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Mobile EU Citizens or Migrants? Assessing the Polish Diaspora in Norway¹

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Between 2004 and 2014, the number of Poles in Norway grew tenfold. Poles have become the biggest minority in Norway, bringing economic benefits for both countries but also social challenges. Whereas the effects of migration for sending and receiving countries differ, there are many areas in which cooperation could bring mutual benefits. Such cooperation based on the respect of the fundamental freedom of EU citizens' free access to the labour market should lead to better integration of migrants. However, the biggest challenge in this respect lies in embracing the diversity of flows occurring within the free movement framework, ranging from short term stays to permanent settlements.

Intra-EU mobility, although still small in absolute numbers, has provoked heated political debates (economic gains notwithstanding). These debates fail to capture the diversity of flows occurring under the free movement regime, and are unhelpful for good policymaking.² EU citizens fall outside the scope of normal migration policies. Under European law, they are entitled to a broad range of political, economic and social rights that facilitate not only short-term mobility but also long-term and permanent settlement. Nevertheless, they enjoy less ready access to integration programmes, such as language or introductory courses, than do third country nationals.³ If they are to manage this niche form of migration, sending and receiving countries may need to cooperate more. To make such cooperation a reality it is necessary to identify key governance challenges as seen from the perspective of both sets of countries, with specific reference to the case of Polish free movement to Norway.⁴ The case of the Polish population in Norway epitomises the diversity of flows under the European free movement, and requires enhanced bilateral cooperation within the European Economic Area (EEA) framework.

¹ I would like to thank Jakub M. Godzimirski and Roderick Parkes for their advice on this paper.

² For detailed analysis see: A. Lazarowicz, "Governance of the free movement of EU Citizens: Weathering the Storm of Politicisation," *PISM Policy Paper*, no. 3 (105), March 2015, www.pism.pl/Publications/PISM-Policy-Paper-no-105.

³ E. Collett, *The Integration Needs of Mobile EU Citizens: Impediments and Opportunities*, Migration Policy Institute Europe, March 2013.

⁴ Norway is not EU Member State, but free movement is ensured through the EEA framework.

This paper is based on the findings of a “Delphi study” on the situation of Poles in Norway

The Delphi study method is a structured communication technique first developed for forecasting, now widely used in studies including research on policy design. A panel of experts/stakeholders in a certain field answers a series (minimum two rounds) of questionnaires. After each, the organiser provides respondents with a summary of the previous round results, so they can revise or maintain their opinions. In this way the highest level of consensus on likelihood or desirability of certain outcomes can be achieved.

For the sake of this study, two panels were created: “Panel P” answered a questionnaire on the impact of Polish migration on Poland (the sending country’s perspective) and “Panel N” was asked analogous questions on the impact of Polish migration on Norway (the receiving country’s perspective). In the first round, respondents were asked to identify the most important challenges and opportunities connected with migratory flows, possible developments of the character of Polish migration in terms of numbers and qualities, and policy recommendations for national measures and international cooperation. For the questions on the developments of Polish migration to Norway and possible ways of cooperation, the two panels were effectively treated as one, “Panel P-N,” with the aim of identifying a consensus between sending and receiving countries.

There were three rounds in the study. Both panels consisted of a similar group of respondents from the administration, expert/academic communities, and NGOs and business dealing professionally with diaspora policies and/or the Polish diaspora in Norway. Nine people initially agreed to take part in each Panel. After the study began, one person withdrew from Panel P. There were also some fluctuations in terms of the numbers of answers received. The number of respondents (r) and answers (a) in the following rounds were as follows: Panel N, I – r: 9, a: 8; II- r:9, a: 9; III-r:9, a:9; Panel P, I – r:8, a:8, II-r:8, a: 10, III-r:8, a:7

For the Time Being or for Good? Polish Migration to Norway

Limited numbers of Poles stayed in Norway after the Second World War, while others immigrated for political reasons in the 1980s or used the opportunities of seasonal work schemes from the 1990s.⁵ The real boom in migration came with Polish accession to the European Union. Between 2004 and 2014, Polish migration to Norway grew more than tenfold, reaching 84,004 registered migrants. The Polish community in Norway is now the biggest of all migrant groups. At first, the “typical” Pole in Norway was a relatively young man commuting between Poland and Norway to work on temporary contracts in construction, agriculture or manufacturing. Although this is still the dominant picture statistically, one can observe that the structure of Polish migration is changing substantially in two important respects. First, there is a rise in the number of women migrating, and of family reunifications.⁶ In 2015, there were 8,462 Norwegian-born children in Polish families, and 5,159 Norwegian-born children in Polish-Norwegian families.⁷ Second, the number of workers hired on permanent contracts is rising, and illegal employment is decreasing.⁸ According to the “Panel P-N,”⁹ these trends will continue and in ten years we can expect more family reunification, more settlement, and greater diversification in terms of jobs taken by Poles.

Significantly, Poles are deemed to be better integrated than before, and there will be a new generation of Poles for whom Norway will be the first homeland. In terms of numbers, most respondents were inclined to think that migration to Norway will stabilise at a slightly higher level than at present.¹⁰ Although the wage gap will diminish gradually, that process would be too slow to put a stop to the flows of workers.

⁵ To learn more about factors making people move from Poland to Norway in a broader historical perspective, see for instance J.M. Godzimirski, *Tackling Welfare Gaps: The East European Transition and New Patterns of Migration to Norway*, NUPI, Oslo, 2005. For a brief study of the recent trends in the Polish-Norwegian context see J.M. Godzimirski, *Hva får folk til å flytte på seg? Noen bemerkninger om polsk migrasjon til Norge—Polska emigracja polityczna stanu wojennego 1981 do Norwegii*, Maihaugen—Archiwum Panstwowe, Lillehammer—Milanówek, 2011.

⁶ See, *inter alia*: J.H. Friberg, “The Polish Worker in Norway: Emerging Patterns of Migration, Employment and Incorporation after the EU’s Eastern Enlargement,” PhD dissertation, Fafo, <https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/34925>.

⁷ Statistics, Norway, <http://ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/innvbe/aar/2015-03-04?fane=tabell&sort=nummer&tabell=219754>.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ The presented trends were indicated by more than half of the respondents.

¹⁰ The second most popular answer was “will stabilise at approximately the same level.”

Family reunification will also contribute to continuing migration. In short, both previous studies, and the results from the current Delphi study, confirm that Polish migration to Norway is changing in favour of at least temporary settlement for a substantial part of the migratory population. This creates a double challenge, as it is still necessary to meet the needs of temporary workers (for example, flexibility, portability of rights), but at the same time to prepare for the impact of longer-term and permanent immigrants (for example, meeting the needs of foreign-born children in schools).

In ten years, how might Polish migration to Norway change? Please indicate most likely changes.	
Panel P	Panel N
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be more family reunification. • There will be a new generation of Poles for whom Norway would be their first homeland. • Poles will be better integrated. • There will be more settlement. • It will cover a wider range of professions. • Poles will become a major, more active group. • More Poles will apply for Norwegian citizenship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be more family reunification. • There will be a new generation of Poles for whom Norway would be their first homeland. • Poles will be better integrated. • It will cover a wider range of professions. • There will be more settlement. • Poles will become a major, more active group. • There will be a rise in flows of capital and goods.

Trends indicated by more than two respondents, from the most to the least popular. Source: Delphi study.

Workers and People: Challenges and Opportunities for Norway as a Receiving Country

For “Panel N,” the opportunities and challenges brought about by Polish migration to Norway were mainly those connected with the labour market. On the one hand, there is a welcome possibility to fill labour shortages in respect of manpower and skills, but on the other there is concern about the integrity and sustainability of the Norwegian model of the welfare state. Generally, especially at the initial stage, when they are less aware of their rights, migrants tend to occupy jobs with lower remuneration, and often on the basis of temporary contracts, as well as in sectors more vulnerable to external shocks.¹¹ This makes them more competitive on the labour market, but also more exposed to abuses and economic downturn. Although Norway was not particularly badly-affected by the economic crisis in 2009, migrants from the Central and Eastern European countries suffered from a short-lived, but relatively high, rise in unemployment, mainly because of their heavy representation in the construction sector.¹² Thus, challenges range from social dumping to the rise of unemployment, and from economic fraud to abuses of mobile workers’ rights. Nevertheless, respondents were generally satisfied with the Norwegian state’s ability to fight social dumping and economic crimes, and assessed it on average 3.1 on a five-point scale, where 1 means “not coping at all” and 5 “cannot be better.” Also, the absolute majority of the “Panel N” respondents agreed that Norway should maintain the EEA framework and focus on proper cooperation on

¹¹ For concrete examples, see: W. Anioł, “Poles in the Norwegian labour market: benefits and challenges,” and S. Garstecki, “Poles in Norway from a judicial point of view,” in: *Polish Community in Norway: Opportunities and Challenges. Conference Materials*, Oslo, 2014.

¹² *International Migration 2013–2014*, IMO Report for Norway, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/innvandring-og-innvandraran-2013-2014/id2345614>.

the bilateral level to assure its proper functioning. The only dissenting voice criticised sending benefits calculated on Norwegian wages to Poland, where the cost of living is much lower.

What opportunities for Norway do Polish migrants offer?	What challenges does Norway have to face because of Polish migration?
"Panel N"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflow of people that fill labour shortages. • Inflow of people with skills and competences needed in certain sectors. • Greater social and cultural diversity. • Inflow of cheap workforce that allows companies to expand. • More direct contacts with nationals of the important European country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting social dumping and inequality in certain sectors. • Possible rise of unemployment in case of economic downturn. • Preparing and implementing proper integration strategy. • Difficulties in properly regulating minimum wages and working conditions. • Avoiding benefits dependency and export of benefits. • Increased competition between low-skilled workers. • Proper adaptation of welfare state institutions (both in terms of numbers and specific needs, for example, schools).

Answers indicated by more than two respondents, from the most to the least popular. Source: Delphi study.

Amongst the panelists, there was also an appreciation of the greater social and cultural diversity brought by migration, and the possibilities that it offers for building more intense relations. When it comes to social and cultural gains, however, these seem to be largely predicated upon the success of integration policies. Happily, in the view of "Panel N" participants, Norwegian institutions' response to Poles' needs ranks only slightly behind its overall ability to regulate the labour market (2.7 on the same five-point scale). Access to language training is considered the single most important policy measure that Norway undertakes when it comes both to integrating Polish workers and empowering them by acquainting them with and helping them defend their rights in compliance with Norwegian and European regulations.

There is no general mapping of language skills amongst the Polish population in Norway, but some studies give a good insight into key measures of language acquisition. Among the 1,000-plus respondents who answered a 2013 questionnaire on cultural participation, most claimed to speak Norwegian only very little (44%) while 35% said they spoke quite well, and 11% fluently.¹³ The level of language proficiency is more strongly correlated with the sector of work than it is with time spent in Norway, being particularly low in the construction sector.¹⁴ Polish is reported to be the language spoken at work by over 50% of Polish construction workers, with the second most popular being English.¹⁵ Whereas manual workers only temporarily working in Norway have little incentive to learn Norwegian, language skills may become necessary for upward mobility, and for those who decide to settle permanently. Interviews on transition to,

¹³ A. Janaczyk, "Polish Immigrants in Norway: Cultural Participation and Integration," Oslo, 2013.

¹⁴ J.H. Friberg, L. Eldring (eds.), *Labour Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe in Nordic Countries: Patterns of Migration, Working Conditions and Recruitment Practices*, Nordic Council of Ministers, 2013, pp. 79–88.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

and out of, welfare benefits, conducted by Oleksandr Ryndyk,¹⁶ show that learning Norwegian is one of the activities undertaken to achieve a higher position on the labour market, besides skills recognition, courses and internships.

What policies should be continued or undertaken by Norway to maximise the benefits and address the most pressing challenges brought by Polish migration to Norway?	
“Panel N”	
Please indicate all necessary.	Please indicate the maximum three most important.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combat social dumping. • Continue efforts to fight economic crimes. • Facilitate language training. • Introduce stronger regulation on minimum standards and workers protection. • Introduce free language courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate language training.

Answers indicated by more than a half of the respondents, from the most to the least popular. Source: Delphi study.

Gains and Losses: Challenges and Opportunities for Poland as a Sending Country

For “Panel P,” economic gains, both for migrants themselves and the wider sending state economy, were highly appreciated. However, the “other side of the coin” was also signalled: concerns over the loss of workers in general, and high-skilled professionals in particular, were voiced by many respondents. Although the demographic impact of migration is considered negative, and some of the potential benefits are dependent on return migration, the majority of respondents would not recommend any particular return policy.¹⁷ Many of the worries are also connected with the changing structure of Polish migration in terms of family settlement. Here, practical problems, such as those connected with providing care for older relatives who stay in Poland, along with more general concerns about identity, are raised.

Studies conducted by the Polish Academy of Science indicate that emigration has a deep impact on family relations in Poland, often challenging traditional roles and assumptions through practices emerging in transnational families.¹⁸ From the Polish perspective, preparing for the consequences of emigration is a matter for internal policies and international cooperation, for example, in terms of regulating intermarriages and problems with custody.¹⁹ In the case of Polish migrants in Norway, there are also particular concerns about interventions of the Norwegian Child Welfare Organisation (Barnevernet). Although interventions in Polish families are not particularly frequent in terms of numbers when compared to other migrant groups,²⁰ they have provoked much distrust. Not only because of the sensitivity of the matter and media interest, but also due to problems in dialogue on the administrative, level and lack of clarity about the functioning of the institution.

¹⁶ O. Ryndyk, “Welfare and Migration: Transition into and out of Welfare Benefits Receipt among Polish Migrant Workers in Norway,” M.A. dissertation, European Master in Migration and Intercultural relations, June 2013.

¹⁷ Source: Delphi study.

¹⁸ K. Slany, M. Ślusarczyk, Ł. Krzyżowski, *Wpływ współczesnych migracji Polaków na przemiany więzi społecznych, relacje w rodzinie i relacje międzygeneracyjne*, Komitet Badań nad Migracjami PAN, Warszawa. 2014; For the analysis of the functioning of Polish transnational families in Norway, see the results of the Transfam project, available at www.transfam.socjologia.uj.edu.pl/en_GB.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ T. Kalve, T. Dyrhaug, *Barn og unge med innvandrerbakgrunn i barnevernet 2009*, SSB, Oslo, 2011, http://ssb.no/emner/03/03/rapp_201139/rapp_201139.pdf.

Meanwhile, the third group of possible opportunities, but also challenges, identified by “Panel P” has to do with the use of migratory flows as a means of promoting Poland as a country, and as a factor facilitating cooperation between Poland and Norway.

What opportunity for Poland does Polish migration to Norway offer?	What challenges does Poland have to face because of Polish migration to Norway?
“Panel P”	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of remittances which results in better living standard in Poland. • Development of economic cooperation. • Opportunities for least qualified workers who could have had problems with finding employment in Poland. • Transfer of competences in the case of return migration. • Development of intercultural relations. • Development of positive image of Poland—country brand. • Possibility of transferring employment standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emigration of younger generation, quickly assimilating in Norway. • Outflow of workers. • Loss of skilled workers, for example, doctors, nurses, high-level specialists. • Settlement of Poles in Norway (permanent migration). • Family problems related to the departure, for example, the issue of care for the elderly. • Demographic problems in Poland due to the large scale of migration of people of working age.

Answers indicated by more than two respondents, from the most to the least popular. Source: Delphi study.

Although the fight against discrimination in the Norwegian labour market tops the “Panel P” recommendations for Polish policy-makers, it seems that even more focus is placed on policies aimed at supporting the development of the diaspora and its members’ continued relations to Poland. The reasons are clear. First, migration can both improve and damage the image of Poland abroad. Thus, there is a need not only to seize the promotional opportunity, but also to react against negative developments. Such an intervention was recently undertaken by the Polish ambassador in Norway, in relation to the controversial TV serial “Kampen for tilvarelsen.”²¹ The organisation of a competition for an “outstanding Pole in Norway” is meant both to consolidate the diaspora and to promote a more balanced vision of Poles in Norway. Similarly, many respondents think that more can be done in terms of economic, academic and cultural cooperation. Special attention is paid here to language matters. “Panel P” assessed Polish policy towards Polish language teaching in Norway as relatively well-conducted, with an average of 2.9 on the five-point scale. However, it must be noted that some of the responsibility connected with supporting sending country language learning lies also, at least formally, with the receiving country.²² Third, according to “Panel P,” social matters may require some sending country support. Respondents pointed inter alia to the possibility of creating “crisis centres” to help Poles who live abroad to cope with various types of conflict situations, be it in their relations with Norwegian institutions, or in their families.

²¹ See: <http://centrumprasowe.pap.pl/cp/pl/news/info/16261,13,msz:-reakcja-ambasady-rp-w-oslo-na-norweski-serial-%E2%80%9Ewalka-o-przetrwanie%E2%80%9D-%28komunikat%29;jsessionid=XYWI8pu0qDFCgCwEqIVxwCkH.undefined>.

²² In line with Directive 77/489.

What policies should be continued or undertaken by Poland to maximise the benefits and address the most pressing challenges brought by Polish migration to Norway?	
“Panel P”	
Please indicate all necessary.	Please indicate maximum three most important.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active fight against discrimination and illegal practices in on the labour market. • The Polish authorities should respond to any events or media coverage contributing to the creation of a negative image of Poles in Norway. • Creation of opportunities to learn and cultivate the Polish language, for both children and migrant workers. • Promotion of Polish culture and tourism, with the participation of Poles. • Creation of possibilities for re-acquisition of Polish citizenship by persons who have renounced it in order to acquire Norwegian citizenship. 	Lack of one dominating answer. Different respondents pointed mainly to the fight against discrimination on the labour market, and activities helping Poles to maintain ties with their homeland.

Answers indicated by more than a half of the respondents, from the most to the least popular. Source: Delphi study.

Closer Cooperation Needed

To a large extent, the smooth functioning of the free movement regime and back and forth (“liquid”²³) migration it generates, is dependent on the sending and receiving countries’ cooperation that assures, for example, the portability of rights. But their common interests extend well beyond the technicalities of the EU/EAA framework, especially when permanent settlement is becoming more widespread. Besides some common interests, such as dealing with the brain waste effect (working below one’s qualifications), migration is usually seen as a factor that can contribute to closer cooperation on many levels. The most popular indication of “Panel P-N” concentrated on the fight against discriminative and illegal practices on the labour market. There is also much more to do to facilitate skills recognition and entrepreneurship, both of which are factors contributing to the upward mobility of migrants and economic relations between states. In the wider realm of bilateral relations, support for cultural and academic exchange is perceived as a tool to create a necessary framework of common understanding of problems that can help to alleviate certain unavoidable tensions connected with large migratory flows. In this respect, EEA and Norway grants are thought to play a crucial role in stimulating research cooperation.

²³ For more on the term “liquid migration,” see: R. Black, G. Engbersen, M. Okólski, C. Pantiru, *A Continent Moving West? EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010.

How can Norway and Poland increase cooperation regarding the Polish diaspora in Norway?
“Panel P-N”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate on fighting illegal practices on the labour market, especially with regard to delegated workers. • Increase cooperation between cultural, academic and educational institutions. • Formalise a system of skills recognition and educational credentials. • Mutual language learning. • Supporting anti-discrimination campaigns. • Continue cooperation through research programmes. • Make sure that information on different business sectors is easily accessible to increase cooperation between companies.

Answers indicated by more than a four respondents, from the most to the least popular. Source: Delphi study.

The Third Side of the Coin—Diaspora Community

Whereas the concerns of “Panel N” were mainly connected with “fairness” and stability on the labour market, respondents on “Panel P” seemed to concentrate more on social issues and possible long-term developments. For both the sending and receiving country, the biggest governance challenge may lie not so much in the volume of migratory flows, but in their differentiated character. In the case of Poles in Norway, this means dealing with a dynamically-changing community with substantial numbers of temporary migrants, as well as growing permanent migration with different needs. For both panels, ensuring that the rights of workers are respected is fundamental. There is also a common belief that closer cooperation between both administration and societies could prevent, or would help resolve, potential tensions. The construction of the study focused on the receiving and sending country perceptions, but one cannot overlook the fact that much will depend not only on successful policies of both Poland and Norway, but also on the more active role to be played by the Polish diaspora itself.

This, however, might prove to be a hurdle as, generally, post-EU-accession migrants are relatively badly-organised and only rarely engage in the promotion of their country or any kind of social or cultural activities.²⁴ They also tend to have a negative or neutral/ambivalent opinion about Polish policy towards Poles abroad.²⁵ The social capital of the newest wave of Polish migration to Norway is also assessed as low,²⁶ and applications for projects submitted to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for diaspora-cooperation grants are scarce. These difficulties must, however, be put into a broader perspective. The Polish diaspora in Norway is a relatively recent social phenomenon, and is developing quite dynamically, which might bear fruit in the future. Currently, there are 27 different Polish organisations in Norway in contact with the Polish embassy.²⁷ Internet portals dedicated to the Polish diaspora allow for looser, network-type organisation. But with the more permanent settlement of tens thousands of Poles in Norway, and their more prominent role on the labour market, Poles in Norway may well become more active in pursuing their specific diaspora-related goals, and in supporting both Polish and Norwegian official policies aimed at achieving a higher level of bilateral political, social and economic cooperation, in which the very existence of the Polish diaspora in Norway is in itself an important contributing factor.²⁸


²⁴ See: A. Fiń et al., *Polityka polonijna w ocenie jej wykonawców i adresatów*, Policy Papers 11 (I), Instytut Zachodni, Poznań, 2013, pp. 43–54.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ See: E. Guribye et al., *Social Capital among Polish Migrants Families in Norway*, Transfam Progress Report Work Package 3, www.transfam.socjologia.uj.edu.pl/documents/32445283/3cc1226f-5149-48ac-97b1-07afade19e76.

²⁷ Data from the Polish embassy and consulate in Oslo.

²⁸ For more on the recent development of the Polish diaspora in Norway in a foreign policy context, see J.M. Godzimirski, “Polsk diaspora og norsk utenrikspolitikk,” *Internasjonal Politikk*, nr 4, 2011, pp. 615–641.



The GoodGov project explores how Poland and Norway can learn from each other in the crucial policy areas of security, energy and migration. This paper is one of three analyses devoted to the problem of migration and mobility in the European Union and the European Economic Area. It is one of the core issues in relations between sending countries, like Poland, and receiving countries, like Norway. The project is conducted by PISM in cooperation with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The project is managed by Lidia Puka (PISM). The content editor is Roderick Parkes (PISM).

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