Chapter 4

Patterns of Emigration from Poland

1. Introductory note

Compared to other Eastern European countries, Poland has the most intensive history of immigration movements, which started in the 17th century and reached a peak in the second half of the 1980s. The uninterrupted migrations from Poland consequently make the Polish Diaspora the third largest diaspora in the world after the Italian and the Irish diasporas (Marek, 1992). During the past 15-20 years, Poland has been one of the primary immigrant sending countries in CEE. At the same time, it has become one of the prominent receiving countries for immigrants from Asia, Russia, and neighboring countries.

Similar to the population movements from other CEE countries, Polish migration flows have been largely determined by economic and political factors during the major historical periods in Europe: the First World War, the Second World War, the "communist" period in CEE, the transition period from totalitarian regimes to democracy and market economy, and the process of EU enlargement.

Before proceeding with the outline of migration patterns from Poland, it should be stressed that, as in other CEE countries, available data sources regarding the Polish emigration size and nature are not consistently reliable and should be considered as such. Compiling adequate statistics about Polish migration is impossible because of the two guiding principles of emigration recording in Poland: counting emigrants by the number of issued international passports on the basis of a "declared change of permanent residence" during the Cold War and counting emigrants only as those people who have officially reported their intention to settle permanently in a foreign country after the lifting of restrictions on free travel abroad in 1989. Moreover, the presently-applied method for recording migration, which is based on registration and deregistration, is inconsistent with

the current Polish definition of "migration" – in which migration occurs when an individual leaves the country for a minimum of two months (Okólski, 1999b). Both the past and the present methods for registering migration have disadvantages in reflecting actual emigration levels[1].

Counting emigrants only based on issued passports underestimates the numbers of actually emigrating persons. It does not account for refugees leaving the country, though they constitute a significant portion of Polish migration during the totalitarian regime. Furthermore, in cases of non-return, authorities were reluctant to report the actual numbers of people overstaying their exit permissions since this contradicted the principle of zero emigration, part of the image the former Soviet Block countries tried to maintain.

After the Cold War, only a few of the migrants were aware that they should report their intentions for long-term residence abroad or were willing to do so. Therefore, the official statistics, from the beginning of the era of free travel until the present time, reflect only a fraction of the actual emigration. The prevailing types of migration from 1990 onwards (such as irregular migrations, pendular migration, and leaving as a tourist and overstaying) can hardly be captured by any method for recording emigration. The possibilities of keeping adequate migration statistics were further diminished by the introduction of the visa-free regime for short-term stays of Polish citizens in the EU and the Polish accession to the EU in 2004. In brief, all data on emigration from Poland must be viewed as revealing general trends in population mobility but not as exact representations of actual emigration figures.

2. Migrations from Poland before the fall of the Iron Curtain

Migrations from Poland before the fall of the Iron Curtain follow the general pattern of migration from Central and Eastern Europe described in Chapter 2. The outflows from Poland could be categorized: as economically driven migrations before the outbreak of the First and the Second World Wars; as internal displacements and deportations during and

[1] This problem results in another complication: incompatible or even conflicting data from different data sources referring to the same period.

after the Second World War; and as restricted migrations during the Cold War period, including mainly refugee flows and ethnic migration.

According to available records, the beginning of a numerically significant migration from Poland could be identified around 1860. By the outbreak of the First World War, approximately 3,5 million Polish people (10% of Poland's population) had left the country in search of economic prosperity abroad (Iglicka, 2000b; Korys, 2004). The majority of those early immigrants went to North America, Brazil, Germany (especially Westphalia), and Russia (Marek, 1992).

The First World War resulted in another two million migrants from Poland who fled voluntarily or were displaced (Iglicka, 2000b). Furthermore, the end of the War did not diminish migrations. On the contrary, migration for economic reasons – impossible during the War – became noticeable again. During the interbellum period, about 1,6 million Poles chose Western Europe as their new permanent residence: France, Belgium, Germany, and Latvia[2] (Okólski, 1998). In addition to economic factors, migration was also stimulated by the collectivization of agriculture in Poland. One million people consequently looked for a new home to the east. Transcontinental migration also continued and comprised more than a half million permanent migrants. The most preferred destination countries were the same as before World War I, with the addition of Argentina (Marek, 1992). Temporary migration also took place in the interbellum period (for purposes of seasonal work), but they were on a much smaller scale[3] compared with permanent migration.

The main migratory flows from Poland before the fall of the Iron Curtain were recorded during the Second World War and the years immediately following, when more than five million Polish people left the country. This number includes deportations, prisoners of war, refugees, and ethnic Poles forced into the German army or transferred to Germany (Iglicka, 2000b). Even though the displaced Poles had the possibility to return to

[2] According to another author, the number of Polish emigrants during the interwar period was 2,1 million, and the most preferred destination countries included France, Belgium, Germany, North America, and South America (Korys, 2004).

[3] In the period of 1927-1938, 538,000 Poles migrated seasonally to Germany and Latvia (Marek, 1992).

Poland after the War, the main return flows were from the former USSR (1,5 million in 1944-1949, and 249,000 in 1955-1959 (Korys, 2004). Return migration from Western Europe was not so prevalent. After the introduction of the communist regime, prospective return migrants from Western Europe were perceived as spies and faced the threat of severe persecution, which could result in a death sentence upon arrival in Poland. Thus, non-returning Poles settled either in Western Europe or migrated further to North and South America, Israel, or Australia.

As in other Eastern European countries, after the Second World War, the government successfully prohibited all kinds of cross-border movement for Polish people. There were small exceptions for "tourist" travel and visits to other socialist countries. During the first years after the War, the main migratory movements in and out of Poland included the expulsion of ethnic Germans and ethnic Ukrainians, the return of Polish soldiers, and the immigration of Polish families from the former Soviet Union.

Repressive measures controlling free travel abroad were temporarily relaxed in the 1970s. After the rise of the Solidarity movement in 1980, travel for reasons of tourism became the main means for emigrating. However, at the end of 1981, the partial liberalization policy was terminated when the government declared martial law and forbade international migration. It was only in 1988, that the last communist government officially introduced multi-exit and long-term passports. Before that time, people were allowed to travel only after obtaining an international passport from police offices or, in the case of ethnic emigration, after obtaining support from the receiving country. Travel to other socialist countries was not prohibited, but it was only possible with a special passport valid exclusively for trips to those countries.

Estimation of the actual emigration that took place during the totalitarian period in Poland is not easy. According to official statistics, 1,1 million persons emigrated from Poland in the period of 1950-1990. Taking into account the immigration of approximately 335,000 persons in Poland during the same period, the net migration figure remains approximately 760,000 persons (Iglicka, 2000b). During the whole totalitarian period, the officially recorded migration level in Poland remained relatively stable: 15,000 to 35,000

emigrants and 1,500 to 3,000 immigrants annually (Okólski, 1998). If, however, some other estimates are taken into consideration, over 4,2 million Poles emigrated between 1971 and 1980 (Kaczmarczyk & Okólski, 2005). Therefore, it could be concluded that the actual number of emigrants is at least five times higher than the officially-reported figure.

Emigration statistics from 1980-1989 are one of the best examples of the above-mentioned deficiencies of the official data. When comparing immigration statistics produced by receiving countries, the Polish government's tendency to underestimate emigration is evident. According to Polish police records in the period of 1980-1989, 222,000 Poles emigrated legally and 533,000 persons overstayed their visas and were considered "illegal emigrants". However, estimates based on the population registers of Poland and the German government suggest that the number of emigrants adds up to 1,050,000 persons (Okólski, 1994)[4].

Even though the discrepancies are significant, all data testifies that the emigration from Poland was substantial. The lack of exact numbers does not conceal the major types of outflow, nor does it diminish the most specific characteristics of the emigrating population, which will be presented below.

The officially recorded, long-term migration reflects the primary migration flow, which includes Poles of German origin who resettled in Germany. This type of migration continued during the entire totalitarian period. Also, with the partial liberalization starting

[4] Estimating the actual size of migrations from Poland is hindered not only by the poor data quality of the official statistics but also by the discrepancies of emigration figures provided by different authors. For example, in the migration period of 1980-1989, the data provided by M. Okólski (1994) differs from that of K. Iglicka (2000b), who provides the figure of "around 271,000 persons" emigrating legally from Poland. In another text the author states (without providing a reference) that according to German sources between 700,000 and 800,000 Poles settled in Germany (Iglicka, 2000a). E. Marek (1992), quoting a 1991 publication of the NSI of Poland, concludes that about 248,300 Poles emigrated during 1980-1989. In a 1998 text, M. Okólski provides the figures of 1,3 million long-term emigrants (from which 271,000 are estimated to have emigrated legally) and 1,1 million short-term emigrants (Okólski, 1998). In a UN publication, the figure of 1,8 million emigrants is suggested after an analysis of "information from other countries" (UN, 2002b).

from the beginning of the 1980s, it became even more spontaneous; thus not appearing fully in the official records (Okólski, 1999b).

A second major flow was the emigration of asylum seekers who used the provisions for the protection of political refugees to settle abroad. The asylum channel was used by Polish emigrants continuously after the Second World War, but a peak in these requests was reached between 1980-1989 when over 213,000 Poles lodged asylum applications abroad. Comparatively, this was approximately twenty times more requests than in the previous fifteen years (a detailed overview of the asylum flow from Poland from 1965-1999 is provided in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3, at the end of the current chapter). Poles are also one of the largest groups of asylum seekers in industrialized countries compared with all other nationalities applying for asylum. Between 1980-1984, Poles were the largest group of asylum seekers in Austria; the second largest in Germany, Sweden, and Italy; the third largest in Denmark; the fourth largest in Greece and Spain; the fifth largest in France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the United Kingdom; and the sixth largest in the Netherlands and Turkey. With 81,427 applications in total, they are the second most important group of asylum seekers in Europe (numerically-speaking) after Turkish nationals, who account for 90,046 of the applications. During the next five years, Poland retains a primary position in the European asylum scene, and it remains the second largest sender after Turkey.

Polish asylum seekers have traditionally headed for Germany and Austria. Yet, since the middle of the 1980s, other countries have started to play a major role. In comparison with the early 1980s, the biggest increase in submitted applications were recorded in Greece, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

After 1989, the number of Polish asylum seekers in Europe diminished significantly. This reflects the fall of the communist regime in Poland. The transition to democracy transformed Poland into a safe country of origin and negated the possibility for Polish asylum seekers to have their applications approved.

A third migration flow was directed toward the United States, where a large and active Polish diaspora developed more than half a century ago (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1958). After Germany, the United States was one of the main destination countries for

Polish emigrants. In addition, the existence of a large network of countryman and kin had continuously facilitated and stimulated new departures from Poland to the United States.

Finally, classical migration for work existed between Poland and the former USSR, as well as the Muslim countries in Northern Africa and the Middle East. These migrations were usually long-term and entire families migrated. However, these migrations rarely resulted in non-return because Poles had perceived few of the destination countries opening legal employment as attractive for settlement.

For the migrating population before 1989, predominant tendencies were: a) more women than men migrating (the ratio of male to female migrants is 100:150); b) an under representation of legal male emigrants above the age of 25; c) a high level of education, especially among emigrants overstaying their tourist visas; d) emigrations originating in the most urban and industrialized regions of Poland such as Warsaw, Gdansk, Katowice and Opole (Okólski, 1998; Iglicka, 2000a); e) the main destination countries for Polish emigrants during 1980-1989 were Germany (50% of all long- and short-term emigrants), Belgium (25% of all long- and short-term emigrants), the USA, and Canada (Okólski, 1998; Korcelli, 1991).

3. Migrations from Poland after the fall of the Iron Curtain

With the fall of communism in Poland in 1989, the previous restrictions on free travel were lifted. People were able to leave the country without interference from the police, and their stay abroad was no longer limited by state authorities. Also, return to Poland was made possible. Traveling abroad was further facilitated by the gradual abolition of visa requirements for Polish tourists in Western Europe. Limited opportunities for legal employment abroad have also been made possible in the framework of bilateral agreements between Poland and several Western European countries, including Germany.

However, despite the liberalization, massive emigration from Poland has not taken place. On the contrary, official statistics show that migration levels from 1990-1997 fell by 4,000 exits per year compared with 1980-1989. At the same time, Poland started transforming into a destination country. While in the 1980s, inflow was about 1,000

persons per year, this numbers increased to over 8,000 immigrants per year in the late 1990s (See Table 4.1). The opening of the borders and the fall of the communist regime resulted in increased immigration of permanent settlers, shuttle migrants, and irregular migrants involved in petty trade and undocumented work (the latter were mainly citizens of countries neighboring China and Vietnam).

Table 4.1. Polish emigration and immigration levels by five-year annual averages, 1945-2003*

Year	Emigrants	Immigrants
1945-1949	797,800	745,900
1950-1954	15,400	4,00
1955-1959	66,700	53,200
1960-1964	23,800	3,500
1965-1969	23,800	2,100
1970-1974	17,600	1,600
1975-1979	25,800	1,700
1980-1984	24,400	1,300
1985-1989	29,800	1,900
1990-1994	20,900	5,400
1995-1999	22,300	8,400
2000-2003	23,900	6,700

Note: * These figures refer only to legal emigrants (those who changed residence permanently and whose departure has been registered).

Source: Central Statistical Office of Poland (Quoted by Okólski, 1999a; Iglicka, 2000b; Kepinska, 2003; and Korys, 2004).

In line with the factors acting as a barrier for a massive outflow from CEE presented in Chapter 2, the most important reasons for the unexpectedly low emigration from Poland included the stricter German policy for granting resettlement status to all who claimed ethnic German origin and the inability to claim political asylum in the West. The refugee flows from Poland did not end immediately after 1989 (See Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 at the end of this chapter). From 1990 to 1994, Polish citizens filed over 35,000 asylum

applications in Europe, which is more than the number of applications from 1965-1979, even though it is significantly less than in the 1980s. The United States and Canada received a combined total of 4,790 asylum applications from Poles (See Table 4.5). Also, the restrictions on obtaining asylum are reflected in the fact that the number of applications in Germany decreased from more than 100,000 in 1980-1989, to 18,811 in 1990-1994, and were nearly non-existent from 1995 onwards. Greece, which was the third largest target country in the second half of the 1980s (8,193 applications for asylum), received only 20 Polish applications in 1990, and virtually none from the next year until the present time.

Another factor contributing to the decrease in emigrations was the outbreak of the Gulf War. This caused suspension of nearly all employment contracts of Polish citizens in Iraq and Kuwait. Finally, with the process of transition to democracy and a free economy, Poles seem to be less prone to undertake long-term emigration or settle abroad and it is believed that they are attempting to establish professional careers in Poland (Okólski, 1994). The latter is true, in particular, for the better educated persons – these people are no longer among the majority of the emigrants as was the case before 1989.

During the years of transition[5] (1980-1997/1998), the migration levels from Poland remained similar to the years prior, but the demographic profile of the emigrants changed visibly. The first noticeable difference was in level of education. In the 1980s, the majority of Polish emigrants were well educated (and included 15% of all Polish scholars); in the middle of the 1990s, approximately 70% of all emigrants had only attained an elementary education and less than 5% had a post secondary degree[6] (Iglicka, 2000a). This change is attributed to the creation of better professional opportunities in Poland and to the steady increase in economic stabilization. Secondly, a predominance of females in migration was no longer evident. The number of male emigrants rose by 8% (Iglicka, 2000b). Thirdly, the main migrating population was no longer as young. In comparison with the previous

[5] According to official statistics, 104,812 persons emigrated from 1990-1994, or only slightly more in comparison with 1981-1985, when 120,148 emigrants were registered (Iglicka, 2000a).

[6] For comparison, in 1988, 39.7% of the male, and 34.7% of the female emigrants had an elementary or lower level of education.

period, the average age of Polish emigrants increased by ten years, now placing the majority into the 35-44 year-old age group (Iglicka, 2000a).

The major sending regions remained the same as in the past: Silesia, Opole, Lower Silesia, and Pomerania, as well as the city of Warsaw. The Eastern provinces Lubelskie and Podlazie and the Western province Lubuskie are the four regions where the lowest levels of emigration are recorded (See Appendix 3 for a map of the regional-administrative division of Poland).

By the end of the 1990s, Western Europe (and more particularly Germany, France, Sweden, and Austria) became the most important destination countries for Poles, accounting for 83.2% of all emigration. The United States and Canada diminished in importance as target countries, hosting 14.8% of the emigrants in 1998 (Okólski, 2000b).

One can find evidence for the existence of migration networks between sending regions and receiving countries. For example, Silesia and Opole are traditionally the sending regions for emigrants to Germany; while emigrants from the southeastern provinces of Malopolska and Podkarpacie have predominantly headed for the United States. The creation of such networks is believed to have been stimulated, in part, by the Polish asylum seekers who emigrated before 1990 (Okólski & Stola, 1999).

4. Recent trends in migration from Poland: 2000-2003[7]

The following section offers a summary of the most recent trends, as seen in officially-recorded short- and long-term emigration records. This quoted data is based only on records of residential change and, in the case of economic migrants, on records of the employment contracts issued in the framework of bilateral agreements which Poland has signed. Consequently, it is believed that the actual level of emigration is highly underestimated.

The most recent migrations from Poland resemble the patterns identified during the 1990s: after 2000, no changes have been recorded in the overall emigration level, the major

[7] Unless otherwise specified, the statistical information about 2002 and 2003 is based respectively on the contributions of E. Kepinska (2003) and E. Kepinska (2004).

sending regions and receiving countries, the prevailing male over female migration, the age distribution, the educational profile of the emigrating Poles, and the prevalence of short-term over long-term migration. Some changes, however, have occurred in the preferences of destinations countries by men and women, in the marital status of female migrants, and in the growing importance of Belgium as a receiving country. During 2000-2003, long-term emigrations signify that the trend of moderate emigration levels from Poland, established in the beginning of the 1990s, has remained stable.

Similar to the previous years, the major sending areas in Poland and the respective receiving countries have not changed. The Southern provinces of Silesia and Opole, and the Southwestern province of Lower Silesia continue to be the dominant emigrant-producing regions in Poland. The European Union maintains a leading position as a destination for Poles, attracting 82.3% of all emigrants in 2002, and 87.8% in 2003. Among European countries, Germany is still the most attractive destination, receiving more than 70% of the Polish emigrant population annually. The remaining popular destination countries include Austria, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The United States and Canada account for approximately 15% of the remaining migration. However, a new trend as of 2003 is the changing position of Belgium and the Czech Republic as receiving countries – with a respective increase of 16% and 21.1%.

Even though the male-female ratio remains stable (around 51:50), a few new trends have become apparent when looking at the demographic profile of the Polish emigrants. First, the two genders are not equally represented in all destination countries. Polish men are overrepresented in the United States and Spain, and they are underrepresented in Austria and Italy. Another new phenomenon is the feminization of the migration flow to Belgium. In 2003, 63% of the migrants to Belgium were woman, which is an increase of 11% compared with the previous year. Second, even though the majority of emigrants are married couples, the proportion of single, widowed, or divorced persons (especially women) has increased. In 1996, 39.6% of the emigrating women were single; in 2002, this percentage increased to 51.8%; in 2003, it rose to 66%.

To conclude this section, a brief notice about legal short-term migration for work will be introduced. The fact that permanent migrations represent only a minor fraction of all Polish migrations was discussed in detail. The most massive legal outflows were the short-term trips, lasting between two and twelve months, which are made possible under the frameworks of bilateral agreements. By 2003, Poland had signed bilateral agreements with 19 countries – eight of which were EU countries and six CEE countries. However, the latter are considered inactive. Temporary legal migration for work is becoming increasingly popular. In 1998, for example, approximately 230,000 Poles were employed abroad; In 2003, the number of seasonal workers abroad rose to 320,000. This tendency persists. In only the first half of 2004, 250,000 Poles were employed on the basis of bilateral agreements. Traditionally more than 90% of seasonal workers were employed in Germany.

5. Belgium as preferred destination country for the Polish emigrants

Tracing the development of Polish migration movements to Belgium is not easy because few sources provide systematic information about this migration. In addition, the quality of available data is weakened by imperfections in the data collection methods. For example, official statistics underestimate the number of immigrants who have dual nationality, who are second-generation immigrants, or are undocumented. According to some estimates, by 2001, the legally residing Poles in Belgium will number 60,000; and the undocumented immigrants amount to between 30,000 and 90,000 (20,000-40,000 reside in Brussels) (Jablonski, 2001).

Reviewing the history of Polish migration reveals that the first Polish migration to Belgium dates to the interbellum period when large numbers of Poles immigrated to Western Europe for economic reasons. The exact number of Poles who settled in Belgium is not available. However, the fact that Belgium was the second most preferred destination country during this time for the more than 1,5 million emigrants ensures that the number of Poles who settled in Belgium could be very significant (Okólski, 1998).

A second increase in Polish migration to Belgium was observed during the 1980s, comprising 25% of all emigrating Poles (Okólski, 1998; Korcelli, 1991). This makes

Belgium the second largest European receiver of Polish migrants at that time (Germany being the largest receiving country).

In the mid-1990's, Belgium maintained its status of being a most-preferred destination country, chosen by 80% of Polish emigrants from rural areas and 40% from urban areas. From 1994 to 1997, 33% of all Polish people who emigrated for the first time went to Belgium (Jazwinska, 1998).

Asylum-seekers flowed to Belgium as well, but the numbers suggest that Belgium was less preferred as an asylum destination. From 1965-1994, a total of 4,506 asylum applications from Polish citizens were lodged in Belgium, which is low in comparison with applications filed in Germany, Austria, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Sweden (See Table 4.2, Table 4.3, and Table 4.4).

The preference of Belgium as a destination country could be attributed to factors such as: the ease and cost of accessing the country compared with transcontinental emigration; the relative proximity to Poland, offering the chance of contact with family members remaining in Poland; the established network of Polish immigrants in Brussels. However, the literature on immigration does not explain why Poles have selected Belgium. The arguments already described could just as easily be reasons for Poles to immigrate to France, Germany, the Netherlands, or Austria. Informal conversations with Polish immigrants in Brussels reveal that Belgium was on one of Poles' main immigration "roads" to North America, but many early immigrants (before the First World War) ran out of financial means to continue their journey. Consequently, many remained in Belgium.

Despite the unexplained motivations for choosing Belgium, one cannot fail to observe the presence of a well-organized and functional Polish community. The long history of Poles in Belgium has lead to a mushrooming of Polish associations and firms which offer a wide range of services for co-nationals. The Polish network is most visible in Brussels, and the following paragraphs provide a summary of the main Polish institutions and businesses in this city.

The two major Polish institutional bodies in Brussels are The Council of the Polish Community in Belgium, established in 1993 and acting as an umbrella organization for all Polish associations in Belgium, and the Polish Catholic Mission, represented in two municipalities in Brussels. The Council and the Mission are available to all Poles in Belgium regardless of their legal status. They serve as immigrant representatives to the Belgian and Polish authorities (Jablonski, 2001).

The little Polonia in Brussels is further on represented by a Polish library and the free magazine *Gazetka* appearing once a month and distributed in the Polish shops.

There are a broad range of services and businesses run by Poles, with a target clientele of Polish immigrants, which testifies for the self-sufficiency of the Polish community in Brussels. The necessity for relying on Belgian services is minimal if one regards the gamut of Polish enterprises active in Brussels. In the Brussels region, one could identify Polish financial services, transportation services, building and repair companies, food stores, cafeterias and restaurants, health care services, legal services, bookstores, linguistic services, car repair and car import-export of new and second hand vehicles, and funeral services. A wide variety of recreational activities and cultural events exist as well, including concerts, dancing parties, celebrations, and cabarets. These are organized on a regular basis in Brussels at easy-to-reach locations. To illustrate the variety and scope of Polish firms in Brussels, a summary of the main ones is presented below:

Financial services are represented by insurance companies offering not only insurance but also credit and assistance with filling out all types of documents. In the same sector, one finds firms offering accounting services, firm registration, and financial advice.

The sector of home maintenance and building/reconstruction is represented by shops for electric materials, illumination bodies, and electric installations (in Auderghem); firms for installation and maintenance of electricity, alarm systems, interphones, computers, hard and software (in Brussels); a store for stainless steel, aluminum, balustrades, railings, metal furniture, fences, artistic blacksmithing (in Uccle); sales and installation of satellite systems (in Brussels); a firm distributing and installing armored and metal doors, locks, safes, and automatic locks (in Jette); a company for roof works (in Anderlecht); a store for parquet

and wooden floors (in Auderghem); a store for sanitary materials, marble tiles, and terracotta (in Uccle); a store for kitchens and kitchen furniture (in Molenbeek).

In Brussels, small Polish firms exist for the following: computer maintenance and repair, upgrading, and web design (in Uccle); an Art-Deco shop for souvenirs, decorations, glass items, silver jewelry, pottery, metal decoration, etc. (in Saint-Gilles); a store for professional clothing and accessories (in Woluwe-St-Pierre); importers and distributors of Polish shoes (in Laeken and Uccle); bookstores also containing printing services such as for invitations and name cards (in several municipalities of Brussels).

The strong presence of the Polish community is also evident from the existence of numerous transportation firms commuting between Poland and Belgium. The bus services are represented by more than 70 private carriers operating between Poland and Belgium on a regular basis. Equipped with microbuses for ten to eleven passengers, trips occur two to three times weekly. The major routes indicate the major regions in Poland from which the immigrants originate, including the Western provinces of Podlasie and Lublin and the Southern provinces of Opole, Silesia, and Malopolska[8].

Within the Polish community, one can find extensive services in the health care sector. Polish nationals offer professional services including plastic surgery, dentistry and dental surgery, and general and specialized medical services. The health and beauty sector is represented by distributors of health products and food additives, esthetics and relaxation salons, cosmetic services, hairdressers, chiropractors, fitness centers and aerobic courses, solariums, massage and energy therapy, and fortune telling and the reading of taro cards.

A wide variety of linguistic services is also present in Brussels. Poles run translation houses and language schools where, in most cases, computer literacy courses are

[8] The main routes offered by the transportation companies are from Podlasie via Lubusz to Belgium (Brussels-Antwerp-Venlo-Świecko-Poznan-Warsaw-Zambrów-Białystok-Łapy-Bielsk Podlaski-Siemiatycze–Sokołów) and from Lublin to Belgium via Opole (Lublin-Piotorkóv Trybunalski-Opole-Wrocław-Antwerpen-Brussels), or via Warsaw (Lublin-Warsaw-Poznan-Antwerp-Brussels) or via Krakow (Lublin-Rzeszów-Krakow-Katowice-Antwerp-Brussels).

also offered. A private service is offered by certified translators and language tutors teach French, Dutch, and English.

Finally, the food sector is represented by many stores such as mini-markets for Polish goods, bakeries and cake shops; import stores for seafood, fish, dairy products, alcohol, and bread products; stores for meat and meat products. Most of the stores are located in Saint Gillis where the largest numbers of Poles reside, but they are also present in other districts of Brussels such as Anderlecht, Uccle, and Brussels' center (Verleyen 2003).

The Polish infrastructure as presented above serves not only to provide services and goods but also as a venue where various employment opportunities are circulated. Co-nationals are recruited or recommended to potential employers. One of the major locations for job announcements is in the free Polish newspaper. In addition, in each monthly edition, an average of 15-30 Polish carpenters, construction workers, English and French language tutors, as well as cleaning and babysitting personnel advertise their services in the classified section and are as a result recruited within the community. Polish employers also announce openings for non-skilled and semi-skilled employment in the magazine. Jobs are announced, and often sold from one Pole to another, at large Polish gatherings such as the weekend open market in Anderlecht, community gatherings, and church masses.

This Polish community life in Brussels testifies to the existence of a large support network. In this light and due to the predominantly commuting type of migration one can speak about the development of a migration system between sending regions and the destination "Brussels". Prospective first time migrants in Poland are usually well aware about the existing Polish meeting points and the places where a job and accommodation can be found upon arrival if these were not arranged in advance. It could be hypothesized that the presence of a strong Polish community in Brussels does not only facilitate the migration process but acts as a trigger for new migrants.

6. Conclusions

What is important to recapitulate about Polish migrations is that the process of political and economic transition did not result in excessive emigration as feared by Western Europe. After a peak in outflow in the late 1980s, the emigration level from Poland stabilized and gravitated to approximately 20,000 persons annually. The increasing economic and social stability in Poland, together with the provisions for joining the European Union, are believed to have reduced the pressure of well-educated, young professionals towards migration. In these new market conditions, migration becomes the economic strategy for persons with lower education and lower professional capacities.

Statistics which evade the official records include all movements which are not permanent departures from Poland, such as tourism, business trips, migration for educational purposes, and short-term employment abroad. If these migrations were to be incorporated into official statistics, one could hypothesize that migrations from Poland have not decreased since the second half of the 1990s.

A new phenomenon, which also remains poorly recorded, is the short-term migration of Poles seeking employment in the shadow economy of almost all Western European countries. Some scholars estimate that the number of irregular short-term migrants is higher than those of persons contracted for legal work abroad. In 1993, the number of irregular Polish workers in Greece was estimated to be between 30,000 and 100,000; the undocumented Polish population in Belgium was 20,000-50,000; in the United States there was an estimate of 91,000 clandestine workers (Okolski & Stola, 1999).

Contrary to the legal migration flow, irregular workers abroad originate from the least industrialized and urbanized regions in Poland. In the past, these Poles were the seasonal and flexible workforce employed by better-developed regions. After the liberalization, undocumented migration abroad has offered better income possibilities than working at home. Irregular work abroad is usually short-term and circulatory, including constant rotation between family members or close friends. The irregular work practices of Poles are not only facilitated by an extensive migration network, which has developed in a well-functioning Polish infrastructure abroad (for example, the Polish press, social

activities, trading in jobs, car pooling, etc.), but also by the states' relaxed attitudes concerning the area of irregular employment of certain nationalities. Poles have testified that, in light of the future accession of Poland to the EU, the police rarely prosecute undocumented workers. Work inspection officers often express a lenient attitude toward employees discovered in irregular work situations, and border control measures are not enforced.

Trends in the post-totalitarian migratory behavior of Poles, together with the relatively stable economic and political situation in the country, predict that no significant change in future migration will occur. The level of outflow will remain constant, or may even decrease, while pendular migration will not cease to exist until the high income inequality between Poland and Western Europe decreases. However, with the accession of Poland to the EU, one could expect that the free flow of goods, capital, and technology, as well as the financial support programs of the EU will lead to economic growth. Ideally, this will aid in decreasing the income gap between Poland and the industrialized countries in Europe. These developments should diminish migration pressures in Poland. Polish workers abroad could slowly stop their practices of shuttle migration once perspectives for employment in Poland improve.