
**EMIGRATION AND FACTORS DETERMINING
RETURN TO POLAND OF THE GRADUATES OF THE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ARTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF WARMIA AND MAZURY IN OLSZTYN**

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Key words: economic migration, labour market, work abroad, Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts, University of Warmia and Mazury.

Abstract

Migrating in order to find better living conditions is an unusual phenomenon, which is very difficult to verify. It has been typical for different groups of people for ages, either Poles have left their country to live in a state, where they were provided better economic and social conditions or political freedom. The phenomenon of economic migration of the Polish citizens after accession to the European Union structures was mainly caused by visible disproportions in level of earnings between Poland and Western countries. Primarily it has concerned young, well educated people, who perceived work abroad as an opportunity for higher earnings as well as chances for promotion or career.

The aim of the following article was to probe the interest of graduates of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn in working abroad as well as defining reasons of migrations. It was essential to identify personal reasons and also individual deciding factors that lead to migration. The research concerned a group of 1410 students, who represented three majors: Pedagogics, Political Studies and Sociology. The probe was taken on associative group of 325 respondents. The results of the research poll were presented in a descriptive form, as well as in tables and graphs.

The research showed that almost L of students from the examined Faculty considered the possibility to work abroad. For most of them the main reason for migration was better earnings (80 percent). The only motivations to come back or quit planning migration was a definite change on the labour market, higher wages and labour demand. Due to the low level of preparation in the time of the research the scale of actual migration could be smaller.

**EMIGRACJA I CZYNNIKI DECYDUJĄCE O POWROCIE DO KRAJU ABSOLWENTÓW
WYDZIAŁU NAUK SPOŁECZNYCH I SZTUKI
UNIwersYTETU WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIEGO W OLSZTYNIE**

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A b s t r a k t

Wędrowni ludności w poszukiwaniu lepszych warunków bytu są zjawiskiem niezwykle złożonym i trudnym do zweryfikowania. Migracje towarzyszyły ludności od wieków, również Polacy z różnych przyczyn opuszczali kraj, by zamieszkać w państwie, które gwarantowało im lepsze warunki ekonomiczne, społeczne czy wolność przekonań politycznych. Zjawisko migracji zarobkowej z Polski, która nastąpiła tuż po akcesji do Unii Europejskiej, głównie miało przyczynę w wyraźnych dysproporcjach w poziomie zarobków między Polską a krajami Europy Zachodniej. Dotyczyło przede wszystkim osób młodych i dobrze wykształconych, którzy w pracy na Zachodzie dostrzegli możliwość większych zarobków oraz szans na awans czy karierę.

Celem pracy było zbadanie zainteresowania studentów ostatnich lat studiów licencjackich i magisterskich Wydziału Nauk Społecznych i Sztuki Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie wyjazdami zagranicę oraz motywów decyzji o ewentualnym wyjeździe. Istotne było również ustalenie przyczyn osobistych oraz czynników indywidualnych decydujących o wyjeździe. Badaniem objęto populację 1410 studentów. Badane osoby reprezentowały 3 kierunki studiów: pedagogikę, politologię i socjologię. Badania przeprowadzono na łącznej grupie 325 respondentów, z przyczyn technicznych jednak nie uzyskano pożądanej liczby respondentów studiujących na studiach niestacjonarnych. Otrzymane wyniki badania ankietowego przedstawiono w formie opisowej, tabel, i rysunków.

Z przeprowadzonych badań wynika, że prawie $\frac{1}{4}$ studentów badanego wydziału rozważa możliwość podjęcia pracy zarobkowej za granicą. Dla większości głównym motywem skłaniającym do wyjazdu były wyższe zarobki (80%). Jedynie zmiana sytuacji na rynku pracy, wyższe zarobki i większy popyt na pracę mogłyby skłonić zdeterminowanych studentów do pozostania w kraju lub do powrotu z zaplanowanej już emigracji. Niski poziom stanu przygotowań w chwili przeprowadzania badania jednak mógł świadczyć o tym, że faktyczna liczba emigrantów mogła być niższa.

Introduction

Migration in search for better conditions of existence is an inseparable element of appropriate functioning of individuals in the society. The scope and importance of migrations evolved through centuries but have not been studied and classified in detail yet. With socioeconomic development those processes intensified and became the subject of scientific studies by economists and sociologists. Globalization, common availability of information, common access

to and cheaper and cheaper modes of movement contributed significantly to facilitating migration of the population.

Accession of Poland to the European Union in May 2004 opened the opportunity of taking up legal employment in some countries of the European Economic Area with prospects for full freedom of movement and taking up employment within the entire European Economic Area 7 years after accession. That liberalization of the European labor market created an opportunity for Polish citizens but as indicated by the most recent estimates, also a threat for the national economy as young, well-educated and entrepreneurial participants of the domestic labor market decided to make use of that opportunity.

Perception of significant disproportions in socioeconomic development, living standards and wages stimulates decisions concerning emigration while the current situation in the labor market making employment according to education acquired during the studies impossible also does not support the decision to stay in Poland. This results from maladjustment of the tertiary education structure to the needs of labor market and the requirements of the employers expecting from the applicants several years of professional experience, without which young graduates cannot expect satisfactory employment.

As a consequence, they frequently choose work below their qualifications that at the same time gives incompatibly higher income than employment in Poland in a position adequate to education. Young people often see work abroad as an opportunity to improve their material status and, with time, also an opportunity for development and professional career.

The aim of the article is to present the mechanisms of income migration and the opportunities for legal employment of Poles in the European labor market. The main goal of the study was to determine the interest among students of the last year at bachelor and master courses offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn in emigration and motivations for the decisions concerning possible emigration.

Methodology of studies

The studies covering the population of last year students of master degree courses at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn were conducted during the first year quarter of 2007 and covered students completing education at the end of the academic year of 2006/2007. The questionnaire composed of 33 questions, mainly half-open, and a detailed legend was the research tool designed to determine the readiness of future graduates for migration.

The study covered the population of 1410 students including 908 full time students and 502 extramural students. The respondents represented three courses of studies: Pedagogies, Political Sciences and Sociology. The size of the representative sample was calculated from the formula (SZREDER 2004, p. 121):

$$n = \frac{0,025 \cdot z^2_{\alpha/2} \cdot N}{0,25 \cdot z^2_{\alpha/2} + (N - 1) \cdot d^2}$$

where:

$z^2_{\alpha/2}$ – value of random variable Z with normal standardized distribution, for which $P(|Z| \leq z^2_{\alpha/2}) = 1 - \alpha$,

N – size of the studied population,

d – statistical error.

The samples calculated on that basis were 208 for full time students and 175 for extramural students. The study was carried out on the total group of 325 respondents, however, as a consequence of organization and specifics of education process no required number of respondents was obtained for extramural students population. The results of questionnaire study obtained were presented in the descriptive, tabulation and graphic formats.

Income migrations of Poles after accession to the European Union

Emigration of Poles is an important element in the history of the country and as a consequence Poland for decades has been considered a country of emigration and it has many years of emigration overseas that were initiated during the times of partitions of the country. During the recent history of Poland we can also see trends supportive for that phenomenon. Years 1989–2004 are characterized mainly by small-scale migration to countries such as Germany, France, Spain, Luxembourg and Belgium that took place on the basis of bilateral agreements between Poland and those countries. During the late 1990s and early 2000s around 400,000 Poles worked legally and ca. 150,000 illegally in the countries of the “EU Fifteen”, which resulted from the freedom of traveling regained after 1989 and elimination of the visa regimes (BONI 2005, pp. 182–183).

Nevertheless, a much higher freedom of migration did not cause an increase in the scale of emigration from Poland; to the contrary, it decreased the scale of it. On the other hand the scale of short-term migrations taking from a few to several weeks increased significantly (KACZMARCZYK, OKÓLSKI

2005, p. 13). At the same time it is worth noticing that after 1990 the profile of foreign migrations changed from long-term related mainly to political causes to seasonal migrations caused mainly by economic factors. That was in a way a symbol of Polish systemic transformation (KISIEL, SZCZEBIOT-KNOBLAUCH 2007, p. 608).

After the 1st of May 2004, employment of Poles in the European Union countries by sector did not change in any significant way as compared to the pre-accession situation (WIŚNIEWSKI, DUSZCZYK 2006, p. 17). In mid-2004 the media presented immense numbers of Poles that supposedly took up employment in other European Union countries; the slogans such as “departure fever” or *exodus*, mainly to the United Kingdom and Ireland were formulated. On the other hand the majority of published data present a more balanced estimates considering to a significant extent seasonal migrations frequently mistakenly interpreted as permanent emigration. Before the accession of Poland to the European Union, however, legal employment there was taken up by ca. 400,000 Polish citizens, mainly in Germany, with over 300,000 Poles migrating there every year, but they were mainly seasonal workers employed mainly in agriculture and hospitality services (DUSZCZYK 2006, p. 2). Considering the complexity of the migration as phenomenon the scale of migrations from Poland can only be estimated. The poles by Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej indicate that ca. 1.2 million Polish citizens work in the European Union (*Praca Polaków*. 2006, p. 1).

According to the data provided by the European Commission, immigrants from new accession countries in 2004 are much better educated than the population of the EU-15. It is worth to notice the general typology of Polish emigrants as they are mainly young people (18 – 34/37 years), possessing no family to support, mainly originating from areas with low level of urbanization, characterized by higher disproportions in incomes as well as exposed to unemployment and related social marginalization (*Trzy lata członkostwa...* 2007, pp. 58–60). The potential Polish emigrant is also a relatively well-educated person exposed to the phenomenon of *brain waste* (*Wpływ emigracji...* 2007, p. 17), i.e. employment of people with high qualifications in positions requiring no specialist education or earlier professional experience. In case of the extensive outflow of specialist labor we can talk about even the so-called *brain drain* (KACZMARCZYK, OKÓLSKI 2005, pp. 44–47).

From the perspective of the source country, in this case Poland, external migrations decrease the pressure on the labor market, which can lead to a decrease in the unemployment rate (*Wpływ emigracji...* 2007, pp. 24–25). In Poland, following the 1st of May 2004, a significant decrease in the unemployment level occurred coupled with an increase in the employment level, which, however, could not be linked directly to emigration. It should be assumed that

economic emigration was a significant, but not the determining factor of changes in the labor market (*Trzy lata...* 2007, p. 61). The outflow of professionals needed to secure basic public services such as health services or education, however, is an issue. The source country also loses a lot on education and training of people who emigrate to highly developed countries offering greater opportunities to well-educated employees after completing their education (*World Population...* 2006, p. 26).

From the demographic perspective, migrations have an important influence on age structure in the source country. Emigration of mainly young people leads to increased burdens for the society by the elderly and can have significant consequences for the social security system (*World Population...* 2006, p. 19). The reverse situation occurs in the receiving country where the number of people in productive age group increases mitigating increasing demographic problems of highly developed countries.

The psychological consequences of migration for the migrant and his family are also important. Separation from the keen, contact with the reality of a foreign country, frequently without knowledge of the language and culture of the receiving country, lead to serious psychological consequences such as alienation, sense of discrimination, loneliness in both the country of emigration and in the home country or even loss of health as a consequence of work under difficult conditions and significant overwork (SZCZEBIOT-KNOBLAUCH 2006, *Biul. Migracyjny* 2007).

Economic migrations of graduates of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts

Migration aimed at improvement of socioeconomic situation has accompanied people forever. Also in the contemporary world it is impossible to stop that phenomenon because of both progressive processes of integration offering freedom of movement and employment and perceptible disproportions in the level of income and social life. Economic migration offers unlimited opportunities to young and well-educated people, also those who have just graduated from their tertiary studies.

Students of the University of Warmia and Mazury are not an exception and readily declare the willingness for foreign migration to take a better-paid employment. Studies conducted in 2007 among those students indicated that over 1/4 of them ending their studies planned to take up employment abroad (SZCZEBIOT-KNOBLAUCH, KISIEL 2007, p. 15). Among the graduates from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts that trend was present at a slightly lower level.

The studies on a group of students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts completing their education during the academic year of 2006/2007 indicated that 25% of full time students and 15% of extramural students declared their willingness to migrate abroad (Fig. 1).

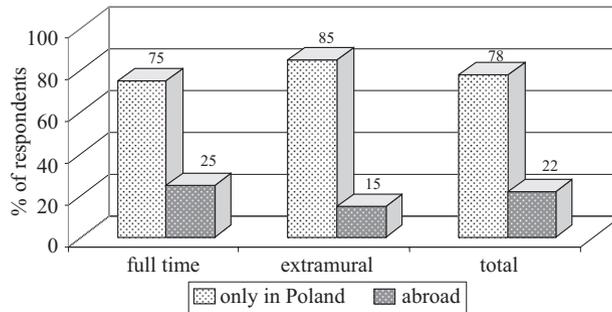


Fig. 1. Place of search for employment after graduation from studies

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

Totaling the data obtained shows that out of the total number of 326 students 22% of the respondents wanted to take care of their professional career abroad. It should be added that many people declaring willingness to search for employment abroad assumed that they would also conduct such search in Poland. Almost 40% of respondents declaring emigration for a job stressed that they did not exclude the possibility of finding employment in Poland where they planned starting their search and only in case such search would not give a satisfying employment opportunity they would emigrate.

The theory of migration presents purely economic motivations related to improvement of the financial standing of the migrants and their families staying in the source country as the main factor for economic migration. It can be concluded then that the current economic emigration from Poland is a phenomenon of strictly economic nature that is caused by the differences in remuneration rates between the home country and the target country of emigration. It should be highlighted, however, that this is a necessary condition, but not the sufficient one (KACZMARCZYK 2006, p. 7).

During the study covering the students of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts the respondents were enquired about the main reasons for their emigration after graduation. The respondents determined in their answers the level of significance of the factors given as the factors determining the emigration. In line with the assumptions of the theory of economies the main reason given was the higher level of remuneration in the target country (almost 80% of responses) and difficult conditions in the labor market in Poland (almost 60% of responses) (Fig. 2).

The results obtained from the studies can be compared with the results of studies conducted in May 2004 in the ten largest academic centers in Poland. The study conducted immediately after Poland's accession to the European Union indicated similar dependences concerning the motivations for economic emigration among students including mainly low wages and bad situation in the Polish labor market as well as perceptibly better working conditions abroad (*Migracje zarobkowe... 2004*, p. 97).

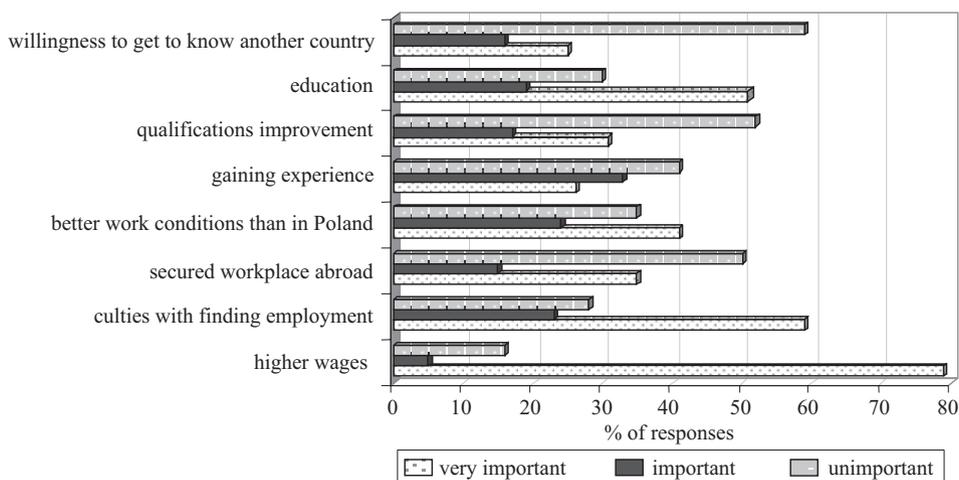


Fig. 2. Reasons for taking employment abroad

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

The main factors influencing the choice of the destination country for migration was mainly the level of wages, which was considered very important by ca. 80% of the respondents. Over 60% of the responses concerned ease of finding employment abroad. Over 50% of the respondents considered presence of the family or friends in the destination country very important, probably to compensate for the earlier mentioned "costs of separation" and facilitate living abroad (Fig. 3).

It should be acknowledged, however, that the countries most frequently declared as destinations of employees; migration were within the distance of 1–3 hours by air from Poland. Over 40% of the respondents chose the United Kingdom as the country of destination, the country of the largest economic migration of Poles during the years 2004–2007. It was followed by Ireland (14%) and Germany (8%). The United States of America indicated by 9% of the respondents was the only country outside European Economic Area indicated. This could result from the requirement to obtain the entrance visa required from the Poles and the difficulties with legal employment in that country (Fig. 4).

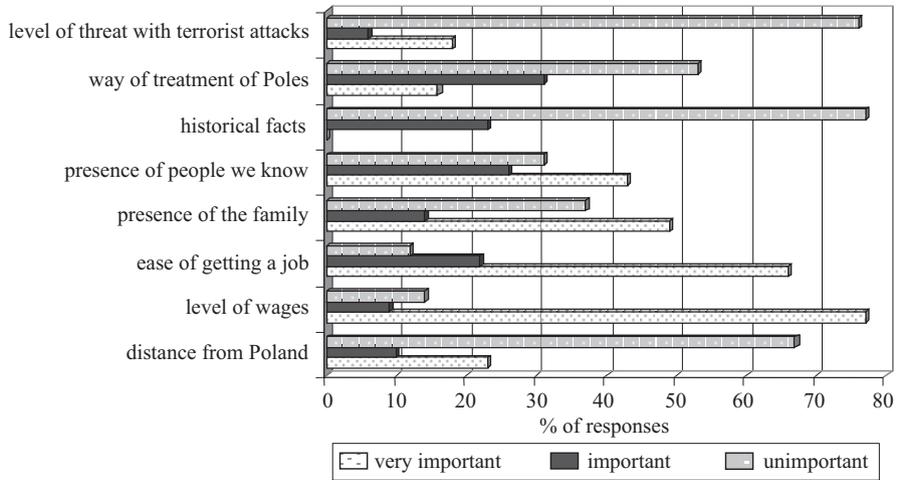


Fig. 3. Factors determining the choice of the target country of migration
 Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

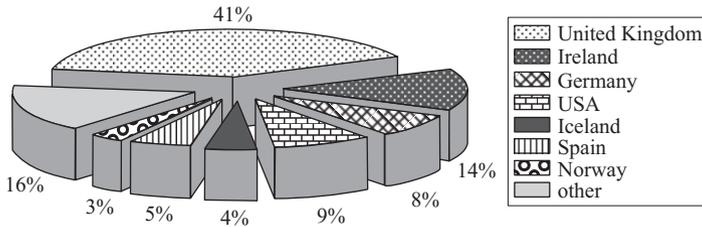


Fig. 4. Destination countries of migration
 Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

Analyzing the phenomenon of migration from the perspective of the push-pull theory indicates a strong influence of both those factors that must appear for the migration to take place (RYMARCZYK 2006, p. 152). According to GUZEK (2001, p. 156) during the entire modern era economic migration was determined not by the positive stimuli encouraging people to migrate to other countries to take up employment but the negative stimuli of the home country. He mentions in particular hunger or threat of hunger as well as existence conditions too far from the social minimum resulting from overpopulation, unemployment and general economic backwardness.

The large difference in the level of remuneration between the Polish labor market and the labor markets of the Western countries of the European Union is the major reason of economic emigration from Poland. However, the analysis

of the human resources consulting company HRK Partners indicates that work abroad is much more profitable in case of laborers who, e.g. in Germany can earn five times more than in Poland, than in case of a person with tertiary education. Currently the people emigrating from Poland are mainly graduates of tertiary schools and specialists. That later group is willing to emigrate, however, only by the perspective of two- three-times higher wages (KRAKOWIAK 2007).

Probably the expectations concerning the level of remuneration are linked to the intended allocation of money earned and this depends heavily on the time of the planned emigration or the material standing of the potential migrant. Studies conducted among the Poles working in the United Kingdom and Ireland show that in the country where they live they allocate the majority of their earnings on current expenditures related to support (90% of responses), over 40% of responses indicated entertainment and travel and only 30% of responses considered savings and other investments (GARAPICH, OSIPOVIČ 2007, pp. 10–11).

Expectations concerning earnings among the students of the Faculty of Social Sciences and arts were highly diversified and for obvious reasons they were higher than remuneration levels offered in Poland. The largest number of the respondents expected remuneration at the level of PLN 3,100 – 5,000, the next group were students who would be satisfied earning abroad from PLN 5,100 to 7,000. Every fifth respondent from the Faculty would aim at a remuneration exceeding PLN 7,000 while working abroad (Fig. 5).

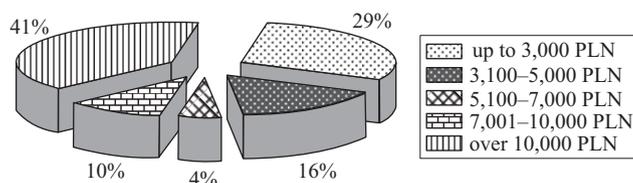


Fig. 5. Expected value of remuneration abroad

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

Every fourth student of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts intended to allocate the money earned for purchase of a flat. The other investments the respondents would like to make using funds earned abroad were: establishing of own business (16,4%) and improvement of professional qualifications (14,8%). Only 13,3% of the respondents indicated current expenditures as the main method for spending foreign earnings.

During the coming years Polish economy will probably develop at the rate of 5–6% per year, twice or trice faster than the economy of the United

Kingdom, the country that received the largest wave of immigrants from Poland. The European Commission projections indicate that within two years unemployment in Poland will decrease to 6%, the same level as the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom (BIELECKI, BLICHAZ 2007).

Good standing of the economy is also supportive for increase of wages. The data of the Central Statistical Office indicate that in 2007 wages increased by over 10%. But this data applies to the sector of enterprises only. In many cases the increase was even higher, e.g. in some services. On those bases numerous economists projected a wave of returns from emigration that stops being profitable (ZUBER 2008). The most recent report prepared by the British Institute for Public Policy Research and the Polish Institute of Public Affairs indicates that out of over one million Poles who emigrated from Poland after the 1st of May 2004 to the United Kingdom, around a half returned to Poland. At the same time the number of people coming to the United Kingdom decreases systematically (LORENZ 2008).

Many people from the beginning assume emigration for a specific time to accumulate a specific amount of capital and return to Poland to live and work there. 43% of the respondents considered earning the required amount of funds to be the factor that is most important and decisive as concerns return from emigration indifferent of its duration. Others do not plan to return, are undecided or make the possible return dependent on many factors. Almost 70% of the respondents considered increase of wages in Poland the most important factor determining their return to Poland; this was followed by an increase in the number of jobs available in Poland (45% of responses) (Fig. 6).

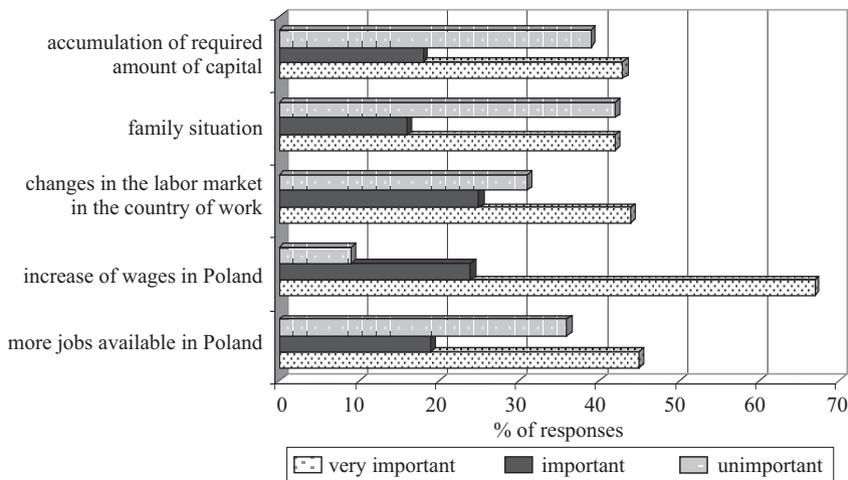


Fig. 6. Factors conditioning return to Poland

Source: Prepared on the basis of own studies.

The above factors can be classified as attracting and motivating return from emigration because of the positive phenomena in the mother country. There are also factors pushing the immigrants out because of unfavorable situation in the country of immigration among which the respondents specified negative changes in the labor market in the receiving country. 44% of responses pointed at that factor as very important. The studies conducted among the students of the University of Warmia and Mazury indicate that remorse related to leaving the family and the country and taking up employment abroad are an important factor motivating return from emigration. The responses also included answers indicating patriotism of the respondents who felt that they are behaving wrongly in relation to the homeland that gave them, among others, their education (SZCZEBIOT-KNOBLAUCH, KISIEL 2007, p. 60).

Conclusion

Loud discussions concerning the wave of economic migrations and consequences of that phenomenon for the economy of Poland in 2007 changed the direction of thinking among the economists and politicians as the wave of Polish migrants stopped swelling. The numbers of Poles returning to Poland exceeds the number of those who emigrate in search for employment. The decisions concerning return are influenced by recession and decrease in the value of euro or pound relative to Polish zloty, which makes employment abroad not so profitable as it used to be immediately after Poland's accession to the European Union. The other reasons are cultural differences and difficulties with assimilation abroad. It can be assumed then that a significant proportion of educated young people who left Poland after graduation from studies will return to Poland where they will find satisfactory employment.

On the basis of empirical studies conducted among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts the following conclusions can be formulated:

1. The propensity for migration among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts was determined at the level of 22%. This means that every fourth student declared willingness to migrate abroad to search for income generating employment. Three out of four respondents were in the age of 23–26 years characteristic for the profile of a migrating person.

2. The level of remuneration (77%) and ease in finding a job (66%) were the main reasons for the choice of a specific country as the target for migration. Based on those premises the respondents chose the United Kingdom as their destination the most frequently (41%). The UK was followed by Ireland (14%), Germany (8%) and the United States of America (9%), that is countries with the highest percentages of Polish immigrants.

3. Almost 90% of the responses from the respondents pointed at higher wages as the main expectation from work abroad. At the same time more than a half of the respondents expected to acquire professional experience and secure better living for the family. The respondents expected mainly the wages equivalent to PLN 3,100–5,000 (41%) or PLN 5,100–7,000 (29 %).

4. Permanent employment contract consistent with the education they possessed was a factor that the respondents specified as very important in taking the decision on resignation from emigration (78%). Students made the decision concerning the return from emigration dependent on changes in the labor market in Poland: increase of wages (67%) and higher demand for labor (45%). Many people planned emigration for the purpose of accumulating a specific amount of capital after accumulating which they planned to return (43%).

On the basis of studies conducted among students of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Arts the estimated percentage of graduates who emigrated in search for a job after graduation can be given. The low level of preparation for emigration at the time of conducting the study could however indicate that the actual number of emigrants was lower. The respondents mentioned positive changes in the labor market as the factor motivating for return. In 2007 in Poland an increase of wages occurred and the demand for labor increased; the media also report that the numbers of returns are higher than the numbers of departures. Such changes are a positive factor for development of the economy and can contribute significantly to decreasing the scale of migrations of the Poles.

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