Chapter 10

Polish immigrants in Brussels

1. The undocumented Polish immigrants

The Polish population was identified and recruited for research through snowball sampling in the period between January 2004 and October 2005 and includes 106 respondents[1]. Of these 106 Polish migrants, 90 persons are undocumented (36 men and 54 women), six have regularized their status in Belgium, and 10 are qualified professionals.

As was the case with the undocumented Bulgarians, we have identified three types of undocumented Polish migrants: those who can be described as undocumented settlers, commuters or pendular migrants, and the false students.[2] Being a commuter is the most preferred migration strategy for Polish respondents and this tendency is supported by the fact that nearly two-thirds of all undocumented Poles are indeed commuters (59 respondents), while the undocumented settler and false students are respectively 26 and five persons. It should be stressed that even undocumented settlers tend to commute to Poland at least three times per year and spend over two weeks in their city of origin, a practice that could be used to categorize these respondents as commuters as well. Nevertheless, the expressed self-perception and self-definition of these migrants is one of "settlers" and these people currently see their life as centered in Brussels and not in Poland. As an external objective factor for defining these respondents as settlers, we have also taken into account that the overall time of residence in Poland is shorter than that of the commuters, who spend in Poland at least three to four months per year while the settlers reside in Poland for

[1] The outcomes of complying with the principle of maximum diversity of the first respondent in initiating a referral chain, and the development of the referral chains of sampled Polish migrants are presented in Appendix 8 and Appendix 9 respectively.

[2] The definition of "undocumented settler", "commuter", "false student", and "professional migrants" are presented in Chapter 9.

a maximum of two months. In brief, what we wanted to stress here is that the undocumented settlers from Poland occasionally behave like commuters, while this is not the case with undocumented settlers from Bulgaria.

Having introduced the composition of the sample of Polish migrants, we will progress towards outlining the profile of undocumented Polish migrants in Brussels by adopting the presentation structure developed in Chapter 9. The results to be presented refer to the entire research population of undocumented Poles, while an explicit indication will be made only in those situations when the results for the undocumented settlers, commuters, and false students differ from each other. When no such specification is introduced, the reader should assume that the characteristics and opinions of the undocumented migrants with different status coincide. In order to avoid high redundancy with the results presented regarding the Bulgarian population, here we will focus in more detail on the differential characteristics of the Polish population, while convergent results such as similar migration motivation and similar professional status will be discussed only briefly.

1. 1. Geographic origins

In the current sample, we have identified undocumented migrants originating from 22 cities and villages located in 11 of Poland's 16 regions. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents originate from four regions with Podlasie being the primary sending region (accounting for 34.3% of undocumented Poles), followed by Lesser Poland (17.8%), Silesia (11.1%) and Lower Silesia (11.1%). Another 5% of the migrants come from the region of Opole. Contrary to the Bulgarian population, undocumented Polish migrants originate from the most rural and economically deprived regions of Poland. The regions of Opole, Podlasie, Silesia, and Lesser Poland were most affected by the late 1980s transitional to democracy and a market economy. These regions were unable to sustain a competitive economic position due to the large concentration of "old" and obsolete heavy industries located there and corollary effects of both no longer being able to export to formerly secure

markets and suffering from reduced state subsidies. Similar to other Eastern European countries, regions with high concentrations of heavy industries experienced industrial and economic downturns while, at the same time, no opportunities for employment were made available for its redundant working force.

1. 2. Demographic characteristic and family situation

As mentioned above, the identified population of undocumented Poles in Brussels includes 54 women and 36 men. The women prevail in the category of undocumented settlers (15 respondents are female and 11 are male) and commuters (38 women, 21 men). Among the false students, one respondent is female and four are male.

The family status of undocumented Polish migrants does not differ for that of undocumented Bulgarians. The majority of the respondents (53.3%) are married or living with a partner in a stable relationship (15.6%). Another 18.9% are single, while the number of divorced (7 persons) and widowed (4 respondents) is lower. Similarly, to the Bulgarian respondents, half of the undocumented Poles have no children while the remaining respondents have between one and three children. The household size of the Poles (before migration) varies from three to 15 persons but, unlike the Bulgarian population, the predominant type of Polish household includes between six and nine persons, and is therefore bigger than the average household of Bulgarian migrants.

1. 3. Educational level and language abilities

All undocumented Polish migrants have a certain educational level and no respondent in the current sample is without education. As will be revealed below, the educational profile and the language abilities of undocumented Polish migrants coincide largely with those of the undocumented Bulgarians.

The predominant educational pattern of the undocumented Poles is eleven years of education in a general secondary school, or in a specialized technical school (52.2% of the respondents). A rather larger number of undocumented migrants (23 persons) have university education and six persons are graduates from college. However, no prevailing

specialty among those with university and college education can be identified. The respondents with advanced university education have obtained degrees in diverse specialties including pedagogy (6 persons), psychology (3 persons), economics (3 persons), finance (2 persons), French philology (2 persons), nursing (2 persons), fine arts and painting (2 persons), engineering, food engineering, history, music, law, mathematics, sociology, pharmacy, biology and Russian philology (respectively one respondent in each of these fields).

Among the respondents with secondary education, 36.7% have no specialization at all, while graduates of technical schools have obtained professional qualifications in construction or building (respectively 4 persons), or as seamstresses, bartenders or cooks (respectively 6 persons), electricians, fitters, carvers (2 persons, respectively), specialists in metal works (3 persons), post and telegraph clerks or drivers (1 person, respectively).

The grand majority of the Poles (85.6%) did not continue their education in Belgium, viewing continuing education as unnecessary and not contributing to access to potentially better employment or increasing their chances of finding jobs. The 13 respondents who are involved in some type of educational career are all Bulgarian migrants, either as false students, who have abused the educational system to gain access to the labor market or those who are studying the French language. The Poles enrolled in French language courses have been motivated by the belief that increased knowledge in French will offer more chances to work and easier ways to communicate with potential clients. However, none of the respondents are interested in studying the Dutch language, as Dutch is considered to have no impact on their access to work.

Looking at the language competences of the undocumented Polish migrants reveal that the majority of the respondents speak only French as a foreign language and, when self-evaluating their level of French, the respondents admit to moderate speaking competence as well as listening comprehension and limited writing abilities. Fifty-nine of the respondents admit to have had some knowledge of French before arrival, while the remaining respondents have studied French only once in Belgium. As far as language spoken with employers or clients is concerned, all of the respondents admit that French is

the primary language of communication. Nevertheless 21 respondents admit that Polish is also playing a crucial role in the work place since undocumented Poles are often also employed by Polish migrants.

1. 4. Living conditions

Even though the living situation of Polish migrants falls into the same patterns described for the Bulgarian population, some differences can be observed such as geographic concentration in certain municipalities, practices of sharing housing with other people and the number of people residing at the same place, type of residence, and rental price.

The undocumented Poles are present in 16 out of the 19 municipalities of Brussels, but the primary residential concentration of undocumented Poles is in three municipalities, namely Anderlecht (21.1%), Bruxelles (20%), and Saint Gilles (20%). Driven by the motivation to cut down housing expenses as much as possible, the majority of undocumented Poles share housing with friends (41.1%) and colleagues (16.7%). Married respondents reside only with their spouse, or spouse and child, or children. Only in exceptional cases do they share their residence with other Polish migrants. When accommodation is shared, it is only to host a close friend or a family member for a limited period.

The residential pattern of sharing accommodation with other people could explain why Polish migrants rent bigger apartments in comparison with Bulgarian migrants. For example, the most commonly rented accommodation by Poles is one or two bedroom apartments (in over 50% of the cases), which is shared between three to six persons. Accommodation sharing allows Polish migrants to save on rent and communal expenses. Thus over 60% of the respondents admit to paying a rent of 100 € or less, compared to the Bulgarian population where sharing housing is not so prevalent and the average monthly rent is between 100 € and 200 €. In this context, it should be stressed that commuters tend to share their housing with more people (5 to 7 persons). Meanwhile, undocumented settlers, who have brought over a family and are not intending to return to Poland in the

near future, tend to invest in more proper housing conditions and to share their accommodation with a maximum of two other persons so that the overall size of the household in Brussels does not exceed four persons. Undocumented settlers also tend to rent smaller apartments (one bedroom apartments or studios).

Looking at the strategies for finding accommodation reveals that unlike the Bulgarians, the majority of the Polish migrants (over 70%) had housing arranged before arrival to Brussels. As will be shown later on, Polish migrants tend to have a broad network of social contacts with other Poles and this social capital is largely employed for finding accommodation and, later on, employment. The quality of the housing and overall comfort are, however, similar as in the case of the Bulgarian migrants. Besides some basic facilities such as electricity, warm water, a radio, in some cases, a stove or a cooker, the apartments of the Polish respondents as a rule lack further amenities such as a bathroom for personal use only, good furniture, TV sets, or video or DVD players. Often the respondents do not have a kitchen and in the cases when a kitchen space is provided domestic appliances such as refrigerators or electric stoves are old and malfunctioning. It is in only a few cases were a microwave oven is available. Migrants who are not planning to settle permanently in Brussels and those who are participating in rotation migration are also not investing in better domestic appliances or furniture.

Exploring the practices of residential mobility of Polish migrants indicates that no pattern of upward social mobility can be outlined. Indeed some migrants (28 persons) have changed residence over time, but re-settlement happened either within the borders of the same municipality or to a municipality with housing similar to the previous one. In the latter cases, residential mobility occurred between the municipalities of Anderlecht, Molenbeek, Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode, Saint Gilles, and Schaerbeek. The main reasons for residence changes are related exclusively to motivations for finding a cheaper place to live, or when a family member or a friend joins the principal respondent and more living space is required.

1. 5. Migration histories

Undocumented Polish migrants in Brussels have a longer history of migration to Brussels in comparison with the Bulgarian migrants. In our sample, we identified undocumented migrants who arrived in Brussels for the first time in 1987 and have remained undocumented ever since. Based on this sampled population we observed an increase in undocumented flows from Poland in the second half of the 1990s, and a peak of undocumented arrivals that took place in 1999 and 2000 (over 30% of the respondents), or on average two years before the Bulgarian undocumented migrations to Brussels augmented.

The reasons for migrating to Brussels are entirely of an economic nature. Without exception, all undocumented Poles declared that their economic situation and income in Poland was not sufficient to maintain a desired quality of life. Those who have been employed or self-employed at the time of migration assert that their income was insufficient for covering needs other than those related to immediate physical survival, to support elderly family members and to invest in good education and upbringing of children.

When posing the question of why exactly Brussels was chosen as a target destination, we received answers indicating the importance of already established social contacts with people who had migrated to Brussels in the past and who actively supported the respondents to migrate to Brussels. In our sample, 28.9% of the respondents decided to work in Brussels after obtaining information about employment possibilities, income, accommodation, and traveling from co-nationals with an established practice of commuting to Brussels. Another 13.3% of the respondents reveal to have long-term experience in migrating to Brussels or a history of migration to Belgium and of re-entering the system of pendular migration, once the necessity to increase income arose. The tradition of family migration to Brussels stimulated a further 5.6% of the Poles to seek jobs in Brussels. The remaining respondents used different information sources in making the decision for migration, these included accounts from friends and acquaintances who were working in Brussels, accounts from people who knew about migrants in Brussels (e.g. drivers of the busses circulating between Poland and Belgium, shop attendants, personnel of commonly

visited bars and restaurants, etc.), information provided by persons advertising transportation services between Poland and Belgium and by self-employed Polish nationals recruiting co-workers in their cities of origin.

Unlike the Bulgarian migrants, not a single Polish respondent arrived to Brussels without having some information about the following: working possibilities or strategies for finding a job, about accommodation and the average price per room, per bed, or in a shared accommodation, and about where to find other Polish migrants who can provide some initial help either for free or for a certain fee. Looking into more detail at who were the main providers of help to prospective undocumented Polish migrants, we identified at least six primary actors: co-national friends or acquaintances who had experience in working in Brussels, family in Poland (and if applicable, family members in Brussels), friends from home who are planning to migrate to Brussels, colleagues in Brussels, and, finally, employers in Brussels. Each of these actors promoted the migratory step of the undocumented migrant by either providing material help (e.g. money to finance the first trip and to survive in Brussels until employment is secured, accommodation, etc.) or information about the cheapest ways to migrate, how to find employment in Brussels, where to look for accommodation, the location of meeting places for Polish migrants, the legal possibilities for migration and settlement and so on.

1. 6. Professional situation

At the time of the interviews, all respondents were working and had an income. Similar to their Bulgarian colleagues, undocumented Polish men are employed in the fields of construction, repair, renovation and household maintenance, auto repair, and auto import-export, while Polish women are active as cleaning personnel, baby-sitters, and maids. Some migrants have supplementary income by working extra hours at restaurants, shops, and cafeteria. Some women are increasing their general income by providing small services to their co-nationals, such as hairdressing and manicure and pedicure services, clothes repair, and baby-sitting for friends. A widespread supplementary income-increasing

strategy is also importing cheap products from Poland, such as cigarettes and strong alcohol, and selling them in Brussels.

The working hours and type of work of our respondents do not differ from those of the Bulgarian migrants. The undocumented Poles have irregular working hours defined exclusively by the demands of their clients or employers. Usually working hours vary between 38 and over 66 hours per week, the predominant pattern is, however, a working week of 50 to 60 working hours depending on how many jobs are executed simultaneously or what are the deadlines for completing a certain job. Some 11% of the respondents work part-time due to time restrictions and when the income from a part-time job is viewed as sufficient. Among the part-time workers, we found false students, who are investing, on average, two to three hours daily looking for legal jobs (e.g. internet searching, visiting interim agencies, filling out job applications, writing motivations letters, etc.) and attending courses and young mothers who have to divide their time between working out of the house and child raising.

The average income of Poles is, however, higher than those of the Bulgarian migrants. With a monthly income between 1000 € and 1500 € (57.8% of the respondents) and between 1501 € and 2000 € (23.3%), Polish migrants earn, on average, 350 € more than the Bulgarian respondents. Only a minority of the respondents has an income of less than 1000 € per month, and these respondents are either new arrivals who have just entered the job market in Brussels (four persons) or “older migrants” respondents who have commuted to Brussels with a clear idea of how much money should be earned in order to purchase a needed good in Poland (six respondents). The two remaining cases are of married women who were not able to work longer hours because of health reasons.

Generally, the respondents perceive their income as sufficient and enough to provide a comfortable standard of living. Since, however, the primary motivation to come to Brussels was not to settle in Belgium, but rather earn money, the respondents tend not to invest their money on improving their quality of life in Brussels, but rather to save their earnings or to remit money and goods to Poland. Exemplifying this motivation is the fact

that undocumented Poles do not purchase goods in Brussels unless they are necessary to everyday life and are indispensable items, such as tools and instruments.

The strategies for finding a job and establishing a client network are entirely related to access to social networks in Poland or in Belgium. A job in Brussels can be secured by several ways, but all include reliance upon acquaintances, family members and relatives, friends, or other co-nationals. Since the different social actors assisting the newcomer in finding a job often overlap, it is difficult to draw a clear line between the types of persons providing support and the migrants using each particular social resource. Trying to differentiate, however, between the primary ways for accessing the job market in Brussels indicates that the following actors are involved when a newcomer is looking for a job: Polish migrants in Brussels (legally residing, undocumented settlers, or commuters) who are connect the respondent to a client or employer free of charge (around 10% of the respondents have used this resource); Polish migrants (commuters or undocumented settlers) who are selling work and acting as intermediaries between newcomers (or commuters) and potential employers in Brussels (some 39% of the respondents have paid an intermediary agent in order to receive a job); Polish commuters who are exchanging their job with a newcomer and who have recruited the newcomer as a participant in the rotation migration structure (42% of the respondents); family and relatives in Poland, with a previous history of migration to Brussels or family and relatives who are already in Brussels (20% of the respondents). Supplementary source for looking for a job include announcing one's services on the announcement boards in stores, supermarkets, special places in the streets, in free newspapers (including the Polish newspaper *Gazetka* which is distributed for free once a month in the places where Poles meet in Brussels); and by printing announcements and distributing them randomly in the private mailboxes of all municipalities in Brussels.

Respondents with specialization in construction, building, electrical works, and wielding agree that their specialization helps them not only to exercise professional activities in Brussels but to get a job in the first place and it has allowed for a faster establishment of a client network in which satisfied clients recommend the respondent to

other interested clients. Respondents with university education have not been able to find employment in their professional field, but have been successful in entering the construction and renovation sector as well.

The relationships between Polish workers and employers and clients can be described as non-conflicting and satisfying mutual interests. A major indicator for the generally good professional relations is the respondents' accounts that incidences of incorrect payment such as underpayment or not receiving any payment at all are rather rare and, as in the Bulgarian population, occur in the first months after migration. The respondents also confirm that changes to jobs and clients are the result of completed service and no more jobs, and in only a few cases (eight respondents) is it a result of bad relations with an employer. Even though the respondents agree that working in Brussels as undocumented is generally hard, that some clients can have particular requirements (e.g. cleaning places of residence of a single physically disabled person living with many pets) or some families where in-house help is provided are impolite, not too clean, and with rude children, the overall impression is that these negative experiences are more related to the nature of the undocumented work, that is, they are often characteristic of the relationship between employee and client. Being aware that providing undocumented work prevents the migrant from pursuing some employment rights and that being an undocumented worker is indeed a consciously made choice, the difficult working situations and relations with employers are not perceived as unusual but rather as job-characterizing.

Looking at the future professional plans of undocumented Poles reveal that only a minority of the respondents are looking for a job at the moment of the interview or are intending to change their employment status and/or field of work. Those actively seeking new professional opportunities are false students, who are looking for a legal job within their field of expertise.

All respondents, no matter whether their plan is to return to Poland, or to find a legal qualified job, admit that during the near future their plans are to keep on working in the same way (e.g. for several clients or employers simultaneously and in the same branch of service).

1. 7. Remittances

As a preliminary step for understanding the remitting behavior of Polish migrants, we first looked at the household income of each migrant and their personal account as to whether this income is sufficient and for what purposes remittances are sent home.

On average, three to four persons (the respondent included) contribute to the household income of each migrant's family composed of four persons or more. Nevertheless, the income of the family or the household is never perceived as sufficient by the respondents except in the case of false students. If the income of the person working in Brussels is taken aside, the migrants' households have a low income, which is hardly sufficient for covering primary everyday expenses. Since the respondents are not providing or are unwilling to provide an exact figure of the average income per household member, we have been only able to distinguish one general trend, which is that migrants coming from the region of Podlasie have a lower household income in comparison with all other migrants.

Regardless of how many persons from the household do have an income, virtually all migrants, besides false students, admit to having the responsibility of financially supporting family members at home. Those relying mostly on the support of the migrants are elderly family members and younger relatives, the latter being usually young mother without a steady income. Given such situations, it is not surprising that the majority of Polish migrants have the responsibility to contribute to the family or household income.

The Polish undocumented migrants have, however, stronger remitting behavior in comparison with Bulgarian migrants even though the latter group also declared a low overall household income. For example, all commuters and over 90% of the undocumented settlers are sending money and goods to their country of origin, while only less than half of the Bulgarians remit money to their families. Polish migrants also remit larger sums of money. Even thought the monthly amounts remitted differ, our estimate is that each migrant remits at least €300 per month. The remitted money is rarely sent using bank transfers, especially when the migrants are commuting to Poland on a regular basis. In the cases when remittances are needed urgently and the migrant cannot travel back, the money

is brought personally either by other commuting friends and/or acquaintances, or by the bus drivers operating on a regular basis between regions of origin and Brussels. In the latter case, the migrants pay a small fee for the service, which however is always lower than the transfer fee asked by money transfer companies or banks.

The receiving families use the remitted capital in various ways. In all cases, a certain amount of money is used for everyday needs such as paying bills and purchasing indispensable goods. Some 11% of the families receiving remittances do spend the money on paying back debts or loans. Another 25% of the migrants' families use the money to finance the purchase of property, including a house or apartment, the purchase of a car, household appliances, or furniture. The desired goods are never bought immediately and usually an initial period of accumulating capital and saving is needed before any significant purchase can be made. Some families (12%) use the remittances to finance and establish their own small business, in which the principal migrant will participate upon return. The small enterprises which have been and is currently invested in include a range of activities such as opening or keeping running a cafeteria, a bar, a grocery store, or clothing store. A business that is invested in a lot especially in the southern regions of Silesia and Lesser Poland is building and construction. In only three cases were the remittances used to purchase land and start large-scale agricultural production.

Those migrants who have children in Poland or family members with children invest also in the education of the children, and special stress is placed on private courses in foreign languages (usually the main studied language is English, followed by German and French).

1. 8. Future migration plans

The future migration plans of undocumented Poles are distinctively oriented towards returning to Poland and, unlike the Bulgarian migrants, plans for permanent settlement in Belgium or prolonged periods of working in illegality are envisioned to a lesser extent. This tendency is exemplified by the fact that 32.2% of the respondents are planning and have already made arrangements to return back to Poland and to find a job,

while another 28.9% of the respondents are planning to return to Poland and to establish a small business. These percentages include however, not only commuters, but also migrants identified as undocumented settlers in Brussels. Even though we have defined undocumented settlers as those migrants who are planning to establish long-term residence in Belgium, and do not commute to Poland on such as regular basis as the pendular migrants, over one half of the Polish settlers (15 persons) are considering the possibility of returning to Poland to either find a job or establish a small business. Settlers who have expressed plans to return to Poland are those for whom becoming self-employed in Belgium as a strategy for regularization is not an option (e.g. for those migrants who do not comply with the requirements of the PECO agreements for becoming a self-employed) and those who have come to foresee better employment opportunities in Poland after the country's accession to the EU. Settlers are nevertheless less certain when the potential return to Poland will take place in comparison with the commuters.

The false students intend to look for a qualified job in Brussels during the period of their studies but admit that should no employment in Brussels be found then a return trip to Poland would be made. It is important to stress that false students are also not willing to stay in Brussels under all circumstances. The primary condition for staying is having a qualified job and a net salary above 1500 €. These requirements are defended in light of the fact that a qualified job in the field of expertise of the false students usually pays above 1000 € in Poland and under such circumstances a stay in Brussels is viewed as worthwhile only if there is a financial profit. Taking into consideration additional factors such as the lack of strong social relationships with other people, and the overall negative attitude towards many aspects of life in Belgium (see section 1.15) developed after one or two years of living in Belgium, the false students confer that the incentives for staying in Brussels are not very high and settling in Belgium is not an ultimate goal.

We have also identified 17 migrants who are planning to commute and to work in Brussels in the same type of job for at least one more year and have not made clear plans for return. These migrants are rather recent arrivals (with a history of working in Brussels for less than two years) and have not yet accumulated the desired amount of savings or

have not achieved their “prior to” migration goals, such as increasing the overall standard of life of their household, purchasing property, financing the education of their children, helping elderly family member in Poland, or securing a better paying job in Poland. These 17 respondents do, however, plan to return to Poland and to either find a job or become self-employed once their financial situation and/or that of the family is improved.

Looking at the time when return to Poland is envisioned indicates that the migrants who are establishing small businesses in Poland and those who have accumulated enough savings are planning their permanent return in the next one to five months from the moment of our interview, while the remaining respondents foresee returning to Poland within six to ten months. The respondents who have firmly planned their return have already changed their patterns of commuting and working on Brussels. For example, previously prolonged periods of stay in Brussels are now replaced by shorter trips and commuting to Brussels does not take place more than three times per year. The time of residence in Poland is, in the meantime, used for either developing the small business (arranging a small office, purchasing tools, getting in touch with potential clients, advertising the business, etc.), looking for the best job possibilities, or finishing some projects such as house renovations, purchasing a house or an apartment, purchasing a car and so on.

The respondents who have not planned their immediate return to Poland confer that the possible trip back will take place once enough money has been saved and this moment is envisioned in at least one year’s time, or is not envisioned at all.

To conclude we should draw attention to the fact that despite the fact that all the respondents verbalize some plans for return, in some cases more certain, in others less, they also admit that the door to Brussels will always be kept open and when additional income is needed or in case their self employed activities turn to be unsuccessful, working in Brussels will immediately be employed as the best alternative for securing an income.

1. 9. Deportations

As we have described in the previous chapter, working in illegality and especially in open space and construction sites increases the risk of being subject to police controls, detention and deportation. Indeed, recent data suggest that undocumented Poles are the third most often deported group of foreigners from Belgium (Perrin, 2005), but deportations have only a limited (if any) impact on the actual presence of irregular Polish workers in the country. This conclusion was reached based on results obtained during interviews with Polish migrants. Firstly, only four respondents have given a positive answer to the question "Are you afraid of police controls while working illegally in Brussels?" while the rest of the undocumented respondents assert that police or social inspections are not an issue of any concern for them. The majority of the respondents believe that undocumented Poles are irremovable from the territory of Belgium and that even if deportations take place, the return as undocumented worker is not hindered since there is no border control on the way from Poland to Belgium and, if one has his or her passport, no restrictions on entry can be exercised. The 96 respondents who confer not to be afraid of being intercepted while working base their attitudes towards the ineffectiveness of deportation measures from their acquaintance with other Poles who have been detained and deported or ordered to leave the country and who have either returned to Belgium or never left the country. Additionally the respondents affirm that with EU enlargement and Poland becoming a new member state, the police are less willing to interfere and to prosecute Polish workers.

Secondly, in our sample we have identified 19 Poles (12 men and 7 women) who were caught by the police while working and deported but, nevertheless, continued to commute to Brussels. Another nine respondents (eight men and one woman) received orders to leave the territory of Belgium and, as in the case of the Bulgarian migrants, did not follow these orders. These encounters with the police and the state authorities are described by the respondents as "disturbing and unpleasant" but are not viewed as threatening in any way or as factors keeping them away from Belgium in the future. What

is viewed as the most frustrating on such occasion is the loss of a job or a client and the loss of income, which has been counted upon.

Clearly deportation measures and police controls on the work place do not have any significant impact on undocumented Poles in Brussels and are indeed only a temporary nuisance and do not change the practices of undocumented work and commuting to Brussels.

1. 10. Social networks and personal contacts

Contrary to undocumented Bulgarian migrants, undocumented Poles confer to have a broader and stronger network of social contacts. These social networks include both close friends in Brussels and people who are described as acquaintances but who are contacted on a regular basis or who are encountered at least two times per month either at market places, Polish churches, Polish shops, cafeterias and meeting places or at social events for Poles in Brussels.

Over half of the Polish respondents admit to having between one and three close friends and another 27.8% of the Poles define as close friends up to seven persons. Those defined as acquaintances are, however, more than 20 persons for the majority of the undocumented Poles (42.2% of the respondents) and in the remaining cases the numbers of acquaintances range between eight and 19 persons. In only a few cases, (three respondents), no persons have been defined as friends and the social network of acquaintances includes less than seven persons.

Looking at the origins of the acquaintances and the friends reveal that the personal social network of Polish migrants includes exclusively co-nationals or co-nationals and foreigners. For example, over 60 respondents admit to having only Polish friends and other 16 respondents declare themselves as having both Polish and foreign friends. Altogether only five respondents confer to perceiving a Belgian as friend but, similar to the Bulgarian migrants, the Belgian friend is usually an employer for which a female respondent is working as an in-house maid, or a client for whom the respondent has worked more than once and who has actively sought the services of the respondent or has recommended him

to other potential clients. The composition of the Poles' circle of acquaintances does not differ from the one of close friends. The acquaintances of our respondents are either co-nationals (in 52.2% of the cases), or co-nationals and foreigners (27.8%).

The undocumented Poles can be described as a population actively maintaining contacts with friends and acquaintances. Taking aside respondents who are sharing housing with their friends or acquaintances (46 respondents), undocumented Poles keep in touch with friends on a regular basis. For example, friends and acquaintances are contacted by telephone or are met in person at least once a week or once in two weeks. The reasons for maintaining social contacts are diverse including the respondents' wish to spend some free time in the company of others, to discuss possible work opportunities or to request help and assistance. Given the context, the reluctance of Polish migrants to initiate and look for new social contacts is to be expected. From over 65% of the respondents who are not interested or not willing to establish new social contacts, one learns that new contacts are viewed as unnecessary considering the substantial numbers of already established contacts. Among the arguments against making new contacts, the respondents mentioned their firm motivation for not settling in Brussels, lack of interest in communicating with local people unless in professional situations, and the limited free hours when the respondents would rather take rest alone or in the company of friends or relatives. Those who have worked in Brussels for over one year and who have established a stable clientele are most negatively disposed towards the idea of initiating new contacts. Poles who have arrived to Belgium most recently are actively searching for new personal and professional contacts viewing the establishment of a social network as the most secure way for guaranteeing future employment. Included among those searching for new social relationships are also false students, who are similar to Bulgarian false students in wishing to start a career at a European institution and share the opinion that entering into any of the EU structures is possible only through personal contacts and not through a fair and anonymous competition process.

Having revealed an extensive social network connecting undocumented Poles with other co-nationals, we turn our attention to the way these close contacts were established

and the reasons for actively maintaining these social contacts. What is important to stress in this context is that the majority of the undocumented Polish migrants (85.6%) had a friend or acquaintance in Brussels before migration took place and 30% had a relative who was already working in Brussels. These previously established friendships were mainly with other Poles from the same city of origin, who were migrating to Belgium (and sometimes to Holland) to work. In some cases the respondents were actively encouraged to try their chance at working in Brussels, while in others, they were invited to participate in rotation migration. In still other cases, the undocumented Poles came to Brussels after an invitation from an acquaintance established as a self-employed migrant or, in the case of female migrants, after a job had been secured. Co-national friends and acquaintances are also the primary persons a respondent contacts if any help or support is needed. Those Poles who reside with their child or children in Brussels declare that a Polish friend or relative would always baby-sit for the respondent's kid when no family member is around to help, co-nationals are also the primary source of medical help and in moments of psychological distress, anxiety or negative experiences supportive conversations with co-nationals are highly evaluated.

Over time, however, most social contacts are no longer purely altruistic and migrants tend to profit from exploiting close social relationships with co-nationals. For example, a job is rarely secured for free, remittances transfer is done for a small fee, providing an accommodation to a newcomer also costs money. Over time, social networks and personal contacts constitute a significant income and increasing resources. Both providers of services and newcomers are satisfied to be involved in such social support networks and admit that the net profit from the migratory movement to Brussels would not be so high if social networks and support structures among Polish migrants did not exist.

Having outlined that the social contacts maintained by undocumented Poles are rather broad and almost without exception each migrant is involved in a strong support network of co-nationals or other migrants, we must still pose the question of whether the respondents perceive themselves as living in social isolation. Giving as an argument the existence of numerous friends and acquaintances in Brussels, 83.3% of the Poles assert that

they have never felt isolated, lonely or alienated in Brussels. A lack of personal contacts with Belgians is not viewed as a factor having an impact on their self-perception as socially isolated or socially excluded. Similar to undocumented Bulgarian migrants, the Poles in Brussels advance their motivation to work and to increase their income as the primary reason for being in Brussels, a motivation that cancels out the need to reflect on issues such as social isolation and integration. Undocumented Poles admit that the presence of many Polish migrants in Brussels and of certain places where Poles can meet facilitates life in migration. On the other hand, when invited to imagine a life in Brussels without the presence of the Polish community the respondents declare that the personal feeling of social isolation would not change drastically and this is again because the main motivation is "working and earning" and not achieving social integration.

Another reason for not feeling socially isolated that is advanced by undocumented Poles is their frequent contact with family, relatives and friends in Poland and the regular trips to their home city. In the present research group, we have not identified a single respondent who does not maintain contact with people in Poland. Most of the migrants (64.4%) travel to Poland at least once every three or four months, either as a member of a rotation migration chain or to visit relatives and family. Another 16.7% of the Poles, in addition to traveling to Poland, call home on average five times per week, and 12.2% maintain all forms of contacts such as calling home, writing letters, traveling on a regular basis, and receiving relatives as guests in Brussels.

1. 11. Health Status

Self-reporting by the respondents regarding their health status indicates that the general physical health of the undocumented Poles is very good and no serious health conditions were reported by any of the interviewed migrants. As in the Bulgarian population, the migrants often indicated that the nature of their work, which includes being exhausting, taking place in open spaces, working with chemicals, and working in dirty and dusty environments, could cause headaches and general physical fatigue. Nevertheless, these symptoms are perceived as minor problems, which do not require any special

treatment. Stress, physical and psychological tension are also communicated as occurring often and women draw attention more often to these conditions than men. Indeed, all women in our sample mentioned at least once during the interview that the work of the undocumented migrant is tiring and stressful and, when asked how often they have experienced stress and tension, female respondents answered that stress and tension are experienced every time when one job is finished and another one has to be found, when a client is nervous, impolite or rude with the respondent or when clients have particular requirements such as cleaning after pets, taking care of pets when the latter has not been specified in advance, or when the respondent's services are not longer required without a notice in advance.

The most common complaint among undocumented men is back and neck pain, pain in the joints and in the muscles. However, the physical condition of the respondents has never deteriorated to such degree that the job has to be put aside. In the worst cases, the respondents had to stop working for two to three days. Nine respondents have been victims of a more serious work accident (severe cut, broken arm, displaced shoulder, twisted ankle, or knee), which required the use of emergency medical services. In all of the cases, the respondents paid cash for the medical service and re-commenced work after recovery. The three respondents, who had to stop work for a longer period of time after breaking an arm, traveled to Poland for the recovery period.

The way the respondents cope with their health problems when such injuries occur does not differ form the strategies employed by their Bulgarian colleagues. The help of doctor is sought only in cases of emergencies (e.g., severe physical problem such as breaking an arm or suffering a deep cut). In all remaining cases, the respondents rely on self-medication or follow the advice of friends, relatives, or a spouse; and when the problem is not considered serious or impeding their work, no actions are taken for solving it. Respondents regard the following conditions as "non-serious problems": migraines, headaches, stomachaches, indigestion, non-invalidating back pain, a cold or flu, and coughing.

Finally, the medicaments used by the respondents are only rarely bought on Belgium (only six respondents have bought medication in Belgium). Instead, supplies of medicaments for a variety of conditions and bandages are brought from Poland and are renewed during each trip to Poland.

1. 12. Stimulation of further migration

Undocumented Polish migrants are more inclined to advise prospective migrants to come to Brussels compared to Bulgarian migrants. Having made the decision to migrate to Brussels after obtaining information about living and working conditions in the city from already migrating Poles, the majority of the respondents (over 80%) admit that they will advise potential migrants to come to Brussels and 72% have actually supported a migrant to come to Brussels. The motives for advertising Brussels as a target migration destination and for supporting potential migrants in their decision to migrate are multiple and often interrelated. Firstly and most importantly, one utilitarian motive for suggesting to co-nationals to come to Brussels is the possibility of earning some extra money from each prospective migrant who is assisted in finding a job and accommodation. The practice of selling jobs to newcomers and of introducing new employees to clients or employers for a certain fee is widespread among Polish migrants in Brussels, and has, over time, become a common technique to quite substantially increase their income.

Secondly the presence of a large Polish community and of clearly distinguished locations where Polish migrants can meet (e.g., churches, open markets, Polish cafeterias, Polish shops) and do meet on a regular basis are advanced as factors that will potentially facilitate the newcomer in the process of finding a job, unless of course some employment has not been secured even before arrival.

Thirdly, potential migrants are assured that life in Brussels can be very cheap and that, in fact, spending on food and rent could be the same as in Poland if the migrant is aware of where to buy cheap food and shares accommodation with other migrants. Moreover, potential newcomers are informed that the earnings from working in Brussels

are substantial and the ratio between earning and spending is very favorable for the migrant.

To summarize, the financial benefits from being in Brussels (for both the inviting party and the newcomer) prevail in the arguments used to encourage co-nationals to migrate to Brussels.

It should be stressed that the practice of benefiting financially from potential migrants is not observable among immediate households members but is indeed present when more distant relatives with whom family ties are not strong are invited to migrate to Brussels.

1. 13. Regularization and stay in Brussels

Motivations for regularization and stay in Brussels are, in the case of undocumented Polish migrants, less strong than those of undocumented Bulgarians. From all the undocumented respondents, 67 persons state that they have no plans to regularize their status and are not interested in obtaining Belgian residence documents. The reasons for this lack of interest in obtaining legal status in Belgium stems from two interrelated facts. On the one hand, the respondents express the opinion that with the accession of Poland to the European Union having Belgian residence documents will no longer be needed. Even though the interviewees are aware that the Polish nationals will not have the rights to work as "older" EU citizens, they assert that the relaxed attitude of the police and the Belgian state towards undocumented Polish workers has been present since the late 1990s and, now with Poland being in the process of becoming a full member state, the need for having documents no longer exists. Also, the respondents are aware that having double residence will also bring double responsibilities such as paying local taxes and reporting one's income to the Belgian tax services.

On the other hand, the unwillingness to regularize one's status is an illustration of the respondents' motivation to return to Poland once the economic situation and the living and working conditions in the region of origin improve enough to offer a good standard of life upon return. Even though planned returns to Poland have been postponed in some cases

for over five years, the fact that the migrants do not perceive Brussels a potential new home, the regular commuting to Poland and the unwillingness for regularization in Belgium could be employed as argument that indeed supports the tendency that migrating to Brussels is merely a form of financial survival strategy and not an ultimate goal per se.

The minority of respondents who are willing to regularize their status (thirteen persons) are either false students or Poles who are in the process of becoming self-employed in Belgium. Their reason for wishing regularization or, to be more precise, permanent residence in Belgium is that this will open more possibilities for qualified legal work (in the case of false students) or will allow concentration on one's professional activities instead of each year (or each half a year) applying for the prolongation of residence documents and having no certainty for the future.

1. 14. Impact of the accession of Poland to the European Union

Undocumented Polish migrants express more positive opinions about the potential outcomes of Poland's accession to the EU in comparison with how Bulgarian migrants perceive the merits of joining the EU. For example 71.1% of the Polish respondents believe that EU enlargement will bring positive personal outcomes for them and their family, 57.8% think that accession to the EU will result in better occupational and living conditions in Poland and 62.2% foresee improvement of the economic situation in Poland. The respondents explain their general positive opinions about the impact of the accession of Poland to the EU as resulting from both observing the economic developments taking place in Poland during the pre-accession period and the certainty that such developments will continue in the future since EU membership not only guarantees the flow of foreign investments into the country, but also defines Poland as a respected partner on the European economic scene. Polish migrants point to the numerous foreign enterprises established on the territory of Poland and the respective opening of new working places as only the first step towards becoming an economically powerful European country. The respondents also express the opinion that Poland is becoming increasingly popular not only

for foreign investments but also for different forms of tourism, which in the longer term will also bring positive developments in the country.

The perceptions of the positive impact of the accession of Poland in the European Union do, however, differ in strength depending on the educational level and the undocumented status of the Polish respondents. False students and those who have a profession, a specialty, or a craft are more optimistic about the immediate positive impact of EU enlargement while the respondents who have lower educational degrees believe that the positive aspects of the accession of Poland to the EU will have an impact on the general population of Poland only after Poland becomes a full member state or at least after three to five years in the future.

1. 15. Positive and negative perceptions of Brussels

Polish migrants express similar views as Bulgarian respondents as to the perceived positive and negative aspects of life in Brussels.

As to the positive perceptions of Brussels, all undocumented Poles agree that the numerous work opportunities and income earning potential in Brussels is incomparable with what could be earned in Poland for a similar work (is work can be found at all) and for them, these are the most important and probably uniquely positive aspects of living in Brussels.

The false students express the opinion that Brussels offers excellent possibilities for establishing international contacts, to communicate with people from all around the world and to live in a culturally and linguistically diverse environment. These two factors are in fact also forming the core of the false students' motivation to find legal employment in Brussels. Even thought the false students admit that if professionally employed in Poland a good income can be secured, it is also recognized that such an international environment is still not present in Poland and will probably never be present. False students are also content that Brussels offers a stimulating environment for continuous learning exactly because of the presence of people from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds,

which can potentially encourage everyone living in such a milieu to learn a new language, to become familiarized with new cultures, habits and traditions.

Another positive aspect of living in Brussels is its proximity to European institutions and firsthand knowledge about job openings and internships. False students believe that being a resident of Belgium and, more particularly, of Brussels provides a competitive advantage when applying for positions at EU institutions.

As with the Bulgarian migrants, the undocumented Poles acknowledge the fact that life in Brussels can be quite inexpensive and no extensive spending is required to maintain a decent quality of life and purchase basic goods.

Turning our attention to the negative impressions of undocumented Poles reveals that the negative sentiments about living and working in Brussels outnumber the positive ones. First and foremost, the unanimous opinion is that undocumented Poles in Brussels are viewed by the Belgians as second category persons and are treated as such. While the Poles feel that they are highly valued as responsible and flexible workers, who are able to satisfy the different requirements of their clients and employers at practically any time of the day or week, the respondents also admit to being treated with disrespect, mocked for not speaking the French language well and ridiculed for being socially and economically deprived in comparison with the native population. In other words, Belgium is described as a society where people such as manual workers and domestic personnel of foreign origin are perceived as second category people, while the same workers of Belgian origin are perceived as better people.

An often expressed sentiment is that clients and employers pity the respondents for being undocumented workers, but rarely view them as equal human beings who like everybody else look for work and a means of improving one's quality of life. The respondents further affirm to feel socially excluded and not desired as a companion for conversations on topics not related to work and immediate assignments.

A negative perception about Brussels expressed by all undocumented migrants is also related to the presence of many Muslim minorities in the city, who are perceived as responsible for the creation of a bad image of all non-EU migrants regardless of their

nationality and legal status in the country. Polish respondents speak in very negative terms about “the Arab” youngsters who are highly visible on public transportation and in the city center. Arabs are described as intimidating other people, behaving rudely and loudly, and provoking negative and non-tolerant attitudes towards everyone who is not Belgian or European. The Muslim minorities are further blamed for the misfortune that all migrants in Brussels, in the sense that this one migrant group is responsible for the creation of negative sentiments on the part of Belgians towards all newcomers, that all other migrants have to pay the price. As specific examples, we can advance accounts given by Poles who had to contact with local authorities on different occasions (such as applying for a residence card in the case of the false students, entering a procedure for becoming self-employed under the PECO agreements) and who say they are treated with disrespect, impatience and intolerance just because they are “another potential migrant” who is trying to get foothold into Belgium. Some respondents admit to have been treated worse from public officials if the person before them was of Arab origin. To summarize, the overall opinion is that migrants are not wanted in Belgium and the level of tolerance towards minorities is extremely low exactly because Belgium has allowed the presence of a large Muslim minority in its territory.

A negative impression shared especially by undocumented women and false students is that the city of Brussels is divided in regions where differences between different classes of people are strongly discernible. The central city municipalities where migrant populations are concentrated are perceived as areas where the state has no control whatsoever. The respondents admit to feeling insecure when using the metro or walking on the streets in the late evenings in certain neighborhoods of Brussels described as not appearing to be European as was expected before migration. In this context, the respondents declare that they did not expect that a European city could be so distinctively divided into territories inhabited by people of different nationalities and ethnicities.

2. The professional Polish immigrants

The group of professional Polish migrants is rather small (ten persons) to allow for in-depth analysis and generalization, therefore in the following paragraphs, we will attempt to draw only a preliminary sketch of the profile of these migrants, while any suggestive conclusions could only be reached at a future research stage when a larger population of professional Polish migrants is recruited for research. Due to time limitations, we have been able to interview only ten professional Poles (four men and six women), from the 22 potential respondents initially identified.

2. 1. Demographic data, household composition, and living conditions

The professional Polish migrants come from the largest and most developed cities of Poland such as Krakow, Warsaw, Gdansk, Lodz, Poznan, and Wroclaw.

No specific age profile of this group of respondents can be identified since the age of these respondents vary from between 29 and 47 years. As far as the family status of Polish professional migrants is concerned, five respondents are married, two are divorced, and three are cohabiting with a partner in a stable relationship. In all cases, the partner or the spouse is residing in Brussels with the interviewee and the couple has either migrated to Brussels together or the respective partner has followed him or her shortly after his or her settlement in Brussels. In all cases, the joining partner arrived in Brussels not later than two months after the interviewee.

Five of the respondents do not have children, three respondents have one child, and two families have two children. However, only one family resides with the child in Brussels, while in the remaining cases, the children are either studying in Poland or are working/studying in another European country.

Altogether, the professional respondents come from smaller households in comparison with the undocumented migrants. The average household comprises of five persons, including parents, the interviewee and only rarely a sibling or a grandparent.

Based on such as small research group, we cannot identify a specific pattern of residential status in Brussels, however we have observed that professional Poles reside in

municipalities known to offer better ambiance in comparison with the inner city areas. The present municipalities of residence of the professional migrants include, for example, Auderghem, Uccle, Etterbeek, Jette, and Ixelles. Two respondents, who arrived recently in Brussels (after 2001) are still residing in their first residence while all of the "older" migrants have changed residence in Brussels at least one time. The patterns of residence change indicate moving towards better residential areas, renting bigger and more luxurious places, or purchasing their own apartment or house.

The size of the housing depends on the size of the migrant's household in Brussels. The divorced respondents reside in two-bedroom apartments of an average 110m², while the remaining respondents live in three bedroom apartments (three persons) or houses with three or four bedrooms (four persons). Five respondents are owners of their housing, while the other five migrants do not have plans for purchasing accommodation in Brussels yet.

All respondents have well furnished and well equipped households with domestic appliances and furniture purchased by the respondent. All professional Poles also have a car, personal computer or a laptop and internet connection. The respondents evaluate this standard of life in Brussels as high and comfortable and admit to having achieved a quality of life where no additional goods are needed.

2. 2. Educational level and language abilities

As it could be expected, the professional Polish respondents have advanced educational degree such as a Masters degree (five respondents) or a PhD (five respondents). The specialties of the professional Poles are similar to those of the professional Bulgarian migrants and include law (two persons), finance/economics (three persons), biology/biotechnologies (two persons), informational technologies/mathematics (one person), pharmacy (one person), and Russian philology (one person). All respondents have obtained their educational degrees outside of Belgium and, once in Belgium, the only additional educational activity of the professional Poles included the study of a language (Dutch in two cases, Spanish in two cases, French in one case).

The linguistic competences of the professional migrants are diverse and all respondents speak at least two foreign languages, including French and English. Seven of the interviewees have a thorough knowledge of three foreign languages, where the language is Russian, Spanish and, to certain extend, Dutch. The language competences in English were obtained prior to migration. Two respondents studied French only once in Belgium. However, the primary spoken language with the employers is English while French is used only as a secondary language and during social events at the work place.

2. 3. Migration histories and migration to Belgium

The migration trajectories before coming to Brussels are various and include at least two past migrations abroad for reasons of education or professional activities within the field of professional expertise of the migrants. Among the countries of past migration, one can identify the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, Austria, Russia, and Luxembourg. The periods of stay abroad vary between nine months and three years depending on the type of education in which the migrant was enrolled or the duration of the working contract. It should be noted that all past migration for purposes of work was the result of either a job transfer or a qualified job offer and not the outcome of a targeted search by the migrant, which is the practice of false students.

Migration to Brussels was also the result of either a job transfer or a qualified job offer, and was undertaken either from Poland (four respondents) or from a country of past migration (five respondents). One person is a former asylum seeker. The years of arrival to Brussels range from between 1976 and 2001, however all but one respondent arrived in Brussels in the late 1990s. As the decision to migrate was to continue their professional career in Brussels, all migrants except the former asylum seeker obtained detailed information about the living conditions, salaries, legislation concerning their migration status, and information about social security and tax regulations prior to migration. This information was provided by the employers, who also supported the migrants in all steps preceding the process of relocation.

2. 4. Professional situation and remittances

All professional migrants are employed exclusively within their field of expertise. Depending on the respective specialty of the respondent, a professional career in Brussels is continued in one of the following industries: banking and financial sector, consultancies, IT companies, and research and development units. One respondent who used to be employed in a consultancy company has also established a small firm for translation services. With only one exception (the person who migrated as an asylum seeker in 1976), the professional respondents are working for the same company or enterprise since arriving in Brussels.

The average income of this group of migrants is around 2000 € net and is viewed as sufficient for maintaining a good quality of life in Brussels and also for financing trips abroad, holidays, and hobbies.

As we have already specified, the households of professional migrants are smaller in comparison with those of the undocumented migrants but, nevertheless, all migrants admit to sending remittances home at least twice since in Brussels, while five respondents remit money to Poland every two months. The average amount of money sent varies between 250 € and 400 €. To avoid paying bank transfer fees the respondents prefer to bring the remittances in person when traveling to Poland, but when financial support is required on a monthly or bimonthly basis, the respondents rely on the services of money transfer companies.

In the cases of sending occasional remittances, the money has been used either for purchasing new household appliances or house renovation, or for financing the medical treatment of a family member. The regularly sent remittances are, however, used for investing in immovable property together with the respondent. The new houses or apartments bought by the respondents and their families are seen as a good investment for the future and securing additional income after retiring or in case of remaining unemployed.

2. 5. Personal contacts, social networks, and social isolation

Similarly to the Bulgarian professional respondents, the Poles in Brussels evaluate their social networks and personal contacts with other people as rather weak. On average,

professional Polish migrants have no more than three persons defined as close friends and these are without exception co-nationals or foreigners. The number of acquaintances is higher – between eight and eleven persons – but, nevertheless, contacts with the acquaintances who are also predominantly foreigners and co-nationals are viewed as weak and non-personal. Professional Poles admit that work pressure and long work hours, combined with family obligations in some cases, do not allow for maintaining regular social contacts with other people but, on the other hand, the respondents argue that even if time were available the possibilities for developing strong friendships and having a close social environment in Brussels and, moreover, with Belgian nationals are rather limited. The respondents describe Brussels as an excellent place for developing professionally and having a good income, but they perceive the city as offering fewer opportunities for a more personal social life. The respondents recognize the existence of numerous social activities, which they could join in Brussels but also perceive social contacts between people in Brussels as rather superficial and not tending to develop into a stronger relationship of caring, sharing mutual interests and organizing common activities.

However, professional Poles do not describe themselves as socially isolated or suffering from alienation. The respondents confer that family and the contacts they maintain with family, friend and relatives in the country of origin constitute a major part of their social relationships and, indeed over time, cancel out the need for having strong social networks in Brussels. Contacts maintained with relatives and friends in Poland constitute a major part of the free time activities of the respondents. Telephone calls are made at least twice a week, emails are exchanged on a daily basis, and trips to Poland are initiated during major holidays such as Easter and Christmas. The family of the respondents also pays regular visits to Brussels and holiday trips to other countries are organized together with family members.

In this context of having a few close friends in Brussels, a larger number of acquaintances and strong relations with family in Poland, one could understand why professional Poles unanimously declare to not be interested in making new friendships in Brussels or to attempt to enlarge their existing social network. Professional migrants

declare that after their immediate arrival to Brussels, efforts to establish new contacts especially with local people failed and that over time the interest in being an initiator of social activities, which could bring upon new friendships decreased, resulting in a situation where the respondents do not feel motivated to be active in establishing social contacts.

2. 6. Future migration plans

The future migration plans of professional Poles coincide with those of the Bulgarians in that the sense that the migrants plan to keep in working in Brussels until the end of their working contracts and then migrate to another European country or return to Poland, especially if the possibilities for having a similar occupation, with similar remuneration, exists. The two respondents who are firm in their decision to remain in Brussels include the "oldest" migrant who has came to Brussels in his late twenties and the respondent who has established a small firm. The remaining migrants who are employees assert that working in Belgium has been and is a personally satisfying experience, offering a good income and securing a good material quality life, but the possibility for working for a longer period and eventually settling permanently in Belgium is not envisioned as an attractive option. The main argument against working permanently in Brussels is the low non-material quality of life in Brussels; the latter is usually translated into a lack of a close social circle of friends who care about the well-being of the respondent and the possibility to achieve social integration. As a primary factor for return or moving to another country, the respondents mention their experience that unconditionally on their qualification and professional position, the only people who over time constitute one's social group are co-nationals or foreigners, but never Belgians. Reflecting on this fact, the respondents admit to feeling unwelcome and consider that under such circumstances good professional opportunities exist also in other countries or in Poland, where however some social integration would be possible to achieve. Among the countries of previous residence where the migrants have lived for over nine months and where the perception of being socially excluded had not developed, the respondents indicated the United States and the United Kingdom. Even though professional Poles admit that in each country a foreigner will

always be a foreigner, the respondents assert that in some countries attitudes towards foreigners and, especially towards professionally qualified foreigners, are more positive and predisposing towards one's social integration.

Having described their negative attitude towards permanent settlement in Belgium or in Brussels, the professional Poles declare themselves uninterested in changing their legal status in the country or in applying either for permanent residence or for Belgian nationality, even though their history of residence in Belgium is long enough to comply with the minimum requirements for residence in Belgium before naturalization.

2. 7. Stimulation of further migration

Professional Polish migrants admit to having never been involved in the process of stimulating prospective migrants to come to Belgium. In a few cases, the principal respondent was joined only by a close family member, such as a spouse or a child, but never by a more distant relative or a friend. When asked what would be their advice to prospective migrants from Poland, professional Poles refrain from making any possible suggestions by arguing that migration is a personal decision and it should not be influenced by third parties and especially by persons who do not belong to one's nuclear family. The unanimous opinion of the Polish professionals is that persons with good educational and professional qualifications as well as language abilities have the knowledge of how to look for jobs abroad and where to find all relevant information, so these people would not need advice from third parties. The respondents admit that if a colleague or relative who planned to migrate asked explicitly about information regarding certain aspects of life in Belgium, then, of course, such information would be provided, but in all other circumstances, the respondents would not be the active party in stimulating or facilitating migration of other persons.

2. 8. Anticipated impact of the EU enlargement

The perceptions of professional Polish migrants regarding the potential impact of the accession of Poland to the European Union do not diverge from those of the undocumented Polish migrants and are the opposite of what has been the opinion of professional Bulgarians. In brief, the prevailing opinion of professional Polish migrants is that by becoming an EU member state Poland will face a lot of positive developments, especially with respect to economics. Foreign investments, the increased importance of Poland as an actor on the international scene, and the voting power of Poland on EU matters are advanced as factors, which will only contribute to the economic stabilization of the country and will respectively lead to an increased quality of life in the country. EU accession is also perceived as a process during which more work opportunities will be created and the level of salaries will increase.

However, the respondents do not foresee any personal impact on EU enlargement. The overall opinion is that a person from Poland who has an advanced university education, diverse language competences and is already making a professional career in Europe will be able to find a relevant professional career in any European country regardless of whether Poland is a member state of the EU or not. Having a professional qualification in fields, such as finance, IT or pharmaceuticals, and professional experience as a consultant, financial controller, or clinical researcher are perceived as universally recognized and the geopolitical situation of the country of origin does not have any significant impact on where a professional migrant is recruited. The respondents agree that having a European nationality facilitates the process of recruitment and selection of candidates but assert that qualified professionals with relevant experience have the capacity to sell their skills successfully to potentially interested companies. What the professional Poles often mention is that even if not all European counties are equally open to consider foreigners for certain openings, the United Kingdom and the United States remain always the two places where one's professional qualities are recognized and evaluated fairly and that professional migration to these countries is unaffected by the nationality of the respondent and the political position of the respondent's country of origin. In these terms, Polish professionals

stress that even if the European employment market shrinks and discriminates based on nationality, at least two countries will welcome a migrant with professional skills and experience.

Assessing the present day developments in Poland, the respondents conclude that return migration to Poland is considered an upcoming possibility. The possession of property in Belgium is not viewed as an obstacle, on the contrary, it is perceived as an investment and a guarantee for secure income if rented.

2. 9. Perceptions about life in Brussels

General perceptions about the positive and the negative aspects of life in Brussels expressed by professional Poles largely coincide with the opinions of their Bulgarian colleagues. Among the strongest positive aspects of living and working in Brussels indicated by the respondents include the calmness with which one can live in Brussels meaning that once out of the working place, life in Brussels is not hectic, the possibilities for having a cultural life are diverse, and different locations are easy to reach. The most positive perception relates however to the mixtures of cultures and nationalities co-existing, the variety of food stores and restaurants offering cuisine from all around the world. Brussels is described as a "small cosmopolitan city" where one can find the essence of each culture of the world on a rather small territory, which gives the impression that one is a master of the place where one is resident. This feeling of having control over one's environment, while at the same time carrying enormous diversity, is summarized as the essence of the city of Brussels.

The positive aspects if living in Brussels relate also to some more material aspects such as the overall cost of life. The latter is perceived as very favorable, especially in comparison with the cost of life in most of the other European capitals. The professional migrants confer to be content firstly with property prices as well as average rents. The price of food, clothes, furniture and household appliances are also described as reasonable, while the variety of goods for people with different financial possibilities is also big and allowing for everyone to purchase goods according to one's personal budget.

The negative sentiments about living in Brussels relate to several distinct spheres. In the first place, professional Poles are discontent with the impossibility of achieving full social integration with the Belgian population, by which it is usually meant the impossibility to develop strong friendships and relations based on shared mutual personal interests. Even though the respondents agree to have never had any specific problems in the process of communication with Belgians, the overall feeling is that a Pole will never be chosen as a close friend and even if the migrant invests time and efforts to maintain close contacts with the local population, over time it is recognized that these contacts were kept only on a superficial and rather impersonal level.

A second area of discontent relates to the high tax levels, and the slow pace with which tax returns are processed. Respondents express the opinion that the high level of taxation should, at least in theory, allow for better city management and better city facilities, including night public transportation, more security on the streets, and better maintenance of certain city quarters.

A third negative aspect of Brussels relates to the service sectors. As noted by professional Bulgarian migrants, the Poles argue that employees in restaurants, shops and public administration offices are slow and sluggish, not interested in serving clients and not showing any personal attachment to their professional duties. The Poles argue that there is a general lack of professionalism as the service sector is concerned.