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## POLES IN IRELAND IN THE LIGHT OF SURVEY-BASED RESEARCH (A CASE STUDY OF THE CITY OF LIMERICK)<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present results of research into the situation of Polish emigrants in Ireland. The research was conducted among 200 people residing in the south-western part of the country, in the city of Limerick and its environs, in August and September 2006. The author, applying a questionnaire-interview survey, essays to answer the questions like: What are the basic demographic features of the examined group? What are their professional structure, qualifications and level of education? What motives did they have to leave Poland? This is a survey-based research which is an introduction to further, deepened analyses of the new emigration wave of Polish citizens.

### 2. The scale of migration

“The emigration wave recorded at the moment is – as specialists claim – one of the biggest that Poland has experienced in its history. Soon, it can exceed the scale of the mass exodus of Poles to the mines of France and Belgium, which took place in the 1920s and the 1930s. It is because of the Partitions, the Second World War, the era of communism, that backwardness of civilization and economic development of the country has accumulated to make us a relatively poor nation. And even today, despite the recent 17 years of implementing po-

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litical, economic and social reforms, there are still many citizens who are forced to go abroad to earn their living" [Kudlicki, 2006]. Following Poland's entering the European Union on May 1, 2004, the labor markets in certain countries of the Community formally opened to Poles. Such facilitations have offered new possibilities and new chances of finding well-paid employment abroad. It is mainly the young who see their chances in the new arrangements and leave homes in search of their own place. It is estimated that the largest number of the Polish headed for Ireland and Britain, and according to different estimates it is from 1.2 to 2 million Poles who have left our country after the opening of the EU's borders [Markiewicz, 2006].

However, the above fact is the source of serious dilemmas: on the one hand, people have the right to move in order to find better living conditions, to wander in order to satisfy their thirst of changes and knowing the world – this is the essence of voluntary migrations, and – at the same time – it is one of the social freedoms which many generations fought for so zealously; on the other hand, there arises the question if, for sure, wage-earning migrations, or leaving home in hope of finding employment, hence – decisions enforced by the economic situation – are voluntary. What consequences does this have for the country which is being left and what consequences does this have for the one admitting emigrants? There is no doubt that the main reason why young Poles have been leaving for the West after 2004 is the economic one.

The rapid transformations which followed at the beginning of the 1990s lacked in a proper legislative framing. The law did not catch up with the changes. In consequence, until the mid-1990s the law in force had been poorly adjusted to the principles of contemporary market economy. John Paul II referred to this form of liberalism as "primitive", stating simultaneously that it has a destructive effect on social development [Jan Paweł II, 2005].

According to current estimates, Poles account, in the global scale, for the biggest after the Chinese, the German and the Italian, ethnic group dispersed outside their mother country. Still, we do not belong to the most populous nations. In Europe, as regards the number of the population, we are as far as on the eighth place. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs assesses that in 2007 there are about 20 million Poles living outside Poland, including the biggest number in the USA, then Germany, Great Britain, France, and recently – Ireland. As far as the last country is concerned, in the last three years, the Polish have become the most numerous national minority, out of 100 working people, 8–9 will be Polish [Markiewicz, 2006].

Research carried out by the European Citizen Action has proved that each year about 5% graduates from institutions of higher education leave for the EU countries, about half of whom stay there on a permanent basis. Those who are leaving can be divided into two groups: the first – comprising specialists

invited by western companies; the other – people doing physical jobs very often below their qualifications, yet being better-paid than in Poland.

Results of the National Census of 2002 showed that almost 800 thousand citizens who have their permanent place of abode in Poland, at the time of the census had been staying abroad for more than two months. Nearly 80% of those, *i.e.* around 650 thousand had stayed there for over 12 months or longer. It was found out that the Polish were staying on all continents, the largest number in other European countries (97% in the EU states) [Kostrzewa, Stańczak, 2004].

The authors of *Diagnoza społeczna 2005 (The Social Diagnosis 2005)*, who conducted their research among a very large number (3,868) of households concluded that every fifth Pole would like to leave (22.5% of the working population and 23.8% of the unemployed). Both among those with jobs and the ones without jobs it is men who show stronger tendency towards emigrating, city dwellers rather than country people, the largest group willing to leave being young people up to 24 years of age (42.3 of the working and 38.7% of the unemployed). The older the person, the weaker the will to emigrate. In the years 2001–2005, 1,240.3 thousand people emigrated from Poland, which makes up almost the same number as the total of those who left the country in the last 50 years altogether (1,359 thousand) (Table 1). Comparing these two numbers testifies to the scale of the phenomenon that Poland has come to face in recent years. Aging of the Polish society, the immense scale of the migrations abroad and the negative birth rate, which demographers are recording with more and

Table 1. Scale of emigration in Poland in the years 1952–2005

Years	Emigrants		
	People (thousand)	%	Total (%)
Total 1952–2005	2,599.5	–	100%
1952–2000 including:	1,359.2	100	52.3
1952–1960	370.4	27.2	–
1961–1970	223.8	16.5	–
1971–1980	225.7	16.6	–
1980–1990	286.7	21.1	–
1990–2000	252.6	18.6	–
2001–2005 including:	1,240.3	100	47.7
2001–2003	211.7	17.1	–
2004–2005	1,028.6	82.9	–

Source: author's own elaboration on the basis of materials obtained from GUS (Central Statistical Office)

more concern nowadays, evoke deep concern about the future of the country, or even about the state of national security, among the majority of specialists in social sciences [Kudlicki, 2006].

The present considerations deal with social conditionings and the situation of Poles staying in Ireland in 2006. The research was carried out with the use of the method of individual interview on the basis of a questionnaire elaborated on by the author. While doing so, the author made use of the literature of the subject and the basis of statistical data included in publications by the Central Statistical Office.

### 3. Ireland and the Irish

Ireland is an island lying in the Atlantic Ocean, in the North-West of Europe. The territory of the country is four times smaller than that of Poland, the number of the population being ten times lower than in Poland (cf. Table 2). The Irish, like the Polish, declare their belonging to the Catholic Church. They have a number of other features in common with Poles as well: they are lively, spontaneous, very kind to Poles, with a similar temperament. They also have similar national vices, such as: they lack in consistency in action, the so-called "short-lived zeal", slightly messy, often abusing alcohol (mainly beer). They, again like us, have had a difficult history, one can say even more tragic. The lack of their own state lasting 800 years resulted in that the occupants (the English) managed to deprive them of their own language (the English language is the main language for communication). Only 3% of the Irish use the Irish language, while about 10% of the population inhabiting the Isle at the moment speak Polish – they are Polish emigrants. This represents the scale of the phenomenon. The Irish praise Polish workers for their diligence, expertise and being disciplined (*e.g.* on Mondays Poles always come to work, which does not always happen in the case of their Irish colleagues). On the other hand, they are afraid of the Polish dominance (or maybe this Polish national haughtiness which has already manifested itself on the Isle) and make reservations in private talks that they will not let Poles colonize their country, and that they can defend it well enough. This is why candidates to be chosen for local authorities are required to prove their knowledge of the Irish language (which is not a condition easy to satisfy even by native Irish people). In recent ten years the birthrate has been positive (+1.4%), while in Poland it has been negative in recent years (-1.5%). The percentage of people with higher education is even higher there. The Irish begin their school education by one year earlier (at the age of 5 years) and, consequently, obtain their higher education earlier in their lives. They introduced recommendations of the Bologna Declaration and it is common

for them to graduate in vocational studies, without obtaining the Master's degree. The Bologna system (4+1) functions there well in practice and proves truly effective. Vocational studies last four years and post-graduate Master's degree takes one year more. The latter is intertwined with vocational practice, which is treated in a serious way there: grades obtained for the practice are treated on the same par as those in the other theoretical subjects. This yields measurable benefits in practice. It is only prospective medical doctors who study longer, *i.e.* six years, like in Poland, and after graduating they are obliged to do a three-year practice training at English or American clinics. Ireland joined the EU 34 years ago (together with Britain and Denmark – which was the first expansion of the European Economic Community in 1973). It was still in the 1980s that the unemployment rate in Ireland was high (reaching 18%), yet today – practically – this is not a problem anymore (a 4% – rate of unemployment is the so-called “natural unemployment rate” – it is only those who do not want to work who do not work in fact). In Poland, the unemployment rate is still very high (Table 2). The distribution of the GDP *per capita* is six times higher than that in Poland; the average monthly gross income, counted in the Euro, is four times higher than that in our country (Table 2).

Table 2. Poland and Ireland – basic comparative data as for the end of 2006

Specification	Ireland	Poland
Area	70.3 thousand km <sup>2</sup>	312.7 thousand km <sup>2</sup>
Population	4.2 million	38.1 million
Density: number of population per 1 km <sup>2</sup>	60	122
Change in the number of population 1995–2005	+1.4%	-1.5%
Percentage of people aged 25–34 years with post-primary education	39.2%	25.2%
Average life expectancy (men/women)	75.8/80.7 years	70.5/78.8 years
Unemployment	4.2%	14.8%
GDP <i>per capita</i>	€ 36.2 thousand	€ 6.5 thousand
Surplus/budget deficit	1.4% GDP	-3.9% GDP
Foreign investments	6.0% GDP	4.9% GDP
Percentage of households with the Internet	45.1%	30.0%
Minimal wage rate per hour of work	€ 7	€ 1.3
Average gross monthly income	€ 2,580	€ 680
Year of joining the UE	1973	2004

Source: author's own elaboration on the basis of Report Kinoulty Research „Polacy w Irlandii”, Eurostat and GUS, quoted after: *Polityka* 2007, no. 11

#### 4. The subject and results of the research

The research covered 200 people chosen totally at random. They are living and working in Limerick and the closest environs. Limerick is situated in the south-west of Ireland and is the third, as regards the size, city of the country. It lies upon the Shannon, at the estuary of the river into the Atlantic Ocean. The river is the longest on the Isle. Men accounted for 62% (124 respondents) of the examined group, the remaining 76 (38%) of the examined being women. The majority of the questioned (80%) were below 35 years of age, that is mainly young people. The age range among men was between 20 and 35 years, whereas women were slightly younger, their age ranging between 19 and 48. On the average, a Polish immigrant in Ireland will be 30 years old (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The structure of the Polish in Ireland according to demographic features (as on 30 September, 2006)

Specification	Number of people by gender	Structure (%)
Total	200	100.0
Women	76	38.0
Men	124	62.0
Number of people by age		
Total	200	100.0
Age range		
19–24	67	33.5
25–30	68	34.0
31–34	23	11.5
35–40	18	9.0
41–44	12	6.0
45–50	7	3.5
51–54	4	2.0
55–60	1	0.5
61 and over	–	–

Source: author's own elaboration on the basis of survey-based research conducted in Limerick, the Republic of Ireland, in September 2006

The structure of the questioned Poles according to the level of their education seems interesting, too. The most numerous group (56.5%) are persons with secondary or post-secondary education, and this both among the men (70 respondents – 62%) and the women (43 respondents – 38%) (Table 4). They are mostly graduates from grammar comprehensive schools, vocational and

technical secondary schools, as well as post-graduate secondary education schools. The average age of the men in this group amounts to 30 years, that of the women – 25 years. The men have – on the average – work experience of seven years, the women – that of four years. Thus, on the whole, they are relatively young educated people, with a few years' working experience in Poland. On coming to Ireland they will not use this potential since they usually find employment in services, gastronomy, trade, hotel services. This results primarily from the rather low level of their English language competence.

The majority of the examined men with secondary and post-secondary education used to work in Poland in technical jobs (mechanics, electro-mechanics) and in construction industry, still there are also drivers, miners, physiotherapists, security men, policemen, male nurses, cooks and office workers, as well as cashiers and even owners of their own small businesses, who – for different reasons, including mostly bankruptcy – resigned from running their own business activity at home. Most of the women used to work in administration.

**Table 4.** Structure by the gender and education (as on 30 September, 2006)

Education	Number of respondents					
	Total	%	Number of women	%	Number of men	%
Total	200	100.0	76	38	124	62
Higher	52	26.0	26	50	26	50
Secondary and post-secondary	113	56.6	43	38	70	62
Basic vocational and elementary	35	17.5	7	20	28	80

Source: author's own research

People with higher education make up the second largest group as regards the number of the examined (26%), with an equal share of women and men. Most of them graduated from universities (42.%) and polytechnics (26.9%), which yields a total of almost 70%. Then there are graduates of academies of economy (15.4%), pedagogical academies (7.8%) – a total of 23% (compare Table 5). The average age for this group is 28.5 years, distributing men – 30 years old, women – 27 years old. The average is made slightly higher here with respect to two men aged 44 and 50, and two women aged 38 and 44. Thus, the average age of men in this group counted without the two extreme cases is 28 years, and as regards women – 26 years, respectively. The age range among the men is wider than that among the women (the first spans between 22 and 50 years, while the other – 23–44). As for the respondents' work experience, the men declare 5-year work experience, while women – 4.5 years, respec-

tively. The older respondents would indicate a longer period of professional experience (in the case of men – 16 years, and 13 years for women). The most numerous group among the men are electronics engineers (32%) and civil engineers (21%). The remaining part includes teachers, sociologists, philosophers and specialists in economic sciences. It is worth noting that political scientists, philosophers and sociologists do not indicate any work experience, which means that they either did not work in their professions or depended on unemployment benefits in Poland. It is also possible they were employed in other jobs in the “grey sector” (in the black labor market). Women with higher education are mainly teachers, accountants, economists, office workers and sociologists. The last professional group – similarly as men – never worked in their profession (see Table 3).

**Table 5.** Poles in Ireland by the type of completed institution of higher education

Specification	Number of graduates					
	Total	%	Number of women	%	Number of men	%
Total	52	100.0	30	100.0	22	100.0
Universities	22	42.3	18	73.3	4	18.2
Polytechnics and Academy of Mining and Metallurgy	14	26.9	4	13.3	10	45.5
Academies of economy	8	15.4	4	26.6	4	18.2
Teacher Training Colleges	4	7.8	3	13.3	1	4.5
Academies of Physical Education	3	5.7	1	3.3	2	9.1
Other institutions of higher education	1	1.9	–	–	1	4.5

Source: author's own research

The least numerous was the group of Poles with basic vocational and elementary education – 35 respondents (17.5% of the total number). Women account for one fifth of this group. Out of 7 women, only two are at the ages 19 and 21, the others ranging from 31 to 45 years of age. Generally, the average age of the women here is about 30 years, yet on excluding the two youngest ones, it amounts to 39 years. The women used to work at home in such jobs as: shop assistants, waitresses, dressmakers, cleaning women.

The men with basic vocational and elementary education are even older than the women, their average age being 36 years, with the exception of 6 men ranging from 21 to 25 years (the average in this sub-group is 23 years). Accordingly, the average age of the remaining part of the group is 40 years, resulting from the age range between 28 and 57 years. The younger people in

this group have shorter work experience – between 1 and 7 years, the average being 4 years. The work experience of the older men in the group ranges from 1.5 to 34 years, the average amounting to 18 years. The men used to work mainly in construction industry as bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, building construction fitters, construction workers. Apart from them there are also drivers, shoemakers and cooks.

The Poles staying in Ireland usually work in jobs that are different from the occupations they had at home – in most cases below their actual qualifications and education level. The main reason for that is their poor knowledge of the English language and the fact that their Polish diplomas, which certify the level of their professional preparation, are not recognized (in the opinions expressed by the majority of respondents) (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Professional structure<sup>1</sup> of the Polish employed in Ireland (as on 30 September, 2006)

Professional group	Number of people	Structure (%)
Total	200	100.0
I Specialists	6	3.0
II Technicians	3	1.5
III Office workers	2	1.0
IV Workers in personal services and shop assistants	58	29.0
V Farmers, gardeners, foresters, fishermen	—	—
VI Industrial workers and craftsmen	101	50.5
VII Operators and fitters of machines	8	4.0
VIII Laborers employed to do simple jobs <sup>2</sup>	22	11.0
IX Persons without vocational preparation	*	*

<sup>1</sup> Refers to the so-called Major Groups according to the Polish Classification of Professions and Specializations

<sup>2</sup> The total number of persons of Groups VIII and IX, possessing the lowest qualifications

Source: author's own research

As far as the question referring to the length of time spent in Ireland is concerned, 87% of the respondents chose the span from 0.5 year to 2 years (that is they came here after 1 May, 2004). Only 7% of the questioned have been staying here for 3 years, and merely 1% – for more than 10 years (compare Table 7).

It seems obvious that obtaining knowledge of the causes of emigrations is among the priorities of the research. Poles are leaving chiefly because of financial reasons (99% of the respondents), *i.e.* in search of employment and better pay than those offered at home. The lack of prospects in Poland was indicated by 24.5% of the examined, while an escape from the threat of unemployment

Table 7. Length of stay in Ireland

Specification	Number of people	Structure (%)
Answers total	200	100.0
Up to 6 months (0.5 year)	45	22.5
7-12 months (1 year)	63	31.5
13-18 months (1.5 year)	36	18.0
19-24 months (2 years)	30	15.0
25-36 months (3 years)	14	7.0
37-48 months (4 years)	6	3.0
49-60 months (5 years)	2	1.0
6-10 years	2	1.0
Over 10 years	2	1.0

Source: author's own research.

was given as a reason by 20% of the respondents (see Table 8). Below are some most common causes mentioned by the respondents:

- "I wanted to earn to pay off bank loans in Poland."
- "I want to pay my debts."
- "I want to earn to pay for my studies."
- "I dream of earning enough to buy a flat"
- "I must help my parents-pensioners."
- "Here, in Ireland, I need a month to earn to buy myself a laptop, in Poland I am not sure if I could earn the same for a whole year if I had to maintain myself."
- "In Poland life is becoming humiliating. Not everybody is fit to be a 'mafioso' or 'grafter'. This continuing poverty and uncertainty of tomorrow are awful and unbearable."
- "There is poverty at home; I worked in Poland for 25 years and I was always lacking in almost everything. I can't stand it anymore. Now, here, though it is a foreign country, they treat me with respect and I can afford to have almost anything."

The Polish who are staying in Ireland recruit mainly from inhabitants of cities (91.5%); only 8.5% live in the country. Over one fifth of the respondents come from Poland's five biggest cities: Poznań (6.5%), Krakow (5.5%), Warsaw (4%), Łódź (2%) and Wrocław (2%). Inhabitants of cities leave Poland much more frequently than their counterparts from villages. A differentiation concerning regions was also noted: the most emigrants come from Dolny Śląsk (Lower Silesia) (17.5%), Małopolska (Little Poland) (15.3%) and Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) (14.8%). The greatest number of the inhabitants of the country come from Pomorskie Region (Pomerania) (23.4%) and Mazowieckie Region

**Table 8.** Factors determining the decision to leave Poland (in the respondents' opinions) <sup>1</sup>

No.	Specification	Answers	
		number	%
1	Money to earn the living, raise life standards	198	99.0
2	Better future for children	27	13.5
3	Lack of prospects for future in Poland	49	24.5
4	Shortage of work, unemployment	38	19.0
5	Low wages in Poland, no chance for a normal life	55	27.5
6	Shortage of flats	42	21.0
7	Because I don't want to stay poor for the rest of my life, I want to work and live a good life.	18	9.0
8	An easier life in Ireland	12	6.0
9	Political mess in Poland, uncertainty of tomorrow	19	9.5
10	In Poland people are not respected, living conditions are bad.	37	18.5
11	Bureaucracy makes life hard.	26	13.0
12	Lack of possibilities of professional development	8	4.0
13	Achieving a high professional position, much higher chances of making a career than at home	4	2.0
14	Temporary stay on business, a contract	2	1.0
15	Accompanying the husband/wife, somebody of the family already left before	39	19.5
16	Learning English, adventure	8	4.0
17	Traveling broadens the mind, wanting to develop personally, possibility of living a more interesting life, gaining new experience	9	4.5
18	Curiosity of the world, a good opinion on Ireland	3	1.5

<sup>1</sup> Altogether the answers yield more than 100% since the respondents were free to choose a number of answers

Source: author's own research

(Masovia) (17.6%). There were no inhabitants of Podlaskie and Podkarpackie Provinces in the examined group (Table 9).

## 5. Conclusions

One can conclude that the two years of Poland's membership in the EU has liberated, in the Polish, a thirst for mobility and considerable want of emigrating in search of employment, fair pay and better living conditions. A great number of respondents stress their disappointment with the effects of the structural transformations in Poland. According to assessments provided by

**Table 9.** Territorial background of the surveyed by provinces

Provinces	Number of people			Structure (%)		
	Total	city	country	Total	city	country
Total	200	183	17	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dolnośląskie	34	32	2	17.0	17.5	11.8
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	6	6	–	3.0	3.2	–
Lubelskie	7	7	–	3.5	3.8	–
Lubuskie	10	10	–	5.0	5.0	–
Łódzkie	9	8	1	4.5	4.4	5.9
Małopolskie	28	28	–	14.0	15.3	–
Mazowieckie	15	12	3	7.5	6.6	17.6
Opolskie	7	6	1	3.5	3.3	5.9
Podkarpackie	–	–	–	–	–	–
Podlaskie	–	–	–	–	–	–
Pomorskie	20	16	4	10.0	8.7	23.4
Śląskie	13	11	2	6.5	6.0	11.8
Świętokrzyskie	4	4	–	2.0	2.2	–
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	3	3	–	1.5	1.6	–
Wielkopolskie	29	27	2	14.5	14.8	11.8
Zachodniopomorskie	15	13	2	7.5	7.1	11.8

Source: author's own research

different sources, from 1.2 to 2 million Poles left the country between 1 May, 2004 and the end of 2005. They found both employment and accommodation in the other EU countries. It follows from the survey-based research conducted by the author that a good part of them have found their place just in Ireland and are pleased with their choice. The average Pole staying on the Emerald Isle – precisely speaking – in Limerick – is 30 years old, mostly a man, with secondary education. It is a separate issue that the image of Poles abroad has changed for the better: today our compatriots are more and more often associated with qualified, reliable and competitive workers.

Analyzing immigrants' employment in a new host country, it can be noticed that the majority of them are physical workers, despite the fact that very often they have diplomas of colleges of higher education or certificates of completion of secondary technical schools, as well as extensive professional experience. They are an instance of peculiar *déclassé*, falling victim to their not knowing the language of the country well enough. Furthermore, immigrants are usually employed in sectors and branches that can offer rather arduous working conditions and lower social prestige. They are as a rule lowly paid, too. There

is a general global trend to diversify the market into better and worse smaller markets [*W trosce o pracę*, 2004].

One has to note also some positive sides to migration in the individual dimension (to the very migrants themselves, their families and social environment they come from). Migrations do offer a chance of finding work, a better job or any job at all if there is a lack of employment. They also enhance the prospects of earning wages that exceed (by a few times) those received at home, in this way securing relative affluence, bettering living conditions and financial standing. Equally important are non-material values: in the new environment the immigrant learns the native language of the new mother country, gets to know new people, their customs, culture and traditions, gets to know the new country, learns new methods of working, new techniques and technologies, new modes of organization of work. He also activates in himself the spirit of initiative and responsibility for his image juxtaposed against other nationalities. Moreover, emigrants broaden their life horizons, obtain a chance of getting to know other social systems, as well as have occasions to realize, in practice, the principles of tolerance and respect towards other cultures, religions and nations.

Very often migrating people become propagators of new partner-based relations between the countries of their origin and those where they arrive in, and this on various planes: economic, cultural, social, or religious. In the situation of a high unemployment rate, wage-earning emigration plays an important role in soothing the effect of shortage of workplaces.

Economic benefits, in the macroeconomic dimension, are connected, first of all, with transfer of capital (stronger currency) to the country of origin (it is estimated that cash transfers to Poland exceed € 2 billion annually), transfer of new technologies, production and ways of management, learning new methods of solving problems on the local level, with transfer of business activity and initiative typical of highly developed states. However, it must be noted that in the age of globalization, wage-earning migrations are losing their value as a developmental factor.

It is beyond any doubt that the economy of the host country benefits most from wage-earning migrations. Mobile workers secure maintenance of a fast rate of development of a given country, fill in gaps in local markets, contribute to development of building of houses (provision of housing for immigrants and their families). Moreover, immigrants pay taxes in the country where they are working and also spend money they earn in it, thus contributing to development of the country's economic situation, a rise in business activity, etc.

Integration of Polish emigrants with the Irish society is in line with the vision of united Europe which sees the latter as a federation of different ethnic groups and regions rather than one of states. The way in which Poles entered the Irish environment, their attitude towards the native people, are generally

positive: they want to enter the new social environment as quickly and “painlessly” as possible, at the same trying to preserve their own traditions and customs (e.g. the Polish cuisine is beginning to raise considerable interest on the part of the Irish).

Polish citizens did not appear in Ireland on a mass scale until 2004 (i.e. after Poland’s joining the EU). Earlier, the directions of emigration of Poles included the USA, France, Germany, Belgium and Great Britain. However, in recent years the number of Poles in Ireland has been rising steadily. They arrive here with their families, children attend Irish schools and it could be expected that quite a high percentage of them will stay there for long, if not forever. This is not good for Poland as there is a threat that the country will soon start “aging demographically”, like most of the nations of Western Europe. Furthermore, it is a fact that there is already shortage of qualified workers and personnel felt in Poland, especially as far as craftsmen and medical doctors are concerned.

The Polish immigration in Ireland is relatively young. The Poles have come mainly from big Polish cities such as: Warsaw, Poznań, Łódź and Wrocław. The largest part are people with secondary education, then those with higher education; there are not many people with basic vocational and elementary education. Generally, their knowledge of the English language is poor, which is the main reason why they take employment below their professional possibilities. Women usually find employment in the services sector, trade, gastronomy, hotel services, or as nannies; men – work as physical workers in construction industry, security services for big companies, also as drivers, less often in trade or gastronomy.

Trying to characterize the attitudes of the Polish towards this new reality, one can distinguish the following three groups of immigrants;

- those pleased with their work, ones that can do well in the new environment, appreciate the pay conditions and the “lighter”, more comfortable life, they want to stay as long as possible, perhaps on a permanent basis;
- the dissatisfied ones who cherished certain excessively positive representations of “a paradise on earth” in Ireland and now are frustrated, complain, yet they got stuck there and are not coming back to Poland;
- “migrating birds” – persons who have gained their professional experience in other European countries and/or in the USA, Canada, and have decided that they are the best off in Ireland for a while; they will improve their English here and do not exclude the possibility of leaving for Australia or New Zealand.

There is still a group of those who came here with the intention of earning as much as possible and returning home after five years at the latest.

The attitude of the Irish towards Poles is generally positive and kind: they appreciate the expertise and diligence of the latter. Obviously, together with the growing number of the Polish flowing in, there occur unpleasant incidents

as well, which – unfortunately – can soil the image of the whole nation. The Irish underline that the Polish are quick to learn and adjust to new requirements in comparison with other nationals; they are also the quickest to be promoted. Also children of the Polish immigrants are reported to be doing well at Irish schools. This is a popular opinion that has not been confirmed by any serious research yet (the author of this paper plans to carry out relevant research in the future). What is more, the Irish are very appreciative of the Polish women's beauty and there are more and more of them who start learning the Polish language.

In the age of globalization, "economy based on knowledge" is becoming indispensable since it is the intellectual capital that is the condition and source of affluence in every country. In this light, the mass emigration of young Poles has to be regarded as a negative phenomenon. The country loses a huge human potential, educated, talented people, willing to work, who should multiply our common wealth instead of contributing to keeping up the high enough economic development of other states. The author is going to continue her research in the coming years, which will allow sketching a more precise picture of the Polish staying in Ireland. It is likely that some new phenomena will occur in the meantime, which will be possible to observe and classify. The results presented in this paper, imperfect as they might be, seem to offer interesting material for analyses and, hopefully, are a contribution to finding answers to a few questions vitally related to the future of our nation and state.

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