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## Why the Isles, why the continent? Reasons for choosing particular countries of emigration among post-EU accession migrants from Poland

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# CMR Working Papers

88/146

**DOMINIKA PSZCZÓŁKOWSKA**

## **Why the Isles, why the continent? – reasons for choosing particular countries of emigration among post-EU accession migrants from Poland?**

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## **Abstract**

After Poland joined the EU in 2004, Polish migration routes changed dramatically. The United Kingdom replaced Germany as the preferred destination. Some completely new countries – such as Ireland – appeared on the map of Polish migrations. Much research has been devoted to this great movement, but there is still no complete answer to the question why particular migrants choose particular destinations, for example why young and educated Poles head for Ireland, but very infrequently for the Netherlands. The purpose of this article is to review existing knowledge on post-accession migration from the perspective of country choice. Initially, legal reasons were emphasized in the literature. Some scholars assumed that the whole very large difference between predicted and actual migrant inflows by country was due to the so called diversion effect, or the redirecting of Central and Eastern European migrants from Germany to the UK and Ireland due to the earlier opening of these labour markets. An even larger body of research underlines economic reasons: the availability of jobs and high wages that attracted migrants. More recently several studies painted a more complex picture, in which many Poles in the UK and Ireland migrated for cultural reasons, such as education, language acquisition or a different lifestyle. Researchers do not agree on the influence of social factors, particularly migrant networks, on migrants' choice of destination.

**Key words:** EU, Poland, post-accession migration, destination choice, diversion effect

## Streszczenie

Po wejściu Polski do UE w 2004 r. szlaki migracji Polaków zasadniczo się zmieniły. Zjednoczone Królestwo zastąpiło Niemcy jako preferowany kraj docelowy. Na mapie polskich migracji pojawiły się całkiem nowe kraje np. Irlandia. Tej wielkiej fali migracji poświęcono już wiele badań, lecz nadal nie znamy pełnej odpowiedzi na pytanie dlaczego konkretni migranci wybierają konkretne kraje docelowe np. dlaczego młodzi i wykształceni Polacy kierują się często do Irlandii, a bardzo rzadko do Holandii. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przegląd istniejącej wiedzy o migracjach poakcesyjnych z perspektywy powodów wyboru kraju docelowego. Początkowo w literaturze podkreślane były powody natury prawnej. Niektórzy badacze przyjmowali, że cała bardzo znacząca różnica między prognozowanymi a rzeczywistymi liczbami migrantów w poszczególnych krajach wynikała z tzw. diversion effect, czyli przekierowania środkowoeuropejskich migrantów z Niemiec do Wielkiej Brytanii i Irlandii na skutek wcześniejszego otwarcia tamtejszych rynków pracy. Jeszcze więcej publikacji wskazuje na powody natury ekonomicznej przyciągające migrantów: dostępność miejsc pracy i wysokie zarobki. W ostatnich latach kilka badań nakreśliło bardziej złożony obraz sytuacji, zgodnie z którym wielu Polaków wyemigrowało do Zjednoczonego Królestwa i Irlandii ze względów kulturowych, takich jak edukacja, chęć nauki języka lub inny styl życia. Badacze nie są zgodni co do wpływu czynników społecznych, w szczególności sieci migranckich, na wybór kraju docelowego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** UE, Polska, migracje poakcesyjne, wybór kraju docelowego, przekierowanie

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Main destinations for Polish migrants**

Poles have been migrating for centuries, and the country has witnessed several large waves of emigration due to economic or political reasons. In the two decades prior to Poland's accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004, circular or incomplete migration was a typical phenomenon (Okólski 2001 a,b), partly due to bi-lateral agreements between Germany and Poland. Poles – frequently middle-aged men from smaller towns and villages – worked in Germany or other European countries for several weeks or months, then returned to their homes, only to undertake a similar trip again after a short period.

Poland's entrance into the EU and the full opening of the British and Irish (as well as Swedish) labour markets to Polish and other A8 workers proved to be a turning point. The most preferred destinations of Polish migrants changed almost overnight. Before EU accession, Poles most often departed for Germany and the USA. According to the Polish Central Statistical Office, in 2002 there were 294,000 Polish migrants in Germany and only 24,000 in the United Kingdom. After 2004 the UK quickly overtook Germany as the main destination, although the numbers for Germany were also rising. By 2006 there were 580,000 Polish migrants in the UK and 450,000 in Germany (GUS 2013). Currently the numbers - according to Polish statistics - are 642,000 for the UK and 560,000 for Germany (GUS 2014). British statistics give a higher number of Poles in the country (730,000 – ONS 2014) and may be more accurate due to the fact that Polish statistics do not capture well whole households which have left.

Ireland, which before accession practically did not figure on the map of Polish migrations (only 2,000 Polish migrants in 2002) quickly became the #3 destination. This was particularly striking given the moderate size of the country. In the record year 2007 the number of Polish migrants on the Emerald Isle reached 200,000, before dropping to 118,000 in 2012 due to the economic crisis. The list of destination countries for Polish migrants also became more diverse. Countries previously not so popular, such as the Netherlands, Spain or Iceland received significant numbers of Poles.

Hundreds of studies have been devoted to this new migration wave, particularly to the UK and Ireland. However, only limited in-depth thought has been given to the question of why particular migrants choose particular countries as their destination. The question is all the more valid since the demographic profiles of migrants in various countries differ significantly in terms of age, education and size of town of origin. Polish migrants to the UK and Ireland

stand out from their compatriots in other European countries in several ways. They are younger, better educated and more often come from larger cities in Poland. The average age of a post-accession Polish migrant to the UK or Ireland (based on data from 2004-06) did not exceed 28 years old, in Germany or Italy – seven year more (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009: 111). The differences in level of education were even more striking. The percentage of persons with tertiary education among Poles in Ireland and the UK was the highest (respectively 26% and 22,5%), whereas the same number for Germany was 6,1% and for the Netherlands, which got the least educated Poles, it was only 4% (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009: 113). Poland's membership in the EU did not significantly change these percentages for the UK and Germany: there were more migrants, but their average level of education remained nearly the same as before accession, when Poles in the UK were also on average much better educated than those in Germany. This sorting of Polish migrants is also in line with world trends. Anglo-Saxon countries generally attract more educated migrants than countries of continental Europe (compare Geis, Uebelmesser, Werding 2008).

The aim of this article is to review existing knowledge about the motives of post-accession Polish migrants for emigrating, and especially for choosing particular destinations. It is most probable that these reasons were varied depending on the demographic profiles of migrants and the destinations they chose, for example that young and educated Poles migrating to the UK or Ireland had different motives to do so than older migrants without high professional or linguistic qualifications, who went to Germany or the Netherlands. There exists a very significant number of publications on this subject concerning migrants to the UK and Ireland, and fewer based on research among Poles in other countries. Only several publications concern more than one destination at the same time. This review will serve as a basis for my planned research comparing reasons for migration of Poles to the UK, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands (the four most frequently chosen European destinations).

The structure of the article is as follows. The remaining part of this introductory chapter puts Polish migrations in a broader perspective of world research on the motivations for migration and sums up how these motivations vary depending on the level of education and income.

Chapter 2 focuses on Polish post-accession migrations. It first summarizes and discusses a particular legal reason which influenced the choice of destination of Polish migrants, namely the non-simultaneous opening of „old” EU15 labour markets to Polish and other Central European workers. The size of the diversion effect this caused is still the subject of some controversy. It then goes on to summarize the state of knowledge on the economic

factors influencing the decisions of migrants, such as the levels of wages, accessibility of jobs, welfare levels and the financial obstacles to migration (section 2.2). The next section (2.3) focuses on the cultural factors influencing migration decisions, such as the knowledge or willingness to learn a language, the attractiveness of a particular culture or metropolis, the need for personal development or to escape social constraints. The final section of chapter 2 (2.4) discusses the social factors taken into consideration by migrants, particularly the role of networks in choosing particular destinations.

Chapter 3 holds the conclusions and suggestions for further research.

## **1.2 How do migrants choose their destinations?**

Motivations for migration have been studied at least since E.G. Ravenstein's (1885) laws of migration. In the past two decades more particular questions of how migrants choose their destinations and what are migrants' sorting mechanism have been addressed. Researchers agree that two economic factors: a high difference in GDP between sending and receiving country and low unemployment in receiving country contribute to higher numbers of migrants (Borjas 1999, Pedersen 2005). It is also well-established knowledge that networks function as pull factors (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, Taylor 1993, Mayda 2007). Recently some researchers (Epstein 2002, 2008) have differentiated between network effects, when a potential migrant decides to move to a particular place because he is counting on the help of people he knows there and herd effects, where the person does not know anybody at destination but knows that many people similar to him have gone there and acts on assumption that "so many before me could not have been wrong". This differentiation may be of use when analyzing Polish post-accession migration.

The literature is not consistent on whether other factors, such as immigration laws, welfare regulations, geographical and cultural distance or costs of moving influence migrants' choice of destination, for example some researchers (Mayda 2007) find cultural factors insignificant, whereas others (Verwiebe 2014) see them as playing a very important role for some migrant groups.

Several authors have come to the conclusion that the influence of various factors differs depending on the demographic profile, especially level of education of the migrants. Verwiebe (2014), who studied British, French, Italian and Polish migrants to Berlin, has come to the conclusion that, irrespective of nationality, people of higher social class migrate most frequently for cultural reasons, whereas members of lower classes migrate for economic and social reasons. He established that 30% of all migrants to Berlin moved for solely social



reasons, 19% for solely cultural reasons and 14% for economic reasons only (the remaining 37% had mixed motives). He also concluded that the type of motivation depends on the age of the respondents: 20-29-year olds named cultural motives for their migration more often than 30-39-year olds, and social and economic motives less often.

Some other studies from overseas confirm differences being dependent on education level. Spörlein (2014) researched the question of choice between countries of South and North America. Migrants in the Americas “segregate” themselves according to level of education even more than emigrating Poles, for example among Mexicans emigrating to the USA only 7% hold a tertiary degree, whereas among emigrants to other countries the number is 46%. Spörlein took into consideration two economic factors: the expected gains from migration and the level of inequality in the distribution of wealth (a measure of the amount of social protection workers can count on in case of poor labor market outcomes) and several non-economic factors: the geographic and cultural distance from destination country, the number of co-ethnics already in the destination country, the level of political freedom and whether the country of destination encourages migration. He established that for the general population of migrants the factors encouraging migration to a given country were: the size of the co-ethnic population in destination, expected economic gains from migration, small geographical distance, small cultural distance and low level of inequality in destination. However, people with a tertiary degree behaved differently than the above average. The number of co-ethnics did not matter for them. They did not prefer countries that were closer in geographic or cultural distance, but more remote ones.

Several authors (Bartel 1989, Pedersen 2005, Spörlein 2014) come to the conclusion that “network effects seem to be stronger for immigrants stemming from low-income groups compared to immigrants from high-income groups” (Pedersen 2005:20). This is most probably due to the fact that people with fewer financial and cultural resources need to rely more on the help of others when looking for a job and setting up in a foreign country.

## **2. Polish post-accession migrants: legal, economic, social and cultural motivations?**

Existing literature suggests the above differences depending on level of education and age may also apply to Polish post-accession migration. Below I will summarize the literature concerning Polish post-accession migrants by grouping motives for migration into three broad categories: economic, social (such as migration networks or family reunification) and cultural

(such as the knowledge or attractiveness of a given language, culture, lifestyle, workplace culture). Combinations of the above three are also possible.

Who belongs to which category and how the choice of destination was made may of course sometimes not be obvious to the the migrants themselves. Trevena, McGhee and Heath (2013) point out that sometimes the migrants did not think through their choice. Having studied the reasons for choosing a particular location in the UK, they write: „most of our respondents ‘did not bother’ to gain any information about their future place of residence, some people had not even looked the location up on a map. What was important to these migrants was that they would be provided with work and would have a source of income in the UK” (2013: 676).

Before turning to the three universally applicable categories of economic, cultural and social factors I shall deal with an issue specific to this and previous EU enlargements: the question of what role was played by the transition periods implemented in some old EU countries before new EU citizens could access the legal labour market.

## **2.1 The diversion effect controversy**

During accession negotiations it was agreed that each of the old EU15 countries could restrict labour market access to new EU citizens for a maximum of seven years in a 2 years + 3 years + 2 years system, where the labour market situation had to be assessed after each of these periods. Only three countries decided to open their labour markets from the first day: the UK, Ireland and Sweden. Most countries did so after two to five years. Germany and Austria were the last to do so after seven years. However, certain loopholes were available for Poles and others to gain legal employment even before this seven-year period was over, such as self-employment and the freedom to provide services.

Researchers agree that these restrictions caused some diversion of workers particularly from Germany to the UK and Ireland. There is no agreement, however, about the scale of this effect.

The problem stems partly from the migration forecasts prepared during accession negotiations. These were created using three methods. Some (Layard, Blanchard, Dornbusch, Krugman 1992, Fassman and Hinterman 1997, Wallace 1998, Krieger 2003) were based on intentions potential migrants stated in opinion polls. Others predicted migrations based on experiences from previous enlargements when Spain and Portugal joined the European Communities (Orłowski and Zienkowski 1998, Bauer and Zimmermann 1999). The largest group made use of econometric models which took into consideration such factors as wage

differences and levels of unemployment in sending and receiving countries (Kupiszewski 2001, Boeri i Brücker 2000, Dustmann, Casanova, Fertig, Preston, Schmidt 2003, Alvarez-Plata, Brücker, Siliverstovs 2003, Boeri, Brücker, Iara, Huber, Kaczmarczyk, Upward, Vidovic 2009). Most of the forecasts proved to be somewhat distant from reality in terms of the total numbers of migrants, and completely wrong on which countries the migrants would go to. Dustmann and co-authors (2003) in a report for the British Home Office predicted that 4,900 to 12,600 migrants from Central Europe per year would reach the UK and that the number for Germany would be 20,500 to 209,600. Most forecasts were prepared before it was known that the EU15 labour markets would not be opened to new EU citizens simultaneously. Even when it became known that the transition periods would be implemented in some countries but not others, no forecast predicted the mass flow of migrants from Central and Eastern Europe to the UK and Ireland. Alvarez-Plata et al. (2003) simulated a situation (which later occurred) where Germany implemented a transition period until 2011. They concluded that the increase of foreign population in Germany will come later and will be 135,000 to over 180,000 per year in the five years after the lifting of restrictions (2011-16), but were careful not to draw conclusions for other countries and for the EU15 as a whole. Even when their own calculations suggested that Germany's share in the number of migrant workers from Central and Eastern Europe would fall from 60% of the total to between 12 and 30% (2003: 45) they discarded this possibility as implausible and wrote that "the geographical distribution of the migrant population across European countries is fairly stable over time" (2003: 39). In reality the distribution of migrants after accession did not remain stable and Germany's share did drop significantly. The above suggests that the differences between predictions and reality did not stem only from a diversion effect, but that the predictions were flawed in the first place.

Nevertheless, some early research after enlargement takes the forecasts as a basis for estimating the size of the diversion effect. Baas and Brücker (2008) in their publication on the macroeconomic effects of the diversion assume that it was as large as the whole difference between predicted and actual numbers of migrants in particular countries (taking as the basis the numbers in the Alvarez-Plata et al. scenario from 2003). They write that "it is likely that migration flows have been diverted away from the preferred destinations towards countries which have opened their labour markets immediately after the EU Eastern enlargement" (2008: 3). Other researchers (Boeri and Brücker 2004, Zaiceva 2006) also conclude that there was a diversion effect from German to English-speaking countries.

Later publications do not put into question the existence of such a diversion effect, but draw attention to the fact that it was responsible for only a minor part of migration to the UK and Ireland. Holland, Fic, Rincon-Aznar, Stokes, Paluchowski (2011) write: “There appears to be clear evidence that the pattern of restrictions in place at the beginning of the 2004 enlargement diverted mobile workers away from traditional destinations – namely Germany – and towards the more easily accessed labour markets in the UK and Ireland. However, we should not over-emphasize the magnitude of this impact, as macro-economic developments and demographics have also played a role in the location decision, and in many cases appear to have played the dominant role” (2011: 15). According to this study only about 20% of the shift of flows in Germany and the UK can be explained by the transition periods.

Several Polish researchers (Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008, Kaczmarczyk 2011, Kaczmarczyk 2013, Fihel, Janicka, Kaczmarczyk, Nestorowicz 2015) point out that Polish people who went to the UK and Ireland were of a different demographic profile in terms of age, education and size of town of origin than those who earlier migrated to Germany. This suggests that restrictions on the German and Austrian labour markets discouraged from migration average-educated persons from small and medium sized towns, and the British and Irish opening encouraged new groups of young and educated migrants, which earlier would not have considered migration at all.

A valuable input to the discussion from Kahanec, Pytlikova and Zimmermann (2014) differentiates between the effect of EU entry and the effect of labour market opening. This is significant because EU entry meant Poles and other new EU citizens could freely move to and reside in all member states, even those whose labour market was not open to them. Kahanec et al. (2014) conclude that the EU entry effect was in fact larger than the labour market opening effect: it was responsible for 33% of migration from new member states and the labour market opening for 28%. Even when EU entry effect is not considered separately as a factor, labour market opening is responsible for only 36% of the rise of migration rates from the new EU10 countries. Other factors taken into consideration included macroeconomic push and pull factors, physical and linguistic distance and the presence of other migrants from a given country at destination.

The question can also be reversed to ask why so many Poles remained in Germany or continued migrating there after the British, Irish and Swedish labour markets were opened. Some had legal work, profiting from particular arrangements such as the freedom of providing services, but others continued to work illegally. For them, the main criterion for choosing the destination was obviously not the legality of employment.

The scenario of simple diversion due to the transition periods is also put into question by the case of Sweden, a country which is geographically close to Poland and opened its labour market simultaneously with the UK and Ireland. It got only very few Polish migrants: according to the 2011 Polish census only 34,7 thousand Poles resided there (GUS 2013). No significant diversion to Sweden took place. Fihel and co-authors suggest this was due to the strong regulation of the labour market through trade union membership (Fihel et al. 2015).

Fihel et al. (2015: 35) sum up the literature on this subject in a report for the European Commission stating that “A comparison of migration flows to the UK and Germany could lead to a conclusion that the migratory regime (presence of [transitional arrangements]) is an important variable. Differences between stocks of Polish migrants in the UK / Ireland and Sweden would rather point to the importance of socio-cultural factors, with language as the most prominent example. It should be stressed here that the English language became the most prevalent foreign language in Poland, especially among the youngest generations (CBOS 2009). Institutions of the labour market matter a lot as shown by the case of the Netherlands (with an immense role of recruitment agencies) or the case of Sweden (with a critical role of trade unions). Modes of labour market incorporation depend heavily on the structure of receiving labour markets (e.g. the UK versus Italy or the Netherlands). Last but not least, migrant networks still play an important role in shaping the scale and structure of migration (comparison between ‘old’ and ‘new’ destination countries). In this context it is important to note that a legal regime, and [transitional arrangements] in particular, presents only a fraction of the mobility puzzle as described in Polish literature (Kaczmarczyk and Okólski 2008; Kaczmarczyk 2013)”.

Since Germany fully opened its labour market to Polish workers in 2011, the number of Poles there has been increasing faster than the number of Poles in the United Kingdom (by 90,000 in the years 2011 – 2013; in the same period the number of Poles in the UK increased by 17,000). In opinion polls today Polish citizens express interest in working in Germany almost two times more often than in the UK: 27% versus 14% of respondents (CBOS 2014). Interestingly, the Netherlands drew as much interest as the UK. However, it is still difficult to disentangle the effect of the labour market opening from other factors, particularly the state of the economy, since Germany weathered the economic crisis better than most countries. Some post-crisis research has shown that the state of the economy and labour market is key in diverting migrant workers from one European country to another (see: Bertoli, Brücker, Fernández-Huertas Moraga 2013), so this may also be the dominant factor taken into consideration by actual and potential Polish migrants.

## **2.2 It was the economy, stupid!**

As obvious from the above, factors other than legal play a key role in determining the directions of migration from Poland. Economic reasons were one of the principal ones that motivated Poles to migrate. On the push side large unemployment in Poland (19,1% in 2004) and a large supply of new workers leaving schools and universities, who were unable to find a suitable job, were certainly an important factor (see: Okólski and Salt 2014). This influenced the decision to migrate rather than the choice of destination. Differences in the levels of earnings between Poland and countries of Western Europe also pushed people to migrate, but did not determine the destination. As Jończy calculated (2010) at the moment of Poland's entry into the EU the Index of Profitability of Migration (which is a comparison of wages in sending and destination country) was 5 for Germany (meaning wages in Germany were five times higher than in Poland), 5,6 for Ireland and 5,8 for the UK. It then rapidly dropped to reach 3 in 2008 in all three countries and remains at that level.

A key economic factor determining the choice of destination was certainly the unfulfilled demand for workers on the British and Irish side around the time of EU enlargement (Okólski and Salt 2014), which was highly publicized. In 2004 unemployment in the UK and Ireland practically did not exist: it was respectively 4,7% and 4,5%. In Germany it was 10,5% (Eurostat). The British Prime Minister Tony Blair said three days before Poland and nine other countries joined the EU: "There are half a million vacancies in our job market and our strong and growing economy needs migration to fill these vacancies" (The Guardian, 2004). According to the British Office for National Statistics the number of vacancies was even higher - 630,000 in May 2004 and despite immigration remained high for the next four years to reach a peak of 672,000. In 2008 it dropped due to the economic crisis, but today is again at record levels of 745,000 (Office for National Statistics 2015).

The migrants themselves pointed to economic reasons as the main ones for their decision. In a survey conducted by the University of Surrey (2006) among Poles in the UK 58,4% stated the reason of migration as "financial/lack of jobs in Poland". The second most frequent answer was "more options/easier to live" with 41,4%. Such an answer doesn't clearly show if reasons for migration were of an economic character (it was easier to live off one's wage) or if the respondents were thinking of options of another sort. The next most popular answer, chosen by 31,3% of respondents pointed clearly to non-economic factors: "personal

or professional development”. The authors of the survey point out that answers varied depending on age. Financial reasons were the cause of migration of 55% of people below the age of 24 and 83% of those above 46. “The set of migration motivations is complex and dependent on age and education – younger and educated migrants stressing the will to live in a foreign country, language acquisition, making friends and living in a global city” – conclude the authors (Surrey 2006: 5).

On the other hand, several authors (White 2010, Szewczyk 2015) point out that a particular kind of economic motivation pushes young people to migrate: the lack of resources to move out of the parental home. In such cases migration is sometimes seen as offering a better possibility of an independent start in life (Szewczyk 2015).

In another study by Milewski and Ruszczak-Żbikowska (2008) conducted in the form of an internet survey among Poles in the UK and Ireland, economic answers were also most frequent: 63% - “the possibility of finding a well-paid job”, 36% - “chance of finding work easily”, but a large group pointed to cultural reasons: 46% - “intention to study, deepen knowledge of language”, 34% - “new experiences”.

So far Jończy (2010) is the only one to have conducted surveys in which he asked about the reason for choosing a particular country. The respondents came exclusively from Opolszczyzna, a very particular region in terms of migrations since many of its inhabitants have dual Polish and German citizenship. The answer “because I can earn more there” was chosen by 60% of emigrants to the UK, 54% of emigrants to Ireland, 42% of those who went to Germany and 35% of those who went to the Netherlands. The second most frequent reason was the existence of migrant networks in the form of friends or relatives already working at the destination, chosen by 51% of migrants to the UK, 36% to Ireland and Germany, 32% to the Netherlands. The third was the knowledge of the language of the destination country, chosen by 44% of migrants to Germany, 43% to the UK, 18% to Ireland and 7% to the Netherlands. Migrants to the Netherlands most frequently (55%) chose the answer „because it is easy to find a job, for example through a work agency”, which was moderately popular for migrants to the UK and Ireland (19 and 18%) and not at all popular for those in Germany (7%). Migrants to Germany were the only ones to point to the small costs and time needed to get to destination (20%).

The welfare magnet hypothesis, formulated by Borjas (1999a) states that a high level of welfare acts as a magnet for migrants, who seek to insure themselves against events such as unemployment, and deters them from leaving a country of migration in times of economic hardships. Other authors (Razin and Wahba 2011) argue that the level of welfare may affect

the skills composition of migrants, and that in a free migration regime higher welfare tends to attract the lower qualified.

The question if welfare considerations influenced the choice of destination of Polish and other Central European migrants is very interesting especially given the variation of their educational profiles by destination, and the publicly expressed worries of some societies regarding migrants' possible abuses of welfare systems.

Empirical studies around the world trying to prove the influence of welfare policies on migration have so far produced mixed results (Giulietti and Wahba 2012). Several studies concerning post-enlargement migration from Central and Eastern Europe conclude that there is no excessive use of welfare by migrants (Pedersen, Pytlikova and Smith 2008, Blanchower and Lawton, 2009, Kahanec et al. 2009, Constant 2011), which suggests that the level of welfare was probably not a factor taken into consideration by migrants when choosing their destination. However, research into specific benefits and their influence on decisions to settle or stay in a particular location, such as the well-publicized Irish and British child benefits, may yet give a more nuanced insight into this question.

Obstacles to migration, such as the cost of travel, may have also influenced the choice of destination of some Poles. Spörlein (2014) found that potential costs, such as geographic distance and lack of support from people of the same nationality dissuade uneducated migrants, but not the educated ones who usually have more resources to deal with these difficulties. This conclusion may also be valid for emigrants from Poland, especially those who left right after accession when there were no direct inexpensive flights between Poland and Ireland (LOT operated the first flight in 2004, cheap airlines Centralwings entered in 2005, Ryanair and Wizz Air in 2006). As Kaczmarczyk (2008) points out based on the ethnosurvey conducted by the Centre for Migration Research of Warsaw University, the costs of moving to work in the EU were very different depending on the destination country. Those departing for Italy or Germany estimated the costs of migration as respectively 609,6 PLN and 748,9 PLN. Poles in those two countries often live on farms or with families for whom they work, so they do not have to invest in housing. The costs of travel to destination can also be low. On the other extreme were migrants to Ireland, who had to invest an average of 2542,9 PLN into a plane ticket, costs of housing and subsistence during their search for a job. As Kaczmarczyk writes (2008:194): "The financial cost of migration may have been a factor of negative selection of migrants. The choice of relatively cheaper migrations to Italy or Germany (...) was accessible for both poorer and more well-off households. Travel to more



expensive destinations such as the US, Ireland or even the UK was accessible only for the more well-off.”

### **2.3 Cultural factors: role of language and lifestyle**

Economic motivations certainly are a large part of the answer to the question why many people left Poland after 2004, but they are not the whole answer. As Luthra, Platt and Salamońska (2014) point out, the assumption that migration from Central and Eastern Europe should be understood as primarily economic has been challenged in recent years. “A body of primarily qualitative research is emerging that documents the complex, specifically non-economic motivations of the new EU migrants (...), as well as the complexity of their migration patterns. It is now widely accepted that this “new” migration system is qualitatively different – more varied in terms of the demographic characteristics of the migrants, their motivations, and their economic and social experiences in the destination country – than traditional economic migration” (2014:10).

Summing up non-economic reasons for migration is certainly not a straightforward task, especially since these reasons are sometimes not obvious even to persons undertaking migration. As Szewczyk (2015: 159) points out, decisions may be “spontaneous (...), often made in days, with a simple, immediate or most often non-existent preparation”.

However, I shall attempt a certain categorization of cultural reasons for choosing particular destinations already present in the literature.

As the above quoted survey by Jończy shows, knowledge of the language of the destination country is certainly an important factor taken into consideration by migrants.

This is not surprising. Several world-scale studies have shown that language is a factor considered by migrants (Adserà and Pytliková 2015b, Chiswick and Miller 2014). (There are also some, such as Mayda 2010 which do not see any influence of linguistic proximity on destination choice).

Since no Western European language is obviously closer than others to Polish, a different factor played a role. As Adserà and Pytliková (2015a) point out, the case of migration to English speaking countries is a special one since English, which is widely taught, „seems to constitute less of a barrier to migrants than other languages”. Additionally they point out (2015b) that returns to English proficiency in linguistically distant countries may be high and may act as an incitement to migrate temporarily to learn the language.

English is by far the most popular foreign language in Poland. In a survey by TNS conducted in May 2015 33% of Poles declared to speak English well or very well. The

number for German and Russian was 12%. The popularity of English in Poland has increased dramatically during the last two decades and depends very much on the age of respondents. 77% of people aged 18-24 claim to be able to speak English and among pupils and university students the number is 85% (CBOS 2012). These are the same people who face strong competition upon entering the Polish labour market due to the very high university enrolment rates in this generation.

Knowledge or attractiveness of the language are not the only cultural motivations found by researchers. Krings, Bobek, Moriarty, Salamońska and Wickham (2013) who conducted panel surveys among Poles in Ireland come to the conclusion that “The younger and more educated of these migrants, especially, are part of a new generation of mobile Europeans for whom the move abroad is not only work-related but also involves lifestyle choices as part of a broader aspiration for self-development”. Some of these Poles could probably be considered “Eurostars” as described by Favell (2008a) – people who profit from European freedoms to create a new identity for themselves, not necessarily linked with one nation but sometimes with more, or with no nation at all but a particular international city such as Amsterdam or London. Trevena (2011: 92) writes about educated Poles working below their qualifications in London that “they do not perceive themselves as part of the British society but rather as members of the international London community, where origin and class do not matter”. Isański, Mleczko and Seredyńska-Abu Eid (2014) write about the migration strategy of Poles in the UK which they call „Project: ME” as part of a wider project of self-development. In their study 288 respondents moved to the UK because of work-related reasons, but an even larger group of 369 respondent gave their reason as “work and education combined” and a further 99 as “tourism, work and education combined”; 35 pointed to education only. As Eade et al. (2007), Favell (2008a) and Grabowska-Lusińska (2014) point out, for younger persons migration is frequently a kind of school of life, a rite of passage into adulthood.

Jones (1999), Favell (2008a) Grabowska-Lusińska (2014, forthcoming) and Szewczyk (2015) write that some of the attractiveness of a large, anonymous city far from home, such as London, may result from the fact that migrants escape the social control of their places of origin and gain freedom in their lifestyle choices. Some media reports suggest very particular cultural reasons for choosing destinations such as London, for example its tolerance towards homosexuals (Jarkowiec 2007).

Other researchers (Siara 2009, Botterill 2011, Grabowska-Lusińska and Jaźwińska-Motyłska 2013, Aziz 2015) have found that particularly for women migration can be an emancipatory decision, an opportunity to develop and challenge traditional gender roles.

For older persons, particularly parents of school-aged children, educational questions often become key in decisions about migration and return. As Trevena (2014) writes, adaptation into British schools is often problematic for Polish children, but once they are settled it is a strong argument for families to remain in their destination, since they believe children could not easily re-enter the Polish education system due to the higher level and different style of teaching than in Britain. Trevena et al. (2013) also notice that having school-aged children is a strong deterrent for families to move.

Similarly rich research results are not available for countries of continental Europe. Luthra et al. (2014) who studied Polish migrants in the UK, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands divide them into six types: circular, temporary and settled migrants (which are the more traditional categories) and student, family and adventurer types (which are not usually treated as separate categories). They point out that migrants do sort themselves by type depending on country, but that generally the diversity of types in all studied destinations is large.

It is also worth pointing out that what sometimes seems like an economic reason, such as the declared intention to work, is in reality a case of mixed motivation, which is partly cultural. In Cieślík's research on decisions to return from abroad among educated Poles in the UK respondents asked about the benefits of working in the UK pointed more often to possibilities of development than better wages (Cieslik 2011). This may mean purely professional but also more personal development.

#### **2.4 Social factors: which migrants use networks?**

The existing literature does not clearly answer what role migration networks played for migrants of the last decade, and more particularly for their choice of destination country.

In previous migrations, such as that of workers to Germany, networks were without doubt very significant. Kępińska (2008) writes that among seasonal workers she interviewed in Germany 80% got job offers in their name from a German employer they did not personally know (these were necessary for legal employment based on a Polish-German state agreement). These people's personal data was passed on to the employers by other people working in Germany.

The directions chosen by Polish migrants after 2004 suggest that the role of networks became less significant. Migrations to countries in which there were strong Polish networks before EU accession, such as Germany, the United States or Italy (Jaźwińska-Motyłska and

Okólski 2001) all declined in relative importance. Numbers of migrants grew in countries which initially had no Polish networks, such as Ireland, or relatively undeveloped ones, such as the UK or the Netherlands. This led some scholars to believe that initially after EU enlargement networks were of secondary importance, the factors of primary importance being economic and legal ones. Okólski (2007) names migration pressures in sending countries, labour shortages in some destinations and the varying degrees of openness of labour markets as the three most important factors. Others, such as White and Ryan (2008) believe them to be of great importance. “The evidence from Grajewo and Sanok tends to suggest that networks do constitute a factor of primary importance in explaining recent East-West migration in Europe” (2011: 73), write Anne White, who studied migrations from two relatively small Polish towns. She points out that in these towns migration “to somebody” – friends or family who can arrange a first job and first housing (as opposed to going “into the dark”) is still the norm. She underlines that due to modern methods of communication migration networks can work and develop much faster than before.

The exact time of migration may have been key. In times of Skype and other forms of instant internet communication networks probably form and bring fruit faster than in previous periods. Sumption (2009) points out based on UK Labour Force Survey data how networks might have affected labour recruitment. She noticed that between 2004 and 2007 the number of Poles who found a job through somebody already working at a given company rose quickly. In the year Poland joined the EU 26% of people questioned had found a job this way (only people who had recently found a job were asked this question). Three years later the number was 36%. Partly this was the effect of the size of the Polish population in the UK. The author ascribes the change also to the fact that more women came to the UK at later dates, and women generally rely on networks more often for finding a job.

In the afore-mentioned survey by Jończy (2010) in the Opolszczyzna region the role of networks seems to be large for all countries. The reason “friends or relatives work there” for choosing a particular destination was mentioned almost as often as economic motivations, especially by migrants to the UK. The answer “friends or relatives live there” was also popular. Jończy concludes that “migration networks are most important not only in mass migrations, but also in new ones, where the migrants had never before worked abroad” (2010:233).

It is obvious that new migration networks developed in countries where there were previously few Polish migrants. The question is still, however, how fast they did and how their role changed from the period immediately after May 1, 2004 to a few months or years

later. The differences of opinion among scholars may also have to do with the demographic profiles of their respondents. It is highly probable that less educated and poorer people still have to rely on the help of family or friends, whereas the better educated and better off ones make their decisions based on other factors.

In this context it is also interesting what kind of connections are important to migrants and how they use them as sources of information or help. Already in 1973 Mark S. Granovetter brought to light the strength of weak ties, that is the fact that for some purposes such as passing on information about a job opening the most important ties are not the strong ones among family or friends, but the weak ones which connect for example former schoolmates or other persons who remain in sporadic contact.

The post-accession migrations of Poles coincided with the dynamic development of various internet fora and social media such as the Polish Nasza Klasa (our class) or Facebook, which make maintaining and reestablishing weak contacts much easier. Rianne Dekker and Godfried Engbersen (2012) who studied Moroccan, Ukrainian and Brazilian immigrants in the Netherlands noticed that social media became a source of “strategic information” for migrants. “This social media infrastructure has changed the nature of migrant networks and has lowered the threshold for aspiring migrants in various ways” (2012: 11), they write. At the same time the degree of access to these media, the level of knowledge of and willingness to use them depends very much on age and education level. It is probable that people departing for the UK and Ireland (statistically younger and better educated) used them more often to get information about work and life at destination.

Media reports about Poles arriving in London without any preparation suggest that herd effects (as opposed to network effects – Epstein 2002, 2008) played a role in directing the flow of Polish migrants. No studies so far have attempted to confirm this possibility.

### **3. Conclusions**

Although the literature on Polish emigration post-2004 is extensive, it is inconclusive or at times even contradictory on the reasons for migration, and particularly for choosing some countries over others. So far researchers have devoted the most attention to migration to Britain and Ireland because these two countries attracted a very large new wave of Polish migrants.

Initially several studies suggested that this new wave was a redirection of migrants who would have otherwise gone to Germany if the Anglo-Saxon countries had not been the first to fully open their labour markets to new EU citizens. This so called diversion effect certainly

played a role, but its size has been rightly questioned in later studies. If the legality of employment had indeed been the main factor taken into consideration by Polish migrants, they should have also gone in large numbers to neighboring Sweden, which opened its labour market at the same time as the UK and Ireland. This was not the case. The question can also be turned around to ask why so many Poles continued migrating to Germany, or even started migrating there, frequently to work illegally, when possibilities of legal employment were open to them elsewhere. Several scholars point out that the demographic profiles of Polish migrants to the UK and Ireland on one hand, and to Germany and other countries of continental Europe on the other were so different that one cannot speak of a redirection of migrants, but rather of a qualitatively different new wave to the Isles (Kaczmarczyk 2008, 2011).

A second major factor discussed in the literature was the large demand for labour in the UK and Ireland. All studies and surveys confirm that the possibility of finding a job was certainly important in many Poles' decisions. More recent studies point out, however, that this was not the only factor taken into consideration by many Poles. Cultural factors, such as the knowledge or willingness to learn English, the attractiveness of the British or Irish lifestyle or work culture, or of London as one of the worlds' economic and cultural capitals, were also taken into consideration by many.

The role of networks in directing migrants to particular destinations is not entirely clear. Its influence seems unquestionable in traditional migrations such as that to Germany. More debatable is its importance for migrants to the UK and Ireland. Since these countries did not in 2004 have large populations of Poles, initially networks must not have played a large role (as pointed out by Okólski 2007). Later several studies and surveys (White and Ryan 2008, Jończy 2010, White 2011) show them playing a very important role. The question remains at what point they became important and also for whom: is it the case, as earlier studies from other countries suggest, that the presence of a large community of compatriots at destination is important for uneducated migrants, but is less important or even acts as a deterrent for educated ones?

Existing literature on Polish migrants suggest more broadly that factors taken into consideration when choosing a destination depend on the demographic profile of migrants, particularly their age and level of education. For younger and better educated persons going to the UK and Ireland, cultural factors seem to matter more and economic factors less than for the uneducated (Krings et al. 2013, Luthra et al. 2014, Isański et al. 2014). Similar research is not as abundant for countries of continental Europe.

Further studies, especially comparative ones conducted in several countries, could bring more light on the issue of motivations of people going to different countries and of different generations. It would be particularly interesting to know for example if educated Poles going to the UK, Ireland, Germany or other countries do so for similar reasons: is the German culture, language or lifestyle as attractive to some educated Poles as the British one? Are reasons for migration and for choosing particular destinations indeed dependant on the level of education, as some foreign (Verwiebe 2014, Spörlein 2014) studies and studies of Polish migrants (Krings et al. 2014, Luthra et al. 2014) suggest?

The roles of networks in various countries also need to be more thoroughly investigated. Despite a number of studies of this issue we still do not know if there is a relationship between the level of education/cultural competence and the dependence on networks and whether the role of networks is in any way destination country-specific.

Another question which begs for further research is a comparison between reasons for going to a given destination and for staying there. Several publications on reasons for returning or for settling in the migration destination (Anacka 2010, White 2013) suggest that these might be very different. Part of that difference stems of course from the fact that these decisions are taken at different stages of life (for example post-graduation versus period with school-aged children). There may also, however, exist country-specific factors which push people to return or stay in a given destination. So far we do not know what these are for Polish post-accession migrants.

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