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MAGDALENA KNAPIŃSKA

Poznan University of Economics and Business, Poland

CHANGES IN MIGRATION IN POLAND IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION FLOWS OF UKRAINIANS

Abstract:

The goal of this study is to analyze the flows of immigrants and emigrants in Poland. The paper starts with a literature review of economic theories of migration and demographic trends. In the last years, Poland experienced a large change migratory pattern and geographic labour mobility. While Poland was initially a source country in international migration, it is becoming increasingly a target country for migration flows. This development was accelerated by the war in Ukraine. Based on the geographical proximity and a long tradition of intense of short-term migration from Ukraine to Poland, nearly a half million of refugees from Ukraine moved to Poland. Moreover, the scope of migration changed from the short-term to the long-term migration. Although, this development caused some short-term structural problems in various fields including education and social system, the Polish economy was able to absorb the war refugee flows better than expected.

Keywords:

Demographic Trends, Macroeconomic Effects and Forecasts, Labor and Demographic Economics, Geographic Labor Mobility, Immigrant Workers

JEL Classification: J11, J00, J61

Introduction

Migration is an important issue for various scientific disciplines, particularly politics, history, sociology and economics. Migration flows associated with human beings for thousands of years have been observed by scientists representing anthropology, biology, geography, and ethnology. Currently we can observe migration movements based on economic and political reasons. From an economic point of view we concentrate on the reasons and effects of migration on the labor market and the economy. From a theoretical perspective the crucial theory is the “push and pull” factors theory of migration presented below in the literature review. Moreover, significant flows of migrants are related to political reasons, and these flows are a challenge for social, education and health policy. The literature underlines the difference between migrant for permanent and temporary stay, and this difference is in the length of stays in the destination country. The political reason of migration flows often provide to the status of refugee. This status means a person who has lost the protection of their country of origin and who cannot or is unwilling to return there due to well-founded fear of persecution. Such a person may be called an asylum seeker until granted refugee status by the contracting state. In this study we concentrate only on permanent migrations observed in Poland, and additionally we focus on the specific of Ukrainian migrations.

This paper is constructed as follows: First, we present the main economic theories of migration. Second, we discuss the migration in Poland from general perspective and using the data from Central Statistical Office in Poland. Finally, we examine the specifics of Ukrainian immigration in Poland taking into account the Eurostat statistics and related papers. In conclusion we summarize the findings and formulated some final remarks.

Literature review - theory of migration

The migration reasons have been addressed by numerous migration theories, which have been formulated in the literature according to micro, macro and meso approaches. This division was implemented after researchers had realized how complex the issue of causes and motifs of migration was. The micro approach takes into account a particular values system of an individual, his or her desires and expectations as well as human resources of migrants.

The macro approach, on the other hand, concentrates on the economic, political and demographic situation in a particular country. It also includes universal factors applicable on a particular territory, such as laws, immigration and emigration regulations and global economic changes.

Finally, the meso approach presents an additional dimension, which is absent in the two former approaches: the collective and social bonds. Social and symbolic bonds between an individual and the community influence decisions made by potential and current migrants. The analysis of mechanisms conditioning departures from a particular country from the meso perspective is also important due to the fact that majority of immigrants arriving in well developed countries still come from traditional communities, in which it is the family or local community that decides upon a departure of an individual, as it provides funds for this departure (Balicki, Stalker 2006, p. 29).

Micro theories include, among others, the expectancy-value model, the stress-threshold model, the relative deprivation and relative frustration model and the economic cost-benefit model. The macro approach models include: the Pioneering Gravity Model and the ‘push-and-pull’ theory. The fact of combining elements of micro and macro approaches must also be marked, as it can be noticed in the case of the mixed theory called the ‘push and pull’ model

and the cost-usage theory. On the other hand, the meso approach is represented by the theory defined as the social choice or the new migration economy (Balicki, Stalker 2006, pp. 31-40).

Taking into consideration our further analyses migration causes explained by the macro approach theories seem to be the most interesting (migration theories review on the basis of Balicki, Stalker 2006, who performed it on the basis of: Th. Faist (2000), *The Volume and Dynamics of International Migration and Transnational Social Spaces*, Clarendon Press, Oxford). The first theory of this type, called the Pioneering Gravity Model, was formulated already in 1885 by a British geographer, E.G. Ravenstein (The assumptions of this theory were published in: Ravenstein (1885), *The laws of migration*, „*Journal of Royal Statistical Society*”, no. 2), and it is also called Ravenstein's Laws. According to this author migration is mainly caused by economic reasons: migrants search for better work and financial profits and the number of migrants decreases as the distance from the destination country increases. Therefore the development of transport shall lead to increasing migration tendencies.

Lee (1996) developed further Ravenstein's approach by focusing on the migration volume, migration streams and on the characteristics of the very migrations. Lee stated that the volume of migration from a particular territory changes together with the level of diversity of area included in territory. Migration volume is also related to the diversity of the prospective migrants and it also changes depending on changing external conditions. Migration volume depends also on the situation of the economy itself, although in the long run it has a growing tendency. Finally, the author claims that the volume of migration depends on the development level of the country and region which the migrant is going to leave (Lee 1966, pp.47-57, after: Lewis 1982, p. 21).

Regarding migration streams, Lee thinks that the better defined they are the bigger they are. A counter-stream stream develops in relation to the main migration stream. The migration stream efficiency¹ is high if the major factors in the development of a migration stream were minus factors at origin. Moreover, Lee claims that the efficiency of the migration stream and of the counter-stream stream has a dropping tendency if the departure and destination regions are similar. The efficiency has a growing tendency if these conditions are extremely different. According to Lee the migration stream efficiency depends on economic conditions and is high in prosperous times and low in depression times (Lee 1966, pp.47-57, after: Lewis 1982, p. 21).

As far as the characteristics of migrants is concerned Lee claims that migration is selective. Migrants tend to consider positive factors or pulling factors occurring in the migration destination place as well as negative factors, which, in a way, 'push' them to migrate. The level of positive selection of the aforementioned factors, i.e. the level of making decisions about departures, depends on many intermediate factors as well as on the position of the candidate in his life cycle, which also determines one's attitude to migration. Moreover, the characteristics of migrants also depends, which is rather obvious, on the features of societies of the origin and destination regions (Lee 1966, pp.47-57, after: Lewis 1982, pp. 21-22).

These considerations may be formulated otherwise as the 'push- and-pull' theory, according to which there are factors 'pushing' to migration departures and factors 'pulling' potential immigrants. This theory was formulated by E.S. Lee, who distinguished the following factors which are taken into account while a decision on migration is being made: factors related to the place of origin (push factors), factors related to the place of destination (pull factors), intervening obstacles and personal factors.

¹ The efficiency of the migration stream is defined as the relation of the migration stream and its counter-stream or as the balance of redistribution of the population affected by the counter-stream. Refer to: Lewis 1982, p. 21.

The 'push' type factors include, in particular, international conflicts, internal military conflicts, totalitarian regimes, persecutions, compulsory displacements, discrimination of minority, discrimination of majority, violation of human rights, guerilla activity and terrorism, poverty and hunger, unemployment and low wages, natural disasters and ecological disasters. Among the 'pull' factors we can distinguish state guarantees of social minimum wages, absorptive labor market with higher level of wages, educational possibilities or possibilities to acquire a new job, economic development and growth, joining of families, a chance to achieve prosperity, political stability, lawful governance and democracy, pluralism, efficient protection of human rights, life space (Balicki, Stalker 2006, after: Hailbronner 2000, pp. 16-17).

D. J. Bogue formulated a mixed theory combining elements of the 'push-and-pull' theory and the cost-benefit theory and its assumptions are presented in Table 1. A positive migration departure decision might be made in the event when the influence of factors specified in Table 1 in sections B and C is stronger than the influence of factors from sections A and D. If factors from sections A and D have stronger impact than factors from sections B and C the decision regarding movement is likely to be negative Balicki, Stalker 2006, after: Slany 1995, pp. 45-46).

These issues are treated similarly in the Stouffer's model, in which migration decisions also depend on pluses and minuses related to the country of origin, pluses and minuses of the destination country and also intervening obstacles and personal factors (Sundari 2007, p.33, after: Stouffer 1940). In each case individuals make a settlement of pluses and minuses or, in other words, of factors encouraging and discouraging migration related to the country of origin and to the country of destination and on the basis of this balance they make their decisions whether to migrate or stay in their own country (Kalinowska, Knapieńska 2009).

Table 1. Potential costs and benefits of migration

A. Potential costs of leaving a country Inhibiting factors	B. Potential benefits of leaving a country Pulling factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport to the new destination • Uncertainty related with finding a new work place, and problem of accommodation while looking for work • Costs of living while looking for work • Necessity to change external image (purchase of clothes, personal hygiene means, etc.) • Feeling of alienation • Lack of respect and acceptance in new environment • Necessity to know and use a foreign language • Necessity to change previous manners of behavior, habits, likings, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher wages • Possibility to choose a work place, consideration of personal preferences • Improvement of living conditions • Possibility to improve the level of education, a chance of self-fulfillment, raising the level of ambitions • Vast possibilities of development and education of children • Higher level of services, higher standard of living • Attractive social life • Favorable ethnic, racial, religious, political and social conditions
C. Potential costs of staying in a country Pushing factors	D. Potential benefits of staying in a country Inhibiting factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties in finding work on the domestic labor market, lack of adequate work place corresponding to ambitions of individuals • Unsatisfactory social and political relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap already owned dwelling place (or relative housing stabilization) • Definite supply of food, relatively easy living (without the necessity to change)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsatisfactory activities of social and political institutions of various type • Violation of basic human rights • Ethnic, social, political and religious inequalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of family, direct relationships with the closest members of family and social groups • Living while surrounded by the closest persons • Having a definite social status • Comfort resulting from the possibility to maintain native tongue, traditions, customs, ways of dressing, 'a' job provided
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Source: (Slany 1995, pp. 45-46).

The newest approaches to migration theories explaining emergence of migration movements include the approach proposed by T.J. Hatton and J.G. Williamson. According to them migration is conditioned by, firstly, a gap in per capita income between rich countries offering high wages and countries in which wages are low. Secondly, it depends on economic development in the sending country, as it increases the wealth of its citizens and at the same time it increases the number of people who can afford going abroad. The third factor stimulating migration is the share of young people in the population – the higher the percentage in the sending country is, the bigger the migration stream is; on the other hand, a high percentage of young adults in the receiving country has a negative impact on immigration. Finally, the fourth migration stimulating factor is the emergence of a network of friends and relatives in the receiving country, which has a positive impact on the migration stream (Hatton, Williamson 2002, pp. 5-9; Guardia, Pichelmann, 2006, pp. 6-7; Nakonieczna 2007, pp. 17-18).

Analysis of changes and trends in migration

In statistics published by The Polish Central Statistical Office foreign migrations there are flows of people connected with changes of residence country, and according to Regulation of the Parliament of the European Union and of the Council of 11/07/2007, this change is related to the intended period of residence in the other country of at least 12 months. A distinction is made here between immigration, i.e. the arrival to the country of a person who was previously a resident of another country with the intention to stay there for at least 12 months, and emigration, i.e. leaving the country by a resident with the intention to stay abroad for a period of at least 12 months (GUS, 2023, p. 204).

On Figure 1 we present the migration for permanent residence in Poland on 1990-2022. According to data from this figure in 1990-2015 the balance of migration was negative, and it was observed since the beginning of 20 century, when emigration to the United States started in many European countries. A spectacular change occurred in 2016, when a positive migration balance was recorded in Poland for the first time in history. Due to the migration crisis occurring in Europe, also in Poland there were more immigrants than emigrants.

Analyzing the number of emigrants in the examined period, it can be noted that the highest number was recorded in 2006, which was undoubtedly due to the improved opportunities to find a job in the European Union countries, which Poland joined in 2004. Namely in 2006 there were 47 000 emigrants for permanent residence. At the same time, it should be noted that these were only trips registered for permanent stay over 12 months, which in practice also meant the registration of people who had already left for a temporary stay.

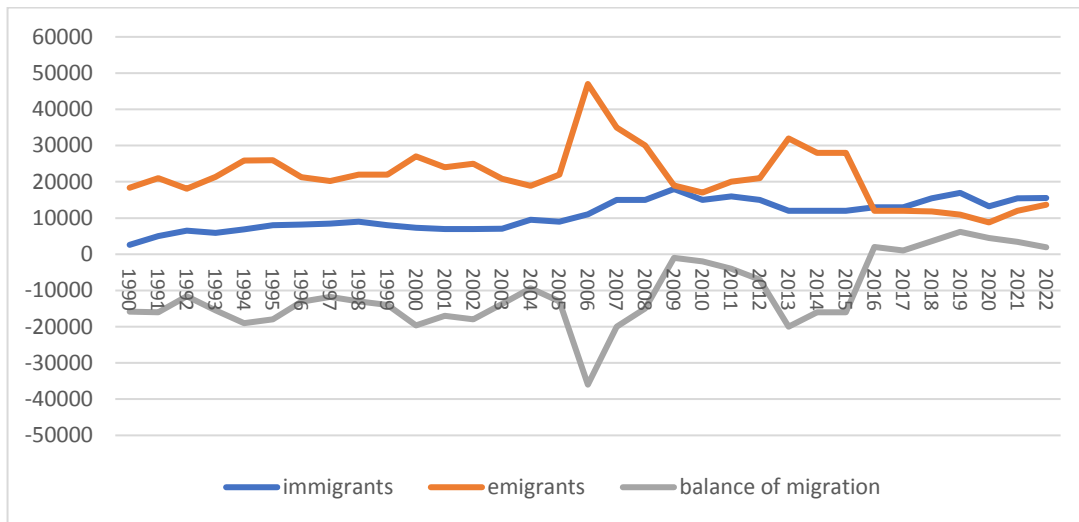


Figure 1. Migration in Poland, 1990-2022

Source: own work based on: (GUS, 1991-2023).

Taking into account the age of emigrants and their influence on the development of labor supply, the most numerous age group among them were people aged 30-44, as shown in Figure 2. In population of emigrants in 2004 and 2022 second larger group was population in age 18-24 years and third – 45-59 years. The tendency to migrate in these age groups can be related to the economic and educational needs of especially young people who decide to emigrate. At the same time, emigration deprives the domestic labor market of labor resources if people of working age decide to permanently go abroad.

However, when it comes to immigrants, the largest group in 2004 was the age group 30-44, while in 2022 the largest number of people coming to Poland were under 18 years of age. Undoubtedly, this situation is related to the influx of women and children from Ukraine as a result of the outbreak of war in their homeland. In 2004, the second largest age group among immigrants were people aged 45-59, and the third largest age group among immigrants was people under 18 years of age. Interestingly, the share of younger cohorts, aged 15–24, in temporary migration was rather stable, while it substantially decreased between 2005–2008 and 2015–2017 in the general population (Vakhitova, Fihel 2020, p. 133).

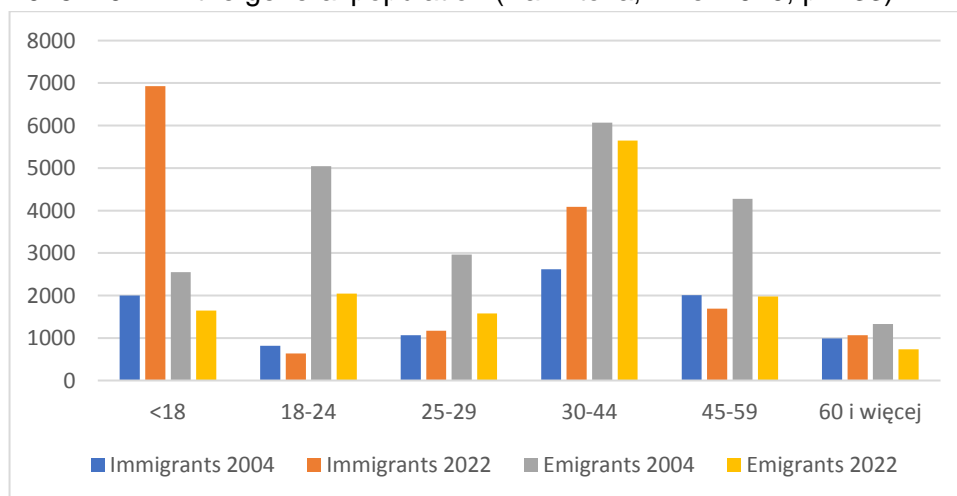


Figure 2. Migrants according to age classes

Source: own work based on: (GUS 2005, GUS 2023).

In turn, in 2022, people aged 30-44 took second place in the ranking of immigrants, and people aged 45-59 took third place. From the point of view of national labor supply resources, the inflow of people of working age is beneficial, but the inflow of minors under 18 years of age at the time of inflow is not good for the labor market, unless the incoming children receive education in Poland and take up work here. In such a situation, the inflow of young people under 18 years of age may be beneficial for the national labor supply resources in the perspective of several years.

Figure 3 shows immigrants according to the countries and regions of the world from which they came to Poland. The largest groups of immigrants are presented here, eight in number, but in total people from other countries and regions also came to Poland. It is worth noting that the Central Statistical Office has only been publishing such data since 2008, previously the scale of immigration was so small that the statistical office did not publish data by country of origin of immigrants. As shown in Figure 3, in 2008 the largest group were immigrants from the United Kingdom, Germany, North and Central America, followed by Ukraine, Ireland, Asia, the Netherlands and Italy (the countries are listed in Figure 3 from largest to smallest flow).

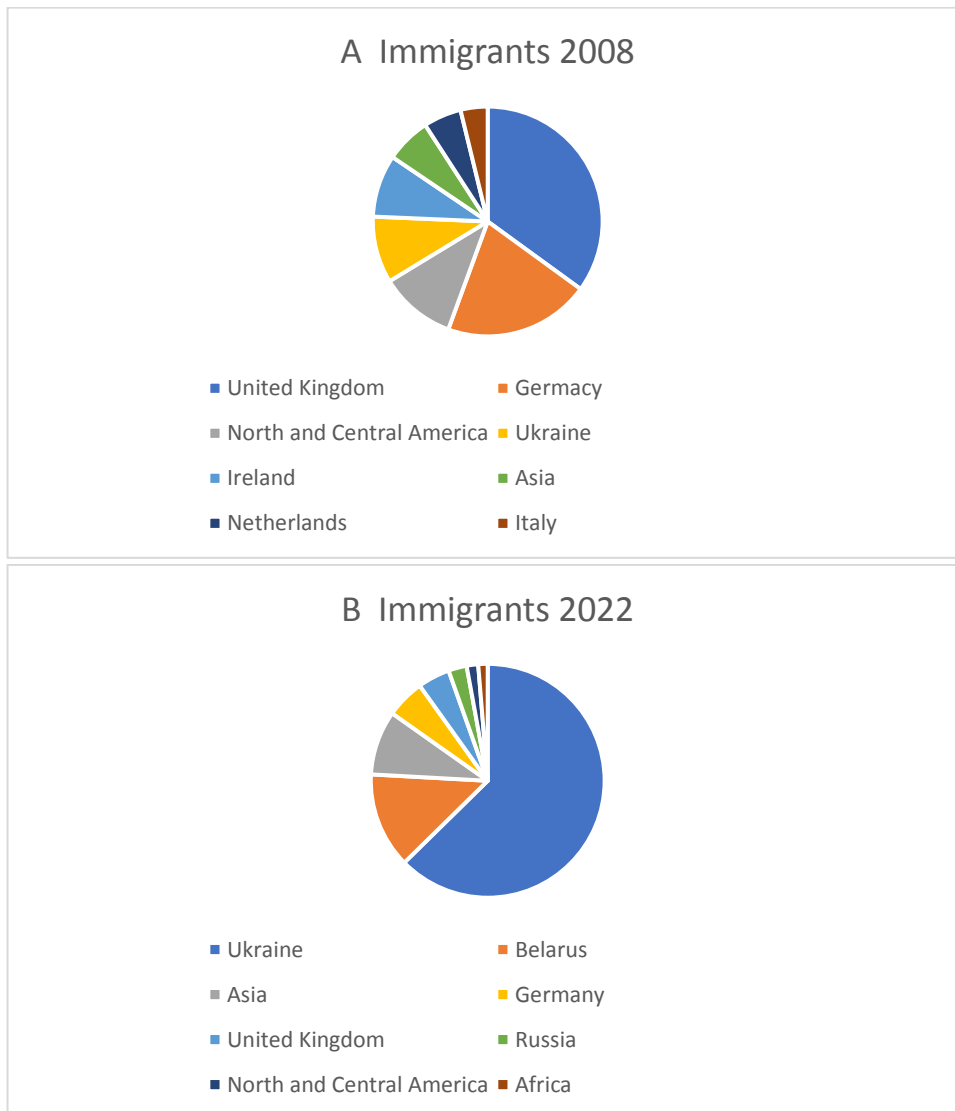


Figure 3. Immigrants according to home country in 2008 and 2022

Source: own work based on: (GUS 2009, GUS 2023).

If we compare this ranking with the countries of origin of immigrants in 2022, a conclusion can be drawn about a very significant change and reorientation of immigration trends, because in 2022 the largest inflow came from Ukraine, Belarus, Asia and Germany, followed by the United Kingdom, Russia, North and Central America and Africa. Flows from regions such as Belarus, Russia, as well as Asia and Africa have appeared, or rather gained significantly in importance, which was not recorded to such an extent in 2008 and earlier years.

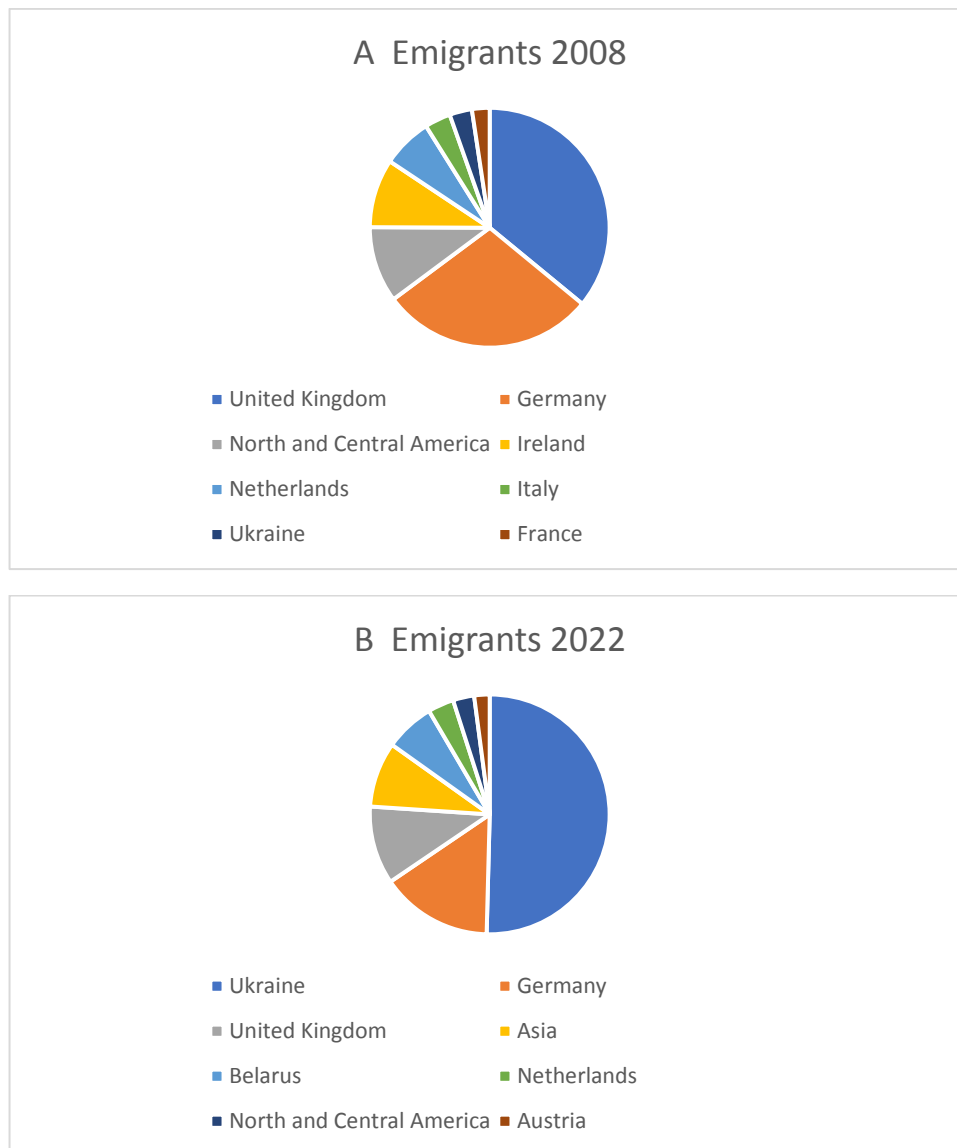


Figure 4. Emigrants by destination countries and regions of the world in 2008 and 2022
Source: own work based on: (GUS 2009, GUS 2023).

As for the countries to which people emigrated from Poland, in 2008 the largest groups emigrated to the United Kingdom, Germany, North and Central America, Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy, but also to Ukraine and France (Figure 4). In 2022, the largest outflows of people were recorded to Ukraine, Germany, Great Britain, Asia, Belarus, the Netherlands, and only further to North and Central America and Austria. Therefore, also in the field of emigration, there have been significant changes and new directions of population flows, which are certainly related to the economic, but also political and migration situation in Europe and

around the world. These changes undoubtedly have an impact on the labor market in Poland, although the labor resources leaving Poland did not always constitute labor resources.

Migration flows from Ukraine to Poland

Depending on the source of statistical data, the majority of Ukrainian nationals (60 to 97%) has different types of permissions allowing them to enter, stay and/or work in Poland. According to Office for Foreigners, as of July 2016, there were around 84,000 Ukrainians legally residing in Poland with different kind of long-term residence permits. According to Eurostat methodology, which also takes into consideration valid long-term national visas, 336 346 residence permits granted by Poland to Ukrainian nationals were valid at the end of 2015. For comparison, that number for 2008 was only 22,000 permits (Jaroszewicz, Piechal 2016, p. 66). Overall, in 2022, according to Eurostat, Poland granted the highest number of permits: 700,264 and in it were 447,225 permits for employment (63,8%) and 200,693 permits for other reasons (including international protection and residence without the right to work). Permits granted to Ukrainians in 2022 represent 11% of all permits granted in the EU (Eurostat, 2024).

According Jaroszewicz and Piechal (2016), before 2016 there were two different types of migration patterns represented by Ukrainian citizens in Poland. The first one, which has been reported for several decades already, was short-term circular labor migration governed by the liberal rules for short-term access to the Polish labor market. The bulk of Ukrainian migrants who arrive in Poland came from that group and usually had no intention of staying permanently in Poland and come from Western Ukraine. The other group, smaller but constantly growing, were long-term migrants who look for a permanent job in Poland or wish to study here. This was a new phenomenon that requires further research. Most of the people representing that group have arrived in Poland recently. Their migration decisions were mainly related to the significant deterioration of the economic situation and the eruption of conflict (Jaroszewicz, Piechal 2016, p. 89).

In 2022 there were three main EU countries where Ukrainian citizens with a valid permit resided: Poland (450,000), Italy (254,000) and Czechia (199,000) (MDP, 2024).

In addition, young migrants are getting more actively involved in educational migration (Stadnyi 2019). Particularly, in 2016–2017 more than 77,000 Ukrainians studied abroad (3 % of the total home students). Relative to 2008–2009 the number has grown by 220 % and two thirds of this increase can be attributed to study at Polish universities (Vakhitova, Fihel 2020, p. 133).

With regard to the migration of Ukrainian citizens, most people point out that it is mainly not a definitive move but one of regular return migration. Circulation is also associated with multiple residences and, where appropriate, citizenship and possibly multiple identities (Liptak, Kincses 2023, p. 781). Overall, Ukrainian migration to Poland constitutes an intriguing case of complex interplays between economic and humanitarian drivers of migration challenging the sharp division between humanitarian and economic migrants, as observed also in other contexts (Donato and Ferris 2020, Ortensi and Ambrosetti 2021). Results of previous studies on refugees' return migration additionally point to the salience of economic security in the home countries as its predictor (Klinthäll 2007, Zakirova and Buzurukov 2021). In this vein, humanitarian factors and the subsequent economic crisis in Ukraine changed the opportunity structures for Ukrainian temporary and return migration (Górny, van der Zwan 2024, p. 8).

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be noted that foreign migrations in Poland have been associated to various processes in recent years. Firstly, the economic development that took place after accession to the EU resulted in a change the migration balance. However, it was also related to the so-called migration crisis of 2015, when thousands of migrants and refugees from around the world arrived in Europe.

Secondly, the number of immigrants in Poland increased after accession to the EU to 10,000 immigrants per year and did not fall below this level until 2022.

Thirdly, due to the war in Ukraine, it was observed that the largest group of immigrants to Poland in 2022 were individuals under 18 years of age. This may be a challenge for both the social benefits system (500+ Program), and the education system, as these individuals are subject to compulsory education in Poland. Since the war in Ukraine is not coming to an end, it is expected that these challenges will persist in the coming years.

Fourthly, immigrants and emigrants are predominantly people from Ukraine – this phenomenon is the result of the war and may continue for the next few years. It is worth mentioning here that strong immigration movements from Ukraine have been observed much earlier, and migrants have indicated the economic situation as the main reason (Jarecki, 2017). The number of immigrants from Ukraine in 2022 accounted for more than half of all immigrants to Poland (over 46,000 people), and the number of people who emigrated to Ukraine constituted half of all emigrants (23,000 people). These data indicate that political problems and war may have a very significant impact on the situation regarding migration movements, even greater than solely economic factors that were important in previous years.

Taking into account the presented factors and conditions of migration from Ukraine to Poland, it can be noted that the unstable political situation in the region, as well as in other parts of the world, can only cause further fluctuations: increases and decreases in migration flows between Poland and Ukraine. However, this situation remains dynamic.

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