

„ Why the Isles, why the Continent? Factors Influencing Destination Choice among post-2004 Graduate and Non-Graduate Migrants from Poland”

May 1, 2004, will be remembered as an important date in the history of European migrations. On this day, ten countries, mostly from Central and Eastern Europe (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) joined the European Union and the scale of migrations from the region, and especially their geographic distribution, changed dramatically.

In the preceding accession negotiations, migrations - officially known as the free circulation of labour within the EU - were a key issue. ‘Old’ EU members, especially Germany and Austria, which were the traditional migration destinations for Central and Eastern Europeans, feared a mass influx of workers, who would bring down wages for locals, burden the social security systems and cause other social problems. ‘New’ EU states and their citizens perceived the freedom to work and live on the territory of the whole EU as a key benefit of membership. Finally, it was agreed that labour markets would be opened to Poles, Lithuanians, Slovaks and others gradually. Each of the old EU15 countries would be able to restrict their access 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 before restrictions could be extended. Three countries decided to open their labour markets from May 1, 2004, the day of enlargement: the UK, Ireland and Sweden.

Both before and after the above regulations became known, several studies (Kupiszewski 2001, Boeri and Brücker 2000, Dustmann et al. 2003, Alvarez-Plata et al. 2003) attempted to predict the scale and directions of migration from Central and Eastern Europe. Some predictions were broadly accurate concerning the total number of migrants. However, not a single one predicted the geographic directions of migration, even when it was known that only three countries would open their labour markets on May 1, 2004. Data from one study (Alvarez-

Plata et al. 2003) suggested that the share of migrants going to Germany would decrease rapidly, but the authors discarded this scenario as implausible since they believed that ‘the geographical distribution of the migrant population across European countries is fairly stable over time’ (2003: 39). Events in the decade after 2004 showed that the direction of migration flows could, in fact, be very unstable (Okólski 2007).

Before EU accession, Poles most often departed for Germany and the USA. In 2002 (the last census before EU accession) there were 294,000 Polish migrants in Germany and only 24,000 in the United Kingdom. After accession, 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). Ireland, which practically did not figure on the map of Polish migrations before accession (only 2,000 Polish migrants in 2002), quickly became the no. 3 destination. In the record year 2007, the number of Polish migrants on the Emerald Isle reached 200,000, before dropping in the years of the economic crisis. This was particularly striking given the moderate size of the country.

It was indeed a revolution in migration routes in Europe. The British press, exaggerating somewhat, called it the biggest migration since the arrival of the Huguenots from France in the 17th century (Garapich 2016:12).

Although migration to the UK and Ireland was characteristic of this migration wave from Central and Eastern Europe, the list of destinations chosen also became more diverse. Countries such as the Netherlands, Spain, or Iceland, and later Norway, also attracted significant numbers of Poles.

As of 2018, the United Kingdom still had the largest number of Polish emigrants (793,000 according to Polish statistics, which do not include persons de-registered from their place of residence in Poland – GUS 2018; 832,000 according to British statistics – ONS 2018). Germany, where the transition period had ended in 2011, had an increasing number of Poles

but was still behind the UK with 703,000 persons. The Netherlands and Ireland were the third and fourth most popular destinations in Europe, with 120,000 and 112,000 Poles respectively, followed by Italy which had 92,000. Among European countries, Norway also had a significant number of Poles - 85,000. Generally, 2,1 mln of the 2,5 mln Polish citizens who lived abroad, lived within the EU. Political instability, notably the UK leaving the EU, may cause these proportions to change. This volatility makes the period a great case for the study of choices migrants make regarding their destinations.

STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT POLISH POST-ACCESSION MIGRANTS

Many publications (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009, Kaczmarczyk 2011, Kurekova 2013) demonstrate that Poles who went to the Isles were different than those who chose countries of continental Europe: they were younger, better educated and more frequently came from larger cities. 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, in Germany or Italy it was 35 (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009: 111). The differences in the levels 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 much better educated than those in Germany.

As Kaczmarczyk (2011) writes, the differences highlighted above suggest that we should speak of two different types of migration. One consisted of young, educated persons who hoped to profit from migration by joining the primary labour market and also gain new

experiences. These persons chose the UK and Ireland most often. The other type resembled pre-accession Polish migrants, who frequently circulated between home in Poland and job abroad, whose motivations were exclusively financial – they wanted to earn money for spending back home and did not have high aspirations for their positions abroad. These persons preferred Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and other countries of continental Europe as their destination.

The literature on Polish migrants after 2004 is very rich (a review can be found for example in White 2016, and especially the recent KBnM report – Horolets et al. 2018), but it does not provide uncontested answers regarding the reasons for migration, and especially the choices of one country over another. The conclusions regarding this issue are sometimes contradictory. At first, several publications (Boeri and Brücker 2004, Zaiceva 2006) assumed that the new wave of migrations to the British Isles is simply a diversion of the flow of migrants to Germany, where they would have gone if not for the restrictions on the labour market. A certain diversion did undoubtedly take place, but its scale was questioned in later publications (Kaczmarczyk 2011, Holland et al. 2011, Fihel et al. 2015). If access to legal employment had been the key factor taken into consideration by migrants, then they should have also gone to Sweden, which also opened its labour market from May 1, 2004. This did not happen. Some scholars point out that the demographic profile of a part of the Polish migrants to the UK and Ireland was so different from those going to Germany, that we cannot speak of a diversion effect, but rather of a new, qualitatively different wave of migrants to the Isles (Kaczmarczyk 2008, 2011). Their liquid, undetermined plans were also treated as proof that these were different migrants (Eade et al. 2007, Engbersen et al. 2009, Moriarty et al. 2010).

A second factor widely discussed in the literature (for example Okólski and Salt 2014) was the large demand for workers in the UK and Ireland, and large supply of well-educated young people in Poland and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. All surveys conducted (University of Surrey 2006, Milewski and Ruszczak-Żbikowska 2008, Jończy 2010)

confirm that the possibility of finding a well-paid job was an important factor taken into consideration by many Poles. Later studies (Krings et al. 2013, Isański et al. 2014, Luthra et al. 2014) underline that it was not the only reason, and that cultural factors, such as knowing or wanting to learn English, the attractiveness of the British and Irish lifestyle and culture, the attractiveness of London as a world economic and cultural centre, were also taken into consideration by migrants. This was the case especially among young and educated people coming from large cities.

The role of social factors, especially migration networks, in determining migrants' choices regarding destination is not unequivocal. Networks seem key in cases of tradition migration, such as that to Germany, but their role is more questionable for migrants to the UK and, especially, Ireland, which had very few Polish migrants before 2004 (Okólski 2007). Some studies (White and Ryan 2008, Jończy 2010, White 2011) however, did find that networks were key in migrations to the Isles. The literature is not conclusive regarding at what moments of the migration wave networks were important and for whom.

Finally, several studies have shown that factors taken into consideration by migrants changed over time, and that reasons for remaining at the destination could be different than the initial reasons for coming. Especially important were factors related to life stage, children and their education (White 2011).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Such striking differences between Polish migrants in EU countries raise obvious questions, which have not yet been fully answered in spite of the large number of research publications devoted to Polish migrants, especially those in the UK and Ireland. These are the research questions I intend to investigate in this thesis. They are as follows:

1. How did Polish post-accession migrants make their decisions to migrate? Was this a one-step process, where a particular opportunity presented itself and they sought it? Or did they first decide to emigrate, and then looked for an appropriate destination?
2. What kinds of factors did they take into consideration when making their decision? Were these factors predominantly economic, social, cultural, legal (due to the transition periods before some EU labour markets were opened) or other?
3. How were the factors taken into consideration dependent on the demographic features of the particular migrant, especially their level of education?
4. How did factors considered by migrants vary depending on the destination? Why were Ireland and the UK more attractive to educated migrants than Germany, the Netherlands and other European destinations?

Because of the transition periods before the labour markets of Germany, Austria and other countries of continental Europe were opened to Polish workers, a fifth question imposes itself:

5. Would migrants have made a different decision regarding destination if all EU labour markets had been open to them at the time of migration?

Although migration from Poland to other countries of the EU is an ongoing process, for many of the migrants it has been over a decade since they migrated. Many have made long-term decisions regarding where to live. My research is thus also a good opportunity to compare how their motivations have changed. Hence my 6th and 7th research questions:

6. Which public policies in origin and destinations, other than those regarding labour market access, influenced migrants' decisions to migrate, to choose a particular destination, and to remain there?
7. Were reasons for remaining at the destination the same as the initial reasons for migrating there? If they have changed, then why are for whom?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND NOTIONS USED

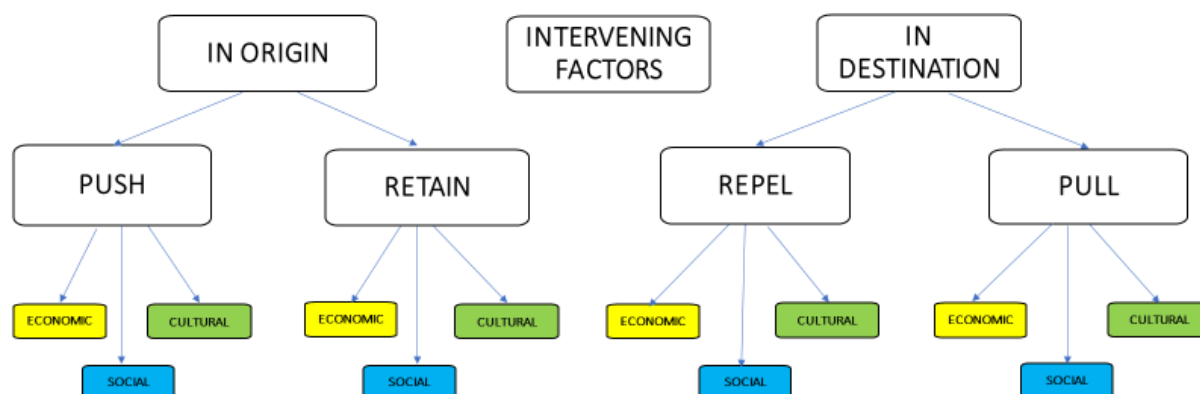
Migration theories can be classified in several ways: according to the field of knowledge they originate from; according to the broad sociological paradigm they operate within; or according to the level of analysis they focus on. In this last classification we can distinguish theories of the macro-level (of whole societies, countries or even global reach), micro- (individual decisions), or mezzo-level (which treats the family or household as the basic unit of decision-making) (Hammar et al. 1997, Faist 2000). Since this study is focused on the decisions of individuals regarding the choice of destination and then the decision to remain at that destination, obviously a micro- or mezzo-level theory is needed. It is also equally obvious (Arango 2000, Castles and Miller 2009, de Haas 2014, Massey 1993, Massey 1999), however, that there doesn't exist one comprehensive migration theory which could serve as a theoretical basis for such a study. In accordance with what some great authorities in migration studies prescribe (especially Massey 1993, 1999 and de Haas 2014), it was necessary to combine several theories for this study.

The framework within which this could be done was provided by the push-pull framework, a concept formulated in 1966 by Everett Lee (1966). He classified factors that influence migration decisions into 1. Factors associated with the area of origin; 2. Factors associated with the area of destination, 3. Intervening obstacles (such as distance, costs of transportation, but also physical or political barriers), and 4. Personal factors (such as the stage of the life cycle or personality welcoming or resisting change) (1966: 50). He also pointed out that it is not the factors themselves, but the perception of those factors by a person which influences their decision. For every potential migrant the set of 'pluses' and 'minuses' in each destination is different (1966: 51).

The push-pull framework has received much criticism over the years. Some believe 'The push-pull theory is but a platitude at best' (1990: 125-6) or that it 'is a purely descriptive model in which factors assumed to play a role in migration are enumerated in a relatively arbitrary manner, without specifying their role and interactions' (Castles et al. 2013: 22). In spite of this, perhaps thanks to its elegant simplicity, the push-pull framework has been used numerous times. De Jong and Fawcett (1981) proposed the value expectancy model, which assumes that each factor influencing migration decisions has a certain perceived value or importance for the decision-maker and that this value must be multiplied by the perceived chances that a given value will be achieved. As the authors point out, such an approach allows for the comparison of alternative destinations. After establishing that 'fun and excitement' is the motive of migration of a particular person, we can ask them about the perceived chance of achieving that goal in particular destinations. Both Lee and de Jong and Fawcett point out, that both positive and negative factors in origin and destination should be taken into consideration. This will be reflected in my model proposed below. In the last decade many authors have criticized the push-pull framework as too deterministic, treating potential migrants as devoid of agency (Morawska 2001; Bakewell 2010; King 2012). Some proposed to replace 'factors' by 'drivers' (Carling and Talleraas 2016, van Hear et al. 2017), defining it as kind of background force based on which potential migrants may or may not decide to migrate. This research aims to name particular factors which pushed people to migrate, such as insufficient earnings, not general phenomena, such as poverty. The basic term used here is as proposed by Lee (1966) – factors.

Following in the footsteps of Bourdieu (1986) and many migration scholars (especially Verwiebe 2014), I have divided factors mentioned in the literature into three categories: economic, social, and cultural. The category of intervening factors includes legal barriers in access to the labour market, and the physical distance of the destination and costs of reaching it. My 'tree' of factors is as follows:

Graph 1. 'Tree' of push, pull and intervening factors for post-accession migrants from Poland



Many authors (Verwiebe 2014, Spörlein 2014) point out that people who are better educated or of a higher social class migrate more often for cultural reasons, whereas the lower-educated or of low status prefer destinations where there are many of their compatriots, probably relying on the help of migration networks.

Personal factors, the fourth category distinguished by Lee, is key for this study, as one of its aims is to compare which factors migrants take into consideration depending on their demographic profiles, especially the level of education.

The framework created by Lee allows for the use of several migration theories, each of which can explain some of the cases of post-accession migration.

Some of the economic factors 'pushing' or 'pulling' migrants can be explained in light of the neoclassical theory of migration (Todaro 1969, Todaro and Maruszko 1987), which assumes that at the micro level migration is the effect of an individual's calculation of costs and expected benefits at destination. The neoclassical assumption that potential migrants conduct

such a cost-benefit analysis is a key assumption of this work. Some migrants do not conduct this analysis individually, but as a family (household), in line with the assumption of the New Economics of Labour Migration (Stark and Bloom 1985). NELM is usually used to explain migrations from third-world countries, where families delegate one of their members to a different labour market to insure themselves from environmental and other risks, in a situation when they do not have access to insurance or credit. However, if we treat the notion of security broadly, not only as having a diversified source of income, but also as having social security and access to support for example in case of failure on the labour market, it becomes obvious that the theory can serve also to explain some decisions of migrating Poles, for example young people with unstable work contracts, which do not guarantee health care or access to an old-age pension.

Economic theories cannot explain some other factors which influence the decisions of migrants. Although there are no comprehensive theories regarding cultural reasons for migration, the notion of 'lifestyle migration' in developed societies has been coined already in the beginning of the 1970s by Zelinski (1971). In Europe some 'Eurostars', defined by Favell (2008) as educated Europeans, who profit from the opportunities provided by the free circulation of labour in the EU to move to cores of economic, cultural, political and other activity such as London, Amsterdam or Brussels ('eurocities'). Although a majority of Polish migrants are not 'Eurostars', among the educated there are those who fit in this category. Cultural and lifestyle-related factors are significant for them.

The spectrum of post-accession migrations would also be incomplete without referring to social theories, particularly network theory, also sometimes called 'migration chains' (MacDonald and MacDonald 1964) or the 'family and friends effect' (Portes 1999). Among social factors there are also those related to social status. Some authors (Stark and Fan 2009, Janicka 2010) argue that some people are motivated to migrate to avoid work they consider

degrading. In the proposed model factors related to status have been included on the side of the country of origin and the destination since the prospect of working below one's qualifications can also discourage from migration.

The push-pull model creates the possibility of including several theories of the micro and mezzo level to explain migrations from Central and Eastern Europe after the enlargement of the European Union.

SCOPE AND METHODS

To study such complex matter as factors motivating migrants to choose a particular country, and then to remain there, semi-structured qualitative interviews seemed most appropriate. In such an interview it is possible to establish which factors the migrant considered, based not only on his own declarations, but the whole context of the story of his life and migration (Mason 2002).

Between July 2015 and December 2017, I conducted 73 interviews with Polish migrants living in the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland. These four countries were chosen most frequently by Poles migrating after 2004. The sample included those who migrated after Poland's EU accession and have been living in the destination for at least a year. This cut of point, which is in line with the United Nations definition of migrant, excluded circular migrants and other people migrating for a very short time, for example to work during their vacation. The sample also included only people who did not have plans to return to Poland or move to a different country within a year, to be able to study reasons for remaining. In each country studies, the group of respondents was diverse in terms of age, length of migration, size of town of origin, work done before and after migration, family situation. In each country graduates and non-graduates constituted about half of the sample. The sample thus contained a much larger share of graduates than the general population of migrants in the country. This was done to

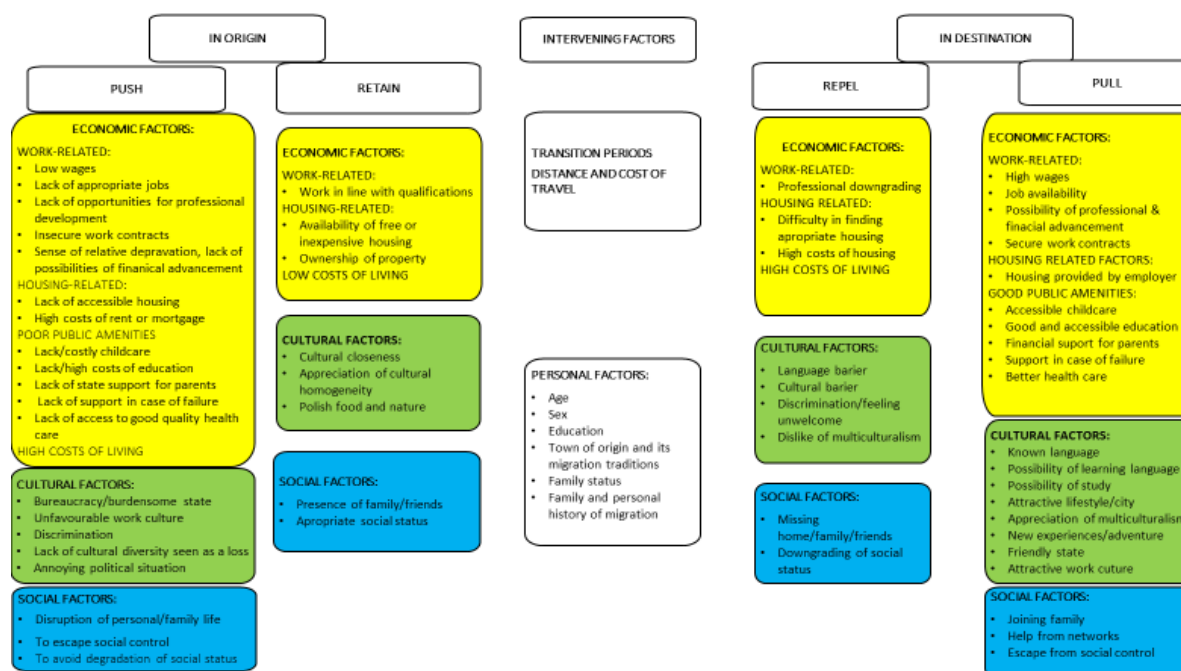
have a large enough sample of graduates (and non-graduates) to be able to compare between the two, and also between, for example, graduates in various countries.

The respondents were recruited mainly through particular Facebook groups (such as Polacy w Holandii – Poles in the Netherlands), several persons through personal channels. This means that the lowest educated, who may not have internet access or who may not know how to use the social network, may have been excluded. Almost all the interviews were conducted through Skype, telephone, or another internet communicator (with the exception of two, which were conducted in Poland when the respondents visited for a vacation).

The interviews started with a request, similar to that used in narrative interviews (Ryan 2010) for the respondent to tell the story of his/her life, focusing particularly on where they lived and why. Then, following a prepared list of topics, I asked the respondent about things he/she might have omitted, or about which I wanted to learn more. The list of topics included the following: 1) general questions about the participant's life before migration; 2) general questions about the migration decision; 3) questions about the influence of legal, economic, social and cultural factors on the decision to migrate and destination choice; 4) the participant's life after migration; 5) their plans.

The data gathered in the interviews were analysed in light of the theoretical model presented. Following Lee (1966) and de Jong and Fawcett (1981), I created a list of factors mentioned in the literature and supplemented it with some factors from my interviews. The division between push and retain factors at origin and pull and repel factors at destination was key, since factors at origin were not necessarily of the same nature as factors which made migrants choose a particular destination, for example some departed for economic reasons, but chose the destination because of network-related reasons, or because of cultural reasons such as the attractiveness of London.

Graph 2. Factors taken into consideration by post-EU accession migrants from Poland



The same kind of analysis was conducted regarding the reasons to remain at destination. This time, the main goal was to compare how factors taken into consideration by a particular migrant had changed. The group does not include a full spectrum of migrants, most notably it does not include those who returned, so general conclusions about who migrants remain or do not remain at destination cannot be drawn.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the literature on Polish post-EU accession migration is vast, so far it had not answered the question which factors migrants took into consideration in their decisions, and how this was related with their sex, age, level of education, and with the destination. This thesis was an attempt to answer the above questions.

The analysis conducted shows that level of education was a key feature which influenced which factors migrants took into consideration. Both persons with and without third-level degrees named economic factors on the push side, from lack of work for those with a low level of education to earnings insufficient to allow oneself a mortgage for those with degrees. Young people, including those who were happy with the levels of their earnings, named factors resulting from the weakness of public policies in Poland, for example lack of health insurance as a consequence of a precarious work contract, or lack of possibility of finding a place in a public preschool for one's child. Economic push factors were not significant only for people who were at the same time well-educated (graduates of reputed schools and fields of study) and not burdened with a family.

Differences between graduates and non-graduates were much more significant on the side of pull factors. For non-graduates the key factor determining their choice of destination was the presence of family or friends who could help them find a first job and a place to live. Graduates made their decisions based on economic or cultural factors, such as knowing the language of the destination, being interested in the culture, or wanting to live in a big metropolis.

The analysis of factors influencing migrants' decisions also demonstrated differences between the four countries analysed. Economic factors were significant everywhere, but they were a necessary but not a sufficient factor.

Persons who went to Ireland were attracted by the economic and language opportunities resulting from living in an Anglo-Saxon country, but they also wished to lead calm lives away from a metropolis and from the ethnic and cultural diversity which they related with the UK. They often presented Ireland as a kind of calm 'periphery', contrasting it with the British or London 'core'. Interestingly, some respondents judged Ireland as less developed even than Poland.

The group of respondents in the UK was extremely diverse – from well-off professionals to a respondent who had been homeless. A characteristic group for this country was respondents who wanted to gain new experiences, for example of life in the London metropolis, or live an adventure (in Eade et al.'s 2007 classification they would be in the 'searchers' category). A smaller number of respondents were very much career-oriented, seeking a career for example in finance. Such motivations were more frequent among respondents in the UK than in other countries.

Germany attracted people who wanted to have a better job and earnings, but who did not wish to live too far from their homes. The small distance was an important factor for almost all respondents, irrespective of their levels of education. It was a very strong factor – some people spoke of other, more attractive opportunities they had in other countries, which they rejected because they wanted to have the possibility of reaching their home within several hours. Respondents in Germany migrated there on average in 2012, thus after the lifting of restrictions on the labour market, and later than respondents in other countries (where the average was 2008). They did not directly mention the ending of the restrictions as a reason for choosing Germany, but many seemed to treat access to legal work and the resulting benefits as a *sine qua non* condition of their migration. We may thus assume that many of these people would not have decided to migrate at all if the labour market was closed. (Only few respondents from the UK and Ireland, and only those without degrees, mentioned the transition periods as one of the reasons why they went to the Isles and not to Germany.) Respondents in Germany, more often than those in other countries, mentioned not only earnings but their form of employment in Poland (for example without health and old-age insurance) as a factor pushing them out of Poland. When already in Germany, they realized how different the situation was there, and that they had access to good quality health care and support from the state, for example for parents of children. Factors related to the good quality of public services and

support from the state were not decisive in the decisions to migrate since migrants often did not have full knowledge of them. They were decisive for the decisions to remain. This concerned especially respondents in Germany and the Netherlands. They discovered that they have full access to health care (and for example can have all their teeth fixed, which was not possible in Poland), sick leave, rehabilitation, and even support for retraining in case of health problems. They gained a much larger sense of security than in Poland.

The Netherlands attracted respondents whose migration was facilitated by work agencies, but also those who judged this destination as ‘easier’ than the Isles (due to geographic and cultural proximity and the fact that they did not need to travel by plane or boat) and preferred it to Germany due to speaking some English, but not German. As a result, many Polish migrants in the Netherlands perceived their compatriots in the country as ‘worse’ migrants than those to the Isles. Some even commented on wanting to move to a different European country to surround themselves with ‘better’ Polish migrants.

Migrants in the Netherlands and in Ireland obviously perceived the United Kingdom as the economic and cultural ‘core’ of Europe. Many felt the need to justify why they did not migrate there.

When asked about the reasons for remaining, many migrants mentioned the same ones as for the initial decision, for example insufficient earning in Poland. For some, factors related to life stage were important – they had started families and believed it would be difficult for their children to return to the Polish system of education. Cultural factors, which were initially not important for non-graduates, gained some importance. This concerned especially lifestyle-related factors such as the possibility of going to the pub, work culture, and interpersonal relations in general. Factors resulting from public policies, for example access to health care, support of the state in raising children or renting an apartment, were not important at the moment of choosing a destination but appeared in the narratives regarding remaining. While in

destination, the respondents started to appreciate a broadly understood sense of security, which resulted from the predictability of the state and friendliness of its agents.

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