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## FACTORS SHAPING THE ECONOMIC MIGRATIONS AFTER ACCESSION OF POLAND TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

**ABSTRACT.** Authors analysed in the paper different factors shaping economic migrations in Poland actually and in the near future – after accession to EU. There are discussed a demographic factor, unemployment, which does not exert a migration pressure under Polish conditions, but the possibility of obtaining the German citizenship in Poland without shifting to Germany became an important factor.

The former negative consequences of migration in particular more and more often are taken into consideration in family strategies. At the same time, the less profitable migration results in comparison to earlier years may prevent migrations effectively. The importance of a strong and long-lasting migration network between Opole region and Germany is discussed. It is probable that the European integration and the accompanying convergence of prices and incomes should cause a decrease of the inflow of persons from Poland.

**KEY WORDS:** Economic migration, migration network, migration factors, migration pressure.

### INTRODUCTION

The ongoing scientific discussion on free international migration after the next enlargement of the European Union focuses the attention on the size of migrations and their consequences for the present EU members and countries in accession. The interest in migrations is very lively and often brings controversial evaluations as it is related to free movement of persons and to access to jobs on the common European market. Poland together with other countries in acces-

sion and the European Union in its present shape look from different points of view on migrations, which makes the problem of free movement a sensitive topic. It also concentrates the attention and emotions of public opinion.

The effective size of migrations after the accession of Poland to the European union will depend of many factors difficult to envisage today. Scientific analyses expose the importance of factors of migrations that can be found both in countries of emigration and in receiving countries.

On the one hand, the expected progress of the European integration and the accompanying convergence of prices and incomes should cause a decrease in the inflow of persons from Poland in the long term at least<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, if the economic integration causes economic growth and living standard improvement, which is the purpose of this process, the readiness of the society to look for jobs abroad will decrease.

## MAIN FACTORS SHAPING THE ECONOMIC MIGRATIONS IN POLAND

The demographic factor will not be favouring emigration either. With the post-war high getting older, the number of people at the age favouring migrations will decrease. Moreover, the educated part of the young generation considers job migration a less attractive alternative than a chance of remaining in Poland, especially when they can find an attractive job in the home country<sup>2</sup>.

Another important factor, which theoretically should induce migrations in search for a job, unemployment, does not exert a migration pressure under Polish conditions. As researches have proven, the unemployed are migrants only sporadically<sup>3</sup>. They are rather not very mobile and not interested in changing their domicile even if it would mean a job. It is an important conclusion as it means that the problem of the Polish unemployment cannot be solved through migration.

The social consequences of migration like separation and disintegration of families on the one hand and cultural strangeness and difficulties related to integration in the new environment on the other discourage many people. The former negative consequences of migration in particular more and more often are taken into consideration in family strategies. At the same time, the less profitable migration results in comparison to earlier years may prevent migrations effectively<sup>4</sup>.

The emigration potential evaluations are not fully authoritative either. According to demographers, utilisation of migration potential evaluations of international migrations forecasting on the grounds of respondent declarations is considered unsubstantiated from the scientific point of view<sup>5</sup>. Basing any forecasts on such data is valueless as long as the researcher cannot prove to what extent such declarations are implemented in the future.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that sociological surveys indicate that many Polish citizens declare readiness to migrate seeking jobs<sup>6</sup>, only a small percentage of them will live up to their declarations. Many objective and subjective factors exert an impact on migration orientation and they may discourage the respondent effectively.

Among the factors stimulating migration, there is the character of the labour market in the European Union, which due to its lack of flexibility manifests a considerable structural shortage of the demand for labour, especially requiring low qualifications, irrespectively of the unemployment level. Potential migrants do not constitute any danger for Western Europe. On the contrary, their presence facilitates vertical mobility of labour force and improves flexibility of the local labour markets<sup>7</sup>.

Also, the demographic factor in the form of a low natural increase and ageing of the West-European society should facilitate settlement in Western Europe. In both cases, immigration from Poland could help to fill these gaps.

Among factors facilitating the decision to emigrate, cultural and social aspects of migration, i.e. migration social networks and migration culture existing in certain regions are more and more frequently mentioned.

The internal dynamics of social migration processes may exert a considerable impact on the shape of migration in the future, especially when forecasts presented from various sources do not take into consideration territorial diversification of estimated migration processes. It is impossible, therefore, to use them to evaluate intensity of migration processes in individual provinces. Thus, the decision whether it is advantageous to emigrate or not depends not only of the possibility of absorption by the labour market and the demographic potential but also the already existing network of migration relations.

Such small migration systems based on relatively lasting and dynamic migration links emerged in areas of intensive, mainly economic, emigration. Such links emerged between Opole Silesia and Germany, Podlasie and Belgium and Małopolska (especially rural foothill areas) and Austria. These links are established at the local societies level and are of a pendulum movement character between the particular group of migrants and certain foreign labour markets<sup>8</sup>.

It is pointed out that at the moment of integration and the emergence of circumstances facilitating travel and seeking employment in the West in regions already covered by migration networks, an increase of migration should not be expected. Certain possibilities of migration intensification are possible in the areas where expansion and development of migration networks are not that strong. It may happen in this situation that some more broad contacts will be established with quite a numerous Polish emigration in Western countries which has not participated till now in the development of migration networks. Conditions favourable for the development of social migration links may emerge in regions where negative consequences of structural adjustment in some industrial branches or in the agriculture may induce the population to migrate.

We should not expect, however, that the discussed links would appear immediately and bring results we may observe today in Opole Silesia. We should remember that the effectiveness of migration links depends on the period of their existence, their character and finally on the intensity of contacts of the emigrants with the members of the society remaining in the place of their origin. The Opole region with its particularly intense migrations is exceptional in this respect in comparison with the rest of the country.

During the last few decades trips from Central-Eastern Opole Silesia to Germany were of permanent assuming a mass character during periods of passport regulations liberalisation. This emigration commenced during the early fifties and was called "reunification of families". Later, it was called "breaking up of families". Each departure meant that some close relatives remained in Poland and they declared their wish to resettle to Germany sooner or later proving their relations with those who have already left. The process of broadening family and non-family links with inhabitants of the Federal Republic of Germany strengthened as a result of the mass emigration during the eighties, i.e. when illegal emigration was the most common form of trips. As a result, in face of the continuous emigration and under the impact of factors causing the phenomenon, the network of links between the inhabitants of the Opole Silesia and Germany was established.

#### DOUBLE CITIZENSHIP FACTOR. THE CASE OF OPOLE SILESIA

An important factor causing that the local Silesian population (including the German minority) remains in the country of origin is the possibility of obtaining the German citizenship in Poland without shifting to Germany. Some German authors maintains that the number of persons in Poland (mainly in Upper Silesia) who have passports of both countries at their disposal reaches 300–700 thousand<sup>9</sup>. According to various Polish data, double citizenship (Polish and German) possess some 50–150 thousand persons<sup>10</sup>. The Polish Press Agency (PAP) informed in May 1995 that 170 thousand persons living in Poland obtained German citizenship in recent years.

German regulations provide that the acceptance of a foreign citizenship in the past does not mean a loss of German citizenship. On the other hand, it is not required to renounce the present citizenship while applying for German citizenship. This means that Germany allows *de facto* the institution of double citizenship, which is not provided for in the German legislation. Also, the Polish legislation has no provisions concerning double citizenship and does not envisage any legal consequences resulting from the fact that a Polish citizen possesses citizenship of another state at the same time<sup>11</sup>.

Decisions on accepting German nationality option implying the German citizenship permit to conclude that the region of Opole Silesia constitutes a poten-

tial source of further migrations and of seeking temporary or permanent jobs in Germany or other European union countries. This phenomenon combined with the fact that these persons maintain their permanent residence in the Opole region initiates the process of lasting links with Germany in the form of movement of persons in connection with various social contacts (family, friends, education, social services, etc.) and pendulum migration between Poland and Germany related to looking for a job<sup>12</sup>.

It seems that the problem of double citizenship of a part of the Opole region inhabitants is of a pragmatic character at present. The part of inhabitants possessing two passports can move to Germany or to other European union countries and find a job legally. There is a lot of positions offered announcements in the local press while the Polish Radio in Opole runs a programme Radio Labour Exchange every day. It should be added that both the radio and the press offers are addressed mainly to persons owning German passports and speaking German. The words „*Sztat*” or „*Staat*” used in these announcements mean German citizenship, of course.

The possibility opened for Opole Silesia inhabitants of finding a job in Germany in connection with their origin causes diversification (also economic) of the status of the region inhabitants. It also exerts an impact on the social situation in the spatial pattern. It was not observed, however, that it causes any social divisions. We deal here rather with an ethnically determined segmentation of local societies.

It seems that finding a job abroad is considered by the local society a rational utilisation of chances and possibilities opened for this group by German legislation. Disregarding these chances of earning abroad would mean a waste of an opportunity of improving the living standard and missing a chance of own and family development in the face of the existing unemployment and hard living conditions. A kind of „migration professionalism” emerged and finding a job abroad is considered a way of life.

It is interesting that we encounter negative evaluations of finding a job abroad by persons of the local origin more and more frequently. This part of the population more frequently accepts a long-term stay abroad, often for several years. A characteristic feature of these movements is their free character according to principles similar to migration within one country. Thus, the Opole region is already in the European Union as far as migration processes are concerned and the chance to obtain double citizenship means in practice that one of the basic European union freedoms – the freedom of population movement – already applies in the Opole region.

Double citizenship constitutes the formal base of this situation, but the functioning of this process is predetermined by an existence of a dynamic and developed network of family relations that was shaped between the Opolskie Voivodeship inhabitants and Germany as a result of migration movement persisting

with changing intensity and commenced just after World War II termination. The networks of migration links similar to that of the Opole region can be noticed also in other parts of the country, although in their initial stage. However, such links are not that developed and diversified as in Opole Silesia.

## CONCLUSIONS

The existence of a strong and long-lasting network of links between the Opole region and Germany causes that emigration both permanent and temporary is much easier here than in regions that did not develop such a broad and effective migration network. It is a factor considerably facilitating decision on migration, especially by those persons who have legal grounds for free travel and work in Western Europe in the form of double citizenship.

In this context the Opolskie Voivodeship can be considered a pioneering region even today. The part of inhabitants of the Opole region that have double citizenship can live and work in Germany and the remaining countries of the European Union. The specific feature of these migrations is, therefore, their freedom of movement similar to that enjoyed inside the European Union. Thus the Opole region is in a sense inside the EU as far as the character of migration processes is concerned while the double citizenship means in practice that a part of its population can enjoy one of the basic freedoms constituting the base of the EU – freedom of movement.

Double citizenship is its formal base. However, functioning of this process is possible to a considerable extent thanks to the existence of a dynamic and developed network of family connections. It was created between the Opole region inhabitants and Germany as a result of continuous migration of the population that commenced immediately after World War II and continued with a varying intensity. This process, apart from obvious economic advantages, enabled both pendulum and one-way traffic on such a big scale between the Opole Silesia and Germany.

Migration links networks similar to that at the Opole Silesia start to emerge also in other parts of the country. However, they are nowhere that developed and versatile as in the Opole Silesia.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> According to M. Okólski, D. Stola, *Migracje między Polską a krajami Unii Europejskiej w perspektywie przystąpienia Polski do Unii Europejskiej* (Migrations between Poland and the European Union Countries in the Prospect of Accession of Poland to the European Union) in: P. Korcelli (ed.), *Przemiany w zakresie migracji ludności jako konsekwencja przystąpienia Polski*

*do Unii Europejskiej* (Changes in the Scope of the Population Migrations as a Consequence of Accession of Poland to the European Union), KPZK PAN Bulletin No 184, Warszawa 1998, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> M. Kupiszewski, *Demograficzne aspekty wybranych prognoz migracji zagranicznych* (Demographic Aspects of Selected Foreign Migrations Forecasts) in: A. Stępnia (ed.), *Swobodny przepływ pracowników w kontekście wejścia do Unii Europejskiej* (Free Movement of Employees within the Context of Accession to the European Union), Warszawa 2001, pp. 73–99.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. Wierzbicki, *Społeczne aspekty migracji w kontekście integracji z Unią Europejską* (Social Aspects of Migration within the Context of Integration with the European Union) in: A. Stępnia (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 183–196.

<sup>4</sup> K. Heffner, B. Solga, External migration and labour flows. Contemporary social and economic determinants (Opole Silesia case), (in:) *Changing Role of Border Areas and Regional Policies*, M. Koter and K. Heffner (Eds), Region and Regionalism No. 5, University of Łódź, Silesian Institute in Opole and Silesian Institute Society, Łódź–Opole 2001, pp. 54–63.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. M. Kupiszewski, *op. cit.* p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. E. Kryńska, *Integracja europejska a okresowa emigracja zarobkowa Polaków* (The European Integration and Temporary Economic Migrations of Poles) in: J. Orczyk (ed.), *Dylematy zatrudnienia w postępującej integracji Polski z UE* (Employment Dilemmas and the Progressing Integration of Poland with the EU), Poznań 2001, pp. 53–67. Cf. also K. Slany (ed.), *Orientacje emigracyjne Polaków* (Emigration Orientation of Poles), Kraków 1997.

<sup>7</sup> K. Iglicka, *Migracje zagraniczne Polaków w drugiej połowie XX wieku* (Foreign Migrations of Poles during the Second Half of the XX-th Century) in: A. Stępnia, *Op. cit.*, pp 183–186, pp. 41–61.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Okólski and D. Stola, *Op. cit.* pp. 19–39.

<sup>9</sup> According to German authorities estimations see i.e. T. Urban, *Niemcy w Polsce. Historia mniejszości w XX wieku* (Germans in Poland. History of the Minority in the 20th Century), Opole 1994, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> K. Heffner and B. Solga in the book *Praca w RFN i migracje polsko – niemieckie a rozwój regionalny Śląska Opolskiego* (Work in the Federal Republic of Germany and Polish – German Migrations and the Regional Development of Opole Silesia), Opole 1999, p. 71, estimated on the grounds of research that the number of people possessing two passports reaches 120–130 thousand in Opolskie Voivodeship.

<sup>11</sup> It means that only the Polish citizenship is binding for persons living in Poland. Such a person cannot have any claims *vis a vis* the Polish state resulting from possession of a German passport.

<sup>12</sup> See more about it i.e. Heffner K., Ethnically mixed regions in the Polish conceptions of regionalisation: the Opole Region in Silesia, (in:) *The political geography of current East-West relations. Papers presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> International Geographical Congress. The Hague 1996*, J. Burdack, F.-D. Grimm, L. Paul (Eds.), „Beiträge zur Regionalen Geographie” Leipzig 1998. vol. 47, pp. 214–230.

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