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**Influx and Integration of  
Migrants in Poland  
in the Early XXI Century**

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# **Influx and Integration of Migrants in Poland in the Early XXI Century**

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**Marek Okólski**

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## 1. Introduction

In Poland, almost all which concerns immigration, since 1990, is a novelty<sup>1</sup>. Before 1990, a limited, migratory inflow of foreign migrants to Poland, mostly of a *quasi*-permanent character, was observed. For instance, in 1985, as typical for the 1980s, 3.4 million foreign entries were recorded of which more than 90 per cent were related to short-term and unofficial journeys of people from the borderlands of neighboring countries. During that period, Polish law did not allow for the inflow of foreign labor nor the protection of refugees. Mixed marriages of Polish citizens led to the eventual emigration of a Pole rather than the immigration of a foreigner. Not surprisingly in the year 1985, according to official sources, only 1.6 thousand immigrants arrived, including approximately 1,000 returning Polish citizens. Population movements into Poland were by all means negligible. Such a situation was a consequence of membership in the Soviet-led Communist block and a closed door policy for the traveling of people which resulted in international *semi*-isolation.

The degree to which movements of people remained repressed during the pre-1990 period can be easily discerned by examining the trend initiated between 1989 and 1991, when gradually major obstacles to border crossing and residence in Poland were removed. In 1991, it was already the case, that foreign entries into Poland amounted to as many as 36.8 million, which was ten-fold the 1985 figure. The number of border crossings, by incoming foreign citizens, continued to rise sharply until 1994 when the annual inflow stabilized and continued until the year 2000 at a level of approximately eighty to eighty-five million. The numerical increase has been accompanied by a strong growth in the geographical diversity of visitors. A large part of those persons visited Poland for a few days or weeks but for other reasons than tourism, brief family reunion or company business. They came to raise money and to support their livelihood in a home country by engaging in petty trade, occasional jobs or “whatever profitable,” i.e., beggary, theft, prostitution, etc. Many of these visitors turned into clandestine residents and workers. Approximately, 7 to 8 thousand arrived yearly with the purpose of settling as permanent residents, of whom foreign citizens constituted a majority. Additionally, tens of thousands of foreigners undertook short-term immigration, on an annual scale, to Poland. This is largely because the labor market had become liberalized and work permits became available to non-Polish nationals. Shortly, the number of legally employed foreigners approached 40 thousand of whom a half included temporary workers. Furthermore, the inflow of asylum-seekers has been initiated<sup>2</sup> and steadily expanded to around 4 thousand a year by the end of the 1990s. Finally, Poland has become a transit territory for massive flows of people from Eastern Europe and Asia to the West. On the other hand, the Polish government had become involved in the repatriation of

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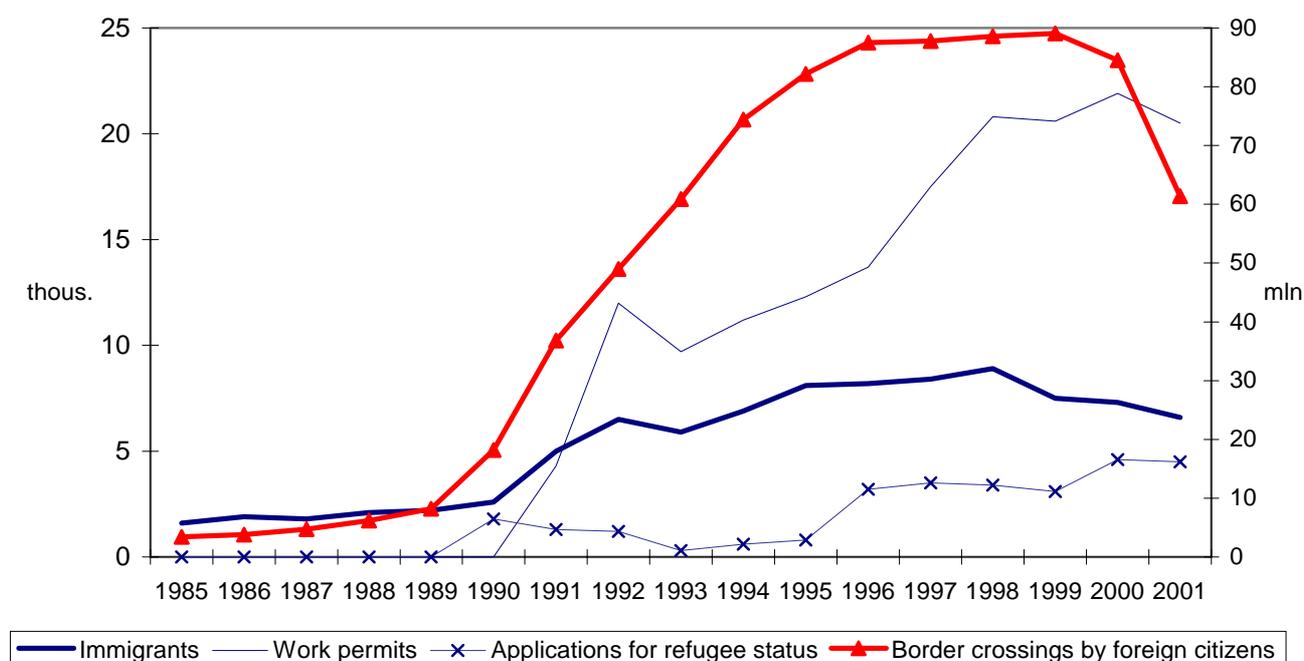
<sup>1</sup> This issue has already been extensively discussed in recent literature. See e.g. Okólski, 1998; Iglicka, Sword, 1999; Okólski, 2000a; Iglicka, 2001; Kaczmarczyk, Okólski, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Before 1990 Poland was not receiving any refugees in accordance with the 1951 Geneva convention and following UNHCR rules; occasionally, however, small numbers of pro-leftist asylum-seekers were accepted in that country.

ethnic Poles and their relatives who lived in former Polish territories captured in 1939 by the Soviet Union or from elsewhere in the former USSR (notably in Kazakhstan)<sup>3</sup>.

Some of these developments are presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Various types of documented incoming migrants in Poland; annual data for 1985-2001 (arriving foreign citizens – in million; otherwise in thousand)



Since 1989, within a period of several years, Poland dramatically changed its ethnic profile. In the period between 1945-1989 it was officially claimed as a homogeneous nation, with one ethnicity and one religion, and any differences were scrupulously concealed<sup>4</sup>. With the restoration of democracy, Poland witnessed a revival of ethnic consciousness and differentiation. The “resurrected” old ethnic minorities were joined by new ethnic groups composed of newly arriving migrants. For the majority of the native population, which has increasingly been encountering alien cultures in everyday life, that presented a great challenge, and triggered off a series of currently unknown social phenomena.

<sup>3</sup> In 1990 around estimated one million Poles (the citizens of Poland on 17 September 1939, the day of Soviet invasion of Poland, or their descendants) still lived in their homelands in Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine or remote areas of USSR to which they (or their ancestors) were deported.

<sup>4</sup> This presented a glaring irony to Poland’s history when it was a multi-denominational and multi-cultural state, and home for various persecuted minorities from abroad.

## 2. Prominent Categories of Migrants and their Structural Characteristics

### 2.1. Categories and Respective Definitions

Traditionally, in migration studies, immigration is more of a research focus than other categories of inflow. In Poland, as in other countries, immigration is a component of balancing the national population and therefore it possesses a strict legal sense. It reflects the facts of registration, in contrast to actual inflow, for permanent residence in a given administrative unit, e.g. municipality, of an eligible person whose previous permanent residence was abroad. In turn, “permanent residence” constitutes another specific concept of Polish law, which emphasizes an individual’s residential rights over the duration (permanency) of residence. We begin with these considerations because, despite international harmonizing efforts by the United Nations or Eurostat<sup>5</sup>, not only do the country-specific definitions of immigration greatly differ but also the definition adopted in Poland strongly departs from what might be seen as prevalent practice in this regard.

The eligible personas referred to above, according to the official Polish definition of immigrant, is unconditionally an immediate citizen of Poland, and a foreigner only when granted permission for settlement in Poland. That permission can be obtained upon the fulfillment of certain conditions, which are fulfilled after several years of a foreigner’s uninterrupted stay in Poland. In effect, the inflow of immigrating Poles, as a rule, strictly corresponds to the time of their recorded immigration whereas the registration of immigrating foreign citizens is delayed by an unspecified number of years.

Unfortunately, these two different groups are not differentiated in official statistical reports. Moreover, because of the difficulty in satisfying the conditions required for permission for settlement and the ease of access to certain other forms of entering residence in Poland, the statistics tend to underestimate the immigration of foreigners. Many *de facto* non-Polish immigrants are believed to be included in other categories (such as temporary migrants, migrant workers, students or even tourists).

According to many accounts, by far the largest category of migratory inflow into Poland is the movement of foreign citizens who enter Poland as tourists or other visitors but either overstay or engage in non-tourist activity by obtaining employment for gain or who enter Poland as short-term migrants and then overstay. This category of irregular (sometimes referred to as undocumented) migrants, represented by these persons, escapes most records except for police records<sup>6</sup>. A majority of these migrants are present in the informal underground or shadow economy as workers, self-employed agents and entrepreneurs. Current available information, which pertains to the flows and characteristics of these persons, originates from scarce and small-scale inquiries carried out by research centers.

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<sup>5</sup> See e.g. UN, 1998; Bilsborrow et al., 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Irregular migrants also include those foreigners who enter Poland illegally.

In addition to “permanent residence” immigration (in Poland’s official jargon – just “immigration”), which is the basic category of migratory inflow into Poland but only remotely corresponds to the UN-recommended category of long-term immigration<sup>7</sup>, Polish legislation also incorporates the category of temporary migration. It pertains to the flow of people who report to a local administrative unit upon their arrival with an expected fixed-time stay in Poland of more than two months. By and large, there are no upper limit requirements for the duration of residence in Poland in that case, and a temporary migrant’s stay may extend for years<sup>8</sup>. Foreign citizens, especially those seeking legal employment, whose entry into Poland became possible on the basis of a visa issued by a Polish Consulate usually report their arrival.

In the 1990s, however, a large proportion of arriving foreigners circulated between their home countries and Poland where their stay was usually very short. As a rule, they did not comply with the registration obligation. This was mainly the case with those arriving through the visa-free regulations (i.e. under the guise of tourism), and whose length of stay was limited to a maximum of three months. The majority tended to leave Polish territory before the expiry of the three-month period, and returned as quickly as possible to stay for another up to three-month term. A different pattern was exhibited by migrants whose activities in Poland required an uninterrupted stay of more than three months. The foreigners concerned required special authorization called “permission for a fixed-term residence,” which enabled a foreigner to live in Poland for up to a period of one year and was renewable. These persons as a rule were registered.

All in all, statistics for temporary migration are far from being unambiguous and exhaustive. As far as newly arrived migrant workers are concerned, they comprise a primary sub-category of temporary migrants; however, there is no official information, which exists. Instead statistical sources comprise data regarding granted employment permissions, for foreigners, in a given year. These foreigners constitute a heterogeneous albeit unified aggregate of those newly arrived and those persons who arrived in earlier periods and renewed their status.

Information pertaining to migrants seeking refugee status in Poland should be considered accurate and exhaustive<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, there are difficulties with interpreting the respective data because only a small portion of foreigners covered by these data fulfill the requirements established for a refugee candidate in Poland. Many of those applying are in fact in transit to a Western European country, frequently Germany, they come to Poland from a safe third country, or they identify themselves as refugees upon apprehension for attempting to illegally stay in or exit from Poland.

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<sup>7</sup> „Permanent residence” immigration here means arrival for unlimited period, and implies rather long stay of an immigrant in Poland. In turn, the UN category of „long-term immigrant” embraces those admitted for a residence of one year duration or longer.

<sup>8</sup> The registration for temporary residence of a reporting foreigner, however, is subject to a special permission system. Generally, tourists are eligible for registration of (non-renewable) up to three-month residence whereas other categories of documented (legal) foreign visitors in order to be registered need permission for fixed-time residence. Such permission has an upper limit, typically 6 or 12 months, but it is renewable.

<sup>9</sup> Poland is a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention since 1992. A practical application of respective rules has consistently been rather generous and lenient, and there seem no significant reasons for asylum seekers arriving in Poland not to approach Polish refugee authorities. All applications and procedures are recorded and included in official statistics.

The migration of Poles also presents a complicated issue. The estimated number of Polish citizens who emigrated in the decade of the 1980s alone by far exceeds 1 million (Okólski, 1998a). Many of these emigrants left as tourists without reporting their departure to respective administrative units. This is a reason why they have never been included in official migration statistics<sup>10</sup>. In the 1990s, after shorter or longer stays abroad, these persons frequently with their children born outside of Poland, did not have to report their arrival because their domicile in Poland was never canceled and they were consequently omitted from migration statistics. For this reason, only very small fraction of returning migrants, which are officially covered by the immigration category, is measured. On the other hand, since the late 1990s, the category of immigration of Polish citizens has been incorporating the cases of repatriates. The latter are foreigners who as a result a special application process have been identified as persons of Polish descent and consequently have been granted a “repatriation visa”. At the moment of arrival in Poland, these persons are recognized as Polish citizens and become eligible for permanent residence. Thus with no specific delay they enter the immigration registry.

Keeping in mind, the difficulty of unanimous interpretation of statistical data which concerns inflows into Poland that ensues from the descriptions above, in the following parts of the chapter we will adhere to specific Polish definitions and, as far as it is possible, we will attempt to distinguish between three general categories: immigrants, other documented migrants and undocumented migrants.

## **2.2. Immigrant Stock and Inflow of Migrants in 2000 by Country of Origin**

Perhaps one of the most conspicuous fallacies about migrant stock all over the world is the United Nations’ estimate for Poland (UN, 2002). It claims, under the heading “migrant stock”, 2,088,000 foreign-born persons living, as permanent residents, in Poland in the year 2000, i.e., 5.4% of the total population which is substantially higher than the proportion in Italy, Portugal and Spain, and a little lower than in the United Kingdom. In Poland, however, the actual migrant stock, i.e. foreign citizens staying as permanent residents, in 2000 was estimated at merely 26 thousand, which means 1/80 (1.2%) of the UN estimated figure<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> On the basis of passport registry sources and foreign immigration statistics, which were strictly confidential until 1989, the estimated number of long-term emigrants during the period 1980-1989 is 1.1-1.3 million. Additionally, approximately 1.0-1.1 million short-term migrants of whom only 271,000 were included in official Polish statistics (Okólski, 1994). The 1995 micro-census revealed that about 900,000 persons who were registered as permanent residents of Poland, at the time of inquiry, were staying for periods of longer than two months in foreign countries. By Polish law, those persons had to be considered as migrants even though a majority had not been included in migration statistics. Later, in 1997 a national survey of living conditions gave rise to another estimate. At that time only 175 thousand officially registered inhabitants of Poland, aged 15 or more, were in fact emigrants (Kostrzewa, 2000). Regardless of differences in estimate methods and data quality, one general issue seems very likely, namely that many emigrants who left Poland in the 1980s returned home in the 1990s.

<sup>11</sup> Immigrants in the UN estimates are considered foreign-born permanent residents of a given country. Indeed, shortly after the end of the Second World War, Poland’s population comprised a considerable number of people, approximately three million, who were born on Poland’s territory, which since the 1945 Yalta conference became a part of the USSR. These persons were usually forcibly displaced and a majority settled within the “new” Polish State. In other words, they were born in Poland but are now considered as a foreign-born Polish population. The number of survivors from that population is now certainly much lower than 1 million (540 thousand, according to the 2002 population census).

It has already been suggested that a uniform definition of a migrant in Poland does not exist. Consequently, several data sets compiled by various state agencies consider more or less the same phenomenon of migrant inflow, which leads to various estimates of immigrant stock. Table 1 focuses on the country of a migrant's origin and presents information extracted from official sources regarding the year 2000. Obviously, the data incorporated in that table do not account for the irregular inflow of migrants nor foreigners who illegally live in Poland. We believe, however, that these sets of data may serve as a reliable basis for describing the major geographic direction of migration movements into Poland in recent years<sup>12</sup>.

As is shown from Table 1, the number of foreign citizens who legally lived in Poland on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2000 (the sum of columns 3 and 5) was 45,097, i.e., 0.117% of the total population. Around 57% of the foreigners had permanent resident status thus constituting the stock of immigrants in a legal sense and 43% had temporary resident status. The difference in status has relevance as far as the degree of civil rights is concerned and limited significance with respect to the length of stay in Poland. For instance, foreign citizens entitled to temporary residence might extend their stay in Poland for up to 10 years, which usually, in of itself, allows for permission for settlement.

Ukrainians were by far the largest group of permanent residents (17.0%; col. 3). In fact, throughout the 1990's, migrants from the Ukraine occupied the peak position in almost every relevant register in Poland. Respectively, two exceptions in Table 1 are the flow of immigrants and new refugee applications.

Ukraine, together with other neighboring countries such as Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia accounted for as much as 46.5% of the total stock of permanent foreign residents. Undoubtedly, this is a tendency well-known in Poland's history: intensive flows of people between Poland and its neighbors, which continued until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other notable countries of migrant origin include Vietnam (5.8%) and the USA (2.4%)<sup>13</sup>. A relatively high proportion of immigrants from the United States might be perceived as an effect of counter-flow because of a large and longstanding emigration of Poles to that country and extensive interpersonal links established between Polish migrants and Americans. Quite different reasons underlie the presence of Vietnamese migrants, and we will deal with this issue later on in this chapter.

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<sup>12</sup> Such assumption seems plausible in the light of various studies on irregular immigrants conducted in the 1990s by Polish research institutes.

<sup>13</sup> Noteworthy seems also relatively high share of stateless persons – 5.2% of the total migrant stock. A large part of that group comprises politically-motivated asylum seekers who came to Poland before 1990.

**Table 1.** Various legal categories of migrants or foreigners registered in Poland in 2000 by citizenship or (in case of immigrants) country of previous residence (the top 12 countries are included)

Country	Immigrants (by country of previous residence)	Stock of permanent residents (on January 1 <sup>st</sup> )	New permissions for settlement	Stock of foreigners granted fixed- time residence (on January 1 <sup>st</sup> )	New permissions for fixed-time residence	Newly arrived foreigners registered for temporary residence	Employment consents issued to temporary residents	New refugee applications	Stock of foreign students (on October 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2001)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total	7 331	25 855	851	19 242	15 034	43 623	19 662	4 644	7 380
Ukraine	291	4 399	159	2 958	3 216	20 888	3 158	70	1 693
Russia	129	2 513	104	1 242	1 033	1 863	816	1 174	291
Belarus	77	1 468	50	862	699	2 157	2 058	63	1 002
Germany	2 494	1 338	13	862	692	2 002	1 481	-	133
Vietnam	51	1 492	83	1 785	1 146	(a)	935	161	133
USA	1 185	620	11	836	506	(b)	656	-	439
France	269	346	9	534	873	1 525	1 265	-	18
United Kingdom	256	359	20	493	382	1 083	1 438	-	28
Armenia	69	473	74	876	668	878	238	836	24
Bulgaria	41	968	19	274	195	700	415	340	117
Kazakhstan	408	338	2	310	235	(a)	109	30	411
China	28	155	27	462	366	(a)	446	76	39
Other most prominent countries	Canada Italy Austria (from 330 to 202)	Czech Rep. Lithuania Sweden Yugoslavia Greece Hungary (from 613 to 400)	No other country above the level of 20	Yugoslavia Libya India (from 828 to 403)	South Korea India Turkey (from 369 to 216)	No data	Turkey India Italy Netherlands Czech Rep. Sweden (from 532 to 310)	Romania Afghanistan Moldova Azerbaijan (from 907 to 148)	Lithuania (753) Norway (383)

(a) included in Asia (4 456); (b) included in Americas (1 323)

Source: official registers of Poland

The list of major countries of immigrants' origin (Table 1; col. 2) considerably differs from the list of top citizenships found in the stock of permanent residents (col. 3). Here a positive correlation between the volume of emigration to a given country and immigration from that country is striking, and this is due to the fact that a high proportion among the immigrants constitute reemigrants, i.e. returning Polish citizens. This phenomenon is particularly clear in case of migrants from Germany and the USA, the two major countries of destination (85.3% of the total emigration in 2000) that in 2000 accounted for 50.2% of the whole immigration flow. The third top country here is Kazakhstan, a novelty in this respect, related to the on-going (since the mid-1990s) repatriation of Poles who long ago had been deported there by the Soviet Union from the seized past Polish territory. A large majority of the immigrants from Kazakhstan automatically become citizens of Poland on entering Poland, and never appear in the statistics of foreigners' stock. All in all, however, an overwhelming majority (around 85%) of immigrant flow to Poland originates from the West (the European Union and North America), and the remainder comes mainly from the neighboring Slavonic countries (around 10%)<sup>14</sup>.

A striking inconsistency presents a comparison of the volume and distribution by country of origin between the already depicted figures concerning newly registered immigrants (Table 1; col. 2) and newly issued permissions for settlement (col. 4). This can easily be noticed by setting the list of top six countries of immigrants' origin against top six citizenships of immigrants granted permission for settlement in the same year (2000)<sup>15</sup>:

rank	country of origin (of newly registered immigrants)	citizenship (of immigrants granted permission for settlement)
1	Germany	Ukraine
2	USA	Russia
3	Kazakhstan	Vietnam
4	Canada	Armenia
5	Ukraine	Belarus
6	France	China

Despite the fact that a foreign citizen is considered an immigrant only when he/she is granted permission for settlement, in 2000 the volume of the former flow was 8.6 times greater than of the latter flow. To a large degree this again might be explained by a principle of incorporating the re-emigrating Polish citizens in the statistics of immigration, and (for obvious reason) the exclusion of those persons in the statistics of settlement permission. Another reason is the change of relevant legislation, which took place by the end of the 90s. As a result, the former permission "for permanent residence" has been replaced by two permissions: "for settlement" and "for fixed-time residence", of whom only the former automatically allows for ones registration as a permanent resident and thus entering of the

<sup>14</sup> The flow from Kazakhstan accounts for more than a half of the outstanding 5%.

<sup>15</sup> It might be reminded that in Poland the registration of immigration is based on the recorded new events of permanent residence, and the only means for a foreign citizen to be registered as permanent resident is to obtain permission for settlement.

statistics of immigration. Generally, the change resulted in a more restrictive access to settlement (permanent residence), especially (and visibly) for the nationals of non-western states, and this might have negatively affected the share of foreign citizens in the statistics of immigration.

The data about new permissions for settlement (Table 1; col. 4) reveal a quite new (and apparently enduring) phenomenon – the coming of Vietnam and Armenia (followed by Belarus and China) to the fore. While the case of Ukraine and Russia as two leading countries (and perhaps also Belarus) might be considered a continuation of a trend established quite long ago, a sizeable settlement of Vietnamese and Armenians (and Chinese) has began only in the 1990s, and by and large has not been expected.

Although hardly noticeable in case of recorded immigration, an intensifying foreigners' drive into Poland can be observed in the statistics of temporary movements of people. As stems from Table 1 (cols. 6 and 7), in 2000 around 44 thousand foreign citizens were registered as new temporary residents, and 15 thousand were given a permission (subject to subsequent extensions) to stay for one year (fixed-time). In contrast to the statistics of permission for settlement, the “fixed-time residents” and “temporary residents” came mostly from non-western countries and the dispersion of their national distribution was by far stronger.

Among the foreigners granted fixed-time residence, the Ukrainians constituted as much as one fifth of the total (and jointly with Russians and Belarussians – one third). The next important nation, however, turned out Vietnamese (7.6%). Other significant non-western nationalities included: Armenian, Chinese, South Korean, Indian, Kazakhstani and Turkish (altogether 16.3%). In the statistics of newly registered temporary residents the Ukrainians, with 47.9%, displayed even stronger lead, and the share of migrants coming from western countries was rather low (around one quarter).

In the 1990s a separate category of documented migrants became asylum seekers. Apart from a few episodes that took place during the communist past<sup>16</sup>, until 1990 Poland did not receive migrants of that category. Even the more so, as already mentioned, Poland had not ratified the 1951 Geneva convention until the year 1992. In early 1990s, however, growing number of foreigners has been applying for refugee status in Poland. On the whole, in the period 1990-2001 as many as 28 thousand migrants applied. Only a tiny fraction (3.1% in 1998-2001) of those application have been successful. That was mainly because for many persons applying for refugee status in Poland this step meant an involuntary transition from the status of illegal transit migrant, and it was not originally intended. In other words, by and large asylum-seekers arriving in Poland were *mala fide* refugees.

National composition of the foreigners applying for refugee status in Poland reflected geographical location of major ethnic and political conflicts or civil wars occurring in Eastern Europe, North Africa and Asia. In 1991 and 1992 a majority of those people came from Ethiopia, Somalia, Albania and Slavonic republics of the ex-USSR. In 1992 and 1993 leading positions were occupied by migrants from the former Yugoslavia (mainly

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<sup>16</sup> Communist regime in Poland occasionally allowed for the inflow of (and granted political asylum to) endangered leftist rebels from non-communist countries, like Greece (in the 40s), Chile (in the 70s) and certain Middle East countries (since the 60s).

Bosnia) and Ethiopia. In turn, in 1994 Armenians overshadowed other nationalities. While in 1995 Armenia was still the top country of origin, a considerable share in the total number of self-declared refugees also went to India, Russia, Afghanistan and Somalia, in 1996 Sri Lanka became the main country of refugees' origin, followed by Afghanistan and Iraq. Between 1996 and 1998 a massive inflow of people took place from Afghanistan and Indian sub-continent (along with Sri Lanka). Additionally, since 1996 the flux of refugees from Armenia to Poland has grown anew. In the period 1999-2001 the leading countries of origin included Russia (Chechnya) and Armenia, followed by Afghanistan, Romania and Mongolia<sup>17</sup>.

To sum up, since 1990 Poland has witnessed largely increased (relative to pre-1990 period) and steadily growing migratory movements from abroad. People of Polish citizenship or ancestry constituted a major group among those arriving with an intention of permanent residence whereas other national groups were rather slim. Gradually, immigrants seemed to have included more and more persons of Polish origin from the ex-USSR (rather than from the West) and foreigners from Eastern Europe or other (former) communist countries who changed their status in Poland (to become an immigrant) after living for some time as temporary residents. An important means for those transitions were mixed marriages with a Polish citizen.

Among migrants who had no Polish roots, regardless of their formal status in the registers (permanent, fixed-time or temporary stay), three distinctly different geographical areas of origin emerged: western countries, countries of European part of the former Soviet Union (plus Bulgaria and Romania) and Asiatic countries. By all accounts, Ukraine became the main country of migrant origin. While western countries were greatly overrepresented in the statistics of permanent residence and underrepresented in the two other records, the opposite was true with the two other areas. Major western countries included: Germany, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Italy, whereas Ukraine, Russia and Belarus (followed by Armenia) played major role in the inflow from the ex-USSR, and Vietnam and China (followed by India and Turkey) – in the inflow from Asia.

It might be mentioned that the number of undocumented (irregular) migrants coming to Poland over the 1990s probably significantly exceeded the number of registered migrants. The undocumented foreigners presented a widely differentiated mix of nationalities including a relatively stable “core” (citizens of Romania, Bulgaria, Armenia, Vietnam, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Mongolia) and a highly unstable “reminder” (composed of varying sets of different nationalities such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Somalia, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Yugoslavia and many other). The geographical variety of this category of migrants to a large degree overlapped with that of asylum seekers (refugees).

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<sup>17</sup> In that period Polish authorities undertook to deport overstaying Romanian citizens, mainly members of the Roma. In seeking a chance to stay in Poland, this prompted many of those people to approach the refugee administration with a request for refugee status.

### 2.3. Demographic Profile and Human Capital of Migrants

Owing to, on the one hand, the scarcity of accurate information and, on the other hand, a limited space here (against a large differentiation of migrant categories), we will present only a very broad sketch of immigrants' profile. First of all, generally males slightly outnumber females. In the 1990s the proportion of male immigrants has initially been increasing and since the mid-decade the sex ratio stabilized at the level of 113-115 males per 100 females. It was legitimate in 2001, however, to distinguish two distinct groups of migrant home countries with respect to sex distribution. The first group comprised the migrants from western and certain Asiatic countries where males predominated, and the second group, displaying a tremendous female excess over male migrants, comprised people from the ex-USSR.

Secondly, in agreement with relatively universal tendency, immigrants were rather young. That means young working-age persons predominated, both among men and women. The 1990s (or, precisely, 1994-2001), however, saw a dramatic change in the age distribution of migrants, namely the change towards more balanced proportions between age groups, particularly to the benefit of the youngest segment of immigrating persons. In that period the share of below 20-year old men rose gradually from 13.7% to 26.0% and above 50-year old – from 20.3% to 24.2%, which means that the share of 20-49-year old men declined from 66.0% to 49.8%. Among women the respective rises were from 11.9% to 28.4% and from 25.5% to 28.0%, whereas the respective decrease was from 62.6% to 43.6% (Kepińska and Okólski, 2003).

Thirdly, in 2001 among immigrants aged 15 or more married persons were in majority (56.6% in males and 58.9% in females) but over the 90s the share of bachelors and spinsters increased quite considerably (to reach 34.9% in males and 22.5% in females)<sup>18</sup>. Family migration, however, was not a rule. A majority of migrants, even those married, moved in without their family members, although some of them with a clear intention to build a family upon the settlement in Poland (Iglicka et al., 1997).

Finally, the level of educational attainment of the immigrants has invariably been relatively high, much higher than that of emigrating Poles. In the second half of the 90s, for instance, the absolute number of university graduates among the immigrants was 4 times higher than among the emigrants although the total number of emigrants exceeded that of immigrants by factor 4. In 2001 one in four immigrants at the age 15 or more had completed tertiary education whereas in the comparable group of the emigrants that proportion was only 1.3%. Around 58% male immigrants and around 64% female immigrants had attended at least a secondary school (Kepińska and Okólski, 2003).

Human capital as measured by the level of formal education was probably considerably lower among registered temporary migrants and, the more so, undocumented migrants than among the immigrants, i.e. persons who after their arrival into Poland have been recognized as permanent residents. Unfortunately very few available information

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<sup>18</sup> Scarce data suggest that the proportion of bachelors and spinsters in the population of undocumented migrants might have been even larger.

pertain to that issue. In a sample of 152 undocumented migrants living in 1996 in Warsaw<sup>19</sup> 19% had completed tertiary education and 45% secondary education. Only for 12% migrants primary education was the highest level ever attended. A distinct difference could be observed between the two largest groups of undocumented foreigners: people from ex-USSR and Vietnamese, the former (especially migrants from Armenia) being much better educated than the latter (Iglicka et al., 1997).

#### **2.4. Mixed Marriages of Documented Migrants<sup>20</sup>**

In Poland mixed marriages often lead to a migration whose direction is rather easy to predict. Marriages of Poles to a citizen of any western country seem a vehicle for emigration while marriages to other foreigners tend to stimulate immigration. Moreover, in the former group of unions Polish females predominate over Polish males whereas in the latter group the opposite is true.

Before the political and economic transition up until 1992 in the marital unions of a Polish citizen and a foreigner, the proportion of those concluded by Polish females was very high and often exceeded 80%. Then a gradual decline in that proportion was observed, and since 1998 it has stabilized at the level of 60%. The annual number of Poland's female partners set at some 2.2-2.4 thousand in the period 1993-2001 while the respective number of male partners had been continuously growing until 1998: from 750 to 1,541, and then somehow leveled off. Among two largest in 1993 national groups of partners to Polish women: Germany and the United States a dramatic decrease of marriages was observed: from 1,080 (46% of the total) to 666 (31%). A contrasting trend occurred with regard to Ukrainian, British and Italian male partners; the number of new unions increased from 226 (10%) to 426 (20%).

Two countries decisively contributed to the growth of mixed marriages where woman was a foreign partner, namely: Ukraine and Belarus. The Ukraine alone accounted for 80% of the overall increase in those unions, and in 2001 its share in the total became as high as 53% (together with Belarus 65%).

Long-lasting tendency, worth to be emphasized, is a much larger geographical diversity and much lower concentration of foreign husbands than foreign wives. For instance, in 2001 the number of countries with at least 10 male partners was 31, and with at least 10 female partners – 13, whereas the top 5 nationalities accounted to 52% marriages with foreign husband and to 80% marriages with foreign wife.

It should be noticed that in 1997-1998 in case of Vietnam and in 1998-1999 in case of Armenia the statistics of Poland recorded unprecedented rise (by factor 2 or 3 in just 2 years) in marital unions concluded by Polish males and females. In that period the both countries entered the top three countries in the list of foreign partner citizenship. This triggered off a media campaign against growing incidence of fake mixed marriages as a means of facilitating a foreigner settlement. The government of Poland has instantly introduced more restrictive practices which mainly affected the number of marital unions of

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<sup>19</sup> The survey has been conducted by the Centre of Migration Research, Warsaw University. The sample was drawn by chain-referral technique according to arbitrary fixed national quota.

<sup>20</sup> Based on Kępińska and Okólski, 2003.

Polish citizens and citizens of those two countries. As a result, the number of Polish-Armenian and Polish-Vietnamese mixed marriages dropped to previous levels.

## **2.5. Economic Activity of Migrants<sup>21</sup>**

Before 1990 migrant labor was a rarity in Poland. Foreigners visiting Poland abstained from any economic activity, and a small number of those for whom Poland used to be a home country were either inactive (e.g. housewives) or dispersed across professions and sectors. Although the situation changed substantially after 1989, still the number of migrants gainfully employed in Poland is very low, lower than in certain much smaller countries, such as e.g. the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Foreign citizens, once in Poland, resort to a wide variety of economic activities, which, however, either require high and highly specialized skills or do not require any skills at all. On the one hand, financial services, insurance or real estate agencies, investment or commercial banks, big industrial plants and supermarkets employ several thousand foreigners, usually at managerial or expert positions. On the other hand, migrants occupy a number of small labor market niches (certain segments of retail and wholesale trade and fast food, seasonal work in agriculture) and are engaged in street-corner or bazaar petty trade, night-bar entertainment, household services (child or elderly care, cleaning, etc), builder or refurbishing odd jobs. They are often self-employed, the duration of their employment is very short and they do not need any particular qualification in order to earn money. Very few foreign citizens, however, find employment as skilled manual workers or middle-position non-manuals, the only distinct exception being probably teachers of foreign languages. That dichotomy is associated with a sharp wage disparities among the migrant labor; on average the highly skilled earn more than Poles representing comparable qualifications and the low skilled earn less.

Typically, a legally employed foreigner is a man (74% in 2001) holding a university diploma (54%). Informal employment is believed to embrace relatively more women and more persons with relatively low educational attainment. The two largest groups of migrants in the official sector are managers (26%), of whom a half are at the same time company owners, and unskilled manual workers (15%). A prevailing size of company offering jobs to foreigners is a small firm with less than 10 employees (34%).

The largest group of foreigners in the official labor market constitute Ukrainians and Belarussians followed by British, French and German (Table 1; col. 8). More than a half of migrants from Ukraine work in tiny trading firms, often owned by a family or as teachers, instructors and trainers. A large proportion of Belarussians and to a lower extent Ukrainians find jobs in sub-contracting foreign companies, usually as manual workers. In contrast, migrants from the European Union are usually employed by medium-sized or large companies in manufacturing industry (especially German, French, Italian and Dutch), supermarket trade (especially French and German), real estate (especially British, German and French), education (especially British) and construction industry (especially French and German).

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<sup>21</sup> Based on Okólski, 2002.

Migrants from Asia (mainly from Armenia, China, Mongolia, India, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam) who account for 14% of the total (legal) foreign employment occupy a special position on official labor market. One third of those persons come from Vietnam. An overwhelming majority of Vietnamese work in just two sectors: trade, mainly in textiles (63%) and fast food restaurants (30%). Typical for migrants from Asia (with the exception of South Koreans and to a lesser degree Turkish) is gravitating around a particular ethnic enclave and relying on close circles of relatives or friends.

The scale of foreigner illegal economic activity is likely to be much larger than of that permitted by law. Home countries for a majority of irregular migrants are two immediate neighbors: Ukraine and Belarus. Certain areas of Poland, mainly around big cities, offer a great number of jobs in agriculture to that category of migrants. In cities individual households frequently employ them for a variety of minor tasks. As a rule, those people regularly circulate between the two countries, and their stay in Poland is usually very short, extending from a couple of weeks to a couple of months. In the early 1990s many citizens of the ex-USSR used to engage in petty trade all over Poland, and the visits of those persons were even shorter. In the course of time, however, the incidence of mobility of this kind has been diminishing, and ultimately has been reduced to peripheral border areas.

A recent (2001) study among the inhabitants of Warsaw concerning *inter alia* the perception of foreigners' activity shed a new light on that phenomenon (Grzymała-Każłowska et al., 2002)<sup>22</sup>. The results seem meaningful if only for an enormously large concentration of migrants in that city (around 50% of the national total) of whom a majority constitute irregular labor. According to the respondents, two largest groups of foreigners originate from the ex-USSR (mainly Russia and Ukraine) and Asia (mainly Vietnam). Less visible are foreigners from Romania, western countries and Africa and Middle East.

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<sup>22</sup> A random sample of 1,004 adult persons was the subject of that survey carried out by the Institute for Social Studies, University of Warsaw.

### 3. Reasons for the Inflow to Poland

#### 3.1. Geopolitics and a Global Political Change

Political factor has played a major role in initiating the inflow of foreign citizens into Poland in the 1990s.

Until around 1990 the population of the former Soviet block countries suffered from a very limited freedom of traveling abroad. Formally, various bilateral agreements concerning visa-free traveling between those countries were in force but in the real life only highly selected persons were allowed to leave their home countries. This has radically changed between 1989 and 1991, and instantly the movements of people who have been for a long time waiting for a chance to take a trip to another country exploded. Initially, a curiosity and satisfaction with newly discovered civil rights were major motives for those trips. After a relatively short time, however, when travelers learnt how to economize or even profit on international excursions, a new phenomenon of shuttle commercially oriented mobility developed (Ardittis, 1995).

Poland along with few other post-communist countries has quickly become a target for growing numbers (in fact, measured in tens of million a year) of travelers from borderlands of the neighboring countries (including East Germany). Those movements also embraced people from more remote regions of the ex-USSR, Romania and Bulgaria, and even China, Mongolia and (especially) Vietnam. After several years it turned out that for a great proportion of migrants from Eastern Europe Poland was the first foreign country they visited (e.g. Frejka, Okólski, Sword, 1999). One of the main reasons for choosing Poland by the migrants seems her pioneering role in pursuing democratic reforms in the region and a peculiar perception of Poland in the former Soviet Union as a “western country” or at least a vestibule to the West<sup>23</sup>.

Quite unique circumstance that stimulated the inflow into Poland turned out the existence of a lively community of Vietnamese citizens from the northern Vietnam (from Ha Noi itself and various provinces around the capital) who in past years studied in Poland thanks to student exchange programs allowed thousands of the Vietnamese to come to communist Poland, i.e., at its peak at the beginning of 1970s over 800 Vietnamese students entered Polish universities. Many of those persons either settled in that country after marrying a Polish partner or upon return to Vietnam maintained cultural links with Poland, and engaged in economic co-operation (mainly trade) between the two countries. The transition in Poland coincidence with the effects of the Vietnamese perestroika that began in the socialist Vietnam in 1986 had a great impact on the economic activity of the Vietnamese society stimulating its entrepreneurship. Although Vietnam remained a socialist republic with the leading role of Vietnamese Communist Party, the country began to move towards an economy based on market forces. Private enterprises became tolerated so as the emigration of Vietnamese citizens who could take advantage of opened up borders in

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<sup>23</sup> To illustrate this point, an IOM study conducted in a number of East European countries in 1992 revealed that the youth in Ukraine, when asked about migration plans, pointed to Poland as the fifth most attractive country of destination, right after USA, Germany, Australia and Canada (IOM, 1993).

Poland and other Eastern European countries and of economic opportunities that emerged during the transition period in that part of Europe. At the beginning of the 1990s the Vietnamese who already began to establish small businesses in Poland, were joined by their compatriots such as other Vietnamese ex-students who had gone back to Vietnam after finishing university and at that time returned to Poland. Subsequently, the former students were joined by first family members, friends and neighbors as well as Vietnamese guest-workers from Germany and former ex-students from other post-communist countries settled already in Europe who found Poland as a country offering better opportunities for life and business than other countries of the region.

In other words, the political change that took place around 1990, particularly the collapse of the Soviet system and bipolar world order was a primary cause for the mass inflow of foreigners to Poland. Lifting of previous barriers to population movements in the former communist countries was not the only immediate factor in that process. For the political change in Eastern Europe fostered territorial mobility of people through two other processes: civil wars related to breaking down of the former regimes or federal States (especially the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia) and ethnic cleansing in certain multinational States. That resulted in the coming of many refugees to Poland, especially from Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Romania.

At about the same time, other parts of the world became an arena of civil wars and aggravated ethnic conflicts too, and a number of refugees from Africa and Asia (e.g. Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and the Middle East) also found their way to Poland. In this case a principal reason was a combination of two factors:

- the very geopolitical location of Poland<sup>24</sup> and her bordering with Germany, which then received more refugees than any other country, and
- the practice of smuggling of those people by routes that involved Poland as a one of transit countries.

As a rule, refugees entered Poland illegally in organized groups and then attempted an illegal passage to Germany. A great number of those migrants happened to be apprehended in Poland, which in turn prompted them to apply for a refugee status in that country.

### **3.2. Poland as a Migrant Attracting Center in the New “Migration Space”**

Among the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe Poland has become the first to introduce a shock therapy in the economy and to restore consumer market equilibrium. Since 1990 deregulated and deeply liberalized Polish economy has been offering good opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs and, despite a fast growth of unemployment, a variety of jobs, particularly in the informal sector. Moreover, in a relatively short time the Polish currency became convertible and the average wage went up sharply. Many economies in the region lagged behind in their transition, and initially some of them underwent a deep crisis if not disintegration. This led to a change in the region’s diversity according to “economic attractiveness” of individual countries and, moreover, to

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<sup>24</sup> Poland is sometimes perceived as located at the crossroads of the West, East and South.

deepening of the differential living standards known in the past. Poland, besides the Czech Republic and Hungary, became a migration pole, a magnet for foreigners, especially those desperately trying to avoid impoverishment in their home countries.

In contrast to what has been predicted in the West in 1989 or 1990, migrants from Central and Eastern Europe did not venture massive movements to Western Europe. An overwhelming proportion of international mobility was contained within the region itself. Apparently on the whole the former communist countries of Europe received more migrants from other regions than they sent to beyond the region's boundaries. Why the predictions did not come true? The answer would not be unambiguous because the reasons were complex and differentiated. The factors that seemed obvious and generally applicable included:

- anticipatory controls on entry in the member countries of the Schengen agreement;
- cost-benefits calculus of individual migrants, which often suggested that potentially higher economic benefits associated with traveling to the West *vis-à-vis* Central and Eastern Europe were not enough to offset the related greater costs (and risks), and
- the existence or fast development of migration networks in Central and Eastern Europe and a familiarity of migrants with a common post-socialist reality.

As a result, a new international migration space emerged in that part of the world, with its own sending and receiving countries, specific categories of migrants and specific dynamics and directions of flows. A basic role of Poland in that space was to receive temporary migrant workers from countries relatively delayed in introducing of the economic reforms and suffering from a very low wage level (Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, etc.) or asylum seekers. The inflow of foreign labor served in a way the cushioning of local market disequilibria and occasionally the substituting for missing Polish workers employed in the West. Humanitarian premises, which led to the acceptance of asylum seekers' inflow, were also prominent. In addition, some importance, in the course of time significantly decreasing, could be ascribed to imports of cheap consumer goods or purchases by foreign movers of goods being in short supply in their home countries, what in more backward regions of Poland either helped to control the cost of living or propelled a local-scale economic activity.

### 3.3. Push Forces in Home Countries

In stems from earlier considerations that political, social and economic developments taking place in individual migrant sending countries and the situation of various groups of the population in those countries were also strongly influencing the flows of migrants into Poland (see also Wallace and Stola, 2001). Apart from Polish citizens who in the 90s reemigrated to Poland, usually after few years of living in the West<sup>25</sup>, three broad groups of

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<sup>25</sup> Recent studies on reemigration of Poles suggest that two, either complementary or exclusive, main factors underlined the decision concerning the return to Poland: a failure in a previous host country and better (than before, but, above all, than in a previous host country) opportunities in the post-communist Poland (Iglicka, 2002).

migrants might be distinguished according to main push factors (or factors existing in their countries of origin that prompted them to move). Those groups included migrants:

- for whom persecution in home country was the main motive;
- whose decision was mainly influenced by their employer in home country or stimuli from international labor market, and
- whose a primary concern were deeply insufficient earnings in home country.

The first group comprised *bona fide* refugees from various countries. For many of those persons, arriving in Poland was an (often, transitory) outcome of a precarious and long-lasting trip, and the causes prompting them to migration were by all means severe. As a rule, they were in danger because of political or ethnic conflict at home. Usually, however, the very requesting a protection specifically in Poland was a matter of accident. Refugees from Armenia present a good example here. That thousands of those people ultimately settled in Poland was to a large extent due to unintended longer stop in Poland of several pioneers of the Armenian refugee movements (in 1991 or 1992) on their way to the West. Apparently, after sympathetic reception in various communities in Poland, growing numbers of Armenians decided to stay in Poland for an unspecified length of time rather than risking a further trip to the West, even though many of them were condemned to illegal residence. Only in rare cases (Albanians and Bosnians in early 1990s) did refugees whose application was tackled by Poland originate from countries for whom Poland was not strictly on route to the West.

Foreigners who might be included in the second group were highly skilled professionals, managers or owners that obtained work permit in Poland. To a large degree they were cosmopolitan functionaries of transnational corporations, which established their subsidiaries or offices in Poland following either foreign capital flow to Poland or strong demand for specific qualifications. A major underlying factor of their coming to Poland seemed a corporate strategy of mother company or, specific for each migrant, career considerations. For that group of foreigners, as much as for a great number of refugees, Poland was usually an accidental stage in a relatively long chain of residence change.

The third group, whose common characteristic was impoverishment in home country, embraced a large majority of foreigners who came to Poland in the 1990s. In addition, the group was strongly differentiated. From among many sub-categories, three seem of particular interest: ethnic Poles from the ex-USSR<sup>26</sup>, temporary migrants from the (former) communist countries involved in various forms of economic activity in Poland and illegal migrants (including *mala fide* refugees) who entered Poland on their way to the West. Only a small part of that group, namely the repatriates and temporary migrants that were granted a work permit (“employment consent”, in accordance with official jargon) had a status of legal foreigners in Poland. A great majority entered the country as tourists, and involved in prohibited economic activity (petty trade, gainful employment, running a small business, beggary, prostitution, etc.). Additionally, thousands of migrants in that group

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<sup>26</sup> Repatriation of ethnic Poles from the ex-USSR pertains mainly to progeny of former Polish citizens who in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were deported by USSR to remote (mainly Asiatic) areas of that country. In the 90s when Poland involved in promoting the repatriation of those people, their links with Poland were rather symbolic or none. It might be hypothesized that for many repatriates the repatriation presented a chance for moving to much better off and better organized society rather than for returning to the motherland.

illegally crossed Poland's border with an intention of getting to Germany or some other western country. Many of them approached the refugee administration in Poland in order to buy time and prepare for a further stage of the journey, some other did it as a necessity after being apprehended by the police, still some other were readmitted after being arrested in one or another western country.

In general, migrants who came to Poland over the 90s and in following years originated from countries undergoing one or another kind of the social, economic, cultural and political transformations. Among those countries a majority was in the course of the transition from totalitarian to democratic order and from centrally planned to market economy. In many cases those transformations disrupted the existing economic and social arrangements or shook the existing social and political hierarchies. Level of production contracted, real incomes decreased and more working-age people became redundant. All this prompted individuals in the countries affected to actively seek the improvement of one's economic situation or in extreme cases to escape a deadly dangerous predicament. As a result, people in those countries have become unusually mobile.

Poland was relatively less negatively influenced by the transition, and for certain groups of mobile people from other countries presented an alternative as a place to make a living and simply offered more opportunities. It should be mentioned that such alternative seemed rather temporary than stable. Moreover for people from certain relatively populous countries (e.g. Ukraine) Poland, as a neighboring and culturally close area, was a natural destination. Therefore it appears legitimate to claim that the deterioration of living standard in countries of origin more than the improvement in Poland affected the inflow of specific groups of migrants.

### **3.4. Metamorphoses in the Process of Migration**

The inflow to Poland continues to take a form of non-migratory mobility. Massive circular movements of false tourists from neighboring countries tend to predominate whereas other forms of mobility remain rather negligible. This notwithstanding, migration into Poland hardly displays any stable structural characteristics. On the contrary, being a new phenomenon, it is subject to frequent changes. That instability is reflected in various metamorphoses of types of mobility and migrant status. Below we just mention some of them without attempting any interpretation.

One (in quantitative terms, the most important) change has been, in the first half of the 90s, from a predominance of movements of petty traders to that of odd job seekers. In the course of time casual and highly flexible migrant workers become more and more attached to specific employers, which especially was the case of agricultural seasonal workers. In a large part, that transformation involved the same persons, the citizens of Ukraine and Belarus, living in areas not far from the Poland's border. This change led to a considerable lengthening of individual migrant stay in Poland. Another important consequence were more personal and complex interactions with the native population (Okólski, 1998b).

By the same token, many foreign citizens who arrived into Poland as asylum seekers, after rejection of their claim shifted to clandestine *semi*-permanent residence in

Poland. They found their way in the shadow economy and informal labor market, and despite their undocumented status have been accepted or at least tolerated by local communities. A typical example here present migrants from Armenia (Łukowski, 1997).

Another distinct change is a metamorphosis from a circular or temporary migrant into a settler. That process took two basic forms: one concerning irregular workers, i.e. from a circulating false tourist to an illegal resident, and another from a false tourist to a legal resident. A vehicle in case of the latter form has usually been a mixed marriage. Ukrainian migrants was by far the largest group involved in that (Górny, 2002; Kępińska, 2002).

Finally, a peculiar change from an illegal transit migrant to an asylum seeker might be mentioned. There is an evidence of a sizeable shift on the part of migrants smuggled from Asia to Germany or elsewhere in the West – from transit migrants to persons seeking protection by Polish refugee administration. This resulted from a strategy developed by the smugglers, which in case of migrants' apprehension by Polish police or border guard involved application for refugee status on the part of migrants (Okólski, 2000b).

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The above picture of migratory movements into Poland and of migrants themselves suggests a number of general conclusions:

- the inflow to Poland mainly takes a form of temporary migration;
- after an initial rapid pace of that process, in the late 90s it stabilized;
- a large proportion of the inflow originates from a “favorable” geographical location of Poland and not so much from endogenous factors inhered in Poland's development;
- only a small fraction of migrants perceive Poland as an attractive country of destination; for a majority the choice of Poland is accidental or results from no choice at all;
- apart from migrants from Ukraine and Vietnam (and to a lesser degree also Belarus and Russia), characteristics of migrants origin and their socio-demographic profile quickly change and hardly display any clear pattern;
- metamorphoses from temporary or illegal status to permanency are relatively rare, and their incidence does not grow over time;
- all in all, at present Poland lacks the traits of a typical immigration country.

#### **4. The Level of Acceptance of Migrants in Poland**

As already noted, after the fall of communism in 1989, Poland began to deal with arrivals of various groups of migrants. The majority constituted foreigners from less economically developed regions of the world, notably Southern and Eastern post-Communist European countries, as well as, migrants from Asia and Africa who predominantly regarded Poland either as a transit place on their way into Western Europe or as a sojourn country, where they were able to temporarily undertake informal trade and perform short-term employment. Distinct but less numerous group of immigrants includes professionals such as managers and specialists from Western countries who came to Poland for a few years in order to work on contracts in Polish branches of large international concerns or native speakers who came to work as teachers. In general the tendency for long-term immigration and settlement by foreigners is rather weak. The number of settled foreign citizens in Poland remains small not only in comparison with “old” immigration countries, such as Great Britain, France, Germany or the USA but even in comparison with other countries of our region, such as the Czech Republic or Hungary. In addition, the distribution of immigrants in Poland is highly uneven. The large majority of immigrants is concentrated in the capital and within several major cities. The destinations of petty traders from neighboring countries are also frequently concentrated around border areas.

##### **4.1. Social Attitudes towards Migrants in Poland**

The recent moderate influx of foreigners into Poland is a type of novelty for a highly homogenous post-war Polish society. This may appear as striking for a country where before WWII ethnic minorities constituted about 36% of the country's population: In the 1930s, the most numerous groups were 5,000,000 Ukrainians (16% of the country's population), 3,100,000 Jews (10%), 2,000,000 Belarussians (6%), 780,000 Germans (2%), 200,000 Lithuanians (1%) and 140,000 Russians (1%) and other less numerous ethnic minorities (Łodziński, 1998). After WWII, as a result of the Nazi extermination of Jewish and Gypsy populations, shifts in Polish borders, forced displacement of ethnic minorities within and out of Poland, as well as the post-war emigration of citizens of different ethnic origins, Poland became an almost ethnically homogenous nation. This was exceptional both for it's history and for other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, the idea of a single nation was promoted regardless of Communist doctrine stressing the idea of internationalism. Although an assimilation policy was formally commanded, it had never been fully and systematically implemented. With time the policy towards minority groups also began to ease. After WWII the forced displacement of ethnic minorities within the country as well as emigration of non-Polish citizens took place. During periods of lower assimilative pressure, especially in the 1980s, education in minority languages was permitted and minorities could establish socio-cultural associations and their members were allowed to enter political activity at the community level. Nevertheless, the activities of minorities

were tightly controlled and restricted by the state.<sup>27</sup> For example, one such minority was not allowed to possess more than one association and one newspaper and the activities of minority organizations were overseen by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in association with Communist party leadership (Łodziński, 1998). In effect, the ethnicity of distinct groups became frozen and vast numbers of members assimilated.

According to rough estimates made immediately after the fall of the Communist regime, recognized ethnic minorities did not exceed 2-4% of the Polish population, and they included approximately 300-350,000 Germans, 200-250,000 Ukrainians (of whom 50-80,000 were Lemkos), 200-250,000 Belarussians, 25-30,000 Gypsies, 15-25,000 Slovaks, 15-20,000 Lithuanians, 13-15,000 Russians, 7-15,000 Jews, 15,000 Armenians, 2-3,000 Czechs, 3-5,000 Tatars and 200 Karaims. The general percentile estimate of the citizens of non-Polish origin was confirmed by the results of the recent census. The results supported the fact that Poland should be considered as an ethnically homogenous nation where 96,74% of the population has declared Polish nationality (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2003). Different nationalities were declared only within 1,23%, of the cases whereas the remaining 2% of the researched population did not submit an answer which would allow an ethnic group rating. According to the census, major ethnic groups in Poland are far less numerous than was believed and their numbers are the following; Silesians - 173,200, Germans - 152,900, Belarussians - 48,700, Ukrainians - 31,000, Gypsies - 12,900, Russians - 6,100, Lemkos - 5,900, Lithuanians - 5,900, Kashubians - 5,100, Slovaks - 2,000, Jews, 1,100, Armenians - 1,100, Czechs - 800, Tatars - 500 and Karaims - 500.

Prior to 1989, the number of foreigners in Poland was low and the issue of immigration was practically absent both within the country's political spectrum and within public opinion due to the restrictions on international movements as well as the political and economic characteristics of the Communist country which were not conducive to attracting immigrants. The sparse arrival of foreigners during the 1970's and 1980's was predominantly composed of citizens of "brotherly" Communist Eastern European countries. Typical examples of such foreigners were the spouses of Polish citizens. Very seldomly did the Polish society encounter more exotic foreigners such as students or trainees from African or Asian countries who took part in official exchange programs.

The political and economic transition, launched in 1989, has profoundly changed the situation. Borders in Eastern Europe opened up and enabled extensive population movements within the region. Along with the inflow of foreigners, Poland has been witnessing the revival of suppressed ethnic identities of national minorities who have traditionally settled in Poland. This increasing ethnic and cultural diversity has posed a certain challenge for the state and the society.

The first immigrants were welcome in Poland. The transition to a democratic political system and free market economy was greeted in Poland with enthusiasm if not euphoria. During the first years of the political transformation there was an aura of excitement about the novelty of diversity coupled with curiosity about different countries

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<sup>27</sup> An important characteristic of the relationship between the authorities of the communist Poland and ethnic minorities was the differentiation of activities in relation to specific minorities. Certain minorities (e.g. Belarussians) were comparatively favored, while the others (e.g. the German minority) were discriminated or ignored (Łodziński, 1998).

and people of different cultures. In those days, Poles were also particularly sensitive to the issue of the abuse of individual rights and were more interested than they would be later in the fate of political refugees and showed a willingness to help those who needed any assistance. Polish society perceived assistance to refugees as a moral duty that stemmed from a debt to pay which was incurred by Polish political refugees during the Communist regime. Newly arriving foreigners from Western Europe were seen as potential investors promoting the progress of Poland. Economic migrants from Eastern Europe and less developed regions of the world were treated as the next pair of hands willing to contribute to the development. The inflow of labor migrants and refugees was also fuel for the national pride of Poles who felt that they were, at least in this respect, comparable to the West. This was particularly important for a country where citizens have traditionally been emigrating abroad “to earn their daily bread”. Therefore, not surprisingly in the beginning of the 1990’s, tolerance towards immigrants and ethnic minorities was exceptionally high in Poland, a country which was, at that time, the leader in the political and economic transition (Jasińska-Kania, 1999; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2002a).

In the 1990’s, foreigners began to be steadily visible both in the media and on streets, particularly in the capital and other major cities as well as in border areas. Poles started to have daily contact with various categories of migrants; petty traders, undocumented laborers, refugees and Western specialists working for international corporations. Even those Polish citizens who did not have personal experiences with foreigners, became aware of the issue of immigration and the presence of immigrants in Poland on the basis of indirect contacts via others (relatives, friends, neighbors) and the mass-media. What was observed was the dynamic process of the concretization of the “other”. This was linked with the fact that migrants began to be placed in specific contexts and were attributed particular characteristics (Nowicka, Łodziński, 2001). As a result, a crystallization of attitudes towards migrants occurred. When comparing the social surveys conducted at the beginning of the 1990’s with those carried out at the end of the last decade, it was exhibited that attitudes towards foreigners became noticeably polarized and a significantly lower percentage of respondents had no opinion on immigration issues.

In the second half of the 1990’s distrust, anxiety and competition were gradually replacing the previous hospitality, excitement and interest in newcomers. According to the “European Values Studies,” in the last decade, social distance towards ethnic minorities and migrants measured by the level of acceptance of minorities as neighbors noticeably deepened in Poland (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2002a).<sup>28</sup> In 1999, Poland was one of the countries where the largest distance towards Jewish minorities and immigrants was postulated. The rejection of people of different races and Muslims was also relatively high in comparison with other European nations. Only in the case of Gypsies were Poles more tolerant when compared to other Europeans. Although, since the mid 1990’s, annual research on affinity towards other nations and ethnic groups has been showing a steady decrease in dislike towards the most rejected, nations and ethnic groups, such as Gypsies,

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<sup>28</sup> It is worthwhile to notice that a similar (but weaker) tendency is also observed in many other European countries.

Romanians, Ukrainians, Russians and Jews (CBOS various years). This, however, does not mean that they are increasingly tolerated as the residents of Poland.

When comparing the beginning of the transition period with the end of the 1990's, Poles became less willing to admit foreigners into the country and to assist refugees. They also began to put pressure on the assimilation of migrants. Apparently, foreigners became no longer treated as welcome guests who could maintain their culture but came to be seen as intruders who, at the most, can be tolerated on the condition that they are useful in economic terms for the benefit of Polish society while conforming to the Polish environment. Migrants ceased to be perceived as intriguing, ephemeral or temporary visitors and they increasingly were seen as a common element of daily life, especially by the population in Warsaw, other large cities and border areas where migrants were concentrated.

Although a substantial portion of Polish society reveals mixed feelings towards the presence of immigrants, there are not many avowed opponents to foreigners. There are no feelings of strong anti-immigrant hostility nor are there any organized forms of serious anti-immigrant protests. The actions of right extremists and skinheads against foreigners remain rare and are publicly marginalized. There can even be observed a steady increase in declared abstract toleration and reinforcement of the norms of "political correctness". Nevertheless, up to now, one would usually encounter a phenomenon described by Świda-Ziemia as "facade toleration" (Smolenski, 2002), that is a surface tolerance rather than a deeply internalized tolerance and true openness to diversity. In addition to the newly emerged stereotypes of recent immigrants, stereotypical clichés about other nations and deeply internalized prejudices against strangers are still vivid. There is an indifference which can be termed as a silent consent to racist jokes, xenophobic publications and offensive slogans on walls. Such acts are usually marginalized and are perceived as sporadic and not dangerous. Nevertheless, examples of Western countries, such as Austria or Belgium have shown that there is a threat of rapidly spreading ethnic prejudices and hostility towards migrants when the immigrant card is extensively played in a political game. European societies are susceptible to the possibility of xenophobic agitation if tolerance is not a strong norm and xenophobic actions are not counter-acted by the government and symbolic elites.

According to social surveys, such as one undertaken in 1999 by the Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), the evaluation of the presence of migrants in Poland is increasingly determined by the perception of its economic consequences for Poles. The current recession in the Polish economy and a high unemployment rate together with many unsolved social problems makes a rather difficult situation for migrants and can lead to an unfavorable social climate for immigration. In Poland, similarly as in Hungary (Csepeli and Sik, 1995), migrants have been increasingly perceived as a "competing force" and rivals on the labor market. Besides economic threats, Poles strongly associate immigrants with criminality such as thefts, robberies, deceptions, ethnic gangs, terrorism and other undesirable social phenomena such as beggary, prostitution, unrest and biological threats. Although September 11 did not evoke any hysterical reactions nor any deep increases in hostility towards the others, particularly Muslims, some sporadic incidents such as the pelting of a mosque in Gdansk with stones took place. These occurrences were interpreted as hooligan excesses and ignored. However, a concern about the danger of migrant terrorism

was aroused. Foreigners from non-European countries associated with individual criminality and ethnic gangs, began to be additionally linked with terrorism.

On the other hand, during times of recession, migrants are often more flexible, adaptable and motivated to work, than the native population and are more capable to better satisfy the needs of customers. They have a truly advantaged position on the market, especially in a shadow economy. Inexpensive goods and services offered by foreigners on the informal market seem to be appreciated by a large part of the impoverished Polish society.

Levels of acceptance of migrants in Poland vary with migrant groups and it is closely linked with the stereotypes of nations and ethnic groups that immigrants belong to. Jasińska-Kania (1996) has found that the general attitude of Poles towards other nations mainly depends on the level of modernity and prosperity of the country of origin, the cultural and political similarity to Polish society, previous conflicts and alliances between that nation (ethnic) group and Poles, and the presence and image of the nation/ethnic group in the Polish mass media. Therefore, for example, in the 1970's among the most positively perceived nations in Poland were the Vietnamese, Russians, and Bulgarians. Conversely, twenty years later, ambivalence was felt towards the first one and hostility towards the later two, while Americans and Western European nations were the most admired in the 1990's.

The attitudes towards foreigners, coming from the richest and most developed Western countries, differ strongly from the level of acceptance of migrants from Eastern European nations and non-European countries<sup>29</sup>. Westerners are perceived through the prism of their "advanced countries and affluent societies;" they are believed to be sparse, wealthy, and highly qualified professionals such as upper managers who came to Poland on contract for several years.

From the view of Polish respondents, foreigners from Eastern and Asian countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Romania and Vietnam dominate in numbers among migrants in Poland (CBOS, 1999). The first three nations are the most reluctantly seen as visitors to Poland. Approximately 41% of adult Poles are opposed to the arrivals of Romanian citizens, 39% to Russian visitors and 17% to Ukrainian foreigners (Łodziński, 2000).

According to a representative survey on the social perception of foreigners from less economically developed countries, Warsaw inhabitants believed, against statistical evidence, that there is an increase in recent years in the number of labor immigrants in Poland (42% described it as rapid and 33% as slow) (Grzymała-Kazłowska et al., 2002c). Only one in 5 respondents regarded the presence of immigrants as a definitely positive phenomenon. The same number of respondents, approximately 1/3, had mixed feelings about immigration and opposed the influx of foreigners to Poland. The inhabitants of Warsaw clearly distinguished three categories of migrants closely linked with their regions of origin. The largest group of respondents pointed to migrants from South-East Asia, particularly from Vietnam, as the most numerous immigrants in the capital. The Vietnamese, who largely concentrate in the capital of Poland, are the most visible migrant group in Warsaw probably due to their anthropological dissimilarity which rivets attention

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<sup>29</sup> Except for nations belonging to the Vysehrad group to whom Poles feel a particular affinity.

in the homogenous society and due to the character of their economic activities which take place in central streets and in open markets.

The Vietnamese have become first and foremost linked with their main economic activities in Poland, namely with trade on open markets by selling inexpensive textiles and running oriental fast food restaurants. Though many Poles have reservations about the quality of goods and services supplied by the Vietnamese, they predominantly appreciate the existence of such an offer. In general, Vietnamese migrants are the most positively perceived among non-Westerners in Poland. Diverse studies show that besides physical characteristics such as being yellow or “dark” skinned, slanting dark eyes, black hair and a short and frail figure, the most prevalent traits in the perception by Poles of Vietnamese migrants are positive characteristics such as “hard-working”, “calm” and “kind” (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2002c; Halik and Nowicka, 2002). These traits are often accompanied by characteristics “persistent”, “resourceful” and “having a gift for trade”. Vietnamese traders are perceived predominantly as polite and attentive towards customers, although they happen to be described also as pushy, cunning and dishonest. In general, the Vietnamese are seen as go-ahead and enterprising migrants, successful in running small businesses and characterized by a high level of ethnic cooperation. There is a perceived image that the Vietnamese form a closely-knit, hermetic, well-organized group with a strong solidarity between its members who collaborate against Poles. Curiosity about a distinct culture is in this case coupled with anxiety about the unknown (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2002b). For example, it is believed that that Vietnamese fast food restaurants offer inexpensive and tasty exotic dishes, but there is a doubt if food preparations meet adequate hygienic standards and the dishes do not contain ingredients forbidden in Polish cuisine, such as pigeon, dog and cat meat. Far before the first SARS cases had been disclosed, there was a kind of hidden fear of unknown illnesses that can be brought by Vietnamese migrants. The Vietnamese are also, to some degree, associated with illegal economic activities such as smuggling goods and not paying taxes. In spite of the relatively frequent presence of migrants in crime columns in the Polish press, the Vietnamese are not perceived as foreigners posing a physical danger to ordinary Poles, although it is believed that they form cruel ethnic gangs involved in the trafficking in persons and smuggling goods. In popular perception, there is too large of a socio-cultural distance between the Vietnamese and Polish societies in order to understand each other which makes the integration of the Vietnamese impossible.

Migrants from the former Soviet Union are another category of foreigners that arise in the perception of Warsaw inhabitants. In this case, the respondents used general labels such as “Russki” or named groups using the names of sending countries: “Russians”, “Ukrainians”, “Belarusians” or “Armenians”. Foreigners from the former Soviet Union are poorly differentiated within the group and in general they are perceived as physically and culturally similar to Poles. Migrants from Eastern neighboring countries are, first of all, associated with their economic activities, that is with cleaning private houses, baby-sitting, elderly care, open market trade, construction and redecoration work. These migrants are not only frequently linked with common economic offenses such as tax offenses but also with serious criminality and prostitution. Characteristics prevailing in the description of these immigrants reflect a mixed attitude towards this category of migrants. The most frequent

traits used by the respondents to characterize this group were; hard-work, politeness, resourcefulness, poverty, backwardness, dishonesty, negligence, pushiness, criminality, arrogance, cruelty and aggressiveness. It seems that many of these negative characteristics are linked with historical stereotypes which emerged after bloody military conflicts. This is especially true in the case of memories which continue to be vivid about Ukrainian crimes during and after WWII (Konieczna, 2002).

The third perceived category of migrants consists of Gypsies who are also labeled as Romanians and, to a smaller degree, are associated with petty traders from Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia. These immigrants are linked with beggary, open market trade in trash goods, petty crime and playing music in the streets. They are characterized in an almost exclusively negative manner as; dirty, pushy, aggressive, dishonest, insolent, uneducated, frauds and backward. These characteristics coincide with the long-lasting stereotype of Gypsies present in Polish culture. According to Ewa Nowicka (2001), Polish Gypsies correspond to Simmel's category of "close strangers" and are popularly described as physically distinct due to their black hair and dark skin. In popular representations Gypsies are characterized as consuming carrion, unclean, negligent, unintelligent, uncivilized, lazy, wasteful and changeable. They are depicted as cheats, thefts, beggars, conmen and vagabonds. The most positive characteristics appearing in the stereotype of Gypsies include: talented for music and dance, jolly, hospitable, caring about family, and fit. Anna Giza-Poleszczuk and Jan Poleszczuk (2001) reduced the stereotypical representations of Gypsies into five main dimensions; 1) petty criminality, 2) secrecy and isolation, 3) romanticism, 4) strong and hierarchical large families, and 5) poverty.

This section may be concluded with the summation that the first immigrants who appeared in Poland at the end of the 1980's and the beginning of 1990's possessed a novelty for a highly homogenous post-war Polish society. After quite a warm welcome attitudes towards migrants became more moderate if not hostile due to the increasing perception of foreigners as competitors with respect to social benefits and rivals on the market during a difficult recession period. Immigration also became an issue of public awareness. Immigrants became visible both in the mass media and in the streets of major cities and markets in border areas. Throughout this period, we have been witnessing a process where complex attitudes and varied representations of immigrants are forming and while old stereotypes, media representations and images emerged from direct contacts coexist. On the one hand, the polarization of attitudes towards immigrants is taking place, on the other hand, surface toleration and political correctness are becoming more visible.

#### **4.2. Immigrants and Public Discourse**

Since 1989, news on immigration and foreigners, which was absent from the mass media in the past, has become increasingly present within the public agenda. It is clearly evident through the number of articles with entries such as "foreigners" and "immigrants" published in the biggest Polish newspapers "Gazeta Wyborcza" between the years 1989 and 2002 or "Rzeczpospolita" between the years 1993 and 2003.

Immigrants are shown in the media mostly in a negative light. Research which was done by Maciej Mrozowski (1997) in the mid 1990's has led to the conclusion that

newspaper articles regarding migrants represent four major types of categories. The largest group consists of articles concerning the “growing” or “massive” influx of immigrants into Poland. This influx is sometimes described by the metaphor of a flood, where foreigners are shown as masses entering Poland illegally or becoming illegal by remaining there beyond a permitted time and being out of the reach of the state. A slightly smaller group is comprised of articles reporting on the criminal behavior of immigrants in Poland. A subsequent group of texts focuses on the economic activities of immigrants with a focus on their participation in the shadow sector. Only a small number of articles discusses the daily life of immigrants, their problems with adjustment to the host society, and describes migrants traditions which are dissimilar with the host society.

The negative media representations of migrants in Poland can be explained by several reasons. First of all, it is an effect of the media’s focus on “bad news” and their continuous search for sensation and abnormality what makes them particularly interested in foreigners criminal behavior and illegal activities. A good example is that of a documentary series called “Borders” which is produced by a private television station called TVN and shows the combat operations of the Border Control. Secondly, the media express opinions of elites who are interested in reinforcing the existing social order and who are rather reluctant towards novelty and changes. Also, relatively low standards of political correctness in Poland allow for symbolic elites to use stereotypical clichés and to openly formulate ethnic/national prejudices. National rhetoric is frequently present in media debates, however, the majority of widely read newspapers are increasingly sensitive to the issue of political correctness and are trying to avoid xenophobic comments. Nevertheless, manifestations of intolerance still occur in the media, but more so in an indirect way, i.e. through letters to the editor. There are examples of papers and other paperback publications that openly play on prejudices and stereotypes, e.g., joke collections about different nations. Thirdly, newspapers often report on state policies, cite state officials and politicians who sometimes play with sentiments and use nationality arguments. Xenophobic attitudes are not very salient in the public activity of political parties, but some politicians use nationalist rhetoric and express extremist right opinions. Although there are no parties who focus on the presence of migrants in Poland, parties such as *Samoobrona*<sup>30</sup> or *Liga Polskich Rodzin*<sup>31</sup> strongly express concern about the rights of foreigners to purchase Polish land after integration with the EU.

Newspapers are also prone to frequently giving a voice to government officials and experts who present state policy on immigration issues and concentrate their attention on restricting the admission of foreigners and the negative consequences of immigration. As a result, one of the most visible topics in the media is state activity connected with the control and the limiting of the inflow of foreigners from less economically developed countries which are mainly from non-European states. Major issues which they consider are the following; regulating the residency of foreigners in Poland, combating forms of illegality such as illegal border crossings, unregistered residency, illegal employment and fighting criminality. The media reports on the increasingly restrictive immigrant policy as a

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<sup>30</sup> A farmers’ protest party (represented in the Parliament since 2001).

<sup>31</sup> A national-Catholic party (represented in the Parliament since 2001).

consequence of Poland's strategic interests, and the European Union's expectations that Poland will guard the Eastern frontier of "Fortress Europe" and will cooperate with the EU in order to limit immigration into the continent.

Less dynamic has been the growth in the number of articles which present the daily life of migrants in Poland, their adaptation difficulties, as well as their unique cultures and unusual individual biographies. What is interesting is that immigrants are not only shown as exotic guests, but they are gradually beginning to appear in the media as "normal citizens or residents". This reflects upon the fact that migrants have come to be visible in public life at universities, in show business and sports. From time to time, the mass media reports on immigrants with Polish citizenship entering local governments, joining political parties or running enterprises which employ Poles.

Immigrants have also begun to appear as characters on TV series: for example, in "A Surrogate Family" or "M as Love" and broadcast co-hosts on TV and radio, i.e. in a commentary program "Plus Minus". It also happens that they are invited to talk shows such as "Among Us" or "Talks in Progress". Thus far, they have been mainly playing an exotic role which serves as an intriguing supplement intended to make the programs more attractive and colorful. But such events may have a significance, even if not intentional, for the promotion of tolerance and multiculturalism in Poland.

In general, migrants are increasingly present in the Polish mass media. In the majority of cases they are depicted in a negative light, in particular criminalized. Nevertheless, they have gradually begun to appear in more diverse and positive contexts. It is worthwhile to notice that journalists are becoming aware of the need for complying with the norm of "political correctness" and promoting tolerance in the Polish media.

### **4.3. Polish Immigration Policy**

In the case of Poland, we can refer to an immigration policy only after 1989, if one can call it an immigration policy at all. During the period of the Polish People's Republic, immigration to Poland was practically non-existent from the perspective of scale as well as significance. As a result, there wasn't any need to create such a policy. This would also be in conflict with the idea of Poland as a culturally and ethnically homogeneous country which was promoted by the Communist authorities. Consequently, in the Polish Constitution of 1952, there weren't any direct references to national minorities or foreigners. There was only one entry on the guarantee of equality of citizen rights and non-discrimination due to nationality, race, beliefs, as well as, an interdiction against propagating hatred and humiliation due to dissimilarity on the basis of nationality, race or beliefs. A basic document pertaining to foreigners was the Aliens Law which was enacted in 1963. The attitude of the formerly Communist country towards foreigners in general could be characterized by a supervisory-inspectory relationship, coupled with generalized and incomplete regulations emanating from the perception of the presence of foreigners as an anomaly and ephemeral occurrence (Okólski, 1997).

This is why, after 1989, when diverse foreigners began to flow into Poland, there was a need to create an institutional and legal framework which would be able to embrace the new phenomenon. Polish immigration policy has been developed after the collapse of

Communism under the pressure of events; the influx of foreigners and external influences such as neighboring countries, international conventions, bilateral agreements and EU requirements. Polish policy in the first half of the 1990's was characterized with a series of fragmented and frequently provisory regulations and actions. In the initial period, in response to the changing reality, more or less *ad hoc* solutions were accepted to regulate the most critical matters. However, in the face of large economic, social and political changes, and problems tied with the transition, the issue of immigration was consistently put off. The more so, as indicated earlier in this chapter, the amount of long-term immigrants or settlers continued to be rather small.

As in the first several years, after the onset of the transition, we can speak of unregulated situation and the relatively "soft" attitude of the authorities towards immigration, since the end of the 1990's rules have been sharpened and there have been a series of new restrictive regulations introduced. Generally, towards the end of the 1990's, one could observe an intensification of regulations and implementation activities connected with immigration policy and a coordination of activities in this field. This is exemplified by the new Aliens Act passed in September 1997, the amendment to the Aliens Act passed in 2001 and the appointment of the Office for Repatriation and Foreigners; a central unit of governmental administration concerned with the coordination of activities towards foreigners for the issues of repatriation, entrance, transit, residency, departures, refugee status, granting of asylum and citizenship issues. The appointment of the Office for Repatriation and Foreigners instead of the Department of Migration and Exile of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration (earlier the Bureau for Migration and Exile) indicates a change in the importance of immigration policy and it's priorities.

Though accepted in 2001, the amendment to the Aliens Act which appointed the Office for Repatriation and Foreigners as a central actor responsible for immigration policy, there was still a lack of general migration doctrine and a complete and long-term vision of immigration policy (Okólski, 1998c). A similar conclusion came from the research of Kępińska and Stola (forthcoming) who described Polish immigration policy in 2002 as incomplete, reactive and decentralized; they attributed this largely to the conditions of it's development. Legal regulations did not develop as a result of deeply thought through goals and long-term plans but as fragmented activities taken under the pressure of the events and strong international influences mentioned above: the development of Polish immigration policy was structured by various external influences resulting from the participation of Poland in international conventions<sup>32</sup>, bilateral agreements<sup>33</sup>, and especially agreements with neighboring countries. There were strong expectations on behalf of the European Union and the Schengen Group, that Poland as a candidate country will realize the immigration policy of the EU and will cooperate to restrict immigration into Western Europe and to combat illegal migration. As a result, the immigration policy in large measure

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<sup>32</sup> In 1991, Poland ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention and the New York Protocol from 1967 pertaining to refugee status. In 1993, Poland also ratified the Convention on Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome in 1950, which pertains to, among others, the treatment of refugees and other foreigners. In 1998, Poland signed the European Social Card proclaimed in Turin in 1961.

<sup>33</sup> Many bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements were concluded on visa/non-visa travel, on readmission and on the flow of workers.

begun to focus on controlling the flow of foreigners, as well as, on basic issues associated with the regulation of residence and combating illegality. The higher level of distrust towards immigrants after the September 11 manifested in new, more restrictive and preventive regulations pertaining to the admittance and residence of foreigners to Poland and stricter implementation of existing regulations.

In general, Polish immigration policy is focused on several aspects. Decidedly the most visible and also present in the public discourse is the state's activity pertaining to issues connected with the control and limitation of the inflow of foreigners from less economically developed countries which are mainly non-European. Other major issues are; combat with various forms of illegality such as illegal border crossings, illegal residency, illegal employment and migrant criminality. The immigration policy also focuses on legal regulations for the residency of foreigners in Poland. The issues of control and regulation of the immigration flow are regulated, in a large measure, in the Aliens Act of 1997 amended in July 2001. A simple review of the chapter titles of the act indicates that the document is first of all concerned with entrance into Poland, residency in Poland and the deportation of foreigners from Poland. The act mainly reveals a catalogue of repressive activities of the state and concentrates on the responsibilities of the migrants. It specifies precise circumstances in which the Polish state can deny foreigners the right to entrance, residency, applying for a visa, residency permission and refugee status. It lists conditions when the state can impose repressive penalties and can deport foreigners from its territory. For example, the foreigner is refused a visa for entrance into Polish territory, if there exists a "justified suspicion" that he crossed the border against regulations or his/her entrance or stay in Poland can have a different aim than declared; then the decision to refuse entrance is immediately executed and there is no appeal from it. The visa is terminated and the foreigner cannot enter Poland within the next 12 months if his/her situation does not change significantly.

The very latest development in Polish migration policy constitutes the act passed in June 2003 concerned all foreigners except diplomats, EU citizens, people applying for protection or being granted protection, neither foreigners of Polish origin nor the closest family members of repatriates. To a large extent, the act specifies previous regulations included in the Aliens Act of 1997 and the amendment to it enacted in 2001. The major new developments in this act include regulations on the types of data that can be collected about foreigners such as information about; health, international journeys within the previous 5 years, fingerprints, new types of visas and documents for foreigners, conditions when entering Poland can not be refused and circumstances when appeals against refusals can be made. In general, it gives foreigners, especially those who have professional or family ties with Poland, new opportunities for entering Poland, extending or legalizing their residence. The first time regularization action which lasts up to December 31, 2003 has been announced. Greater importance is also attached to rights of foreigners in critical moments, such as stays in detention centers or under conditions of expulsion. A new development is a chapter pertaining to the control of legality on Polish territory and the responsibility of tour operators for illegal migrants. Greater attention is also paid there to health protection. The

act specifies and broadens the scope of tasks that should be carried out by the Office for Repatriation and Foreigners.

The second dimension of Polish immigration policy is to meet international conventions pertaining to the protection of human life and the rights of individuals. That obligation is mentioned in the most important legal act in Poland, namely in the Polish Constitution of 1997, where it is stated that foreigners have a right for asylum in Poland and could seek their protection from persecutions in the framework of refugee status. Detailed regulations regarding refugee status and asylum are listed in the Aliens Act of 1997 and in the subsequent amendments to it. The Aliens Act also contains special chapters: "The Status of the Refugee and Asylum" and "Committee on Refugee Affairs", as well as, a chapter which was added in 2001 under the influence of the necessity to accept refugees from Kosovo, named "Temporary Protection of Foreigners on the Republic of Poland's Territory". The latest development in Polish migration policy constitutes a sizable act, enacted in June 2003 which is a series of elaborate details exclusively relating to foreigners looking for protection on Polish territory. The act specifies three previous forms of protection available in Poland: refugee status, asylum, temporary protection and introduces the fourth possibility of tolerated residence which is open for those who do not qualify for the other three but cannot be expelled due to humanitarian or family reasons. In comparison to regulations in the previous general acts, the new one additionally includes articles concerning the treatment of minors without assistance, the disabled, and victims of violence seeking protection. It also specifies forms of aid for migrants applying for refugee status, the rights of acknowledged refugees, ranges of duties and procedures for operating the Refugee Council and types of official registers including data on migrants.

A third critical aspect of Polish immigration policy is the question of repatriation of foreign citizens of Polish origin from the former territories of the USSR, especially from Asiatic republics of the former USSR and the Asiatic part of the Russian Federation. The issue of repatriation was undertaken in the Aliens Act in 1997, and further elaborated upon in the special Repatriation Act passed in November 2000.

A fourth developing aspect of Polish immigration policy refers to citizens of the EU after the entry of Poland into the European Union. Thus far, in July 2002, there was passed a special act concerning the citizens of the EU in which principles and conditions of their entrance and residence in Poland were specified.

In general, in Poland still lacks immigration doctrine and a complete long-term vision of immigration policy. Polish migration policy is concentrated on "admission rules" and administrative aspects on controlling the issues of influx and residence of foreigners in Poland and it does not include issues of immigrant integration. There are four major dimensions of Polish immigration policy: 1) the control and limitation of the inflow of foreigners from less developed countries (especially non-European) and migrant criminality, 2) the protection of refugees, 3) the repatriation of ethnic Poles from the former USSR, and 4) regulations relating to citizens of the EU after the enlargement. We have been witnessing the development in Polish migration policy: from unregulated immigration and a "soft" attitude towards foreigners, through highly restrictive regulations introduced at the end

1990's, to the latest developments in which more attention is paid to the issue of human rights in the context of migration.

#### **4.4. Government Programs and Services Available to Immigrants**

Immigrants have thus far not been perceived as an important and integral part of the country's population, towards which the authorities should undertake adequate programs and the government should provide needed services.

The immigration policy includes at a minimum only the issues concerning immigrant participation in the labor market. The last Alien Act of 2003 specifies only the categories of immigrants who do not need a work permit in Poland. These are foreigners with a permanent residence permit, foreigners granted refugee status, foreigners under temporary protection, and foreigners with a permit for tolerated residence. These same groups of immigrants are formally entitled to social benefits. It is worthwhile to mention that even the latest regulations do not assure immigrant families even in cases of repatriates or refugees with any special social and labor entitlements. A better scenario is associated with schooling. Although a statutory right to schooling is only possessed by foreigners with a permanent residence permit, foreigners granted refugee status, foreigners under temporary protection and foreigners with a permit for tolerated residence, Polish authorities, similarly to the EU countries, claim that schools admit all migrant children even in the case of their illegal or residence or unclear legal status.

In general, the socio-cultural dimension of the presence of migrants in Poland is so far almost completely absent in Polish immigration policy even though this issue is regarded as a key concern by the European Committee on Issues of Migration in the Council of Europe (Majchrzak, 1994). The Council of Europe actively supports social cohesion programs which encompass protection of the weakest social groups, such as immigrants, and gives them the assurance of equal rights and the ability to fight forms of social exclusion and discrimination. In Polish immigration policy, questions pertaining to the social integration of immigrants almost do not arise. This can be the result of the newness of this phenomenon and the character of immigration to Poland. It results also from a fact that migration to Poland is composed of relatively small numbers of foreigners who settled down in comparison to short-term and transitory migrants. There are also significant numbers of foreigners with illegal or unclear legal status, such as false tourists. From the perspective of the government which is facing large scale social, economic and political problems, the integration of immigrants is not a priority issue.

In effect, there are only two special government programs for immigrants which pertain to refugees and repatriates. But even with these two cases where the state has obligated itself to ensure the acknowledged refugees and repatriates with assistance in adaptation to a life in Poland, there is a lack of suitable administrative solutions, adequate personnel and funds for the implementation of programs and services. In the case of acknowledge refugees, an effective long-term governmental program, with the intent of assisting them in integration with the Polish society, has not been elaborated since 1993 when the need for a special integration program was recognized after the arrival of a sizable group of refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the first unsuccessful integration

program launched in 1994 by the Ministry of Interior with the financial assistance of the UNHCR, the Ministry of Interior and Administration attempted to implement the Program of Individual Adaptation (PIA) in 1996 and 1997, which was intended to assure an acknowledged refugee and his/her family financial support for a period of up to 15 months. Apart from a permanent lack of funding for the program, neither the PIA nor the activities of non-governmental organizations supported refugees in a sufficient way which was comparable to Western European standards. That deficiency was attributed by government officials and independent experts to general socio-economic problems occurring in Poland, *inter alia* a lack of apartments and a high level unemployment (Siarkiewicz, 2001). Therefore, selected program beneficiaries, who were obligated to move out from refugee centers, could not afford normal accommodations and usually remained unemployed.

Between 1997 and 2000 activities in the field of refugee integration were scant, except for the fact that in 1998 the responsibility for it was transferred from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The Department of Social Aid in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy commissioned local governments (provinces) to support acknowledged refugees with integration. According to a decree by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy issued in December 2000, pertaining the integration of refugees in Poland, acknowledged refugees could apply for support in integration to local governments who decided upon the legitimacy and range of the aid in each individual case. Generally, refugees could apply for assistance in learning the Polish language or vocational training. Additionally, for a maximum period of 12 months, a refugee could benefit from financial aid for rent and maintenance. From the inception of the program, it did not offer any long-term systemic solutions in respect to three key issues for the adjustment of refugees: access to the labor market, accommodation, and adequate language/cultural skills. Additionally, a permanent lack of funds for the program resulted in frequent delays in payments and withholding payments. Moreover, lower level administration officials were not sufficiently prepared to implement integration programs and deal with refugees. However, it must be mentioned that special training programs funded by the EU for representatives of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations such as Polish Red Cross and Polish Humanitarian Action raised the competencies of social workers and civil servants to deal with refugees.

The situation is paradoxical in many respects. Acknowledged refugees receive far less support from the Polish government than foreigners only applying for refugee status in Poland. During the period when an application for a refugee status is being considered, all applicants have a right to stay in special refugee centers where they are offered accommodation, full board, basic medical care, cloth, hygienic products and a small allowance. Although recognized refugees obtain the right to work, education and social aid, they lose their accommodation, maintenance and allowance provided by the refugee centers after they have been granted refugee status. Without organizational and financial assistance, they can not stand on their own two feet in a new, unknown, culturally different environment.

It has been observed that refugee applicants predominantly do not intend to stay in Poland regardless of the outcome of their refugee proceedings because they are convinced of better institutional and social/ethnic/family support in Western countries. As a result, the majority of refugee proceedings in Poland are stopped due to the eventual disappearance of the applicants. The acknowledged refugees who try to settle in Poland, are not able to adjust to life in Poland because they cannot obtain assistance from the government, non-governmental institutions nor ethnic networks. Eventually, they often use their single financial assistance payment, which is intended as support in integration, for a trip to the West. That reaffirms the Polish government in a conviction that there is neither a sense nor a need for any real integration system. As a result acknowledged refugees are dependent upon only extemporaneous and sporadic aid from governmental or more often non-governmental organizations. This issue will be dealt with further on.

The second existing program intended to support immigrants in the process of adjustment to the host society encompasses repatriates. To become a repatriate, in addition to presenting proof of Polish origin, the potential repatriate has to prove that he/she will possess adequate "settlement conditions," i.e., accommodation and livelihood in Poland which is to be assured by the commitment of the local authorities, an official invitation issued by a private enterprise, association, foundation or an invitation by the repatriate's family. Additionally, the Repatriation Act gives repatriates the opportunity to claim from among the following types of aid: single financial assistance for a repatriate and his/her family (the reimbursement for travel, redecoration costs, settlement and school benefits), the possibility of learning the Polish language and help with finding a job (and advantages for employers who will employ repatriates). The government also commits itself to support communes that bear the cost of hosting repatriates.

Except for the repatriation system which assures migrants basic accommodations and upkeep at the beginning of their residence in Poland, there are no other special integration programs. In spite of cultural advantages that repatriates possess because they should be of Polish origin and should cultivate their Polishness, many repatriates face serious adaptation problems, of which the most burdensome are; difficulties linked with inadequate language competencies, formal/legal problems with repatriation visas and with recognition of foreign diplomas, labor restrictions in the case of spouses of repatriates who up to 2003 were regarded as normal foreigners, financial problems with very low incomes, lack of accommodation and employment, socio-cultural problems such as a lack of social support, longing, a feeling of strangeness, negative experiences with civil servants and neighbors (Hut, 2002).

Generally, the Polish government is not actively realizing a policy which is promoting multiculturalism and supporting immigrants. The state does not disseminate special educational programs for Polish society which teaches about tolerance and cultural pluralism except for sporadic initiatives which originate from associations and non-governmental organizations. The government does concern itself with assisting immigrants in socio-cultural integration with the Polish society nor does it provide migrants with the opportunity for social, cultural and economic integration. For example, there are no free

language courses, except for students taking part in exchange programs and civil servants lack foreign language skills and competencies to deal with foreigners.

The state does not possess any far-reaching policy which promotes cultural pluralism and multiculturalism or the melting of ethnic minorities and new immigrant groups into Polish society. In the development of Polish immigration policy we currently see a tendency towards the reduction of immigration from less economically developed non-European countries and an ignoring of the presence of already settled legal and illegal migrants in Poland. The lack of state activities pertaining to the integration of immigrants can be interpreted as a policy of discouragement and abandonment. In the face of weakly developed ethnic networks, a small amount of institutional support from both the public institutions and NGO's as well as a low level of social acceptance of ethno-cultural pluralism, in practice migrants are frequently left only with a choice between fast assimilation and marginalization.

#### **4.5. Non-governmental Initiatives Pertaining to Immigrants in Poland**

A significant role in assisting foreigners applying for refugee status and particularly helping acknowledged refugees is played by various local and international NGOs. The most important organization in this field, UNHCR, monitors legislative activity and the implementation of laws regarding refugees as well as provides both foreigners and governmental administration with expertise. The organization engages in refugee integration and is involved in direct assistance for socio-cultural adaptation. The agency is involved in paying integration benefits, funding language courses, driving lessons, and financially supporting special programs realized by other institutions. The UNHCR also organizes information/education campaigns about refugees such as "Refugee Day" and offers a quarterly publication "From a Foreign Land".

Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH) is one of local non-governmental organizations helping refugees with integration. The organization provides recognized refugees with language courses which are financed by the governor of the Warsaw Province and assists refugees with job searches. In 2002, PAH rented 5 rotary flats, financed by the governor of the Warsaw Province, where selected refugee families could be located. The other projects of PAH pertaining to refugees include; running Refugee House for 30 refugee applicants or recognized refugees, participating in Refugee Day, publishing a handbook for refugees, creating a adaptation program for the children of refugees and carrying out an informational/educational initiative called "Neighbors".

In recent years, the growing involvement of the Catholic organization Caritas-Poland has been observed. Caritas has organized "Information Bureaus for Migrants and Refugees" which perform an informational function and provide psychological counseling. In addition, they offer, on a more limited scale, other types of assistance such as; searching for a job, accommodation, offering temporary financial support, free meals, medical services, integration benefits, language courses and aiding in contacts with governmental intuitions.

The Polish Red Cross (PCK) is an organization which played the most significant role at the onset of refugee inflows. For example, they took care of the first significant group of refugees expelled from Sweden admitted by Poland at the beginning of the 1990's.

The PCK also organized arrivals of refugees from the Balkans in 1992 and 1999. Both PCK and the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFPC) promoted Poland's ratification of the Geneva Convention. HFPC and Amnesty International specialize in human rights watch and legal advice for immigrants, the same as recently established legal centers at Warsaw and Jagiellonian Universities. HFPC similarly to UNHCR gives also its expertise in the field of immigration policy and guards obeying international conventions and agreements. Other non-governmental organizations such as the Polish Committee of Social Aid help refugees as they do other vulnerable social groups such as the homeless, poor and elderly. Although it would appear that there are plenty of various integration initiatives, non-governmental organizations do not provide refugees with comprehensive, systematic, stable and effective long-term assistance.

A similar situation characterized by the *ad hoc* and dispersed actions of various non-governmental organizations which focus on select aspects of integration occurs in the case of repatriates. However, an important difference with refugee integration programs lies in the fact that repatriation programs are not funded by wealthy international NGO's and monitored by European Union institutions. This results in a small range of adaptation assistance and repatriation itself. Among organizations that engage in aid for repatriates the most visible remain such associations as: "Polish Community", "Polish Humanitarian Action" and "Return", and foundations: "Assistance for Poles in the East" and "Foundation of Aid to Polish Exiles".

Other types of activities are programs intended to promote ethnic tolerance and social cohesion in Polish society. For example, the branch of the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), appointed to Poland by the Council of Europe, monitors and discloses cases of racial abuse and ethnic prejudices. According to a report published in 1999, despite regulations introduced to deal with the problem of racism and ethnic discrimination, the law in many respects is too vague and poorly enforced. The recommendations of ECRI include a need for special training for civil servants and more decisive intervention in cases of ethnic discrimination and violence, e.g., greater intervention when considering Roma/Gypsies and more actively overcoming anti-Semitic prejudices. The authors conclude that there is an adequate level of public awareness towards acknowledged ethnic/national minorities and appropriate actions are usually taken in this case, however, the Polish society is challenged by a new phenomenon of immigration. Although the examples of physical violence towards foreigners and the cases of serious racist appearances by right extremists and skinheads seem to be rare, migrants are frequently subject to verbal abuse. But they are quite frequent everyday manifestations of xenophobia and prejudices in the form of racist jokes or offensive inscriptions on walls which are treated indifferently by the majority and broadly ignored.

This is also an issue of concern for the founders of the association "Open Republic: Association Against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia". The association documents manifestations of xenophobia in the mass media, education (e.g. reports on school textbooks) and political platforms. The organization is aiming at awaking the sensitivity of individuals and institutions and promoting tolerance in Poland. A similar goal is shared by the annual "Multicultural Week", a festival, lasting several days, on Warsaw streets. Other

examples of civil initiatives are joint associations, such as the Polish-Vietnamese Association of Friendship as well as integration programs established in local community centers such as the initiative of the cultural center in Podkowa Lesna, a place located in the vicinity of a refugee camp.

Generally speaking, in addition to the few non-governmental organizations which have been involved in assistance for immigrants since the beginning, there are currently various non-profit organizations which have begun to treat different immigrant groups as targets for their support. Although it seems that there are many various integration initiatives, non-governmental organizations do not provide neither refugees nor repatriates, not to mention other groups of immigrants, with complete, systematic, and effective support. However, we can observe an increasing number of civil initiatives aiming at creating a multicultural and tolerant society in Poland.

## **5. Three Models of Migrant Adjustment to Life in Poland**

### **5.1. The Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Westerners**

Migrants' adjustment strategies depend strongly not only on the cultural, social, economic and political environment in a receiving country, but also on the socio-demographic characteristics of migrants; their number, legal status, length and character of residence, willingness to cooperation with others. To a large extent, adaptation strategies are shaped by migrants' culture and social networks, usually ethnic networks to which they belong to. Therefore, instead of talking about one general strategy, we will discuss three modes of migrant adjustment characteristic for three largely different migrant groups; the Ukrainians, the Vietnamese and Westerners, particularly the Americans.

### **5.2. The Adjustment of Ukrainian Migrants to Polish Society**

The migration of Ukrainian citizens to Poland is a large in number phenomenon which is characterized by a variety of migratory forms and adaptation strategies. Assimilation, transnational spaces and surface accommodation are three the most prevalent adaptation strategies. Assimilation is one of particularly frequent adjustment patterns among these migrants coming to Poland from the neighboring Slavic country due to a close distance between the Polish and Ukrainian societies in cultural and geographical terms. Such a scenario is more likely due to the fact that Ukrainian migrants do not tend to form a thriving ethnic community with elaborated ethnic institutions and developed social networks.

It is worthwhile to notice that recent Ukrainian immigrants and dominant short-time, often circular, migrants from the Ukraine in general rather weakly make use of the old historically settled Ukrainian minority in their adjustment. Although statistical data and biographical interviews with "new" Ukrainian migrants reveal that the areas of Ukrainian minority's concentration constitute a frequent destination for newcomers and new migrants from the Ukraine keep some links with members of the "recognized" Ukrainian minority

(Jerczynski, 1999; Górny, 2002). This can be explained by the fact that, in spite of relatively high numbers, the Polish citizens of Ukrainian origin are not self-integrated and organized in a community but conversely subject to intensive assimilation processes and marginalized in socio-economic terms in the Polish society (Babiński, 2001).

It should be pointed out that a considerable group of Ukrainian citizens in Poland constitutes people of Polish origin and individuals whose families had possessed ties with Polish society and culture. The migrants from Ukraine, due to long and well-established connections with Polish society and a small level of cultural distance to the host society can easily adjust to a life in Poland. Assimilation occurs particularly often in the cases of Polish-Ukrainian mixed marriages which constitute a substantial part of this migrant group. A marriage to a Pole is used as a vehicle for emigration from the Ukraine to Poland and as a way for the legalization of status abroad.

However, a small geographical distance between Poland and Ukraine, also gives Ukrainian migrants, even those settled in Poland, an opportunity to maintain extensive contacts with the Ukraine. Therefore, Ukrainian migrants usually adjust easily to a life in Poland and frequently operate without serious problems in both environments. Using a concept developed by Thomas Faist (2000), it can be said that they easily form transnational social spaces crossing physical and national borders, which connect individuals in networks that encompass migrants from the Ukraine and foreigners from other post-Soviet countries staying in Poland. As a result, they simultaneously become members of both Polish and Ukrainian societies (Górny, 2002).

Surface accommodation seems to be another important adjustment strategy among the citizens of Ukraine involved in short-term and circular migration to Poland. A concept of „incomplete migration” proposed by Okólski (2001) is a useful term to describe the way of operation of Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland. Incomplete migration, which resembles “transmigration” known from the recent US - Mexican experience, is defined by the author as a temporary population movement between countries where migrants do not respect administrative rules concerning foreigner entry and sojourn in a host country by undertaking irregular employment. They pursue economic activity and earn money for consumption or investments in a foreign country whereas the migrant’s family lives take place in a home country. Incomplete migration has a quasi-migratory character and sojourns abroad are relatively short. Research shows that in the case of Ukrainian irregular workers, the average duration of their sojourn in Poland was between 2 and 3 weeks (Okólski, 1997; Wallace and Stola, 2001). This form of international mobility is characteristic of the transition period with economic imbalances between sending and receiving societies, inadequate legal regulations or inefficient enforcements in both societies and weak social ties in sending countries. To a large degree, incomplete migration, where individuals circulate between the peripheries of sending countries and the shadow zones in the receiving countries, has substituted internal migration from country’s peripheries to the center. Incomplete migration constituted in the 1990’s an important, frequently primary, source of bread-winning for households in Central and Eastern Europe.

For a long time, the citizens of Ukraine, as well as other visitors from the European countries of the former USSR, could enter Poland as “tourists” on a visa-free basis and could legally remain for up to three months after presenting confirmation of a booked hotel accommodation and proving that they possessed a sufficient amount of money to cover the costs of staying abroad<sup>34</sup>. In spite of the fact that tourists were forbidden any employment, the Ukrainian visitors in large numbers undertook illegal odd jobs, offered informal services or traded on open markets in Poland. The majority of Ukrainians came to Poland only for a few weeks (or even days) or left Poland, at least for a short period, before the end of permitted time in order to avoid overstaying the three-month residence period. On October 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 new regulations, imposed by the EU, came into effect introducing free visas for Ukrainians. How they will influence the migration from Ukraine to Poland poses an interesting question which can be answered in the near future.

Two major types of income-earning activities of Ukrainian labor migrants in Poland are petty trade and various types of unskilled menial piecework. Before 1998 traders dominated over laborers, whereas afterwards trade lost its significance in relation to informal services. During the first period, Ukrainian traders traveled to Poland for short trade trips to sell inexpensive but poor quality imported goods on Polish open markets. These traders traveled in organized groups and were transported directly to a target place, where they were accommodated in a pre-booked motel and afterwards taken back home. Later, individual arrivals began to prevail. After 1992, there was a switch in the predominant type of Ukrainian economic activity in Poland. Ukrainian traders became largely involved in transferring to the Ukraine goods bought in the open markets in Poland. The biggest Warsaw market, located at *Stadion Dziesięciolecia*<sup>35</sup>, was one of the most important places of exchange between Polish traders and foreigners from the former Soviet Union in the 1990’s. However, since 1997, the Ukrainian trade business has been declining, due to legislative and economic changes both in Poland and in post-Soviet countries and restrictions on the admittance of foreigners into Poland. Therefore, since 1997, the majority of Ukrainian labor migrants have been involved in manual piecework in a shadow economy. As a result certain segments of the informal labor market such as housekeeping (domestic service), construction work and farming have been dominated by Ukrainian workers.

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<sup>34</sup> They did not have to meet these requirements when they presented a registered invitation from a Pole or a foreigner meeting the adequate requirements who committed themselves to the all potential expenses of a migrant.

<sup>35</sup> The great open market located in a stadium close to the city centre on the right bank of the Vistula river. The open market was started in 1989, and from its beginning has been an important place of exchange between Polish traders and migrants from the former Soviet Union. Although after 1997 business declined due to restrictions on the admittance of foreign traders into Poland. This overlapped with economic problems both in post-Soviet countries and in Poland. There are still 5,000 companies operating on the market and more than 20,000 workers are employed there. The majority of entrepreneurs trade in clothing, shoes and cosmetics, both wholesale and retail. Apart from the most numerous Polish entrepreneurs and the Vietnamese traders, there can also be found Russians, Armenians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Romanians and African sellers and buyers. (see Damis official Web Site, <http://www.jarmark.damis.pl>).

### 5.3. The Adjustment of Vietnamese Migrants to the Polish Society

Completely different patterns of adjustment to the receiving society are encountered among Vietnamese migrants in Poland. In this case we deal with a well-integrated elite and majority of migrants who are subject to the processes of separation.

The integration of the elite is an effect of their socio-demographic characteristics which is usually of a high socio-economic status and is associated with the context and character of their inflow to Poland. The first wave of Vietnamese migrants consisted of students and doctoral students who came to Poland under intensive exchange and training programs during Communist Poland.

The first Vietnamese migrants formed a socio-cultural, and often simultaneously a financial elite, consisting of 200-300 ex-students and their families. They concentrate around the organization “Socio-Cultural Association of the Vietnamese in Poland”. These people usually have Polish citizenship or at least permission for settlement and own prosperous small businesses. They are relatively well-integrated with the Polish society both in cultural respects by knowing the Polish language and being graduated from Polish universities, and in social terms by being married to Polish wives. Some Vietnamese even converted to Roman Catholicism and there is a group of approximately 250 Vietnamese who attend special services organized in the Vietnamese language. On the other hand, even the best integrated Vietnamese “internally” still cultivate their own ethno-cultural identity and maintain strong ties with the other Vietnamese (Halik, 2000; Halik & Nowicka, 2002).

The members of the association operate as leaders of Vietnamese immigrants and as official representatives of the whole Vietnamese “community” in Poland. Vietnamese leaders are particularly concerned with their image in Poland and they are active in the creation of positive representation (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2002b). They participate in charity actions, organize cultural events and integration conferences, and also by willingly meeting with journalists, researchers and politicians. On the one hand, they act as mediators between the Vietnamese community and the Polish society, but on the other hand, they support the development of the Vietnamese community in Poland.

Over the course of time, the Vietnamese coming to Poland, were less selected in terms of both education and societal status. Though males predominated in numbers, there were a significant number of females among Vietnamese migrants arriving to Poland in the 1990’s. For example, according to our research conducted in 2002, roughly one in three or one in four open market traders were women (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2002c).

Nevertheless, the majority of these later labor migrants tends to develop a kind of ethnic enclave. Besides individually and socially conditioned adaptation abilities, at least several other reasons contribute to that fact. Large dissimilarities between Polish and Vietnamese societies made the processes of learning the Polish language and culture particularly difficult, especially in the face of a lack of institutional support for integration. Additionally, the majority of Vietnamese migrants of the 1990’s did not perceive their migration to Poland as a permanent settlement. In general, they planned to come back home after accumulating sufficient economic capital, and taking into account the possibility that they could be forced to return to Vietnam or move out from Poland to a more favorable country. Therefore, they gave priority to earning and saving money over investing time and

money into language courses. Especially as, learning the Polish language seemed to them an extremely tough task.

However, the matters looked different in the case of Vietnamese children born in or brought to Poland. Vietnamese parents attached great importance to their children acquiring high competencies in the Polish language and cultural skills since they perceive this as valuable capital, even in the case of possible return. Therefore, many Vietnamese migrants decide to employ Polish neighbors-pensioners as baby-sitters in order to have children brought up in the Polish culture. Such efforts along with a high level of motivation of Vietnamese pupils for learning result in the fact that Vietnamese children are often the best pupils at Polish schools. Sometimes it leads to a paradoxical situation when parents can not communicate with their own children due to a language barrier. Therefore a special Vietnamese supplementary school for children was organized by the association.

In addition, the socio-cultural adaptation of numerous Vietnamese migrants is limited by their illegal status and peripheral position in the host society. Our research on trafficking (Glabicka et al, 1999) revealed that a part of Vietnamese employers paid for trafficking in recruited workers to Poland. Such illegal migrants were kept under lock and forced to exhausting labor to repay for a debt they owed their employers.

A substantial community of the Vietnamese in Poland also allows migrants to retain their own culture and to operate almost exclusively within their own ethnic group. Although in general there are no second or third generations of Vietnamese immigrants in Poland, Vietnamese networks and informal/formal institutions have been exceptionally well developed. A great cultural and geographical distance between Poland and Vietnam and a high propensity (culturally determined) of Vietnamese migrants for in-group co-operation has contributed strongly to the formation of an ethnic enclave.

The Vietnamese form the most developed migrant community in Poland, the heart of which is the biggest open market in the capital on *Stadion Dziesięciolecia* and its closest surroundings<sup>36</sup>. Besides being a main workplace, the *Stadion Dziesięciolecia* plays other crucial roles for Vietnamese immigrants in Poland. There are dozens of Vietnamese food stands and ethnic shops with Vietnamese groceries, medicines, and newspapers which are both published in Vietnam and in Poland. Here, Vietnamese services, such as hairdressing, acupuncture, medical advice, travel offers, translations, legal advice and video rentals, are on offer. The open market integrates Vietnamese immigrants who organize themselves in a community. They exchange information, plan a common market strategy, raise funds, resolve conflicts within the community, organize social and cultural events such as; soccer league games, Miss Vietnam tournaments, festivals, concerts of Vietnamese music and special showings of hit movies.

The Vietnamese in Poland can be characterized as a migrant group with a high level of ethnic co-operation and self-organization. Besides being culturally conditioned the level of social trust and ethnic cooperation is also, to a large extent, an effect of the activity of the Vietnamese leaders in Poland. Several of the integrated immigrants, members of the “Socio-Cultural Association of the Vietnamese in Poland” occupy key positions in the whole community. They play a leading role in a second important Vietnamese organization, called

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<sup>36</sup> See note 31.

“Solidarity and Friendship” that has the aim of gathering, organizing and controlling all Vietnamese migrants in Poland. The role of the Vietnamese associations in Poland in organizing migrants and creating an immigrant community can be compared, for instance, with that played by the resilient Chinese associations in Hungary (Nyiri, 1997).

The majority of adult Vietnamese migrants hardly acquire Polish language and culture competencies, keep social distance from the Polish society and tend to be closed within a kind of the ethnic enclave. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese migrants are simultaneously well-integrated with the Polish society in economic terms. The Vietnamese play an important role on the labor market in Poland, especially in the textiles sector and catering industry. The running of Vietnamese ethnic fast food restaurants and clothing stands, can be regarded as a model of prosperous entrepreneurial migrants. The research showed that on the main market in Warsaw alone (“*Stadion Dziesięciolecia*”), and in its immediate surroundings, there are at least 1,100-1,200 Vietnamese stands (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2002c). Additionally, the Vietnamese are also present in other major open markets in Warsaw as well as in other Polish cities. According to leaders of this community, in the Polish capital alone there are between 300-400 Vietnamese food stands and 30-40 restaurants.

#### **5.4. The Adjustment of Western Migrants to Polish Society**

Migrants from Western countries provide another interesting example of adjustment to life in Poland. They are usually employed by medium-sized or large companies, and often being branches of large international corporations, at managerial or expert positions where highly specialized skills are required. They are particularly visible in the financial sector, insurance agencies, real estate businesses, the manufacturing industry, super-market trade, construction industry and education. This category includes Americans and British who are employed as teachers at language schools and who well exemplify the discussed phenomenon. A relatively high proportion of migrants from the United States among Westerners might be regarded as a counter-flow as a result of the numerous and longstanding emigrations of Poles to that country and as an effect of strong interpersonal links which have developed between Polish and American societies. A high proportion of these migrants is composed of re-emigrants, i.e. returning Poles or Americans of Polish origin.

As already noticed, the migrants coming from the richest and most developed Western countries are warmly welcome and widely accepted in Polish society. They are perceived through the prism of Western stereotype, as coming from the most civilized and developed regions of the world. They are perceived to be a sparse amount of affluent, highly educated and qualified individuals who have come to Poland on a work contract. Westerners are perceived as a source of capital and investments and people who extensively contribute to the progress of the country. The appearance of Western migrants in Poland was also fuel for the national pride of Poles who linked it with the assumption that Poland became an attractive marketplace and an interesting destination for some Westerners. The returning of Polish emigrants is interpreted as a sign that Poland is already almost as stable and affluent as Western states. Nevertheless, EU propaganda which plays on concerns about the

foreigners right to purchase Polish lands and properties, and claims by former owners who lost their estates, especially former Polish citizens of Jewish and German origin, can lead to a deterioration of attitudes towards Westerners. The EU opponents say that after the EU enlargement Poland will lose its independence and that the Polish nation will be exploited by Westerners.

Western migrants seem to be easily capable of accommodating to a life in Poland due to their socio-demographic characteristics; high incomes, valuable cultural and professional competencies and their high prestige position in Poland as well as contracts which assure a stable and comfortable life in the host society. They live in exclusive apartments and villas in the best quarters of major cities. Even when they come on their own, as many American language teachers, their language skills, which are linked more with the fact that English is their native language than with formal linguistic or pedagogical education, are valuable resources both in professional and private spheres. Western migrants are admired by Poles who actively search for contacts with foreigners due to curiosity and the opportunity to practice foreign languages, job perspectives, and the possibility to visit foreigners after their return to their country of origin. Such foreigners are also attractive potential spouses. A large portion of Western migrants feels no need to learn Polish since they can afford shopping and services in places where English is spoken. Both at work and in their spare time they are surrounded by persons speaking foreign languages whether Poles or other foreigners.

Therefore a large portion of managers from the West remain separate from the external social world and remain only in their circle of compatriots and work mates. All matters connected with life in Poland are arranged for them by their companies and agencies which specialize in services for foreigners. Agnieszka Szwańder (2002) claims that foreign managers remain in an universal managerial culture which is isolated from the reality of countries of their temporary residence. In the case of unexpected problems such as contact with the police after committing a traffic offence, the migrants become completely helpless. In daily life, they can encounter difficulties in understanding their subordinates, feel lonely and insecure among people with whom in fact they maintain only superficial contacts.

The type of adjustment represented by Western migrants can be defined as surface accommodation, that is external adjustment to permit functioning at work in a new country accompanied by little identity reconstruction and acculturation effects.

## **6. Implications of the Presence of Immigrant Populations for Polish Society**

In general, the impact of immigrant populations on Polish society is thus far rather minor due to the character of immigration to Poland which is still in its embryo stage. Although migrants have become visible in public discourse and in social awareness, their impact on a socio-cultural sphere seems to be still rather small.

The economy and the labor market represent a field where the impact of migrants is the most significant. That can be attributed to the fact that migrants who arrive and remain in Poland are predominantly motivated by market opportunities that they individually find. As has already been discussed, refugees constitute a marginal numerical group, similarly with voluntary migrants attracted by non-economic factors such as family ties, sentiments, or climate. In addition, the large part of migrants in Poland are believed to be short-term migrants, often engaged in illegal activities.

Social services pertaining to immigrants are generally weakly developed, although state officials claim that migrants may receive basic medical aid in cases of emergency and all children are admitted to Polish school regardless of the legal status of their parents. However, as already noted, the issue of migrant integration is almost completely absent in public policy.

To a large extent, the implications of the presence of migrants in Poland are dependent on the region of the country since the spatial distribution of migrants in Poland and their impact on the Polish society are strongly uneven. Migrants are concentrated in the Eastern and to a lesser extent Western and Southern border areas. But the most powerful migration pole is definitely the capital of Poland. The very first spatial distribution patterns and clusters of migrants are slowly becoming outlined in Warsaw. For example, Vietnamese traders cluster around large open markets where their economic activity takes place.

## **7. Concluding Remarks**

The first immigrants who appeared in Poland at the end of the 1980's and the beginning of 1990's possessed a novelty for a highly homogenous post-war Polish society. After quite a warm welcome attitudes towards foreigners became more moderate if not hostile due to the increasing perception of foreigners as rivals on the market during a difficult recession period and as people involved in illegal economic activities and serious criminality. Immigrants became visible in the streets of major cities, in open markets in border areas and in the mass media. Under the influence of direct and indirect contacts the concretization of "the others", the formation of representations and the polarization of attitudes towards immigrants are taking place. Simultaneously, social surveys and media research indicate that surface toleration and the norm of political correctness are slowly becoming stronger in the Polish society.

Poland still lacks immigration doctrine and a complete long-term immigration policy what can be partly explained by the fact that it is a country that has been hosting a relatively small number of long-term or permanent migrants only for last a dozen or so years and it has been strongly involved in activities connected with the political and economic transition, the social consequences of transition and the EU integration. The most visible dimensions of

Polish immigration policy: the control and limitation of the inflow of foreigners from less developed countries (especially non-European), the limitation of migrant criminality (especially illegal border crossing and trafficking) and the control of administrative aspects of residence of foreigners in Poland. The protection of refugees, the repatriation of ethnic Poles from the former USSR and regulations relating to citizens of the EU after the enlargement are other significant aspects of governmental activities concerning migration. In short, the development in Polish migration policy since 1989 has been from unregulated immigration situation, open borders and a “soft” attitude towards foreigners, through highly restrictive regulations at the end 1990’s, to the latest developments which can be interpreted as paying more attention to the issue of human rights in the context of migration. Polish immigration policy practically does not include issues of immigrant integration. The government does concern itself with assisting immigrants in socio-cultural integration with the Polish society. The Polish government is realizing a policy which is neither promoting multiculturalism nor assimilation, that is melting ethnic minorities and new immigrant groups into Polish society. In the development of Polish immigration policy we currently see a tendency towards the reduction of immigration from less economically developed non-European countries and an ignoring of the presence of already settled migrants in Poland.

Generally speaking, in addition to non-governmental organizations which have been involved in assistance for immigrants since the beginning, there are currently various non-profit organizations which have begun to treat some migrant migrants similarly to other deprived groups as a target for their support. Although it seems that there are many integration initiatives, non-governmental organizations do not provide even such specific groups as refugees or repatriates, with complete, systematic, and effective support. However, it can be observed an increasing number of civil initiatives aiming at creating a multicultural and tolerant society in Poland

In the face of usually weakly developed ethnic networks, a small amount of institutional support from both the public institutions and NGO’s as well as a low level of social acceptance of ethno-cultural pluralism among the Polish society, adjustment to a life in Poland seems to be a particularly difficult task, especially in the situation of a large geographical and cultural distance between migrants and a receiving society. To a large extent, adaptation strategies among migrants in Poland depend on the socio-demographic characteristics of foreigners; their number, legal status, length and character of their residence in Poland and are shaped by migrants’ culture and social networks (i.e. social trust and willingness to cooperation with others). Therefore we can distinguish different modes of migrant adjustment characteristic for large migrant groups such as the Ukrainians, the Vietnamese and Westerners, particularly the Americans. The migration of Ukrainian citizens to Poland is a large in number phenomenon that can be characterized by a variety of migratory forms and adaptation strategies among which assimilation, transnational spaces and surface accommodation are three the most prevalent. Completely different patterns of adjustment to the receiving society are encountered among Vietnamese migrants in Poland. In this case we deal with a well-integrated elite and majority of migrants who are subject to the processes of isolation in ethnic enclave. The type of adjustment represented by Western migrants can be defined as surface accommodation, that is external adjustment which

permits functioning at work in a new country with little identity reconstruction and acculturation effects.

In general, immigration to Poland can be characterized by its amorphous nature. When considering the issue from the perspectives of both the immigrants and the host society, we are currently witnessing a certain transition period between the first stage of immigrant influx into Poland which was characterized by a relatively high dynamic of inflow, a lack of State immigration policy, and a novelty of immigration for the host society. In the second stage of development we see that the immigration phenomenon is stabilizing, the influx is being controlled, a coherent immigration policy is being developed and is encompassing various aspects of the presence of migrant populations. Attitudes towards the foreign populations have, to a large extent, formed and immigrant communities are emerging. Immigration at this transitional stage might be described by its irregularity, evenness, selectivity, randomness, contradictions and unpredictability characteristic of transition period.

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