

Polish immigration to Finland – statistical survey



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Introduction

Poland has always been recognized as a country of emigration. The Second World War, when over five million people emigrated, border changes and unofficial emigration during the post-war communist period 1945-1989 are examples only from 20th century. Reasons for emigration of that time were mainly political. After the transformation in 1989 people encountered an opportunity to emigrate in order to look for better conditions of life and work. Because of a still-existing gap in economical development between Poland and Western Europe, lots of people decided to take advantage of this possibility. The crucial moment was 1st May 2004 when Poland accessed European Union and gained an admission to the free market of labour flows. However, only Great Britain, Ireland and Sweden opened their borders for citizens of New Member States without restrictions. After a few years only Austria and Germany require special permissions for job till now.

There are some typical destination-countries which Polish emigrants usually choose. The most popular nowadays are Great Britain, Germany, Ireland, Holland and Italy. According to the esteems of Central Statistical Office in Poland (GUS, 2009) in the end of 2008 around 2 210 thousands of Polish citizens lived abroad, from whom 1 887 thousands in Europe and 1 820 thousands in the European Union. Table 1 presents numbers of emigrants from Poland living in the period 2004-2008 in Europe, EU and five European countries with the largest Polish centres.

Nevertheless small Polish communities can be found almost in each of European countries. One of

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Table 1. Emigration from Poland for a temporary stay in the period 2004-2008 (in thousands). Data: Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach emigracji z Polski w latach 2004-2008.

destination/year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Europe	770	1 200	1 610	1 925	1 887
European Union	750	1 170	1 550	1 860	1 820
Great Britain	150	340	580	690	650
Germany	385	430	450	490	490
Ireland	15	76	120	200	180
Holland	23	43	55	98	108
Italy	59	70	85	87	88

these less popular destinations is Finland. Flows of migrants between these two Baltic Sea-cross-neighbours have not been significant, but it is worth following how it has been changing through the passage of time after EU enlargement in 2004.

Polish immigration to Finland

Until 1980 Finland had also been a source of emigration. Since then the trend has reversed and Finland has become a country of immigration, mostly for foreign citizens from Europe, especially from Sweden, Russia and Estonia. The peak of immigration to Finland was reached in 2008 when 29 114 foreigners settled. Numbers for previous years are respectively: 2007 – 26 029; 2006 – 22 451; 2005 – 21 355 and 2004 – 20 333 (Statistics Finland). Despite this fact, Finland is still a country which has the smallest percentage of foreign population among EU15 states (2,5% in 2008).

Explanation for this situation can provide an assumption based on obstacles which encounter immigrants in the Finnish labour market. Among these vulnerabilities high unemployment rate, low value to foreign labour stock by Finnish employers and poor

language skills (while good knowledge required) are the most significant to be mentioned (Heikkilä, 2005). That is one possible comment for the phenomenon that Finland is not a popular choice of destination also for New Member States (NMS) included Poland. Another reason can be the state policy: Denmark and Sweden allowed free movement of NMS citizens to their labour markets at once and that is why these Nordic countries were chosen the more often among NMS (Heikkilä & Wilkman, 2008).

Figure 1 shows immigration from Poland to Finland, emigration from Finland to Poland and net migration through the whole period 1989-2008. There were two growth periods in the streams of migration between these two countries: the first one just after the crucial year 1989 and the second after 2006. Nevertheless, since the beginning of 21st century regular intensification can be observed. The rapid growth in 2006 is probably because of the fact that since 1st of May 2006 the transition period expired and Finland ceased the restrictions in free-movement of labour market. This also evidence that looking for job is the main reason for immigration to Finland from Poland.

During the first year after EU enlargement 115 people from Poland entered Finland. Almost half of them (53) settled in Uusimaa county, consistently to

Table 2. Immigration of Polish citizens to Finland by county 2004. Data: Statistics Finland.

Total	115
Uusimaa	53
Itä-Uusimaa	-
Varsinais-Suomi	16
Satakunta	4
Kanta-Häme	1
Pirkanmaa	9
Päijät-Häme	3
Kymenlaakso	-
South Karelia	3
Etelä-Savo	1
Pohjois-Savo	4
North Karelia	2
Central Finland	3
South Ostrobothnia	1
Ostrobothnia	4
Central Ostrobothnia	-
North Ostrobothnia	4
Kainuu	1
Lapland	1
Åland Islands	5

Table 3. Emigration of Finnish citizens to Poland by county 2004. Data: Statistics Finland.

Total	69
Uusimaa	36
Itä-Uusimaa	1
Varsinais-Suomi	9
Satakunta	-
Kanta-Häme	-
Pirkanmaa	-
Päijät-Häme	1
Kymenlaakso	2
South Karelia	-
Etelä-Savo	-
Pohjois-Savo	4
North Karelia	-
Central Finland	2
South Ostrobothnia	-
Ostrobothnia	7
Central Ostrobothnia	1
North Ostrobothnia	5
Kainuu	-
Lapland	1
Åland Islands	-

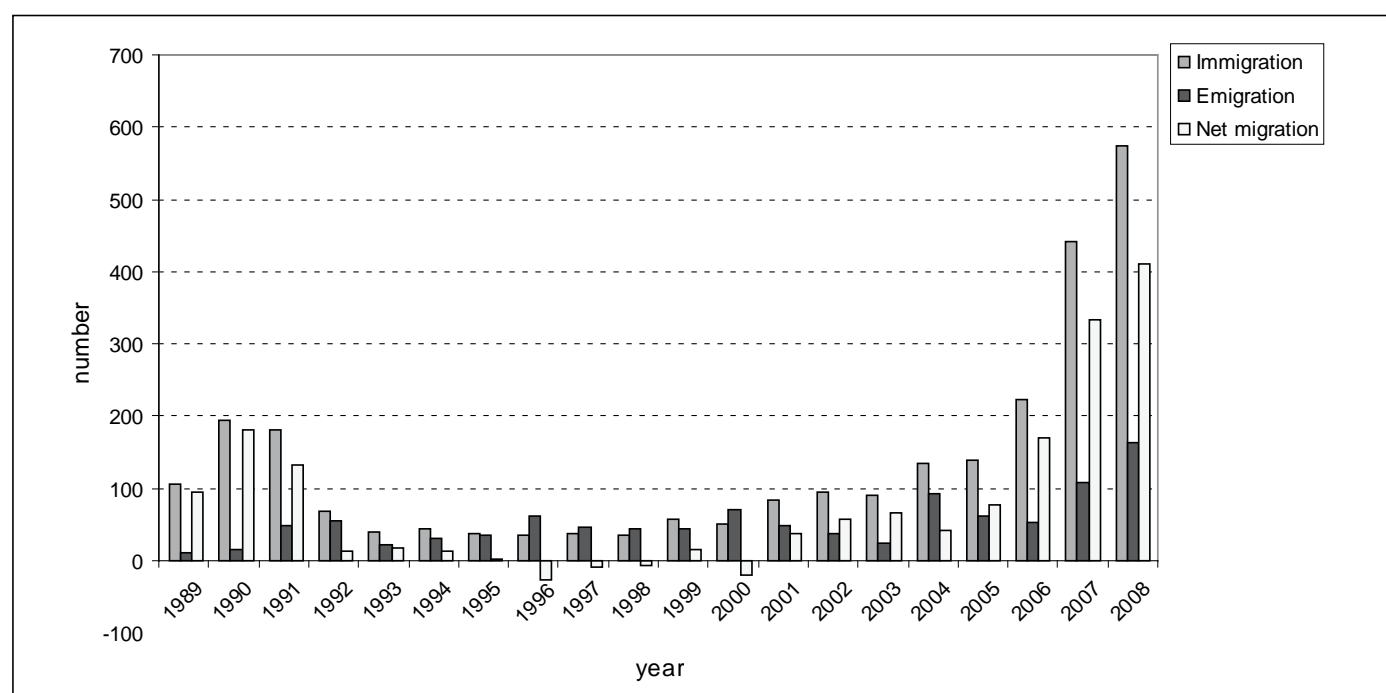


Figure 1. Immigration from Poland to Finland and emigration from Finland to Poland 1989–2008. Data: Statistics Finland.

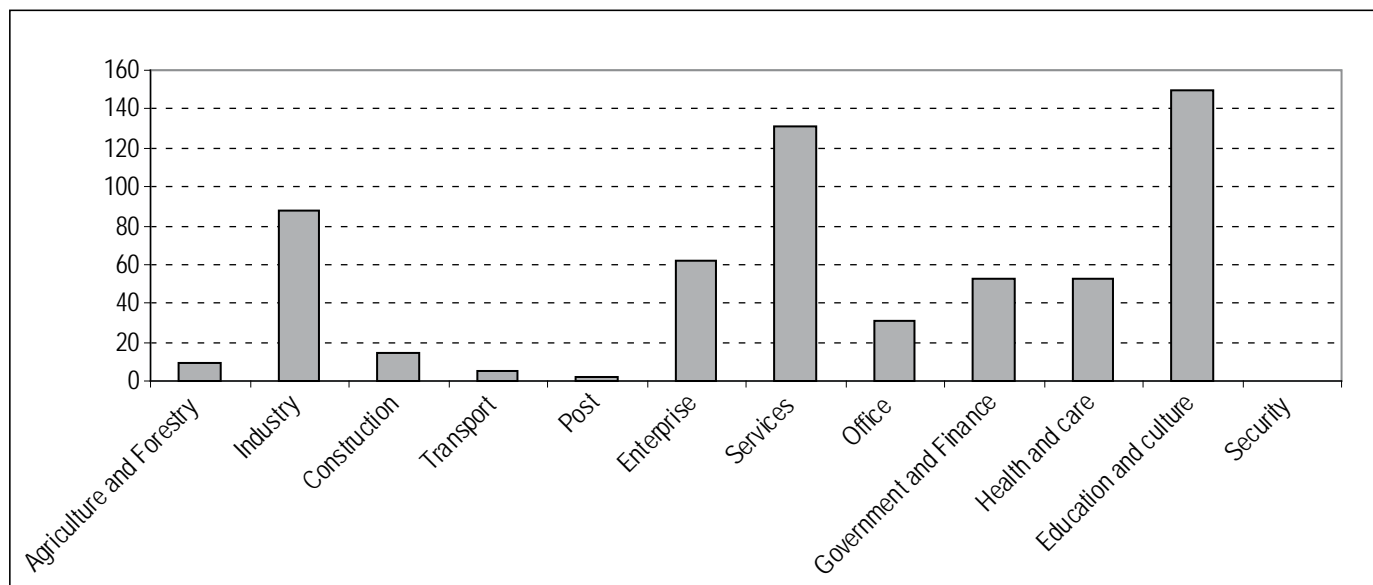


Figure 2. Economic sectors of employed Polish immigrants by country of birth in Finland 2004. Data: Statistics Finland.

the pattern prevalent among all Nordic countries that capital city areas attract immigrants the most (Heikkilä & Wilkman, 2008). Next positions occupy regions of Varsinais-Suomi and Pirkanmaa, mainly because of cities of Turku and Tampere. According to special data bought from Statistics Finland by Institute of Migration, the table 2 presents Polish settlement in particular counties of Finland. Apart from main cities settlement in the rest of Finland seems to be random, equable and strongly connected to particular reasons of single persons.

To comparison, table 3 presents outflows from Finnish counties to Poland. It seems to be almost twice less that the opposite direction. This is also an example which confirms the trend showed in Figure 1 that Finland has usually positive net migration and gains the inflows of Polish immigrants rather than loses outflows to the opposite direction.

Polish immigrants in the Finnish labour market

There are differences between Polish and Finnish data about number of Polish immigrants in Finland. According the data from Statistics Finland in the year of 2004 in Finland lived 1204 Polish immigrant between 15 and 74 years old, 672 of whom have a job. Figure two indicates employment of Polish migrants by economic sectors.

Three main fields in which Polish immigrants find employment the most often are education and culture (150), services (131) and industry (88). The most popular occupations among industrial sector are metal industry and chemical processing. Polish people employed in the service branch work usually as cleaners, sales officers or take restaurant jobs. Not only low-skilled job dominate among Poles but also professions require more specific training. The example is relatively high number of teachers and artists of Polish background working in Finland.

Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy publishes from 2004 every half a year the Information about employment of Polish citizens in European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Switzerland and of citizens of EEA states in Poland (Informacja w sprawie zatrudnienia obywateli polskich w państwach Europejskiego Obszaru Gospodarczego i Szwajcarii oraz obywateli państw EOG w Polsce). The publication contains data about permissions for job given to Polish citizens by Finnish state. Table 4 presents these numbers.

From the 1st of May 2006 Finland abandoned two-year transition period and since then Polish citizens has not needed to apply for permission anymore. However, according to Finnish law, there is an obligation of immigrant workers to register themselves in employment offices. Between 1st of May 2004 and 30th of April 2006 Poles gained together 343 permissions for work. This data can illustrate the scale of

Table 4. Numbers of permission given to Polish immigrant workers in Finland. Data: Informacja w sprawie zatrudnienia obywateli polskich w państwach Europejskiego Obszaru Gospodarczego i Szwajcarii oraz obywateli państw EOG w Polsce, 2008.

Year/Period	2003	January-April 2004	May-December 2004	2005	January-April 2006
Numbers of Permissions	720	325	130	152	61

Polish job-migration but they are not a synonym of real amount of Polish workers in Finland. The data do not comprise e.g. those who returned to Poland after temporary job or who work without legalization (Informacja w sprawie zatrudnienia obywateli polskich w państwach Europejskiego Obszaru Gospodarczego i Szwajcarii oraz obywateli państw EOG w Polsce).

After the growth of Polish immigration after 1st of May 2006, in 2007 and 2008 situation seems to be stable. The latest data from October 2008 says that in Finland live about 4000 Polish citizens for economic purposes (Informacja...,2008). They are mostly men without families – majority of them (2500-3000) is employed in the metal industry (including shipbuilding industry) in Rauma, Turku and Helsinki as welders or machine operators. The second branch with significant amount of Poles employed is construction (e.g. in Olkiluoto by atomic power station building 50% of staff i.e. 1 000 people are Poles). Majority of these workers are delegated by Polish employers for a certain period of a couple of months.

Moreover, Polish citizens each year take up seasonal jobs in agriculture sector during the summer as strawberries and other fruit and vegetables pickers. The number fluctuates near several hundred people.

The separate group are highly-skilled professionals, mainly of IT branch who have started legal and permanent job in Finland.

To integrate Polish community in Finland 23 Finnish-Polish associations exist, connected under one umbrella association (Suomi-Puola Yhdistysten Liitto (SPYL)). They function in main Finnish cities like Helsinki, Turku, Tampere Lahti, Mikkeli etc. to develop Finnish-Polish relations and promote knowledge of Poland in Finland. Relatively, in Poland is Polish-Finnish Association with the main office in Warsaw and four agencies e.g. in Gdansk. The second important area which integrates Polish people in Finland is the Catholic Church and several parishes offering masses in Polish language.

Conclusion

Flows of migrants between Finland and Poland are modest despite the growth after 2006. Polish migration to Finland can serve as an example to show how small communities function in this Nordic country. The author hopes that this article can be her first step towards deeper investigation of this topic. It would be advantageous and interesting to lead some qualitative research in the future to reveal personal experiences of single Polish immigrants.

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Statistical resources

- Statistics Finland.
Eurostat.