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## UKRAINIAN NATIONALS IN THE LABOR MARKET OF WIELKOPOLSKA

**Abstract:** Since the Poland's accession to the European Union, Ukrainian nationals have shown growing interest in the Polish labor market. They are employed as seasonal workers, including in the agriculture sector, or as blue-collar workers offered jobs where no qualifications are required. They substitute the Polish workers who migrated to the UK, Western Europe countries or Scandinavia. The increased interest in Poland may be explained by their commitment to improve their own economic situation, and by the condition of the Polish labor market which is getting better and better. The main purpose of this paper is to characterize the labor market of Wielkopolska while addressing the economic migration of Ukrainian nationals. The topic discussed herein is only an outline and a starting point for further in-depth studies on migration processes towards Poland. During the research, Ukrainian nationals were found to be the largest group of employees migrating to the Wielkopolskie voivodship. The intensified migration of foreign workers to the labor market of Wielkopolska is related to low unemployment rates and increased availability of new jobs. As noted in this paper, skilled Ukrainian workers dominated in the labor inflow until 2015 whereas from 2016, the Ukrainian economic migrants are mostly blue-collar workers offered jobs where no extensive skills are required.

**Keywords:** labor market, immigrants, economic immigration, Ukraine

### INTRODUCTION

Recent years have witnessed a discussion on the economic migration of Poles to the UK, Netherlands, Germany, Norway and Sweden (cf. Kaczmarczyk, Tyrowicz 2007, Kozak 2010, Kozielska 2014, Kwiatkowska, Jurkiewicz 2015, Pujer 2017). For many, wealthy Western European and Scandinavian countries became an opportunity to improve their economic situation. The migrations of the Polish population have become a part of the Polish history (cf. Szyszka 2016). In 2016, over 2.3 million Poles lived abroad. However, Poland is not only a country that people leave to improve their economic position and earn more; it has also become the destination for a large population originating from both Eastern Europe and conflict zones (cf. Duszczyk 2011, Duszczyk 2012, Brunarska et al. 2012, Szpakowska et al. 2016, Klimek 2015). The purpose of this paper is to characterize the labor market of Wielkopolska while addressing the economic migration of Ukrainian nationals. When discussing economic migrations, two effects need to be considered: the transfer of funds and the effective entry to the labor market. Though not described in this paper, these issues are the key reason for changing one's place of residence; in that context, the information on the number and structure of work permits may provide a picture of the present situation of foreign nationals. Obviously, this paper does not address these topics on a comprehensive basis. Instead, it is only an outline and a starting point for further in-depth studies on migration processes towards Poland.

### MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY OF STUDIES

The data on employment and unemployment figures and remunerations in the Wielkopolskie voivodship originated from the documents of the Central Statistical Office and from the Voivodship Labor Office in Poznań. Published by the Central Statistical Office, the "Situation on the labor market in the Wielkopolskie voivodship in 2011-2014" (*Sytuacja na rynku pracy w województwie wielkopolskim w latach 2011-2014*), the "Labor market in the Wielkopolskie voivodship in 2015" (*Rynek pracy w województwie wielkopolskim w 2015 r.*) and the "Labor

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market in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship in 2016” (*Rynek pracy w województwie wielkopolskim w 2016 roku*) are documents that provide basic information on the employment level, labor flows, average remunerations and the unemployment structure and figures. Empirical data on migration processes originated from the analyses and reports of the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy and of the Central Statistical Office. Also used was a paper on the Eurostat database with respect to migration and international protection statistics.

### EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE LABOR MARKET IN WIELKOPOLSKA

While contributing to social objectives, the proper functioning of the labor market is an important condition of economic development (Marcysiak, Prus, 2017; Prus, Sadowski, 2012). As provided for in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948, and in ILO Convention No. 122 of 1964, all human beings have the right to freely choose the place and type of work, performed in safe conditions that promote productivity, against remuneration that ensures a decent existence. The labor market is considered to be a “location” where labor purchasing and selling transactions take place. The demand is developed by employers (“buyers”) willing to hire employees (“sellers”) (Kuryło 2005). The subject matter of the purchasing and selling process extends to qualifications, skills, experience, education and knowledge (Dolny et al., 1998). Globally, the labor market is considered as the international labor market. Because of general national policies, domestic labor markets are identified. At a macro-region scale (in Poland, voivodeship), regional labor markets are considered. Also, municipal or district labor markets (referred to as local labor markets) may be discussed. Labor may be defined as a purposeful activity of humans who use work tools to adjust the objects of work to their (social, spiritual, material and other) needs (Sadowski, Wach, 2003). Employment is a specific form of work (labor) for another party in return for remuneration (Berten, 2002). According to Central Statistical Office data, in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship, the number of jobs created exceeded that of jobs lost over the 2012-2016 period. In 2016, the difference was 37,900 jobs (Table 1).

Table 6. Jobs created and lost in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship over the 2012-2016 period (thousand).

Specification	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of jobs created	48.8	60.9	71.8	65.5	66.2
Number of jobs lost	33.5	33.7	35.1	30.9	28.3
Balance	15.3	27.2	36.7	34.6	37.9

Source: own study based on the Local Data Bank

In Poland, the number of employees increased from one year to another. In 2013, there were nearly 13.85 million employees, rising to around 14.96 million in 2016 (an 8% increase). The same situation takes place in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship: from 2013 to 2016, the number of employees increased by more than 142,000. This indicates a growth trend on the local labor market (Table 2).

Table 2. Employees in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship in 2012-2016.

Specification	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Poland	13,850,506	13,919,826	14,237,452	14,504,269	14,964,411
Wielkopolskie voivodeship	1,357,954	1,367,192	1,412,670	1,448,408	1,500,101

Source: own study based on the Local Data Bank

When analyzing the Wielkopolskie voivodeship labor market, the decreasing number of unemployed also needs to be noted (Table 3). In the Wielkopolskie voivodeship, the unemployment

figures decreased by one half over the period concerned. According to Central Statistical Office data, in 2016, the official unemployment rate reached the lowest level (4.9%) in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship.

Table 3. Unemployment in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship in 2012-2016.

Specification		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Unemployed (thousand)	Poland	2,136.8	2,157.8	1,825.2	1,563.3	1,335.2
	Wielkopolskie voivodeship	147.9	144.8	116.4	93.3	77.7
Official unemployment rate (%)	Poland	13.4	13.4	11.4	9.7	8.2
	Wielkopolskie voivodeship	9.8	9.6	7.6	6.1	4.9

Source: own study based on the Local Data Bank

Changes to the Wielkopolskie voivodeship labor market are caused by multiple factors. The advantageous situation is supported by commercial and industrial traditions, favorable geographic location and transport infrastructure, all of which contribute to a continuous economic growth which sets this region apart from the rest of the country. The labor market is also affected by the negative demographic trend which reveals an ageing society and the outflow of the working-age population to other countries (Voivodeship Labor Office in Poznań, 2017). The low unemployment rate in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship is what makes the employers look for foreign labor. According to data from the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy, 2016 witnessed an important increase in the number of registered declarations of intent to employ a foreign national, especially as regards people from countries east of Poland.

#### UKRAINIAN NATIONALS IN THE LABOR MARKET OF THE WIELKOPOLSKIE VOIVODESHIP

Ukrainian nationals have been active in the Polish labor market for many years. The rapidly growing interest in working in Poland was caused by the outbreak of armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine in 2014, and by the deteriorating condition of the Ukrainian economy. The main economic motives are unemployment (20%) and unsatisfactory remunerations (60%) (Fig. 1). Political situation (12%) is a non-economic motive behind the decisions to leave Ukraine (National Bank of Poland, 2015).

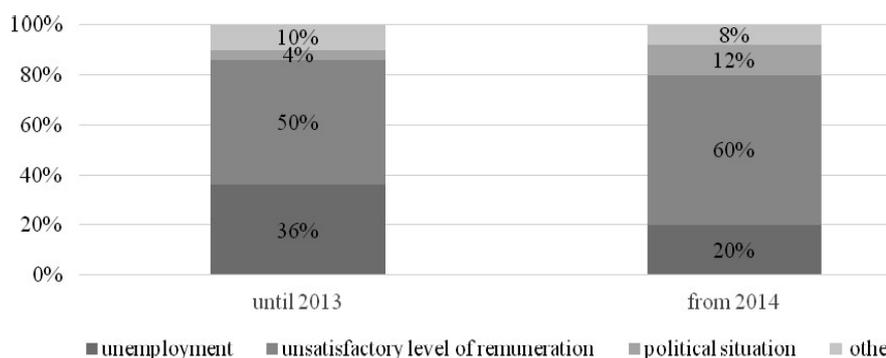


Figure 1. Main reasons behind the migration of Ukrainian nationals to Poland (%)

Source: own study based on "Ukrainian nationals employed in Poland" a 2015 report by the National Bank of Poland



For the Ukrainians, the simplest and most common basis for employment is the declaration of intent to employ a foreign national, filed by Polish employers. The simplified procedure for employing foreigners based on a declaration is governed by the Regulation of the Minister of Labor and Social Policy of June 27, 2007, as amended (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) No. 120, item 824), and is applicable to citizens of 6 countries: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldavia, Russia and Ukraine. They may be employed in Poland for 6 months during 12 consecutive months without the need to obtain a work permit. The number of declarations of intent to employ a foreign national varied across the period under consideration (Table 1). The number of people employed based on the aforesaid declaration has been increasing since 2014. In 2015, around 782,000 declarations were filed, which is twice as much as in the previous year. In 2016, the number of declarations filed by the employers continued to grow. By the end of 2016, it increased by around 68% compared to previous year. Actually, the number of foreign nationals employed in Poland based on the declarations may be lower, due to such reasons as: canceling their plans to move to Poland; the consul's refusal to deliver a visa; or the foreigner's failure to show up at work (Labor Market Department, 2017). In the Wielkopolskie voivodeship, the number of declarations filed grew each year. In 2012, around 11,500 employers declared their intent to employ a foreign national, whereas in 2016, that number went beyond 126,000. The declarations of intent to employ a foreigner were mostly issued for Ukrainian nationals. In 2012, they accounted for 93% of all declarations. In 2016, that share increased to reach 97%.

Table 4. Employers' declarations of intent to employ a foreign national in 2012-2016.

Employers' declarations	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	total
total in Poland	243736	89363	387398	782222	1314127	2816846
including Ukrainian nationals	223671	80243	372946	762700	1262845	2702405
in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship	12285	5246	21987	58628	126972	225118
including Ukrainian nationals	11465	4708	21028	57665	123197	218063

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy.

The work permit is a document that makes foreign nationals eligible for legal employment in Poland. For the foreigner, the condition is to hold a visa or a short-term residence permit. Work permits are delivered by the competent voivode for the employer's place of residence/seat. In Poland, several dozen thousand work permits are delivered to foreign nationals each year (Table 2). In 2012, 39,144 work permits were delivered; the next year, that number decreased to 39,078. After 2014, there was a significant increase in the number of foreign nationals employed in Poland based on work permits. In 2016, the number of work permits doubled compared to previous year (Table 3). In the Wielkopolskie voivodeship alone, 10,231 work permits were delivered in 2016, including 89% to Ukrainian nationals.

Table 5. Work permits delivered to foreign nationals in 2012-2016

Work permits	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	total
total in Poland	39144	39078	43663	65786	127394	315065
including to Ukrainian nationals	20295	20416	26315	50465	106223	223714
in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship	2182	2432	2705	3608	10231	21158
including to Ukrainian nationals	1291	1504	1810	2870	9118	16593

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy.

The number of work permits delivered in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship increased over the 2012-2018 period. In 2013, the number of Ukrainian nationals employed based on a work permit grew by 16.5%. Since 2014, more and more Ukrainians have been employed in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship because of the outbreak of armed conflict. Compared to previous year, the number of work permits delivered to Ukrainian nationals in 2016 was several hundred percent higher (Table 3).

Table 6. Growth of the number of work permits delivered to foreign nationals over the 2012-2016 period (%)

Work permits	2013/2012	2014/2013	2015/2014	2016/2015
total in Poland	99.83	111.73	150.67	193.65
including to Ukrainian nationals	100.60	128.89	191.77	210.49
in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship	111.46	111.23	133.38	283.56
including to Ukrainian nationals	116.50	120.35	158.56	317.70

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy.

According to the Employment Promotion Act (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 2008, No. 69, item 415, as amended), foreign nationals may be granted a work permit in Poland for a maximum (yet extendable) period of three years, applicable to five types of employment (A, B, C, D, E). Type A is intended for foreign nationals employed under a contract with an employer established in Poland. The work permit is delivered if no people look for employment in the profession concerned in the territory concerned, provided that the remuneration to be paid to the foreign national is no lower than that paid to a Polish national occupying the same job. Other work permit types (B-E) apply to managers, counselors and experts working for foreign employers. Considering the work permits delivered to Ukrainian nationals, it may be noted that in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship, the largest group was employed under type A of work permit. The largest and the smallest number of B-type permits were issued in 2012 and 2015, respectively. However, they had a negligible share in the total volume of permits (0.07 to 0.93%). No D-type permits were delivered to foreign nationals in the period under examination.

Table 7. Work permits delivered in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship to Ukrainian nationals by type

Years	Total work permits delivered	A-type	B-type	C-type	D-type	E-type
2012	1291	1267	12	12	0	0
2013	1504	1483	5	11	0	5
2014	1810	1801	7	2	0	0
2015	2870	2862	2	5	0	1
2016	9118	9108	6	4	0	0

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy.

When analyzing the sectors where immigrants are employed, the concentration of Ukrainian nationals in specific industries is clearly noticeable (Table 5). The structure of industries where Ukrainian nationals were employed evolved over the period under examination. In 2012, the largest group of Ukrainians were employed in the agriculture, forestry and hunting (21%) and in the building industry (14%). 2013 witnessed an increased interest in scientific and technical activity. In 2015-2016, the largest number of work permits for Ukrainian nationals were delivered in the transport and warehouse management sectors (19% and 23%, respectively).



Table 8. Work permits delivered in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship to Ukrainian nationals by selected sections of the Polish Classification of Economic Activity in 2012-2016

Years	Total work permits delivered	agriculture, forestry, hunting and fisheries	industrial processing	construction	wholesale and retail trade	transport and warehouse management	accommodation and catering activity	information and communication	financial and insurance activity	professional, scientific and technical activity	education	healthcare and social assistance	households with employed persons
2012	1291	272	109	178	103	99	29	0	1	150	2	22	12
2013	1504	216	66	185	124	122	22	4	1	204	2	13	28
2014	1810	252	75	139	147	162	38	16	0	233	2	32	28
2015	2870	298	182	303	150	553	17	12	0	323	8	21	16
2016	9118	524	648	1234	539	2057	103	14	0	959	3	46	31

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy.

In 2012-2015, the population migrating to the Wielkopolskie voivodeship labor market was mostly composed of skilled Ukrainian workers (the largest number of work permits was delivered for that employee group) (Table 6). In 2016, the above structure changed; the largest number of work permits was delivered to people to be employed as blue-collar workers. Compared to 2012, the number of work permits delivered to managers more than doubled in 2016. However, their share in the total pool of work permits declined.

Table 9. Work permits delivered in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship to Ukrainian nationals by selected employee groups in 2012-2016

Years	Total work permits delivered	by employee groups			
		managers, counselors, experts		skilled workers	blue-collar workers
		Total	including: positions held in management boards of legal persons		
2012	1291	16	8	473	294
2013	1504	22	0	395	47
2014	1810	34	7	527	115
2015	2870	33	1	1106	667
2016	9118	35	1	3489	4547

Source: own study based on data from the Central Statistical Office and the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy.

As shown by studies, the majority of Ukrainian economic migrants were employed as blue-collar workers. On one hand, this could suggest they work below their education level (brain waste). But on the other hand, this means the migrating population is mostly composed of previously unemployed, poorly skilled people.

## SUMMARY

Over the recent years, the migration flows have changed their nature, intensity and geographic directions. While posing a major problem, they also affect the situation of both the country of origin and the destination country. They determine the labor market conditions and impact the processes taking place within. Stopping these flows would be pointless because they are usually underpinned by economic factors. Under these conditions, it is difficult to affect the individuals' decision to stay

in their country of origin and not to pursue their plans to improve their situation. In the context of migration challenges, the analysis of the labor market allows to make the following conclusions:

1. in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship, the number of jobs created increases and exceeds that of jobs lost;
2. the local labor market grows because of the increased number of employees and declining unemployment figures;
3. the low unemployment level in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship makes it necessary to rely on foreign labor;
4. Ukrainian nationals show a growing interest in the labor market of the Wielkopolskie voivodeship;
5. there was a shift in the skills of employees originating from countries east of Poland; skilled Ukrainian workers dominated in the labor inflow until 2015 whereas from 2016, the Ukrainian economic migrants are mostly workers offered with jobs where no extensive skills are required.

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