294	5,4
5. Skilled trades occupations	62084	15,9
6. Caring, leisure and other service occupations	30362	7,8
7. Sales and customer service occupations	18632	4,8
8. Process, plant and machine operatives	72724	18,6
9. Elementary occupations	127570	32,6
<b>Industry</b>		
All categories	390815	100,0
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5179	1,3
C Manufacturing	74923	19,2
B, D, E Energy and water	5332	1,4
F Construction	36347	9,3
G, I Distribution, hotels and restaurants	105512	27,0
H, J Transport and communication	38390	9,8
K, L, M, N Financial, Real Estate, Professional and Administrative activities	64658	16,5
O, P, Q Public administration, education and health	45237	11,6
R, S, T, U Other	15237	3,9

*Notes: B, D, E Energy and water' includes the SIC 07 groups 'B Mining and quarrying', 'D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply' and 'E Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities'.*

*G, I Distribution, hotels and restaurants' includes the SIC 07 groups 'G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles' and 'I Accommodation and food service activities'.*

*H, J Transport and communication' includes the SIC 07 groups 'H Transport and storage' and 'J Information and communication'.*

*K, L, M, N Financial, Real Estate, Professional and Administrative activities' includes the SIC 07 groups 'K Financial and insurance activities', 'L Real estate activities', 'M Professional, scientific and technical activities' and 'N Administrative and support service activities'.*

*O, P, Q Public administration, education and health' includes the SIC 07 groups 'O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security', 'P Education' and 'Q Human health and social work activities'.*

*Source: 2011 Census*

They were also spread throughout the occupational range, although mainly at the lower end of the skill spectrum. About a third were in elementary occupations, almost 19 per cent worked in manufacturing as process, plant and machine operatives, 15 per cent in managerial, professional and technical occupations, 16 per cent in skilled trades and 18 per cent in other services (leisure, caring, sales and administrative and secretarial).

These data supplement those from Poland, discussed above. What they reveal is a relatively newly arrived Polish population now showing evidence of settled maturity. It is a young, gender balanced cohort, engaging in family formation. It is well educated, with good English language capabilities. It engages mainly with the private rented housing sector but with one in seven already in some form of ownership. Over 80 per cent are in employment, with a substantial number in self employment. Industry and occupation distributions show a wide penetration of the UK economy, although still with a tendency to occupy relatively lower skilled jobs.

## **5. Why did the Poles come?**

On the surface it seems clear that simple economic motors - disadvantage in the homeland, opportunity in the new land – have driven Polish migration to the UK. In fact, this is only part of the story. The post-2004 migrations – and their cultural and political consequences – may also be seen as managed and negotiated by a range of agencies, each of which has a vested interest in maximising its returns from population movement. Above all, the flow resulted from a concurrence of political circumstances, socio-demographic forces in Poland and a pent up demand in the UK for low skilled labour.

### **5.1 The role of Government policy**

#### *5.1.1 Impact of the terms of accession treaty*

The EU accession treaty stipulated a transition period of up to seven years before free movement of people was allowed. Throughout the period of accession negotiations, the government of Poland had stressed the importance it attached to free movement of people (and labour) as a basic principle of European unity and a major benefit of membership. Moreover, the government insisted that the principle should be fully respected in order to protect Polish citizens against discriminatory practices in other EU countries (Kułakowski 2001; UKIE 2003). Such a position was widely popularised and largely supported by the mass media. Although this position was initially supported by some member states there was no consensus. Contrary to early expectations, only three countries of the EU 15 agreed to free their labour market instantly; among them the UK was by far the largest. France and Germany, considered in the pre-accession period as main targets for Polish migrants, quickly expressed their reluctance and decided to introduce a transition period; Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands, which at the time of negotiations were favourable to immediate and unlimited access to their labour markets, finally adopted a partial solution (UKIE 2005). Ultimately only the UK, Ireland and Sweden opened up their labour markets immediately so that the whole potential flow of emigrants from Poland, which otherwise could be dispersed among 15 countries, was now directed to only three of them. As easily the largest labour market the UK became the main target.

The position of the Polish government was based on a number of premises, which referred to “numerous analyses” predicting only moderate out-migration after accession (Kułakowski 2001; Rada Ministrów 2002). First, it was thought that after 2004 most of the increase in the population at working age would be owing to growing numbers of “immobile people” aged 45 or more. Second, in view of a supposedly decreasing demand for the low-skilled in the EU, the expectation was for a relatively low propensity to migrate on the part of Polish workers, who were described as in general poorly educated and unable to communicate in foreign languages (Ibid.). Third, the evidence of earlier

EU enlargements indicated that the economic integration of Poland with the EU would promote growth in the Polish economy and thus weaken emigration pressure. Fourth, the analysis predicted a steady increase of immigration into Poland from other EU countries, so flows would be two way. Fifth, studies suggested that for social rather than purely economic reasons decreasing numbers of Polish citizens were interested in working abroad (Ibid.). This last claim was based on the growing costs of supporting two homes by migrant workers (one in Poland and another in a foreign country), which could not be offset by the existing (in fact, narrowing) wage differences between Poland and EU 15 countries. Generally, the Polish government estimated an additional migration potential of only 100 000 persons in addition to what might have happened in the absence of an EU accession outflow. It thus argued that there was little danger of destabilising the EU labour market as a result of granting the citizens of Poland an instant access to that market.

After the accession treaty was agreed, the mass media and analysts, while presenting it as a success for the government, emphasized the importance of unrestricted access to the EU market, including its labour market, and funds for combating unemployment as “the most significant achievement from the point of view of the society” (Górska 2006: 184). As a result, during the early post-accession period the climate of enthusiasm in favour of the westward movement of people and exploration of employment opportunities in the old EU countries became a normality (Romejko 2009). Even before, but especially after May 2004, many Poles ventured a journey to EU 15 countries to “test” the freedom of movement and work. Apparently the test came off well. A public opinion poll in March 2006 revealed that the possibility to work freely in other member countries was perceived as the most positive effect of Poland’s EU membership (CBOS 2006a). However, the perception stemmed mainly from a two-year long experience of unlimited access to the UK<sup>4</sup>. Hence, a positive association of the benefits of movement with the UK labour market became synonymous.

### *5.1.2 Policy in the UK*

In the UK, the migrations from 2004 followed several years of relatively permissive labour immigration policies by the Labour government which came into power in 1997. From the late 1990s, with backing from several ministries, notably including the Treasury, a more liberal approach to labour migration, particularly among the skilled and highly skilled, was followed. A series of schemes was either expanded (Seasonal Agricultural Workers, Working Holiday Makers) or instituted (Sectors Based Scheme, Highly Skilled Manpower). Opening up to the accession states was perceived as being sound from the perspective of foreign policy as well as a solution to increasingly publicised shortages of both skilled (especially in construction) and lower skilled labour (especially in agriculture and hospitality). When the UK made its initial decision it was not known that most other EU 15 states would not open their borders too. Furthermore, an econometric study carried out for the Home Office and written before the policies of the other EU15 countries were known forecast a net annual immigration from the accession states of some 12-15 000 during the first decade (Dustmann, 2003). Although it was assumed that substantial numbers might come, it was also assumed that most would return home in due course. Hence, in both countries forecasts of the scale of migration were wide of the mark.

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<sup>4</sup> On journeys to and life in the UK of Polish citizens in early months after the accession, see for instance articles published in *Dziennik Polski* (London) by Bugajski (2004), Garapich & Foczpański (2004), Śpiwok (2005), Wiśniowska (2006) and others.

## 5.2 Major causes of emigration from Poland to the UK

Most explanations of the subsequent migration are based on labour market and other economic differences between the two countries. Various regression analyses have shown migration flows to be positively related to variations in wage rates, unemployment and economic growth (see, for example, Drinkwater et al, 2006; Pollard et al., 2008; Szwabe, n.d.). Most emphasis is put on conditions in Poland, emphasising the push effects of low wage rates, youth unemployment and lack of opportunities, especially for women, resulting from the post-Communist restructuring of the Polish economy. However, it is not just aggregate wage rates which affect decisions to move. Average monthly net wages in Poland and the UK vary by sector: in construction and hospitality for example the differential was threefold in one study (Cizkowicz et al., 2007). The series of surveys of Polish immigrants carried out in the UK consistently found that financial reasons, lack of opportunities in Poland and the desire for personal and professional development were key factors in decisions to migrate. Surveys of return migrants in Poland (IIBR, 2006, quoted in Cizkowicz et al., 2007; CBOS, 2006b) uncover a similar situation, with discrepancies in earnings level the primary determinant of the decision to move to the UK, even at the minimum UK wage, even among well educated Poles. Cizkowicz et al. (2007) argue that job compatibility with the migrant's education was not a prerequisite for the decision to migrate, better pay being more important. What was perceived as good pay was strongly positively correlated with job satisfaction even if the job did not require the use of the skills and qualifications held. Furthermore, a body of primarily qualitative research has emerged which suggests a complexity of noneconomic motivations for movement (Burrell, 2010; Luthra et al., 2014).

A great wave of Polish citizens migrating to the UK after Poland's accession to the EU might be perceived a paradox, at least when it comes to looking at its root causes in the home country. It took place at a time of very fast economic growth, job creation, wage rise and declining unemployment in Poland (Fihel et al. 2007). This may suggest that the causes on the part of the receiving country, the "pull factors" might have been more powerful than the "stick factors" in Poland that might discourage emigration. Alternatively, "push factors" influencing decisions whether or not to emigrate might have been at play. Below we analyse the determinants of recent Poland to the UK migration in their complexity and interdependency.

### 5.2.1 Structural demographic and economic factors

On the eve of Poland's accession to the EU several structural factors favoured out-migration, some of them specifically to the UK.

#### *Entry of baby-boomers to Poland's labour market.*

The period around the date of accession to the EU coincided with increasing numbers of new labour market entrants. Assuming that the average age of entry was around 23 years, between 2002 and 2007 the Polish labour market had to face the arrival of people born in 1979-1984. In that period the number of births (4.3 million) was 322 000 higher than in the preceding six years and 573 000 higher than in the following six years. Moreover, those baby-boomers were as a rule better educated and their occupational aspirations were higher than the general economically active population<sup>5</sup>. At that time entry of young people into the labour market in Poland was difficult owing to very high

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<sup>5</sup> All data in this paragraph were derived from the Polish CSO statistics .

unemployment (41 per cent of those aged under 25 were unemployed in 2004). Given that the only accessible and absorptive labour market was the UK (and to lesser extent Ireland) it is not surprising that many of the baby-boomers of 1979 to 1984 were Britain bound.

The structure of the labour force was changing too. First, in the years preceding and following 2000 the working age population was growing fast, with the number of people entering retirement age declining and of those entering working age increasing. Between 2000 and 2005 the share of population aged 25-59 rose from 47.1 to 50.1 per cent<sup>6</sup>, exerting a significant supply pressure on the national labour market, which in some of its segments struggled with over-employment inherited from the communist past.

Secondly, the legacy of a large economically redundant population in relatively backward and predominantly rural areas led to a sizeable potential for current and future emigration. For these people the transition to a market economy after 1989 offered few viable employment opportunities outside the major urban areas (Okólski 2012). Until accession, the realisation of this potential flow was slow because of its high dependence on relatively few social contacts in receiving countries and reliance on being able to find jobs in the shadow economies of EU 15 countries. Therefore, the accession-related freedom of population movement removed a major obstacle to a massive outflow of that superfluous labour force.

Thirdly, the opening up of the huge labour market of the UK (approximately twice as big as the Polish) on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 enlarged the space where Polish citizens could freely seek employment opportunities, without having to depend on their social capital and ensuing migration networks. It is therefore plausible to argue that structurally Poland was a country with a great migration potential; what was less certain was how big was the capacity in the UK to absorb new migrant workers.

Viewed by a typical economically active person in 2004 Poland's economic situation seemed much less favourable than that of the UK, which was generally richer and its institutions, including employment, public health care, social security and welfare, more highly developed. Life in the UK was perceived to be easier and of higher quality. In particular, the prospects of having a job substantially differed. In 2004 the unemployment rate in the UK stood at 4.8 per cent, while in Poland it was 19.5 per cent. The number of vacancies in 2004 was around 600 000 in the UK and only 220 000 in Poland, which translated into 2.5 unemployed persons per vacancy in Britain and 13.5 in Poland. The difference with respect to job availability did not change much in the next two to three years<sup>7</sup>.

Additionally, pay in the UK was much higher than in Poland. The minimum monthly wage expressed in US\$ using purchasing power parity (PPP) in the UK was 1507 whereas in Poland it was 628 (ILO 2010). A McDonald's cashier or crew member earned an hourly wage rate 5.5 times higher in the former. Even accounting for differences in price levels, the gap was still significant: a British employee of McDonald's could buy 2.11 Big Macs for his/her hourly wage while a Polish employee had to make do with less than one (Ashenfelter, Jurajda 2001).

Although the wage differentials diminished after Poland's accession to the EU, Polish wages still lagged behind British ones. The difference in an annual wage per full-time equivalent dependent

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<sup>6</sup> According to the UN estimate that proportion was to rise from 46.1% in 1990 to 51.2% in 2015 whereas the total population size was to remain stable.

<sup>7</sup> All data in this paragraph were derived from national statistics of the respective countries.

employee (expressed in US\$ using PPP) was 25 776 (57.5 per cent) in 2004 in favour of the UK and 24 674 (55.2 per cent) in 2011 (OECD 2014). Also compensation costs of labour in manufacturing in the UK differed substantially from the respective costs in Poland. In nominal terms (expressed in US\$), in 2011 it was 30.77 in the former country and 8.83 in the latter, or 22.00 and 5.34 if social insurance expenditures, labour-related taxes and directly-paid benefits<sup>8</sup> were excluded (BLS 2012) .

### *5.2.1 Educational boom in Poland and improved human capital endowment of migrants*

Contrary to the argument of the Polish government set forth during pre-accession negotiations with the EU, the level of education and ability to communicate in foreign languages was not low and in the immediate pre- and post-accession period the situation greatly improved. In 2002 only 9.9 per cent of Poland's population aged 13+ were university graduates but 41.4 per cent had completed at least secondary education. Among those aged 25-29 and 30-34, 20.5 and 16.2 per cent respectively had obtained a university degree. In both these groups the share of people whose education was at least secondary exceeded 50 per cent. Moreover, the transition period witnessed a great educational boom, especially among the population of rural areas. Overall, the proportion of 19-24 year olds in higher education rose from 12.9 per cent in 1990/1 to 40.7 per cent in 2000/01 and 48.7 per cent in 2013/14. By 2011, 36.1 per cent of 25-29-year olds and 32.9 per cent of 30-34-year olds held a university degree. In these two groups as a whole, two-third of people had completed at least secondary education. All this means that at the time of accession a high quality labour force was available and one which continued to improve<sup>9</sup>.

Parallel to this boom, a significant improvement occurred with regard to the incidence of learning and knowledge of foreign languages, especially English and German. While in 1992/93 34.2 per cent of pupils in primary and secondary schools were learning these two languages, of which 18.2 per cent were learning English, in 2004/05 99.5 per cent were learning the two languages, 77.1 per cent of them learning English (MEN 2005). The knowledge of English increased from 9 per cent of the adult population in 1997 to 17 per cent in 2004 and 30 per cent in 2012, by which time 77 per cent of those aged 18-24 could communicate in English (CBOS 2012). In a 2012 study of proficiency of English in more than 50 countries, Poland was given a "high knowledge" mark (together with Austria, Belgium, Germany and Hungary), just behind a "very high knowledge" which was attributed to four Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands (Gazeta.pl 2012). These changes transformed and upgraded the human capital of Polish youth and often stimulated professional aspirations and life strategies that could not be fulfilled in Poland but required further studies or work in other countries.

The emergence and rapid growth of a middle class after 1989 was accompanied by a growing demand for an international education. Growing familiarity with the English language increased the attractiveness of UK universities and colleges (Andrejuk 2013; Szewczyk 2012). Why was Britain so attractive for Polish students? First, British universities were highly regarded and had well developed admission programmes for foreign students. In addition, accession to the EU meant that Polish students acquired the same conditions as the British with regard to tuition rates and access to stipends. Furthermore, large international communities of students and teachers and the relatively high degree of tolerance of British society to foreigners were also important. Second, there was a high incidence of secondary school graduates in Poland proficient in the English language. An increasing number of

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<sup>8</sup> Directly-paid benefits are primarily pay for leave time, bonuses and pay in kind.

<sup>9</sup> All data in this and preceding paragraph were derived from the Polish CSO statistics .

them attended Polish schools offering an International Baccalaureate programme, recognised in the UK. Finally, the openness of the UK labour market to Polish citizens enabled a large number of young but less well-off Poles to initiate, continue or resume education there along with being employed. Between 2004/05 and 2012/13 approximately 30 000 Poles were admitted to universities in the UK (HESA 2014). This figure may seem low when compared to the total number of Polish residents, but thanks to the internationally highly-valued university degrees and relatively easy access to jobs in the primary labour markets all around Europe, in transnational corporations and European institutions, those persons were likely to be members of the elite among the Polish post-accession migrants. Hence, “Studying in the UK constitutes one of stages on the path of further professional mobility” (Andrejuk 2013: 272). She argues that those students’ experiences and aspirations “point to their significant role in the creation and development of a new occupational class of pan-European mobile professionals” (274).

### *5.2.2 Other factors*

There was not only an aspiration to emigrate. Practical improvements in travel eased the friction of distance for those moving. The increased availability of transport means and routes, with the wide availability of regular coach lines and cheap airlines, made it easier to come and go. Other improvements that made the post-accession migration of Poles easier, more effective and executed at lesser costs included the wide use of plastic money cards, mobile phones and the internet.

Perceptions also shifted. Over several months after May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 journeys from various parts of Poland to London and other cities of the UK became iconic in the Polish media. They reported, for instance, that in June coaches from Poland arrived at Victoria Station every 10 minutes. Although many migrants failed and returned (or ended in the streets), the prevalent message sent to relatives and friends in Poland was of success. The narratives about the migration of Poles to the UK in those early post-accession months recalled tales about the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1890s.

Such mystification culminated in *The Londoners* (*Londyńcy*), a TV drama series, which had its debut on the main public television channel in Poland in October 2008. It was watched on average by more than three million people. Although particular episodes focused on hardships, inter-personal conflicts and even criminality, the series painted life in London as colourful and manageable for all, irrespective of their social background and past experience.

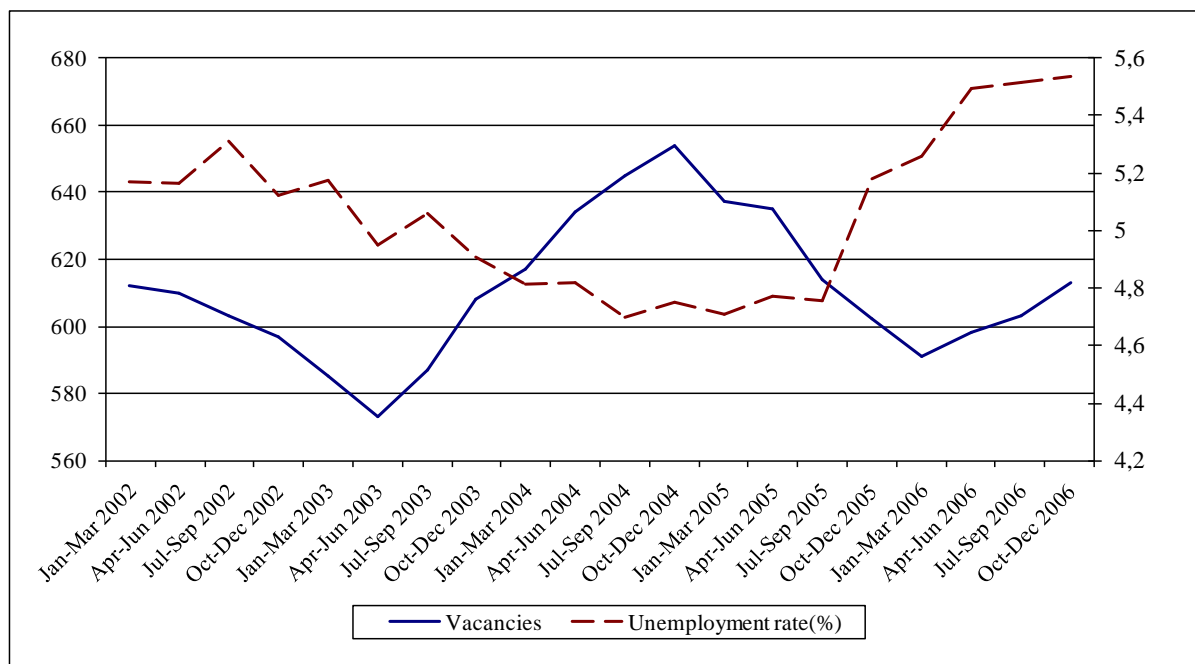
Within a relatively short time Britain, and especially London, became well known to Polish public opinion, better than any other place outside Poland, and it became clear that in practically every corner of Poland some persons were missing because of migration to the UK. The practical side of this knowledge included information about employment opportunities and living conditions and access to quickly expanding Polish-British social networks that paved the way for a well-thought, steady and regular movement of people between the two countries.

## **5.3 Labour demand in the UK**

What has received less attention in the literature is where the jobs taken by migrants came from and how the demand for labour by UK employers was activated. For most commercial employers, recruitment and mobility decisions and processes are determined by the need to maximise profitability, often involving highly flexible work arrangements such as the need to bring in additional workers to

meet peaks of service, product and process demand. Circumstances vary between sectors and by type of employer because of the nature of each organisation's predominant activities. Each industry has its own distinguishing characteristics in size, skill mix and training requirements, geographical spread of operations, ownership, nature of service or product and trends in product/service demand, all of which affect recruitment of migrant labour. Hence, the nature of business operations underlies the ability of the UK labour market to attract and offer employment to Poles and other incomers.

**Figure 4. United Kingdom vacancies (thousands) and unemployment rate (%), 2002 - 2006**



Source: Labour Force Survey

It is clear that in the years both before and after 2004 large numbers of Poles and other A8 citizens found jobs. A survey in Britain among the UK citizens and members of 25 most numerous immigrant nations revealed enormously high employment (rank 3-4) and low inactivity (rank 24-25) among Polish migrants, accompanied by very high work load per week (rank 2) (IPPR 2007). In these circumstances a shift in the number of job vacancies might have been expected. In fact, as Figure 4 shows, there was little change in recorded vacancies between 2001 and 2008. Only after 2008 did the number of vacancies fall. There is no evidence of a rise in vacancies before 2004 or a fall afterwards, both of which might have been expected if there was an unfilled demand which the new migrants were able to satisfy. Furthermore, the industry sectors with the most vacancies were not necessarily those into which A8 migrants moved. However, it is likely that many (most?) vacancies were not registered. Unemployment data show a similar pattern. There was little change in overall numbers of unemployed before and after 2004. It thus appears that A8 immigrants were absorbed into the labour market with little effect on the two major indicators.



### *5.3.1 Self employment*

One reason for the lack of effect on vacancies and unemployment was self employment. Many immigrants entered into self employment on arrival in the UK, a process already occurring before 2004. The 1993 EU Associate Members Agreement gave the accession countries the right to establish businesses in EU 15 states. By the turn of the century Polish businesses were already being set up in the UK, in low income businesses such as window cleaning as well as more skilled trades (Anderson et al., 2006) although how many were employed in them is uncertain. Self employment was especially common among A8 immigrants working in construction before 2004, accounting for 48 per cent of the total in the sector. Two thirds of the self employed were in skilled trades (the stereotypical ‘Polish plumber’). They were able to find work because of a chronic shortage of skilled building trade workers, possibly a consequence of government changes to the industrial training system in the 1980s and 1990s which resulted in fewer young people entering apprenticeships (Holmes, 2010).

For many self employed, ability in the English language, enabling them to cope with the necessary legal and bureaucratic complexities, was a key to business establishment (Helinska-Hughes et al., n.d.). However, these complexities may not themselves have been barriers, given migrants’ experiences of the regulatory barriers and bureaucracy in Poland. Not surprisingly, entrepreneurs initially occupied the enclave economy. In their study of Polish entrepreneurs in Scotland, Helinska-Hughes et al. (n.d.) found that initially businesses tended to be in the enclave economy, relying on personal resources owing to lack of access to formal sources of finance and advice. They rapidly broadened out from a Polish clientele, especially into construction, transport and small food and personal service outlets and IT, often becoming more localised with time into the whole community (Harris 2012). Similarly, many highly skilled Poles in London, working in jobs that maximised their skills and qualifications, were in services for the Polish community (Iglicka, 2008). Pollard et al (2008) quote a British-Polish Chamber of Commerce estimate that, as of 2008, 40 000 Polish entrepreneurs had set up business in UK. Self employment seems to have been a vehicle for longer term stay.

### *5.3.2 Sectoral demand*

In the years leading to 2004, shortages of low skilled labour were already manifest although, as it transpired, many were not registered with the government vacancy service. In one study of the recruitment of A8 citizens, carried out on the eve of accession, all employers surveyed reported recruitment difficulties (Anderson et al., 2006). This was especially the case for low skilled and some more skilled positions in agriculture, hospitality and construction. A large majority of employers had tried to recruit domestic workers and raised pay and non-wage benefits but still had shortages. However, no one factor underlay recruitment difficulties, depending on the kinds of jobs available in each sector: factors included geographical location, prevalence of self employment and degree of informality. One key finding, to be repeated in several other studies in the ensuing years, was that two thirds of employers in agriculture and food processing and 40 per cent in hospitality suggested that UK workers were difficult to recruit because the work was physically demanding and ‘not glamorous’ (Anderson et al., 2006; Rogaly, 2006; McCollum and Findlay, 2011; Migration Advisory Committee, 2014).

A key sector for the employment of Poles and other Eastern Europeans was agriculture and related food processing (‘agribusiness’) as WRS data show. The government Migration Advisory

Committee (MAC) and several other reports into seasonal work in agriculture pointed to the growing trend towards greater capital investment and intensification in the sector. However, it appears that the availability of A8 migrants in 2004 may have halted the decline in employment in an industry where workers were being substituted by labour – saving capital investment so that the effect of the new workers was to slow investment as cheaper labour became available<sup>10</sup>. In their submissions to the MAC most employers complained of the continuing impossibility of recruiting British workers so that foreign workers in the industry were not displacing domestic ones. There was a trend in the industry towards vertical integration in which producers increasingly engage in PPP (Picking, plucking and packing) activities, while developing closer associations with the supermarkets. The latter seek to derive ever greater value from producers while insisting on a highly flexible system ‘just in time’ of product delivery (Rogaly, 2006). Accompanying these trends has been a declining core, full time labour force and a burgeoning need for temporary workers deployed in a highly flexible fashion, necessitating the recruitment of workers who would be reliable, flexible and compliant. Mc Collum and Findlay (2011) surveyed 61 employers and labour providers in hospitality and food production and processing in urban and rural areas of England and Scotland. They found that in some more rural areas migrants formed the core as well as temporary workforce in food production and processing. It has also been suggested that the provision of tied accommodation, in some rural areas, usually in the form of caravans and huts, helps recruit and retain migrant workers (Jentsche et al. 2007 – quoted in Trevena 2009).

Vacancies also existed in the hospitality industry where employers claimed that prior to 2004 most hotels were understaffed (Mc Collum and Findlay 2011). Initially employed in both core and temporary ‘back office’ jobs, Poles and others were more likely than domestic workers to see hospitality as a career and increasingly to take on more visible and senior roles. This was particularly the case for those with higher education: with mastery of the English language, talent emerged as natural skills and education came through. For those with careers developing, upward social mobility stabilised the population leading to longer stays and even settlement.

### *5.3.3 Role of agencies*

An essential link between employers and migrant workers was provided by labour contracting agencies which recruited and placed employees. The substantial presence of Poles in the administrative and service sector referred to earlier is predominantly a reflection of their registration with employment agencies which were then recorded as their employers and from where they were able to take up temporary posts in a range of occupations across industries.

In agribusiness there was a direct connection between supermarket practices and the use of agency gang workers (Rogaly, 2006). Only agencies, through the gangmasters licensing system, could provide the flexibility necessary when fine tuning of the work place regime was needed, perhaps in response to supermarket demands associated with a specific marketing initiative. However, part of that flexibility is the frequent lack of enforcement of the national minimum wage and of workplace regulations (Migration Advisory Committee, 2014). Agencies operated in other ways. Garapich (2008) points out that many of them were initially low key, back door, one person businesses within the migrant community, for example, helping others fill forms and follow procedures, often easing the passage from the grey economy into a formal one. Pooling of resources was common, including

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<sup>10</sup> We are indebted to Professor Alan Manning of the London School of Economics for this insight.

sharing of accommodation and finding jobs (Schneider and Holman, 2009). Informal networks were important in the hospitality sector, being an inexpensive, quick and stress free way for employers to recruit good quality workers (Mc Collum and Findlay, 2011). Latterly networks developed into a proliferation of websites and internet radio stations geared to helping migrants as well as organising events such as one day job fairs.

## **Conclusions**

### *Statistical summary*

Using the available statistical evidence we have compiled as comprehensive a picture as possible of the scale and nature of the new Polish migration to the UK.

Sources from the two countries are in broad agreement on the stocks of Poles in the UK at various times. The UK census recorded 676 000 Polish born in 2011. LFS data show a steady rise in the annual stock to 658 000 in 2011, not far short of the Census figure for that year, and to 679 000 in 2013. Meanwhile, Polish LFS and census statistics indicate that by December 2012 an estimated 637 000 had stayed in the UK for more than 3 months.

Estimates of the flow vary because the definitions and counting systems used present differing pictures. By the time of its demise in April 2011, the WRS had registered 705 890 Poles. Allowing for those who should have registered but did not, it may be estimated that about 920 000 employees came in. To these must be added the self employed, giving a total of about 1.14 million by 2011. This compares with one million NINOs issued to Poles by 2011 and 1.164 million by 2013. What we do not know is how many, having registered, came to the UK and returned on more than one occasion. Survey evidence suggests the number may not have been trivial. Furthermore, these two sources omit children aged under 15 who comprised more than one in ten Polish born in England and Wales in the 2011 UK census.

Data from both countries on the characteristics of Poles coming to the UK suggest an evolving stream. Polish statistics suggest a more 'elite' flow to the UK than to other countries. The UK census pictures a maturing settled population, still tending to occupy relatively lower skilled jobs but showing evidence of upward social mobility.

### *Towards an explanation*

In many respects the movement between Poland and the UK followed a common pattern in Western Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Examples include Italians to Switzerland in the 1950s and 60s, Turks and Yugoslavs to Germany and Portuguese to the Netherlands in the 1960s and 70s. Initial flows of labour were transformed into settled communities which continue to this day. What was to some extent different from the moves discussed here is the more direct role of employers in the initial recruitment in these older flows and the stronger role then played by economic growth in a Europe still recovering from the Second World War.

In addressing the question put forward in this paper title, we consciously focused on underlying structural factors, and followed an approach that was in contrast to much of the existing research dealing mainly with the individual strategies of migrants. We sought general explanations rather than inquiring into the range of observed diversity. Unlike several other authors who

investigated the causes of the post-accession migration from the new EU member states of Central and Eastern Europe, including migration of Poles to the UK (e.g. Burrell 2006, 2010; Cook et al. 2011; Galasińska, Kozłowska 2009; Luthra et al. 2014; Ryan et al. 2009), we argue that the principal motive (and at the same time the guiding premise of predominant strategies) of Polish emigrants was gainful employment in the UK. This is why it was so important for the post-accession flow of arriving Poles that the UK labour market was accessible to them instantly and unconditionally.

Our position is supported by evidence from the UK census and elsewhere (IPPR, 2007) that, compared with other nationalities, Poles in the UK had high levels of employment and low levels of inactivity. Therefore we argue that personal motives such as education enhancement, woman liberation/emancipation, adventure or curiosity were not the main driving force of Polish migrant strategies<sup>11</sup>. In particular, the paradigm of “fluid migration” (Engbersen 2012) whose central part was young and adventurous “vagabond” acting, with no clear strategy and following a philosophy of “intentional unpredictability” (Eade et al., 2007), certainly did not reflect the behaviours of a large majority of Poles moving to the UK.

It has been demonstrated in the foregoing analysis that answering the question included in the title of this paper is not an easy task. Any question that asks “why” inevitably seeks a helping hand in theory. Unfortunately, the recent migration of Poles to Britain revealed so many significant determinants involving the interplay of a wide variety of factors that it hardly fits any theoretical framework applied to analyses of current intra-European population movements. In particular, the migration of Poles has not resulted from any predominant single cause, such as wage differentials, recruitment of labour, collective household strategies (those in line with the New Economics of Labour Migration postulate) or migration networks. Nor could it be satisfactorily explained by such all-embracing but dangerously vague concepts as “pull and push” theory as manifest in the strikingly different pattern of migration to Germany and the most recent movement to the UK. This difference is of particular relevance as a warning signal of the dangers in applying that explanatory framework to current post-accession emigration. Indeed, the complexity and diversity of underlying causes have been supported by a number of empirical studies, which point to a variety of motives and strategies followed by Polish post-accession migrants, both among those heading for a specific country (like the UK) or in a comparative international scope (Eade et al. 2007; Grabowska-Lusińska & Okólski 2009; Kaczmarczyk 2008; Krings et al. 2013; Luthra et al. 2014; White 2011, 2013).

We are in agreement with those who argue that the phenomenon of mass Polish post-accession migration (and, consequently, also the movement to the UK) over an unprecedented short time (compared to other voluntary movements of population) needs a new approach (and explanatory framework) since the movement represents a novelty in an entirely new global environment and historical context (Engbersen et al. 2010; Favell 2008; Luthra et al. 2014). It might be epitomised by means of three complementary and mutually indispensable adjectives: right people in right place under right circumstances.

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<sup>11</sup> Luthra and co-authors (2014) extend that list of “non-economic motivation of the new EU migrants” by including migration for love or adventure (Favell 2011), migration for self-development (Cook et al. 2011), migration realizing family goals (Ryan 2010), migration maximizing friendship networks (Conradson, Latham 2005), migration for lifestyle improvement (Benson, O’Reilly 2009; Crowley-Henry 2010) and even (in case of young people for “seeking a lark” (Galasińska, Kozłowska 2009).

Let us begin with the “right people”. The concept of “right people” embraces the surplus (reinforced by the “boom” of young labour market entrants/higher school graduates) and structural mismatches of labour in Poland, post-communist anomy (migration as one of the viable strategies to overcome that, similar to migration as a response to social disorder accompanying rapid urbanization, as described by Thomas and Znaniecki), high educational and cultural competence/maturity (including widespread knowledge of the English language) and awareness of freedoms and entitlements stemming from “European citizenship”. Furthermore, at least since 1939 Poles had been generally favourably regarded by the British.

The “right place” was the UK labour market, although it was not immediately apparent at the time. The economy was growing rapidly but there was a reluctance among domestic workers to undertake many of the jobs available at the wage rates on offer. Migrant workers willing to work for minimum (or less) wages allowed employers to avoid capital investment that would have increased productivity in, for example, food processing. In service provision, such as hospitality, migrants provided flexibility in working practices that reduced costs. In addition, public attitudes towards the inflow of people from new EU member states were generally favourable. Coincidental with this was the “compression” of the physical distance between Poland and the UK through a rapid development of non-costly and effective transport, communication and information facilities between the two countries. This made it possible to achieve the high levels of flexibility required by both employers and migrants.

Finally, by the “right circumstances” we mean the juncture of Poland’s accession to the EU with the decision taken by the UK government to grant immediate access to the British labour market. That other countries did not follow suit meant the lack of any strong competition from other receiving countries.

It was the coincidence of these three circumstances – a perfect migration storm – that allowed a wider set of personal reasons to come into play.

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