

Contemporary Challenges and Threats to the Development of Polish Regions in the Context of the Phenomena of Migration and Re-emigration

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Introduction

Despite the growing level of employment in the Polish economy, the unemployment rate is still increasing; there is also a visible slowdown in demographic growth, expressed by low levels of fertility and changes in the age structure of the population. Among the major development problems, revealed after Polish accession to the European Union, the problem of migration outflow is of high importance. Its previous – significant – scale¹ and the still unabated desire among Poles to travel abroad,² justify the classification of foreign migration into the group of important social problems. From the point of view of regional development, migration flows can have a significant impact on the possibilities and prospects of development at the local and regional level, particularly in areas where migration balance is strongly negative for a long period. It can be observed that in an increasing number of regions in Poland, the impact of migration on demographic potential, on the development of the regional economy and on social development, is gradually becoming one of the most important factors influencing the challenges and prospects for development.

The significant quantitative dimension of the problems associated with migration outflows determines that the strategic assumptions of national regional policy are directly related to these trends.³ The challenges that modern regional policy is facing are associated with not only higher utilization and improvement in the quality of labor resources and ensuring

1 CSO estimation, based on Census results, shows that at the end of 2011, approximately 2,060 thousand residents were temporarily outside Poland. See: Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach emigracji z Polski w latach 2004–2011 (Information on size and directions of Polish emigration in the years 2004–2011), Warszawa 2012, 2.

2 The research of Public Opinion Research Center shows that over one third of people aged 18 to 24 (36%) intend to apply for employment outside Poland in the future or are already making such efforts, while a further 15% assume or would consider a job abroad if they received an offer. A dominant role in the structure of migration is the migration of young people, which reaches 70% of all travels. The increasing share of immigrants in the structure of young people is becoming one of the key features of Polish emigration. See: Wyjazdy zarobkowe za granicę. Komunikat z badań (Poles working abroad. Statement from studies), Warszawa 2012, 7.

3 Krajowa Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego 2010–2020: region, miasta, obszary wiejskie (National Regional Development Strategy 2010–2020: regions, cities, rural areas), Warszawa 2012, 1414–1418.

internal cohesion of the country and the development of innovation, but also prevention of negative demographic trends.⁴ Regional policy conducted on a national scale should respond to newly emerging risks that destabilize cohesive process in the territorial dimension (e.g. support for regions threatened by socio-economic destabilizing due to the depopulation caused by migration outflow). While the policy for a region's development (e.g. regions threatened by a risk of slowdown in development processes as a result of depopulation) should prevent and counteract processes causing negative demographic, social and in consequence economic phenomena. One of the direct instruments of this policy is to attract persons involved in various forms of international migration to come to the region, particularly young people of working age, educated, with work experience and those who have not definitively broken their bonds with the region of origin.

International Migration and its Effects in the Context of the Risks and Development Challenges for Migration Regions

In the regions that are characterized by a long tradition of migration outflow, and where the scale of these travels is significant, international migration may become an important factor affecting the shape of the social and economic processes. This is because the permanent depopulation of these areas triggers certain social, demographic, economic and cultural consequences. Migrations, definitive or long-term, short-term or swing, which take a permanent character, provoke dysfunctions in the demographic and economic fields of the region. Increased international migration can cause significant repercussions in the social (e.g. reduced social activity of inhabitants, lower levels of entrepreneurial activity) and economic sphere (reduction of demand potential, lower access to specialized labor resources, lower unemployment level). One may also add the consequences of a political nature (e.g. changes in the structure of the ethnic, national options, electoral behavior – turnout and preferences, choices of investment).

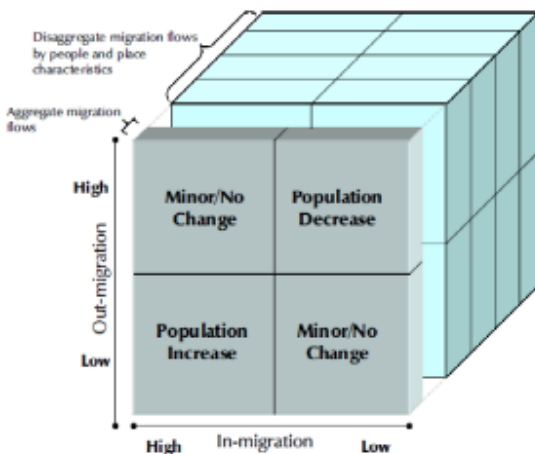


Figure 1. Diagram of the impact of migration on population potential of the region

Source: Edward J. FESER – Stuart H. SWEENEY, *Out-migration, Population Decline and Regional Economic Distress*, Washington 1999, 7.

⁴ Michał BONI (ed.), *Polska 2030. Wyzwania rozwojowe (Poland 2030. Development Challenges)*, Warszawa 2009, 78–83.

Many studies show the importance of financial funds transfer (remittances) for the region's development.⁵ Moreover, it is also significant to encourage migrants to stay in touch with their region of origin, which can double the chances of the migrants' investment there. Simultaneously, it is underlined that a strong dependence on the flow of financial resources provided by community members (swing or circulating migrants) residing abroad is a feature of the regions from which the migrants originate. It is worth noting that transfer of part of the income to Poland make persons who are not directly involved in the migration process (understood as a process associated with travel and stay abroad) actually benefit from it. However, the funds coming from migration are usually too small to become the basis for investment and as a result are constantly consumed, while maintaining or raising the standard of life of people associated with the migrant.⁶ In addition, the migrants usually come from regions that develop slower than others (peripheral areas, rural areas), where investment opportunities are limited. As a result, migration mainly affects the individual financial potential of the region's inhabitant, affecting the level of individual life and the demand for goods and services on the regional market. It can less affect productive investment; it can only be done by some individual projects for improving the quality of life and social prestige (the construction of houses, flats and upgrading of their equipment, improvement of the property). The lower tendency to take risk associated with entrepreneurial activities in the migrant's region of origin means that the influence of foreign outflow on the local communities in the migratory region has a draining character.⁷

Inhibition of the demographic development and population potential weakness, in many local areas having a form of depopulation, may appear in the migratory regions. Moreover, following the reduction of economic potential, due to the drain (even temporary) of people of working age, usually prepared professionally, results in a decrease in the GDP level of the migratory region. However, it should be noted that negative feedback associated with the temporary and definitive migration outflow is always - at least to some extent - the consequence of not using local and regional demographic potential and labor resources. The experience of temporary migrants is of great importance for the development of the region. A number of studies suggest that temporary migrants should be positively selected (e.g. in the first place the most active individuals leave the region), additionally the migration itself creates opportunities to gain additional qualifications and skills. This type of position in the local community, qualifies the migrant to play the specific role of a devel-

5 See more i.e. Dilip RATHA, *Workers' Remittances: An Important and Stable Source of External Development Finance*, in: *Economics Seminar Series*, 2005, Paper 9, 157–175. URL: http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/econ_seminars/9 (Visited: on 10 June 2014); Tito BOERI – Herbert BRÜCKER, *Why are Europeans so tough on migrants?*, in: *Economic Policy*, 20, 2005, 44, 629–703, Article first published online: 28 October 2005, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0327.2005.00148.x.

6 See Krystian HEFFNER – Brygida SOLGA, *Praca w RFN i migracje polsko-niemieckie a rozwój regionalny Śląska Opolskiego*, Opole 1999, 57–67.

7 See Krystian HEFFNER, *Migracje a rozwój regionu. Znaczenie procesów migracyjnych dla rozwoju regionów w Polsce* (Migration and development in the region. The importance of migration processes for the development of regions in Poland), in: *Spółeczeństwo Śląska Opolskiego 1945 – 2011 – 2035 – aspekty społeczne, demograficzne i rynku pracy* (Society of Opole Silesia 1945–2011–2035 – social, demographic and labor market), Robert RAUZIŃSKI – Teresa SOŁDRA-GWIŹDŹ (eds.), Opole – Warszawa 2012, 79–92; Krystian HEFFNER – Brygida KLEMENS, *Education and innovativeness as factors increasing investment possibilities and creating grounds for clusters emerging in rural areas*, in: *Innovation Systems and Rural Development: Proceedings from 10th Annual Conference, Nordic-Scottish University for Rural and Regional Development*, Hanne W. TANVIG (ed.), Forest & Landscape Working Papers 27/2008, Hørsholm 2008, 139–155.

opment leader. Thus, one might assume that migrants are so innovative and dynamic, not only to initiate projects of an economic or social character, but also to provide some (positive) patterns of action to the members of the community, and consequently stimulate the development at local, as well as regional level. Unfortunately, in most of the acknowledged migration flows this type of relationship turns out to be marginal. Temporary migrants are mostly the participants of so-called secondary sectors of foreign labor markets. The work undertaken by them, alongside a range of other features typical for such sectors, does not require high qualifications, often even at the core of temporary mobility, lies the demand for workforce, without any professional skills. Frequently temporary migrants function on the margins of the target community, which means that the possibility of transferring and absorption of positive patterns of social or economic behavior is usually illusory. In addition, many migrants are characterized by a unique ability to forget the experience gained while working abroad (with the exception of consumer behavior), and their return to their country is combined with the rapid restoration of social and economic behavior established in the past.⁸

Many researchers indicate that the effects of international migration in the long-term period are generally negative for the region of migration.⁹ Frequently it comes to the breakdown of social institutions in regional and local structures and disturbance of the process of economic growth (especially in the traditional industries, crafts, services and agricultural production). From the point of view of the region's development, the long-term effects of tidal circulation (swing migration) and temporary migration are evaluated rather negatively, although the short-term consequences in most cases have a positive connotation.¹⁰

Conclusions for the Issue of Re-emigration from the Study of Foreign Migration in the Opolskie Region

The Opolskie Voivodeship maintains traditional characteristics of international migration, which before 2004, put the region in the position of the country's most important region in terms of migration, but also the changes being a direct consequence of Polish accession to the European Union and the opening up of Western European labor markets can be easily observed. The migrants from the Opolskie Region - as from other regions of the country - are getting younger, are starting professional activity, mostly before setting up a family,

8 Marek NOWAK, Inequalities and Migration: Why the Central and Eastern European Societies Need More Welfare State, in: (Post) transformational Migration. Inequalities, Welfare State and Horizontal Mobility, Marek NOWAK – Michał NOWOSIELSKI (eds.), Frankfurt am Main 2011, 23–59.

9 For example: Brygida SOLGA, Miejsce i znaczenie migracji w rozwoju regionalnym, Opole 2013, 161–205; Robert RAUZIŃSKI, Migracje zagraniczne za pracą i jej społeczne konsekwencje na Śląsku Opolskim w 20-lecie (1989 to 2009), in: Człowiek w pracy i polityce społecznej, Jan SZAMBELAŃCZYK – Maciej ŻUKOWSKI (eds.), Poznań 2010, 145–155; Bogusława PUZIO-WACŁAWIK, Społeczno-ekonomiczne skutki migracji Polaków po akcesji Polski do Unii Europejskiej, in: Zeszyty Naukowe Polskiego Towarzystwa Ekonomicznego No. 8, 2010, 179–193.

10 See more detailed discussion on it in: Krystian HEFFNER – Brygida SOLGA, Features of a migration region – an analysis using the example of the Opolskie Voivodeship, in: Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series, 20, 2013, 20, 43–58.

and are relatively well educated. The results of studies presented in the chapter¹¹ indicate that in a group of migrants, almost 75% were under the age of 40, and more than one fifth was not yet 25 years old. The advantage of young people in the structure of migrants is a typical feature of spatial mobility. However, this situation has certain consequences for the region of origin (Opolskie). The region loses people of procreation age and of highest professional activity and persons who may constitute a large development capital. The significant issue in connection with the above is their return to Poland. The studies of re-emigration of Poles after 1989 show that older age is not a key driver behind the decision to return from migration.¹² More often young people decide to return to their country, and this feature provides the possibility to use their resources by Polish employers.

In the group of Polish migrants, there are an increasing number of people with a relatively high level of education. Moreover, among surveyed migrants, persons with at least secondary education are dominant (more than $\frac{3}{4}$), while 21% are individuals who in the country received a higher education. Although some of the migrants have the chance to work in professions requiring higher qualifications abroad, most outgoing persons, even those with higher education, must settle for simple work in the secondary sectors of the economies of the host countries. This reveals - repeatedly discussed in recent times - the problem of the depreciation of Polish migrants qualifications. In addition to a considerably large group of people with specific vocational preparation (technical education - 10%, and vocational - 17%), the vast majority (nearly 30%), are persons with higher education. Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the migrants left the country after graduating from high school, not taking any job in the country. Therefore, they had no professional experience and at the same time, they do not necessarily expand it abroad. This is because only 10% of respondents worked abroad in their profession, while almost 60% of them worked not in accordance with their qualifications or below. Most often they performed simple tasks which do not require specialized vocational training (in agriculture - 25%, construction - 20%, catering - 19%, hotels - 10%, cleaning apartments - 14%, childcare or elderly care - 10%), which is quite common for foreigners working in the secondary labor markets in Western Europe. Not necessarily do the migrants raise their professional qualifications by attending courses or training abroad. The vast majority (over 70%) does not have this type of experience, but at the same time, the other group of people being trained in this manner (e.g. raising their qualifications or changing the possessed one) seems to be relatively considerable. In a sense, the problem is the status of foreign migrants on the labor market. Although abroad, a limited number of migrants have the chance to work in professions requiring higher qualifications, most outgoing persons, even those with higher education, must settle for simple work in the secondary sectors of the economies of the host countries.¹³ It is difficult to estimate how many Poles worked abroad in accordance with their qualifications. However, we know for

11 Chapter is based on the results of research conducted by the authors in the framework of the project: Wypracowanie metod zmniejszania emigracji zarobkowej i wspierania powrotu migrantów na polski rynek pracy (Development of methods for reducing emigration and supporting the return of migrants to the Polish labor market), Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy w Opolu (the Voivodeship Labour Office in Opole), Uniwersytet Opolski (Opole University) 2011-2012.

12 Agnieszka FIHEL - Agata GORNY - Ewa MATEJKO, Remigracja a transfer kapitału ludzkiego do Polski w okresie transformacji, in: CMR Working Papers no. 13/71, 2006, 21-49.

13 See, for example: Paweł KACZMARCZYK - Joanna TYROWICZ, Migracje osób z wysokimi kwalifikacjami, Warszawa 2008, 9-10.

sure that many of them do not use their skills and knowledge gained in the country. Research carried out in some regions, suggest that people who have already had experience of foreign travels and do not perform abroad work in their profession are the majority (the percentage of employed beyond their professional skills oscillates around 70%).¹⁴ In the presented studies, work not compatible with the migrant qualifications was undertaken by almost 60% of people. Once again, one can speak about the phenomenon of qualifications depreciation (waste brain). This means that the knowledge and skills during the migration period are significantly devalued, and the ability to move into the regional (national) labor market becomes limited.

However, it should be borne in mind that in a situation of increasing unemployment among young people, traveling to undertake work abroad is regarded as the only chance of finding a job. Mostly this problem relates to people with a higher education. On average, in Poland, every ninth unemployed person is a graduate of a university, and the most difficult situation appears to be in the cities. In Opole, unemployed persons with a university diploma represent 17% of all the unemployed. A common reason for unemployment is the mismatch between the educational structures and the needs of the labor market. The situation affects a considerable group of people born during the population boom of the 1980s of the twentieth century who had studied fields of study which were fashionable in the 1990s, but with low demand on the labor market, such as management, marketing and administration.

Among migrants from Poland, an increasing share is the group of single people. In the studied group, people who have not yet set up families account for 40%, almost the same as those remaining in a formal or informal relationship (43%). This feature, though, should be considered in two aspects, and certainly, it does not facilitate the forecasting of trends in return migration to the country and the Opolskie Region. On the one hand, a large proportion of the migrants have families that usually remain in the home country. Not many of the families are willing to migrate abroad. Such a situation implies certain consequences of a social nature and affects the operation of a family in a permanent state of separation. Certainly, those people who left their relative at home will consider the return more often. On the other hand, the increasing participation of unmarried young migrants shows the lack of family responsibilities and further opportunities to settle down abroad and to start a family there. Data from the British statistical office show that one in four children born in 2011 in England and Wales have a non-British mother, mostly coming from Poland.¹⁵ People who live alone in exile will take the decision to return far more seldom, but for those who have set up a family already abroad the migration typically takes the form of a permanent settlement. It is assumed that the country will lose this group forever, but even in this group, there are people who decide to return. For policymakers, this indicates the need to create appropriate conditions for re-emigration, in the field of education of children.

Contemporary migrations from Poland are purely an economic phenomenon. They are determined by the diversity of incomes and living standards between Poland and targeted countries of migration. It is important to bear in mind that differences in wages are not enough to explain the dynamics and diversity of the migration process. In this context, it

14 See, for example: *Zagraniczne migracje zarobkowe. Raport końcowy z badań* (Foreign labor migration. The final report of the study), Szczecin 2009, 33.

15 Sabina TORUŃCZYK-RUIZ, *Na Wyspach wciąż królują Matki Polki*, in: *Biuletyn Migracyjny* no.38, 2012, 6.

is worth noting that presented studies provide many different reasons behind migration. A large part of them is economic in nature, but apart from traditional reasons, such as the desire to find work and earn money to buy a car or a house, there are also new reasons, such as gaining work experience and qualifications. All of these elements formulate the thesis that the motifs of migration are diverse. This issue has surely essential meaning in the discussed topic. At present, the situation in the labor market and the quality of life and social security in Poland and in the Opolskie Region are not favorable enough to attract a large group of migrants to return home. Hence, whilst the economic and social factors, the most important stimulator of economic migration are in force, they will trigger the foreign mobility, not necessarily at its current high level. The scale of foreign travels in the Opolskie Region to date is still significant, but the analysis of net migration indicates some saturation of this process. Similarly, one can analyze CSO data, which show that the wave of Polish migration will be reduced systematically and gradually.¹⁶ In the view of the above, and taking into account the experience of many European countries we can expect a wave of return to Poland and the Opolskie Voivodeship. It is difficult to estimate how many migrants will return and when. Mainly it will depend on the situation on the European, national and regional labor markets and whether the mechanisms that facilitate return will be activated.

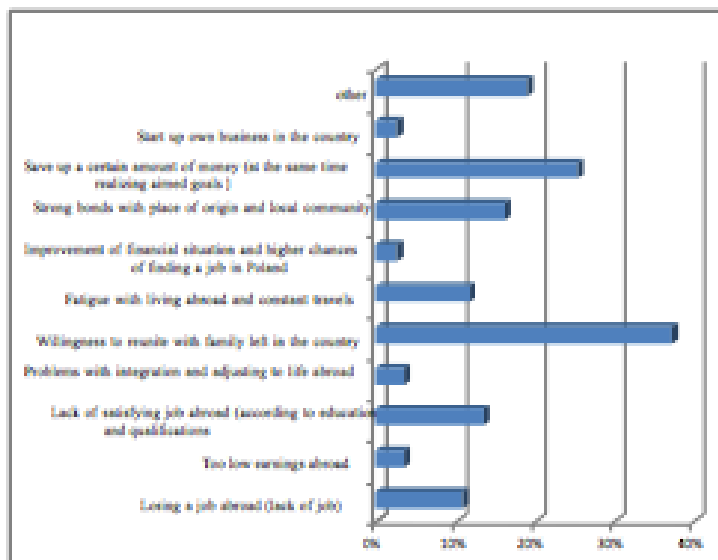


Figure 2. Reasons for returning to the country as indicated by the respondents

Source: Brygida SOLGA, *Migracje zagraniczne i powroty w województwie opolskim i ich znaczenie w kontekście tworzenia system wsparcia instytucjonalnego dla reemigrantów* (International migration and returns in the Opole province and their meaning in the context of creating a system of institutional support for returnees), in: *Wypracowanie metod zmniejszania emigracji zarobkowej i wspierania powrotu migrantów na polski rynek pracy* (Developing methods to reduce emigration and support the return of migrants to the Polish labor market), Opole 2012, 27–38.

¹⁶ According to the forecasts of CSO positive net migration (greater inflow than outflow) will occur after 2020 see: *Prognoza ludności na lata 2008 – 2035* (Population projection for Poland 2008–2035), Warszawa 2009, 80–81.

Many studies have shown that a considerable part of Polish migrants is considering a return to the country (in the present study – 71%). Their statements should be interpreted carefully, since no studies carried out in the country and in the Opolskie Region verify such statements, and therefore we do not know how these lead to prospective behavior of the migrants. We know, however, that the declarations of return are of different natures (Figure 2). A special role, in addition to the relatively well-paid job, has family commitment. Frequently it is the ultimately decisive factor of re-emigration. As indicated, in a case where a family member has migrated, the likelihood of his/her coming back is higher. In this case, the only important thing is the time remaining abroad. Other factors declared by the migrants considering a return to the country are the following: young age, acquiring specific professional experience and at the same time having an idea to start economic activity back in the home country (as employer or employee), possession of material and financial capital, fatigue of current life as the migrant, especially if this situation continues for many years. This means that while forecasting trends in the field of re-emigration all these aspects should be taken into consideration.

An important feature in the context of the re-emigration process is also the length of stay in a foreign country. The research shows that a substantial group of people going for a short time decided to extend their stay. Additionally in the surveyed group, can be noticed the increasing number of people who eventually decided to stay abroad for a longer period or permanently. Only 13% of people migrated with this intention, while now declarations to extend the stay have been made by 25% of respondents. These results give reason to believe that with the passage of time remaining in exile, the attitude of the migrants is evolving towards greater indecision about prospective life plans.

Regional Policy and the Issue of International Migration – the Example of the Opolskie Voivodeship

The primary objective of the regional policy for migratory regions should be reducing the negative effects of migration outflow through actions aiming at diminishing disparities in living standards, improving living conditions and strengthening the local and regional labor market. It is also crucial to launch factors that attract migrants (pull factors) to the region (re-emigration) and also new inhabitants to the region (immigration). In such regions, it is possible to use the instruments of socio-economic policy in order to control effectively the migration processes at the local and regional level.¹⁷

The impetus for the formulation of the regional policies is the transition of such regions into the phase of deepening demographic depression. The assessment of the range of substitution of internal and external migration in the socio-economic structure of the migratory region has an important role. It is also significant to reinforce the adaptive processes of the human and social capital of the migratory region with regard to the changing needs of the regional economy. The negative balance of migration can be offset by removal of the barriers that suppress migration movement, both internal and external. As a result, a complex of negative effects in the migratory region (economic and social) can be gradually reversed (the dominance of inflow migration over outflow). A stable and growing labor market, with

¹⁷ Brygida SOLGA, Foreign migration in the context of development and regional migration policy, in: Institute for Western Affairs' Bulletin, No. 109, Poznań 2012.

a clear and growing share of attractive jobs in the service sector, the sector of basic services and in the sphere of production is essential to improve the migration balance. It is also important to establish new work places for young people, and to foster entrepreneurship and education.

Figure 3. Development challenges in the context of the Opolskie Voivodeship vision of regional development



Source: Strategia rozwoju Województwa Opolskiego do 2020 r. (Development Strategy for Opolskie Voivodeship until 2020), Opole 2012.

The problem of foreign migration outflow has become an essential development challenge in the Opolskie Voivodeship, which was reflected in the new document Regional Development Strategy Opolskie 2020. The Opolskie Voivodeship is a region which, due to the low birth rate and migration traditions, is steadily losing population share. The much more intense decline in the population of the Opolskie Voivodeship in comparison to the country, is mostly due to the unfavorable natural movement, and is mainly caused by the permanent outflow of foreign migration and its demographic consequences. In addition, a continuous negative exchange of migration from the Opolskie Region within Poland is projected, which will further strengthen the population decline. Therefore, the strategy for the most important (horizontal) development challenge recognized the need to prevent and counteract depopulation processes (see Figure 3). It is a response to the unfavorable demographic situation in the region, identified as the most significant barrier to development. Facing the specified horizontal challenge will be possible through the implementation of comprehensive and complementary activities in various spheres of socio-economic life. The prospect of demographic collapse additionally prompted the regional authorities to develop a program of Demographic Special Zone. The main objective of the programme is to rebuild the population potential of the Opolskie Voivodeship by creating new jobs and improving the quality of life. Proposed programme tools are complex and relate to four strategic areas. It is proposed therein, inter alia, financial assistance to couples deciding to have children, develop infrastructure of nurseries and kindergartens and welfare bills in the frame of child home care.

Conclusion

A large-scale migration directly affects the development of the region and can trigger multi-effects that affect the demographic situation, the social phenomena and economic processes, both at the local as well as at the regional level. Loss in the population potential of the migratory region has a direct impact on the development of such an area, reducing its competitive position.

In the Opolskie Voivodeship, the research on migration processes (especially the outflow of migration, but also re-emigration), and the initiatives of the social, economic and administrative provisions have been undertaken for many years. Their aim is to reduce the willingness to migrate and job search outside the region, to improve the use of migration experience and to encourage entrepreneurial activities of the migrants (returnees) in the regional economy. Due to the heterogeneous structure and profile of the migrants and returnees and their migration strategies, actions directed at these particular groups, in practice, are not easy to implement. Diverse target groups determine various mechanisms of support and recommendations for prospective actions. Therefore, occasionally it is about supporting a rapid implementation of investment plans of the migrant, another time – supporting action to enable overcoming of social and professional exclusion (e.g. training organized by employment agencies, professional counseling, workshops, psychological workshops, therapeutic work with the families of returnees facing problems resulting from their return, helping drug addicts). For people returning from abroad it might be important also to contact other re-emigrants, already familiar with the problems associated with return. Hence, it is also essential to create a common environment for people who have returned and involve them in the local associations' activities, especially when they cannot cope with the difficulties connected with return. However, of key importance is encouraging entrepreneurship among migrants and drawing their attention to the changes that have been made during their absence and certain possibilities in this field (e.g. grants to develop own business, workshops, advice system, systems of facilities and incentives in the tax system, support for innovative and entrepreneurial initiatives, indicating possibility of safe accumulation of capital in the sector of small and medium enterprises, etc.). A change of climate around the economic activity of the migrants, and particularly their entrepreneurship activity, should bring direct benefits for those working or staying abroad, as well as resulting in accelerated economic growth and decrease in unemployment rate. In turn, the impact to change consumption patterns of financial funds, earned abroad, may increase the demand effect on the local and regional market.

This is even more important because the research result revealed the problem of the migrants' situation after their return to the country in terms of social adaptation, and especially reintegration into the labor market. The most problematic is finding a job. It is not difficult to find a satisfying and lucrative job offer, but employment in accordance with qualifications or any employment. It seems that the past and future returns from migration creates certain opportunities, but also challenges. It is not so important to encourage re-emigration, but rather to create the basis for an effective return and successful reintegration into society, and especially reintegration into the labor market. It seems that – as for today – the migrants can rely only on the information on the country's situation and convincing signals that return to the country can be a reasonable and cost-effective solu-

tion provided by state authorities. What is lacking are broader and more specific actions referring to the economic and social issues that will be addressed to this group, and especially to potential entrepreneurs. Moreover, the re-emigrants themselves are not seen as a group that requires support from both public institutions and NGOs.

Abstract

After a decade of membership in the European Union and the opening of the European labor markets for Poles, the importance of foreign migration and its impact on the development of particular regions has grown significantly. The evaluation of foreign migration with regard to the opportunities and threats for regional development - even if not quite ambiguous - rightly puts foreign migration balance and their results in the context of risks to the region's development. Therefore, the following consequences of permanent negative migration balance are the most important for the development of the region: loss of human and social capital, decreasing population and rapid worsening of the age structure, growing labor deficit, shortages in educated personnel and skilled workforce within specific lines of business, reducing local budgets and generally decreasing the economic potential of the region. As a result, despite the significant transfer of income, increasing standards of living and wealth primarily in migrant families, decreasing unemployment and growing professional skills of the migrants resulting from migration - the impact of positive consequences of migration on a region's development is distinctly less visible.

Keywords

Foreign migration, migration region, social and economic consequences, regional development

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