

Central and Eastern European Migration Review

Received: 28 September 2021, Accepted: 28 December 2021

Vol. 10, No. 2, 2021, pp. 151–169

doi: 10.17467/CEEMR.2021.16

— Special Series —

The Migration Transition in Poland

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In the period 1950–2020, international migration in Europe changed significantly. One of the most characteristic features was the change in net migration from negative to positive. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Poland belonged to the minority of countries in this respect – that is, it experienced strong emigration but only minor immigration. However, migration in Poland has also been changing. In the second decade of this century, the outflow of people has weakened, the inflow of migrants has increased and the migration balance has become positive. I analyse these phenomena from the theoretical perspective of the migration transition that was experienced in the second half of the twentieth century by most countries in Western, Northern and Southern Europe. I attempt to answer the question of whether the latest migration phenomena prove that this transition is also occurring in Poland. In conclusion, I argue that the available to-date evidence provides an affirmative answer to this question.

Keywords: migrations, migration transition, Europe, Poland

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Poland as a country of sustained emigration – an enduring perception

Until recently, Poland was perceived as a country of emigrants. Such an image was quite common in Polish society. People had emigrants in their family circle or knew families from which someone had gone to work or settle abroad. The image of *émigré* Poland in mass culture – initially mainly in fiction writings – continues to this day: from the works of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century luminaries of the *belles-lettres* – for example, Maria Konopnicka (1910), Henryk Sienkiewicz (1882) or Stefan Żeromski (1898, 1925) to the outstanding contemporary prose of Witold Gombrowicz (1953), Czesław Straszewicz (1952), Melchior Wańkowicz (1952) and Sławomir Mrożek (1974) as well as Zbigniew Herbert's poetry (1974), to the most recent work of Janusz Głowacki (1992), Edward Redliński (1994), Manuela Gretkowska (1991, 2001), Henryk Grynberg (2004) and others.¹

In the current century, however, the leading role in portraying the emigration of Poles and the related problems seems to be the audiovisual means of expression. The set of well-known films whose plot is based on emigration is already quite substantial. After a few – still in communist times – attempts by filmmakers to deal with the topic in the 1960s and 1970s (a comedy by Bareja 1963; a touching drama by Petelski and Petelska 1978) followed by a drama film by Skolimowski (1982) and a clear revival of interest in 1989–2009 (see Bromski 2009; Lang 1992; Zaorski 1997), the five years (2015–2019) preceding the current pandemic's disruptions produced a rash of emigration films (Antoniak 2018; Banaszekiewicz and Dymek 2018; Domalewski 2017, 2020; Gajewski 2015). Numerous TV productions, especially the 29-episode series *Londoners* which was broadcast in 2008 and 2009, also strongly appealed to the imaginations of Poles. It is worth adding that the mass culture message gained significant support from news services and mass media journalism.

Evidence of the scale and duration of emigration from Poland can be found in many countries. The 'Polish' parishes and even villages in Parana and Texas, as well as the workers' settlements in American, German or French cities in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, were by no means isolated instances (see, for example, Baker 1982; Bukowczyk 1986; Janowska 1965; Klessman 1978; Kula 1981; O'Brien 1992). The perception of Poland as a country of emigration was fostered by the relative durability and cultural coherence of Polish communities abroad and, in some cases, even by the political activity of Polish organisations (Pilch 1984). On the other hand, in many European countries, the past half century has seen a well-documented influx of Poles, sometimes as the dominant immigrant group – an influx accentuated in often-heated media debates. In various countries, under the influence of the presence of immigrants from Poland, stereotypes of Poles have developed over the course of the last few decades.

Migration researchers have found substantial empirical evidence confirming the *en masse* scale of emigration and the high propensity to migrate in Polish society in comparison to many other nations.² Thus, the perception of Poland as a country of emigrants is justified.

Migration in Poland compared to other European nations – the long view

I would also like to look at the phenomenon of mass emigration from Poland from a different angle. Migration affected almost all European countries. Jean-Claude Chesnais (1986), like many other authors (e.g., Coleman 2006; King 1996; Van de Kaa 1999), writes of its regulatory role in demographic development. In the initial phase of the demographic transition, the population growth was so rapid³ that it led to sometimes tremendous overpopulation, with a consequent increasing pauperisation and shortage of livelihoods for large sections of society. Emigration turned out to be one – and perhaps the easiest

– means of solving the problem. The peak of the European outflow of people occurred in the last decades of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the next. Between the years 1846 and 1932, millions of inhabitants emigrated from a number of European countries: the most, 18 million, left the British Isles (including Ireland); 11 million left Italy; and about 5 million each left the Austro-Hungarian empire, Germany and Spain. Emigration from the British Isles (including Ireland) encompassed 66 per cent of the population at the beginning of this period, 63 per cent in Norway, 48 per cent in Portugal and Italy, 36 per cent in Sweden and 31 per cent in Spain (Chesnais 1986: 165). In many of these countries – Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Great Britain and Italy – the strong outflow of people lasted for at least five decades (cf. Woodruff 1966) (my criterion here is a minimum emigration rate of 3 per 1,000 population). Intensive emigration occurred even in countries that were never considered as ‘emigrant’ countries – for example, in France, from where in the years 1851–1900 more than 800,000 emigrated (Lucassen and Lucassen 2010: 14). Note that, in a similar period (1871–1913),⁴ the outflow of people from Polish lands,⁵ although significant, did not match the emigration from most of the countries mentioned here. Emigration affected about 3.5 million people or 17–18% of the initial population (Gawryszewski 2005: 409).

Weaker emigration from Polish lands during the period of mass European exodus had the same causes as that from other countries of Eastern Europe. As argued by Chesnais (1986), there was a relative delay in relation to other parts of the continent in the emergence of a permanent surplus of births over deaths due to the systematic decline in mortality. Any substantial outflow of people appeared in this part of Europe only in the 1880s and the peak period of emigration did not begin in these countries for another 20 years – i.e., in the first decade of the next century. Shortly thereafter, however, the increase in population coincided with international political and economic turbulence, which significantly limited the possibilities of emigration.⁶ Proof of the importance and considerable consequences of these difficulties is, *inter alia*, the situation of Poland in the interwar period, when there was, and intensified at that, a huge – multi-million – overpopulation of the countryside (hidden unemployment), which could not be permanently exported abroad (Kalinowski and Wyduba 2021; Turowski 1937).

After the end of the Second World War (and even in the interwar period), emigration significantly decreased in many European countries or even ceased to be a mass phenomenon although a growing immigration appeared. Gradually, between 1950 and 1990, most of the non-communist European countries transformed from (net) emigration areas to (net) immigrant areas and the continent as a whole became one of the world’s most attractive magnets for migrants (Castles and Miller 1993; Colinson 1994; Gatrell 2019; King and Okólski 2019).

However, until the beginning of the twenty-first century, this tendency did not apply to Central and Eastern Europe. Both the outflow and the influx of people from abroad were subject to strict controls and restrictions of a political nature (e.g. Stola 2010). With the passage of time, as the demographic potential grew (and it grew rapidly, especially in the years 1946–1955) and economic difficulties accumulated, a ‘migration overhang’ was created,⁷ that is, a quantity of relatively redundant people who were ready to emigrate but were deprived of the possibility (Iglicka 2020). Layard, Blanchard, Dornbusch and Krugman (1992), in their book devoted to this phenomenon, predicted on the threshold of the political and economic transition that effective implementation of the changes would require a strong outflow of people abroad:⁸ a stream of the kind called ‘crowding-out migration’ (Okólski 2012a).

Indeed, from the 1990s onwards, along with the gradual liberalisation of the rules of human movement, increased emigration on an economic basis could be observed in these countries (Fassmann and Münz 1994, 2000). This outflow of people was substantially reinforced by widespread unemployment

which resulted from market-oriented economic reforms introduced in the early 1990s.⁹ In member states of the European Union the peak coincided with the period after their accession (Black, Engbersen, Okólski and Panțiru 2010). This mass emigration was an unusual phenomenon on a European scale because, first, it occurred at a time when the rest of Europe was attracting rather than sending out migrants and, second, it coincided with a drastic collapse in demographic growth.¹⁰ It would seem, in fact, that this outflow of people abroad was a delayed complement to the mass emigration that was not realised in the interwar period and later, and was associated with the accumulation of large population resources (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009).

However, the case of Poland and several other countries proves that recently, at least since the second decade of this century, emigration from this part of the continent has been diminishing, while immigration has increased, leading to a reversal of the balance of migration flows (cf., for example, Fihel and Okólski 2020; Grabowska-Lusinska, Drbohlav and Hars 2011).

The migration phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe might seem similar to the transformation observed in the second half of the last century in Western Europe (and, with some delay, in Southern Europe) – i.e., the change from being countries with ‘redundant’ populations ready to emigrate to becoming magnets attracting people from other countries or regions (Okólski 2012b).

The concept of the European migration transition

The changes in migration trends in Europe that have been observed since the nineteenth century were described in a stylised manner by means of the theoretical concept known as the ‘migration transition’. Although the concept, which is akin to the *longue durée* approach, facilitates the arrangement of the complex, erratic and often disorderly events and trends in international mobility, it should not be considered as their deterministic projection. Unfortunately, the name of this theory has been assigned to contents of varying scope (and sometimes even meaning), which is not conducive to unambiguous use.¹¹

Nevertheless, every understanding of the term ‘migration transition’, among its various characteristics and manifestations, contains the view that the trend characterised by the predominance of emigration over immigration has reverted to the opposite trend. The originator of this concept is Wilbur Zelinsky (1971) who, in describing the relationship between population changes – known as the demographic transition¹² – and the simultaneous changes in migration, formulated the theory of a (territorial) mobility transition, one element of which is the reversal of the foreign migration balance from negative to positive.

However, I consider that it was Chesnais who introduced the idea of the migration transition as a specific European phenomenon related to the European model of modernisation and the demographic transition characteristic of this continent, despite the fact that he formulated his idea 15 years after Zelinsky.¹³ With a certain stylisation of this concept (cf. Fihel and Okólski 2018 for a more detailed description), it could be argued that, in contemporary Europe, there has been a certain long-lasting population cycle consisting of three stages: (1) long-term stabilisation or stagnation of the population (despite sometimes drastic short-term disturbances), (2) a systematic population increase over a period of two or three generations and (3) long-term stabilisation (or stagnation) of the state of the population (at this stage without significant fluctuations in shorter periods), although at a much higher level than in the first stage. The second stage of the cycle is nothing more than a demographic transition. Somewhat parallel to this cycle is the secular migration cycle, the first and third (last) stages of which are characterised by a relatively low intensity of international migration. In the second (intermediate) stage, however,

there is a significant revival of international movement during which the phenomenon known as the migration transition appears.¹⁴

Both the demographic transition and the migration transition involve two significantly different phases. During the first, a rising intensity of natural increase (the explosion phase) then gives way to a weakening intensity of the increase (the implosion phase). On the other hand, in the migration transition, the recovery of migration flows in the first phase involves increased emigration and, in the second, increased immigration, which leads to a change in the migration balance from negative to positive (Okólski 2012c). The phases of the transition are strongly influenced by the respective phases of the demographic transition (at least are correlated with them) – the population explosion results in increased emigration and the implosion ultimately creates conditions for increased immigration.

In developing the concept of a migration transition, Joaquin Arango (2012) suggested the existence of two basic causes for the varying characteristics of the same transition in different European populations – both related to the passage of time. Drawing from the demographic analysis, he called them the cohort (generation) effect and the age (aging) effect.¹⁵ The age effect is expressed in specific migration characteristics, such as intensity and selectivity, corresponding to the stage of the migration cycle (including the migration transition stage). As different European countries are at varying stages or phases at any given time, the characteristics of their migration inevitably differ, an example of which is the sequence of sub-phases occurring in the second phase of the migration transition, as identified by Felice Dassetto (1990). It should be remembered that the basic tendency of this phase is increased immigration and the permanent predominance of this stream over emigration.

According to Dassetto, the phenomenon occurs sequentially in the form of three different sub-phases. The first is the inflow of workers from less-developed countries who are predominantly socially marginalised in a destination country; in the second, the main stream consists of family members of these employees. This second sub-phase is accompanied by the settlement and acculturation of the foreigners and social tensions related to their increasing use of social benefits and public services (schools, medical institutions, etc.) and appearance in the ‘neighbourhood’. In the third sub-phase, a long-term process of inclusion and integration of settled immigrants occurs. The cohort effect, on the other hand, is based on the emergence of a given migration phenomenon corresponding to the specific phase of transition at different historical (calendar) times.

Why are there the differences in migration transition in various parts of Europe?

The cohort effect is of particular importance for explaining the differences between European countries in contemporary migration, especially with regards to the characteristics of immigration – a specific feature of the second phase of the transition. According to Arango (2012: 50),

[i]t stems from the influence exerted on the course and characteristics of the immigration experience by the historical context in which its initial and formative phases took place. Especially influential elements of this context are the types of immigration flows prevailing in that period and the socio-economic conditions that determine them, the dominant conceptions of migration and the main characteristics of the international economic order and of socio-economic regimes. These influences may leave a long-lasting imprint on later stages of the immigration experience. These formative years may shape dominant social orientations towards immigration that would have a long-lasting effect or produce facts or policies that further impact future developments.

The immigration experiences of European countries confirm that there were differences in circumstances, as mentioned here, in the initial period of the second phase of the migration transition, as well as subsequent differences in the course and characteristics of immigration. This differentiation is the subject of my previous analyses (King and Okólski 2019; Okólski 2012c; Okólski 2017), which prove that the concept of age and cohort effects may be very useful in interpreting and explaining the differences between European countries in the final (second) phase of the migration transition. At this point, rather than quoting all the arguments used in these analyses, I limit myself to the basic conclusions.

First, shortly after the end of the Second World War, there were clear differences in the course and characteristics of migration between three areas (mega-regions) of Europe: its north-west, southern and eastern parts (including the central-eastern region).¹⁶ This third area, unlike the other two, consisted exclusively of communist countries. The differences clearly reflected the phase of the migration transition accomplished by these mega-regions and their advancement in its course. They survived until the beginning of the twenty-first century and are, to some extent, still visible today.

Second, the course and characteristics of migration in the entire post-war period, lasting over 75 years, have changed in each of the main areas of Europe. These changes have had a specific form in each of the areas, although they occurred at the same time and apparently, to a great extent, under the influence of similar geopolitical and economic conditions.

In the final (second) phase of the migration transition, European countries became (or are becoming) areas of immigration – that is, the outflow of people abroad has diminished (or is weakening) and the inflow increased (or is increasing) – which has ultimately led to a permanent change in the migration balance from negative to positive. The first mega-region where this phenomenon occurred was the Western and Northern countries. A surplus of immigration over emigration appeared in most of them in the 1960s and 1970s (earlier in France and relatively late in the UK). Other countries that experienced this phenomenon at the end of the century belonged to the south of the continent. In the same period, the ‘laggards’ of the north and the west – Finland and Ireland – joined the group of net immigration countries. The third mega-region, consisting of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, is just showing the beginnings of the process which, in other areas of the continent, caused a change in the migration balance. In several Central and Eastern European countries (the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary) this change has already become quite clear. Thus, we can assume that, when becoming a net immigration area, the first of the three mega-regions belongs to the 1960s cohort, the second to the 1990s cohort and the third to the cohort of the second decade (or perhaps later) of this century.

Migration in each of these three cohorts took place in significantly different geopolitical and economic conditions. Viewed from the political perspective, the Cold War continued to reverberate until at least the end of the 1960s and the enemy camps of the West (including the South) and East were consolidated. The countries of the West opened their borders to migrants and actively engaged in their recruitment. In addition, a few of these countries experienced massive inflows of people from their former colonies. From the mid-1970s, the process of *détente* and the inclusion of the Southern countries in international political and economic structures began. During this period, the recruitment of migrants was replaced by Western countries’ attempts to regulate their influx. At the beginning of the 1990s, the former hostility and isolation of the East (the Central and Eastern European countries) gave way to far-reaching pan-European cooperation. In the course of this process, most countries have gradually adopted basic liberal-democratic principles from the West, while also implementing similar regulations regarding the movement of people across national borders.

In regard to the economic context, in the first period the migrations characteristic of it (and also of the first of the cohorts of the countries considered here) were referred to as being of the ‘Fordist’ type.

These migrations were related to mass (serial) industrial production and the intense demand for jobs that did not require high qualifications. The great economic boom in the West was not without significance in this period. It was fueled, *inter alia*, by investments financed under the Marshall Plan. A significant labour deficit arose, which was satisfied by the mass import of foreigners. From the mid-1970s on – given the raw-materials crisis and the challenges of globalisation – the capitalist economies of Europe experienced transformations whose most significant manifestations were deregulation, the expansion of transnational corporations, the flexibility of industrial production and services, a more than previously diversified international division of labour and the volatility of consumer demand. As a consequence, the demand for labour and the forms of employment underwent a profound qualitative (and also quantitative) change and the following became popular: mandate contracts, part-time work, outsourcing and remote work. Russell King called the related labour migrations ‘post-Fordist’ and characterised them as follows (2002: 95):

Migration has become a new global business with a constantly shifting set of agents, mechanisms, routes, prices and niches. Very different from the Fordist labour migration system of Europe in the 1960s and early 1970s, the new migration regimes of the 1980s and 1990s were based on fast-evolving European and global conditions: the escalation of push pressures from the global South, the new-found economic prosperity of Southern Europe (combined with ease of entry), and the removal of the Iron Curtain as a barrier to emigration (...).

In the third period, that is, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one of the most significant factors in the European economy was the major expansion of economic potential and markets thanks to the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the European Union. Economic changes were also marked by increasing digitisation and computerisation. Flexible and unstable forms of employment have become much more frequent and the conditions for an increased mobility of the labour force have emerged. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe have experienced dynamic development and short-term, often circular, labour migration, especially between nearby countries, has flourished.

Thus, the countries of the West and the North represented the pioneering cohort of complete migration transition, while that of Central Eastern countries was delayed in this process by several decades. At any point at which migration phenomena in Europe are viewed, the picture is different in each of the three mega-regions of the continent due to the ‘cohort effect’ – that is, the political and economic context in which the analysed migration changes (the second phase of transition) were initiated. This, in turn, was strongly influenced by the ‘age effect’. At every point of the second phase of the migration transition in Europe the differences between individual countries resulted from the degree of their advancement – the sub-phase in which a given country found itself. The same applied to the preceding phase. Nevertheless, regardless of the differences indicated here, the experience of a migration transition has undeniably been shared by all (or almost all) European societies.

Towards the final phase of migration transition in Poland

Poland, as a country belonging to the ‘cohort’ of Central and Eastern European countries, is among those lagging the furthest behind in the migration transition and, therefore, behind the Mediterranean countries and even further behind the transition leaders in the Western and Northern European countries in regard to becoming an immigration area (Bonifazi 2008; Okólski 2013). Nevertheless, the question arises as to whether or not Poland has already entered the phase of intensified immigration and the

growing predominance of this flow over emigration. The rest of this paper is devoted to attempting to answer this question.

Before moving to the heart of the matter, I feel obliged to mention a study I co-authored, which was tellingly named 'The Unfinished Migration Transition' (Anacka, Fihel and Okólski 2018). The paper, in which the migration reflected in the statistical data and special studies described therein which occurred in the period up to 2015, was written relatively recently but, despite the short passage of time, enough changes have already taken place in Poland to require the modification or supplementation of the regularities we expressed there. Viewed from the perspective of the past few decades (including the period in which the transition from state socialism to liberal democracy began and culminating in Poland's accession to the European Union), foreign migration before this period was strongly marked by breakthrough political events. These included, first (in 1948), drastic administrative restrictions in regard not only to migration but to all international mobility, later (in 1989), the wide opening of the border (although in practice the opening was limited to non-migrant mobility) and, finally (starting from 2004), the guarantee of full freedom to migrate.^{17, 18}

This sequence of radical changes in Poland's migration policy left a strong mark on the processes of foreign mobility, which were dominated first by the accumulation of a huge 'migration overhang' and finally by a mass outflow of people abroad – and this in a situation of zero population growth and a continuing decline in the numbers of people capable of working. This gave rise to doubts as to the correctness or legitimacy of interpreting migration in the Polish context in terms of the migration transition, at least as experienced by most European countries. In the analysis cited here, we saw the possibility that the strong outflow of people would cease and that there would be, instead, a prevalence of quasi-migratory forms of inflow from abroad (such as foreigners coming to work on a tourist visa and multiple circulation) which could, in some part, turn into immigration in the strict sense, though such a prospect did not seem certain.

The research project which resulted in the paper cited above¹⁹ also allowed for a different viewpoint and included a forecast of migration in Poland in 2010–2060 (Anacka and Janicka 2018). It adopted an innovative methodology (Anacka 2018). First, the migration to be analysed was divided into four flows: the emigration of Poles, the immigration of foreigners, the return migration of Poles and the outflow of foreigners. The definition of all four flows was based on the concept of the 'resident population'. Thus, the criterion of migration was the length of actual residence in or absence from Poland for more than a year, relative to the respective stream. This was in stark contrast with almost all previous migration projections which used the migration balance as the sole indicator. Second, unlike in the vast majority of migration forecasts, future migration trends were not 'delineated' on the basis of arbitrary assumptions (e.g., by extrapolating the trend or assuming that migration would be constant at the level observed at the time of preparing the forecast) but were based on the analysis of the results of an econometric model capturing the long-term relationship between identified migration flows and selected demographic and economic variables considered to be significant.

The parameters of the model were estimated on the basis of data from 31 European countries. An important feature of the forecast was also the *de facto* recognition that the logic and nature of the migration transition was conceivable and possible in Poland – that is, the fact that the direction of the migration trend may or even should change. An important argument in favour of this belief (contention?) was the depletion of the emigration potential of the Polish population, along with shrinking domestic labour resources.²⁰

Indeed, the forecast analyses confirmed that, starting from the period 2015–2019, there would be dynamic changes in trends, especially with regard to the emigration of Poles and the immigration of

foreigners.²¹ This decreasing rate of emigration and the growing rate of immigration were ultimately to cause the balance to change from negative to positive. The main element of this transformation is the rapid influx of foreigners and the growing role of this stream in shaping migration trends in Poland. The emergence of a permanent positive migration balance was predicted in the 5-year period 2025–2029 and the positive net migration rate is expected to peak in the period 2040–2044. The forecast clearly indicated the emergence of the second phase of the migration transition and the relatively close prospect of it being completed in Poland. Obviously, the team preparing the forecast had no basis for predicting unexpected events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which could undermine the validity of these assumptions and thus the accuracy of the forecast results.

In this connection, what did migration trends in Poland look like in reality? I will not cite here the commonly known findings concerning the intense outflow of people in the years after 1 May 2004 which, in view of the weak immigration at that time, proved that Poland was still experiencing the first phase of the migration transition (see, for example, Grabowska-Lusińska 2008; Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009; Iglicka 2020; Iglicka and Ziolk-Skrzypaczak 2010; Kaczmarczyk 2010, 2018; Okólski and Salt 2014; White, Grabowska, Kaczmarczyk and Slany 2018). However, I propose to examine migratory conditions starting from 2010. To begin with, it should be made it clear that analyses which would be devoted to migration trends in Poland in the second decade of this century are missing in the scientific literature (rare exceptions include annual reports of the Government Population Council on the demographic situation of Poland and scarce fragmentary papers). For this reason my insight into those trends will be mainly based on crude data derived from public statistics.

Table 1. Immigration to and emigration from Poland, as reflected in data from the Central Statistical Office in the years 2010–2019/20*

Year	Migration reflected in 'permanent residence' registers			Registered long-term (over 12 months) migration			Estimated long-term (over 12 months) migration		
	immigration	emigration	balance	immigration	emigration	balance	immigration	emigration	balance
2010	15.2	17.4	-2.1	54.5	41.2	13.3	155.1	218.1	-63.0
2011	15.5	19.9	-4.3	45.7	44.3	1.4	157.1	265.8	-108.7
2012	14.6	21.2	-6.6	49.2	49.7	-0.5	217.5	275.6	-58.1
2013	12.2	32.1	-19.9	43.3	66.3	-22.9	220.3	276.4	-46.1
2014	12.3	28.1	-15.8	46.1	55.0	-8.9	222.3	268.3	-46.0
2015	**	**	**	**	**	**	218.1	258.8	-40.7
2016	13.5	12.0	1.5	61.7	47.1	14.6	208.3	236.4	-28.1
2017	13.3	11.9	1.4	37.3	37.8	-0.5	209.3	218.5	-9.2
2018	15.5	11.8	3.6	68.5	39.6	28.9	214.1	189.8	24.3
2019	16.9	10.7	6.2	73.1	39.1	34.0	***	***	***
2020	13.3	8.8	4.5	***	***	***	***	***	***

Notes: * An explanation of the categories in this table are to be found, among other places, in *Rocznik Demograficzny* (CSO 2021b: 402–405); in particular, data on estimated long-term (over 12 months) migrations are being compiled by the Central Statistical Office according to the Regulation of the European Commission 862/2007 and take into account non-registered facts of migration. ** Lack of data due to impaired registration. *** Data still not available (as of 27 December 2021).

Source: *Rocznik Demograficzny*, various years. Central Statistical Office, Warsaw.

First, I suggest looking at the data which concern outflows, inflows and the balance of migration. Referring to the data in Table 1, the following observations seem justified:

1. In the year closing the period for which data were available at the time of writing this text, that is, in 2019, a positive migration balance was recorded. This is evidenced by all three quite different methods of measuring migration used by the Central Statistical Office (for an explanation, see the notes beneath the table. For the third measure – the ‘estimated long-term migration’, I refer to data from 2018 – the only ones available to date).
2. In the first half of the period analysed, the balance in the case of the first measurement (the least-adequately reflecting actual migration) was negative, with a slight tendency to deepen; this later changed to positive. In this case, the main component of the changes was undoubtedly the fluctuation in the volume of emigration, which initially clearly increased but which, in the last 4 years, has decreased dramatically. Initially, this was accompanied by a slight decrease in the size of immigration and then a similarly slight increase (see CSO 2021a).²²
3. The second measurement, based on records of more than one year of absence (in the case of emigration) or longer than a year of residence in Poland (in the case of immigration), indicates the volatility of the balance (with its rather small size) and the relatively high positive level of this indicator in the last two years. In the case of the measurement, a greater role between the two components was played by the size of the immigration which (although not without fluctuations) clearly increased, while the volume of emigration (first increasing, then decreasing) ultimately remained close to the level in the initial year.
4. In my opinion, the approximate estimates which are compatible with Eurostat recommendations (the third measurement) reflect the reality the most adequately and therefore seem particularly interesting. The result of the measurement used here was that the sizes of both flows were several times greater than in the case of other methods. Immigration increased sharply in 2012 and, in subsequent years, remained at a similar relatively high level, while emigration from 2016 showed a clear downward trend. In this case, the migration balance turned out to be consistently negative until 2017. However, starting from 2012, it was systematically reduced, to become finally positive in 2018.
5. In general, in the period analysed, migration in Poland lost the features characteristic of the first phase of the migration transition while, in the final years (2018 and 2019), a clear symptom of the second phase appeared – a positive migration balance. Moreover, as appears from the estimations (prepared by the CSO for unified Eurostat statistics), the immigration became sizeable during this period which, in itself, is another important feature of the second phase of the transition.

Specific analysis of immigration to Poland should – in my opinion – help to answer the question of whether emerging manifestations of the second phase of the migration transition can be considered as a phenomenon which is firmly grounded in Polish conditions and heralds the completion of the transition in the foreseeable future. Before I refer to the respective statistics, I should mention that, for around two decades before 2010, Poland had become familiar with increasing inflows of foreign citizens. These, however, were mainly temporary movements. According to researchers studying this phenomenon, it might have foreshadowed a substantial rise in the long-term migration of foreigners (Górny, Grabowska-Lusińska, Lesińska and Okólski 2010).

Table 2. Data of selected registers concerning foreigners staying or working in Poland in the years 2010-2019 (in thousands)*

Year	First residence permit	Work permit	Employer declaration	Student enrollment	Valid residence document
2010	101.6	37.1	180.1	21.5	97.1
2011	108.0	40.8	259.8	24.2	100.3
2012	146.6	39.1	243.7	29.2	112.0
2013	273.9	39.1	235.6	36.0	121.2
2014	355.5	43.7	387.4	46.1	175.1
2015	541.6	65.8	782.2	57.1	211.9
2016	585.9	139.1	1314.1	65.8	266.2
2017	688.9	235.6	1824.5	72.7	325.2
2018	648.2	328.8**	1582.2	78.3	372.2
2019	724.4	444.8**	1640.1	82.2	422.8

Notes: * An explanation of the categories in this table are to be found, among other places, in *Rocznik Demograficzny* (CSO 2021b: 402–405). ** In addition, permits for seasonal work (a category that did not exist before 2018): 2018 = 134,600, 2019 = 131,400.

Source: *Rocznik Demograficzny*, various years. Central Statistical Office, Warsaw and (in the case of the first category) *Residence Permits: Statistics on First Permits Issued During the Year*, 'Statistics Explained', Eurostat; cf. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_-_statistics_on_first_permits_issued_during_the_year&oldid=507019 (accessed: 17 May 2021).

To address the question posed above, I use the data in Table 2. When interpreting these data, two preliminary remarks should be made. First, they comprise only foreigners who came to Poland, unlike the data in Table 1, where the statistics of immigrants included both Polish and foreign citizens. Second, the data come from various administrative registers (e.g. from the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Office for Foreigners, etc.) which serve a purpose other than measuring immigration. In addition, the collections of foreigners included on these registers are not completely separate and also do not cover so-called undocumented migrants. Nevertheless, I believe that the data represent a broad and complementary spectrum of citizens of other countries coming to and living in Poland which, when analysed together, may provide an answer to the above-mentioned question.

An obvious and coherent conclusion can be drawn in the case of each of the registers: at the end of the 10-year period under consideration, the corresponding number was many times higher than at the beginning. Thus:

- the number of first residence permits was over 7 times higher;
- the number of work permits was almost 12 times higher;
- the number of employers' declarations on employing a foreigner was almost 9 times greater;²³
- the number of foreign students was nearly 4 times higher (in 2019, they accounted for 6.8 per cent of the total number of students in Poland); and
- the number of people with a valid residence document was more than 4 times higher.

Thus, undoubtedly, in the period 2010–2019, Poland experienced an unprecedented increase in the migration of foreigners. Further observations are as follows:

1. The increase in the inflow of foreigners continued throughout the entire 10 years.
2. A particular increase in this inflow occurred just after 2013 although, in the case of the register of first residence permits and students, the acceleration occurred a year earlier.

3. The numbers of foreigners arriving or living in Poland at the end of the decade had become significant not only in comparison with many other European countries but also in relation to the population of Poland.

It is worth supplementing these statistics with four additional observations. First, in 2016–2019, Poland was the top EU country in terms of the number of (first) residence permits issued to third-country nationals, naturally outstripping all major European net-immigration countries.²⁴ Second, according to the estimates of the Central Statistical Office, at the end of 2019, 2 million and 106,000 foreign citizens lived in Poland which translated to 5.5 per cent of its total population.²⁵ This created a sharp contrast to the situation in the 1980s and 1990s, when the percentage of foreigners was estimated at a fraction of a per cent, even in comparison to the 2011 census data, which showed that the corresponding percentage was less than 0.8. Third, in the final years of the period under analysis, the Polish labour market contained between 2 and 3 million foreigners each year and, in June 2020, 818,800 foreigners were already registered for retirement and disability insurance with ZUS (the Social Insurance Institution) – around 5 per cent of all persons covered by insurance.²⁶ In the decade 2010–2019 the number of insured foreign citizens rose at a striking pace; it was only 78,600 at the beginning of this period (and 440,200 in 2017), more than 10 times less than in 2020.²⁷ This indicates that a growing number of migrant workers might have had relatively safe and stable employment in Poland. Finally, the characteristics of the influx of foreigners in 2010–2019 still differed from those observed in European countries more advanced in the second phase of the migration transition, for the immigrants in Poland not only consisted mainly of people looking for a job but also of people living alone there (without family members). To be true, most of the immigrants stayed in Poland for a relatively short time – less than 12 months – although there was a clear tendency to extend their stay and for their families to also go to the country (for a more detailed analysis of these phenomena, see Kołodziejczyk, Okólski and Stefańska 2018; Okólski and Wach 2020).

Conclusion

My answer to the key question of whether the phenomena that are characteristic of the second phase of the migration transition and that have been observed in the 2010s in Poland are sufficient to prove their comprehensiveness and consolidation and allow us to conclude that they will be long-lasting is confirmative. Poland has already entered this phase, although it is only at its beginning (the first sub-phase). The persistence of these phenomena will probably be dynamic and consistent with the qualitative changes in immigration described in Dassetto's above-mentioned concept. The enormous increase in the influx of foreigners for temporary employment will transform into massive family migrations and the consequence will be intense adaptation processes, not devoid of social tensions. This is how the migration transition in Poland could relatively soon be completed.

However, it should not be expected that there will be a duplication in Poland of the migration patterns observed in countries where the migration transition took place earlier, nor large similarities in the course of migration processes. The aforementioned age effect will make Poland appear as a relatively 'less mature' immigration country for many years to come. The consequences of the impact of the cohort effect will become particularly deep, causing specific, difficult-to-predict immigration phenomena during the second phase of the transition, one of which is quite obvious today. In the case of Poland, the main reservoirs of immigrants are (and will remain) completely different countries to those of the north, west, and south of the European continent. Another specific phenomenon may be the relatively permanent popularity of circular migrations related, for example, to the increasing ease of movement

and communication in the international space. This may result in a relatively low propensity of migrants to be settled.

Finally, immigrants' different patterns of adaptation, which will be embedded more in transnational spaces than was the case in the 'pioneering countries', cannot be ruled out. It is also difficult to predict what the impact will be on the course of the second phase of the transition of the level and nature of the return migration of Poles who, in the period of the 'last emigration',²⁸ often encountered relatively favourable conditions for adapting to life outside their home country.

It goes without saying, in addition, that the present Covid-19 pandemic will certainly lay its imprint, still difficult to predict and evaluate, on the migration pattern of all countries, including Poland.

Notes

¹ Novels treating the experience of emigration appeared in such numbers following Poland's entry into the European Union that it is difficult to come up with a representative list. For example, in the years 2005–2009, among other titles, see: Bielawska, 2009, Krenz, 2008, Ledzewicz, 2009, Lustyk, 2008, Parys-White, 2008, Plebanek, 2007 and Tubylewicz, 2005.

² It suffices to mention here the effects of the most recent, post-accession (after 1 May 2004), wave of outflows. For example, on 1 January 2010, the EU countries alone registered around 1.5 million Polish citizens residing on their territory, which positioned Poland among the top 4 immigrant countries, just behind Turkey, Romania and Morocco (European Commission 2011). Between 2004 and 2010, in countries such as Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, Poles changed their position from a minor to a leading immigrant nation. According to the estimate by Poland's Central Statistical Office (CSO 2021a), in 2004–2010 the number of Polish emigrants increased by around 1 million (and by 2015 by another half a million). For a comprehensive analysis of post-accession emigration from Poland, see Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski (2009).

³ According to Walter F. Willcox (quoted by Chesnais 1986: 299), between 1800 and 1935 the population whose mother tongue was Russian increased 6 times, 5 times for English speakers, 3.5 times for Polish and Italian speakers, 3 for Spanish speakers, 2.5 times for German speakers and 2 times for French speakers.

⁴ As times which are 'similar to' 1846–1932, we consider the period of the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the years preceding the outbreak of the First World War, that is, 1871–1913. Before that, emigration from Polish lands was negligible while, later, during the war, it principally reflected compulsory displacements or their consequences.

⁵ The most popular estimates for this phenomenon concern the territory of Poland within its 1938 borders.

⁶ In the case of Poland, important factors – reducing the outflow of population during the period 1914–1945, when ongoing mass (voluntary) emigration could be expected – included war operations in 1914–1918/20 and 1939–1945, immigration restrictions in some target countries (mainly the USA), and a drastic shrinkage of labour markets (greatly decreased demand for labour) in these countries during the economic crisis of 1929–1934.

⁷ Note that these countries differed considerably with respect to such a migration overhang. In fact, in some of them (notably ex-GDR and ex-Czechoslovakia), a scarcity of labour was observed whereas some others (notably Bulgaria, Poland and Romania) had a surplus. In the late 1970s and the 1980s this led to large flows of workers between the member-states of COMECON/CMEA, an economic organisation that comprised the countries of the ex-Soviet bloc (Okólski 1992).

⁸ These authors argued, by analogy, that since such an outflow in earlier periods was a precondition for the accelerated development of first Western and Northern Europe and then Southern Europe, it should also take place in Central and Eastern European countries.

⁹ A great part of that unemployment had its roots in the policy of full employment which belonged to the priorities of communist modernisation. Such a policy encouraged the enterprises to labour hoarding by enterprises – i.e., maximising the number of employees instead of increasing labour productivity. This resulted in a ‘colossal wastefulness of human capital’ (Socha and Sztanderska 1993: 132).

¹⁰ It should be remembered that earlier European mass emigrations (especially at the turn of the nineteenth century) were a reaction to accelerated population growth.

¹¹ Probably the most comprehensive (albeit not identical) scope of the migration transition is present in works of Hein de Haas (2010) and Ronald Skeldon (2012).

¹² In Zelinsky’s terminology, a ‘vital revolution’ signifies a revolutionary population increase.

¹³ It would seem that Chesnais was not familiar with Zelinsky’s theory (which was published in the *Geographical Review*, a specialist journal for geographers). What is especially characteristic of Chesnais’s approach is, first, his focus on emigration and immigration – that is, international flows (and his omission of other types of mobility) and, second, his association of these flows with mortality and childbearing changes in a historical and social context that was specific to Europe.

¹⁴ It should be stressed, however, that both concepts – the population and migration cycles – include a predictive component, in keeping with which, in reality, the final stage (in particular of the migration cycle) has not yet been fulfilled. While empirical representation of the population cycle has been the subject of many scientific works, the most notably of Chesnais’ seminal 1986 monograph, very few have been devoted to the migration cycle. Among the latter, Fassmann and Reeger (2012) seem to adequately reflect the historical experience of several European populations.

¹⁵ Moreover, the strength with which these ‘effects’ manifest themselves depends, according to Arango, on two factors that differentiate the process of migration transition. The first is the phenomenon’s degree of delay in a given country, which affects what patterns of transition are adopted or ‘imitated’ from the ‘forerunners’, and the second is the complex interplay of structural characteristics of the country, which are often rooted in its history.

¹⁶ A few countries have departed from the patterns observed in a given region – in the north and west of Europe these were Finland and Ireland, in Southern Europe Greece and, in Eastern Europe, the former Yugoslavia to some degree.

¹⁷ The lifting of administrative obstacles to the Polish population travelling abroad in 1989 ensured a huge outflow of people which, however, predominantly took the form of circular mobility or irregular migration. The reason for the negligible flows of long-term migrants until 2004 was the retention of restrictions concerning the length of sojourn and access to the labour market in destination countries. In fact, in some of them, the regular migration from Poland diminished as a result of the cessation of the ‘privileged’ treatment of Polish migrants who, in earlier times, were perceived as victims of a communist regime. It was only Poland’s accession to the European Union and, especially, the termination of restrictive labour-market-related ‘transitory’ measures, which fundamentally changed this situation.

¹⁸ In fact, on 1 May 2004, only three EU destination states – Ireland, Sweden and the UK – lifted migration- (and employment-) related restrictions, although soon after, all other EU states, EEA states and Switzerland liberalised the rules of entry and access to the labour market for Polish citizens.

¹⁹ The project entitled ‘*Niezakończzone przejście migracyjne a starzenie się ludności w Polsce*’ [*The Uncompleted Migration Transition and Population Ageing in Poland*] (acronym: Mig/Ageing) was carried out in 2013–2018 by the team from the Centre for Migration Research at the University of Warsaw. Funding was provided by the National Science Center within the framework of the Maestro programme.

²⁰ See Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009 for a discussion of the fact that the increased migration from Poland in the first years after EU accession may already be the ‘last emigration’.

²¹ Changes in the other two migration flows (the return of Poles and outflow of foreigners) were expected to be relatively smaller.

²² The data for 2020 indicate that, despite a decrease in both emigration and immigration – according to ‘permanent residence’ registers – the net migration remained positive. No data on long-term migration in 2020 were available.

²³ An employer declaration to give a job to a specific foreign citizen is a simplified way for foreigners to get access to Poland’s labour market. No work permit is needed in such a case. The permissible length of employment, however, is limited to 6 months over any 12-month period. Foreigners from selected countries (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine) can benefit from this form of employment.

²⁴ At the time of writing this article the numbers of first residence permits in 2020 had already been published by Eurostat. Although in Poland (as in the EU as a whole) the respective number decreased (compared to 2019), it was still by far the highest among all EU countries and constituted 26.6 per cent of all permits (cf. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_-_statistics_on_first_permits_issued_during_the_year#First_residence_permits_.E2.80.94_an_overview; accessed: 28 December 2021).


²⁵ Cf. <https://stat.gov.pl/statystyki-eksperymentalne/kapital-ludzki/populacja-cudzoziemcow-w-polsce-w-czasie-covid-19,12,1.html> (accessed: 28 December 2021).

²⁶ Cf. <https://forsal.pl/praca/aktualnosci/artykuly/8219519,zus-rosnie-liczba-ubezpieczonych-cudzoziemcow.html> (accessed: 28 December 2021).

²⁷ Cf. <https://www.zus.pl/documents/10182/2322024/Cudzoziemcy+w+polskim+systemie+ubezpieczenia+C5%84+spo%C5%82ecznych.pdf> (accessed: 28 December 2021).

²⁸ See Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski’s 2009 book *Emigracja ostatnia? (Last Emigration?)*, which presents a comprehensive account of the massive post-accession outflow of people from Poland.

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Conflict of interest statement

No conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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How to cite this article: Okólski M. (2021). The Migration Transition in Poland. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 10(2): 151–169.