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Return Migration of Higher Educated Poles in Times of Economic Crisis

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Abstract

Migration is a very important socio-economic issue in the contemporary world. One of the interesting and pertinent research problems worth considering concerns the scale and nature of migration from countries which entered the European Union in 2004. The enlargement of the EU led to a significant increase in the number of part-time/temporary migrants. According to statistical data, the number of Polish emigrants increased nearly four times from 451 thousand in 2002 to 1720 thousand in 2012. In the context of global economic crisis, there appeared a number of questions about the international migration and return migration of Poles. This paper describes migration and return migration of higher educated Poles. Based on empirical research, main emigration countries are taken into account together with Polish migrants' professions. The paper also aims to establish whether Polish migrants' jobs are commensurate with their qualifications. Furthermore, main reasons for return migration are shown and elaborated upon in the context of economic crisis and migrants' plans for the future.

Keywords: Return Migration, Economic Crisis

1. Introduction

*„Migration means life and progress;
a sedentary population stagnation”*

(Ravenstein 1889)

Migrations constitute a significant socioeconomic issue in the modern-day world. As a result of globalization processes and the resulting integration in social and economic terms, international transfers of populations assumed a broad and mass scale character. Inhabitants of both the developing countries and the highly developed ones take part in migrations, although the scale, structure, reasons and consequences of these transfers are diverse.

In the first decade of the 21st century, one can observe a growing interest in the problem of emigration from Poland in the academic circles and the mass media. This is a result of Poles' increasing participation in temporary emigration because of Poland's accession to the European

Union and gradual implementation of the principle of free movement of persons. A significant part of the population of Polish emigrants is constituted by young and relatively well educated persons who often get employed below their qualifications. This trend may raise concerns about the depreciation of Polish emigrants' social capital.

Taking the above factors into account, this article will be devoted to the problem of emigration and return migrations of higher educated persons. In the first part main migration trends in Poland will be discussed, in particular, the scale and directions of the movements. The structure of migrating persons will be presented using the criterion of education and the determinants of higher educated persons' migrations will be identified. In the next section attention will be focused on the return migrations of higher educated persons, and results of original empirical research will be demonstrated as regards, among other things, countries from which Polish emigrants returned, type of job performed abroad and the issue of its commensurability with emigrants' professional qualifications. In addition, main reasons for return migrations will be established and it will be possible to verify the hypothesis that the economic crisis and the resulting situation on the labour market in the countries receiving immigrants have a negligible influence on the decisions made by Polish migrants. The results of the empirical research will be considered against to theoretical migration frameworks, i.e. New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM).

2. The influence of Poland's accession to the European Union on Poles' migrations

The essence and nature of contemporary emigration processes in which Poles participate are determined by Poland's accession to the European Union. As a result of integration with European communities, the citizens of member states acquired citizenship of the EU (which is complementary to the citizenship of the country of origin). One of the resulting rights was people's freedom to move. Together with free movement of capital, services and goods, it establishes four basic principles that helped form the unified EU market (Organiściak-Krzykowska 2012). As a result of implementing it, Polish citizens obtained the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States and are entitled to take up employment there.¹ During the pre-accession negotiations it was agreed upon that countries of the "old" EU-15 have the right to impose transitional periods while making available their labour markets to immigrants. Great Britain, Ireland and Sweden decided not to benefit from this right, allowing Poles to take up employment within their territories immediately after accession. In 2006 the same decision was made by Finland, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy. One year later freedom of employment was introduced by the Netherlands and Luxembourg and in 2008 by France. During the last two-year transitional period, labour markets were opened by Belgium and Denmark (2009) and Germany and Austria (2011), which maintained restrictions concerning freedom of movement of employed persons for the longest period of time, fearing an influx of too many immigrants from new member states.

¹ Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC.

Poles' permanent migrations abroad constitute a small part of Poland's inhabitants' actual migrations, which are predominantly temporary (short term and long term). It should be noted that permanent migrations are often preceded by migrations for fixed periods of time, which do not require de-registration, which, in turn, constitutes a necessary condition in the case of permanent migrations.

On the basis of the data presented in table 1, it can be observed that in the whole period under analysis (the years 1990-2012) Poland remained an emigration country with negative migration balance. This means that the number of definitive emigrants was bigger than the number of persons moving to Poland permanently. Since the 90's of the 20th century until 2006, the number of Polish permanent migrants has been on the increase. 2006 saw the highest number for definitive emigration – 46,9 thous. persons. In comparison with 2005, the number of emigrants increased over two times. Thus in 2006 the migration balance reached the biggest negative value (-36,1 thous.). Since that year a significant drop in the size of this balance was noted (up to -1,2 thous. in 2009), which was connected with the diminishing number of permanent emigrants and the simultaneous increase in the number of definitive immigrants.

Table 1 International migrations of population for permanent residence in the years 1990-2012

Specification	Number of migrants (w thous.)										
	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Emigration	18,4	26,3	27,0	22,2	46,9	35,4	30,1	18,6	17,3	19,8	21,2
Immigration	2,6	8,1	7,3	9,3	10,8	14,9	15,2	17,4	15,2	15,5	14,5
Migration balance	-15,8	-18,2	-19,7	-12,9	-36,1	-20,5	-14,9	-1,2	-2,1	-4,3	-6,7

Source: *Rocznik Demograficzny* [Demographic Yearbook], GUS Warszawa 2012, *Mały rocznik statystyczny* [Small Statistical Yearbook] *Polski*, GUS, Warszawa 2013.

While Poland's accession to the EU did not significantly influence the size of permanent emigration (an observation confirmed by negative migration balance which has persisted for decades and which makes Poland a traditional emigration country), the stream of temporary migrations has increased several times.

The information concerning Poles' temporary emigration is provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS). The data aggregated by GUS are estimates and refer to temporary emigration understood as migrations abroad of persons who did not officially change their permanent address in Poland and remain abroad for no longer than 3 months (until 2006 this criterion amounted to 2 months) (Information...2013).

The data presented in table 2 shows that the number of people involved in temporary migrations in the years 2002-2011 has been systematically increasing. In the pre-accession period (according to National Census from 2002) 786 thousand Poles stayed abroad, whereas in 2005 the number of Poles involved in temporary emigration nearly doubled and amounted to 1450 thousand. 2007

was particularly strong in terms of the scale of temporary emigration – during that year more than 2,27 million people were involved in migrations on a non-permanent basis, the highest number noted so far. Starting with current year, because of the global economic crisis one can observe a slight decrease in the number of Poles involved in temporary emigration (up to 2210 thous. in 2008 and 2000 thous. temporary emigrants in 2010). However, the National Census data for 2011 indicate that the number of temporary emigrants increased by 17 thous. in comparison with the previous year and amounted to 2017 thous. in 2011 r, while in 2012 it increased by another 113 thous. A decisive majority of temporary emigrants (over 77 %) stays abroad for more than 12 months.

Table 2 Temporary emigration from Poland in the years 2002-2012 by country

Country	Number of emigrants in thous.									
	2002 (according to 2002 National Census)	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 (according to 2011 National Census)	2012
Total	786	1000	1450	1950	2270	2210	2100	2000	2017	2130
Europe, incl.:	461	770	1200	1610	1925	1887	1765	1685	1693	1816
EU-27 (until 2006 EU-25)	451	750	1170	1550	1860	1820	1690	1607	1622	1720
Austria	11	15	25	34	39	40	36	29	24	28
Belgium	14	13	21	28	31	33	34	45	47	48
Cyprus	.	.	.	.	4	4	3	3	3	2
Denmark	.	.	.	.	17	19	20	19	18	23
Finland	0,3	0,4	0,7	3	4	4	3	3	2	2
France	21	30	44	49	55	56	60	60	62	63
Greece	10	13	17	20	20	20	16	16	17	14
Spain	14	26	37	44	80	83	84	48	45	37
Netherlands	10	23	43	55	98	108	98	92	92	97
Ireland	2	15	76	120	200	180	140	133	131	118
Germany	294	385	430	450	490	490	465	440	437	500
Portugal	0,3	0,5	0,6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Czech Republic	.	.	.	.	8	10	9	7	7	8
Sweden	6	11	17	25	27	29	31	33	34	38
Great Britain	24	150	340	580	690	650	595	580	601	637
Italy	39	59	70	85	87	88	88	92	94	97
Non-EU countries, incl.:	10	20	30	60	65	67	75	78	71	96
Norway	-	.	.	.	36	38	45	50	43	65

Source: Information about the size and directions of emigration from Poland in the years 2004-2012, GUS, Warszawa 2013.

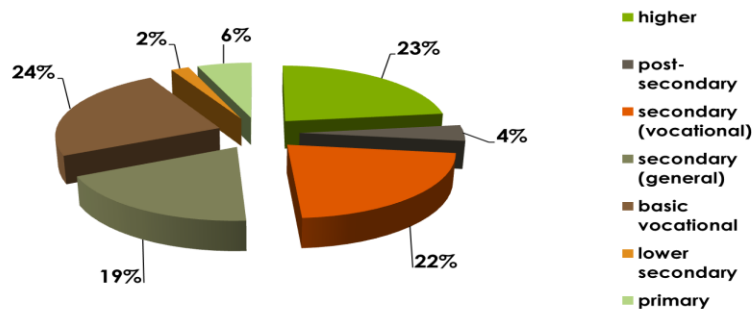
It should be emphasized that emigration for temporary residence concerns especially going to the European Union countries (ca 80% of the emigrating persons). In the years 2004-2011 the number of persons residing temporarily within the territories of these countries rose over two times (from 750 thous. in 2004 to 1720 thous. in 2012). Among the EU countries, the most popular destinations for Polish post-accession emigration for temporary residence are Great Britain, Germany and Ireland. What needs to be emphasized is the fact that temporary emigration to Great Britain increased almost thirty times in the years 2002-2006, and to Ireland – one hundred times in the years 2002-2007. Germany has been a popular destination for Polish emigrants for years, due to its geographical location and well developed migration networks. Consequently, temporary emigration to this country remained high both in the pre-accession period and the post-accession one, despite the fact that until 1.05.2011 access to the German labour market was formally denied. Additionally, starting with 2007 Polish emigrants have been more and more interested in going to Norway (a non-EU country), whose labour market was opened to EU citizens on the basis of Agreement on the European Economic Area. This trend was a result of a relatively good situation on the Norwegian labour market, as opposed to other European countries.²

3. Educational determinants of emigration processes of higher educated Poles

Migration structure is determined by various sociodemographic characteristics of the persons involved in migrating. Among the most important features distinguishing migrants one can enumerate sex, age and place of residence, and, most relevantly from the point of view of this paper, education.

On the basis of the information from the National Census of Population and Housing conducted in Poland in 2011, one can conclude that temporary emigration is taken up predominantly by people who have at least secondary education (nearly 70% emigrants). Nearly one out of four emigrants was higher educated. Persons with lower secondary education and primary education (2% and 6%, respectively) were least inclined to be involved in emigration (Chart 1).

Chart 1 Emigration from Poland for temporary residence in 2011, by educational structure



² During the economic crisis the rate of unemployment in Norway held steady at 3,1-3,2% (in the years 2009-2012), while in Great Britain it increased two times (from 3,9% in 2006 to 7,9% in 2012) and in Ireland – three times (from 4,4% in 2006 to 14,7% in 2012). Eurostat (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>).

As the experience of Poland and other emigration countries demonstrates, a high propensity for work-related migrations is typical for relatively well educated persons, whereas lower educated persons are underrepresented (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009).

The selective nature of migration processes resulting from the issue of education may lead to the danger of the so-called brain drain. This phenomenon consists in departure of highly qualified individuals. On the other hand, the fact that higher educated persons take up jobs below their qualifications may result in the so-called brain waste (Kaczmarczyk, Tyrowicz).

While identifying the reasons why individuals having a specific level of education get involved in the post-accession temporary migration, one should draw attention to the shaping of educational structure of Poland's population (table 3). Since mid-nineties of the 20th century, considerable changes have been taking place as regards the number of people with higher education. The percentage of individuals who graduated from higher education schools increased from 6,5% in 1995 to 20,6% in 2011. This trend was caused, among other things, by transformations of Poland's higher education system, which were referred to as educational boom (i.e. the creation of non-public higher education schools). As a result, since the beginning of the nineties of the previous century, the number of higher education schools increased four times, from 112 in 1990 to 453 in 2012.³ In connection with the above tendency, the number of students also significantly increased. In the academic year 1990/1991 Poland had over 390 thous. students, whereas in the years 2011/2012 that number amounted to 1,76 million individuals. Quite exceptional was the academic year 2005/2006, during which Polish higher education schools had 1,95 million individuals (Szkolnictwo wyższe... 2013).

Table 3 Educational structure of Poland's population – age 13 and older in the years 1995-2011 (in %)

Level of education	Years				
	1995	2002	2005	2008	2011
Higher	6,8	11,1	14,2	17,4	20,6
Secondary	27,1	32,4	33,0	33,6	30,5
Basic vocational	25,9	23,8	23,0	22,3	22,8
Lower secondary and primary	33,7	29,8	27,3	24,9	24,5
Incomplete primary	6,4	2,9	2,5	1,8	1,6

Source: Organiściak-Krzykowska, Janusz 2013.

³ Rocznik Statystyczny RP 2002-2013, GUS, Warszawa.

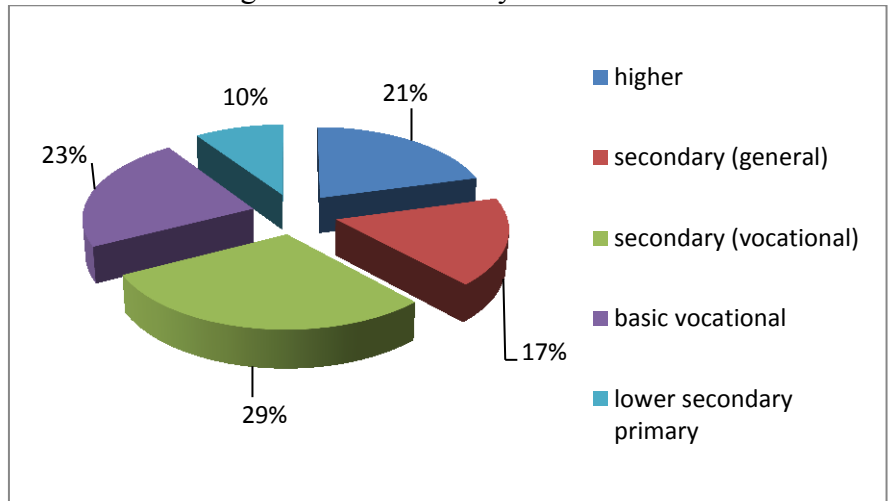
The educational structure of Poland’s population presented above partly explains the fact that a relatively big percentage of higher educated persons get involved in emigration from Poland.

4. Return migrations of higher educated Poles

In connection with the high number and structure of post-accession temporary emigration from Poland there emerges the interesting question of the nature of higher educated persons’ returns from economic migration to Poland. In order to find answers, in the years 2011-2013, using survey method, an original empirical research was conducted among 2857 persons who returned from emigration and registered in county job agencies in the regions of eastern Poland.

On the basis of this research it was established that the educational structure of persons returning from economic migration was similar to the educational structure of persons emigrating abroad. The tendency to return was the strongest among persons with secondary vocational education (nearly 30% of those returning). One out of five remigrants under analysis was higher educated (chart 2). It turns out that higher educated persons go away and come back in equal measure.

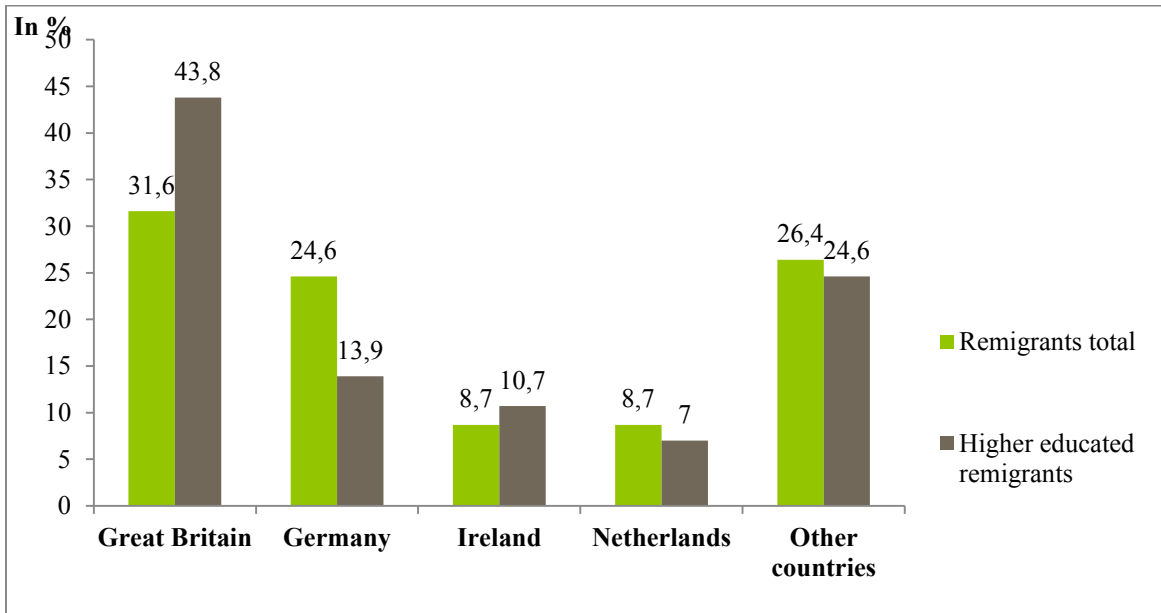
Chart 2 Return migrations to Poland by educational structure



Source: Study on the basis of individual research.

The structure of return migrations by the country of last emigration has been shaped similarly to the above mentioned emigration tendencies, although one can notice certain differences in this aspect between the total returns and the returns of highly educated remigrants. Persons who were higher educated most often returned from Great Britain (43% out of the respondents belonging to this educational category), Germany (nearly one out of five respondents), Ireland and the Netherlands (8,7 and 8,7% respondents, respectively). As far as the total population of respondents was concerned, 32% of them left Great Britain and nearly one out of four respondents returned from Germany.

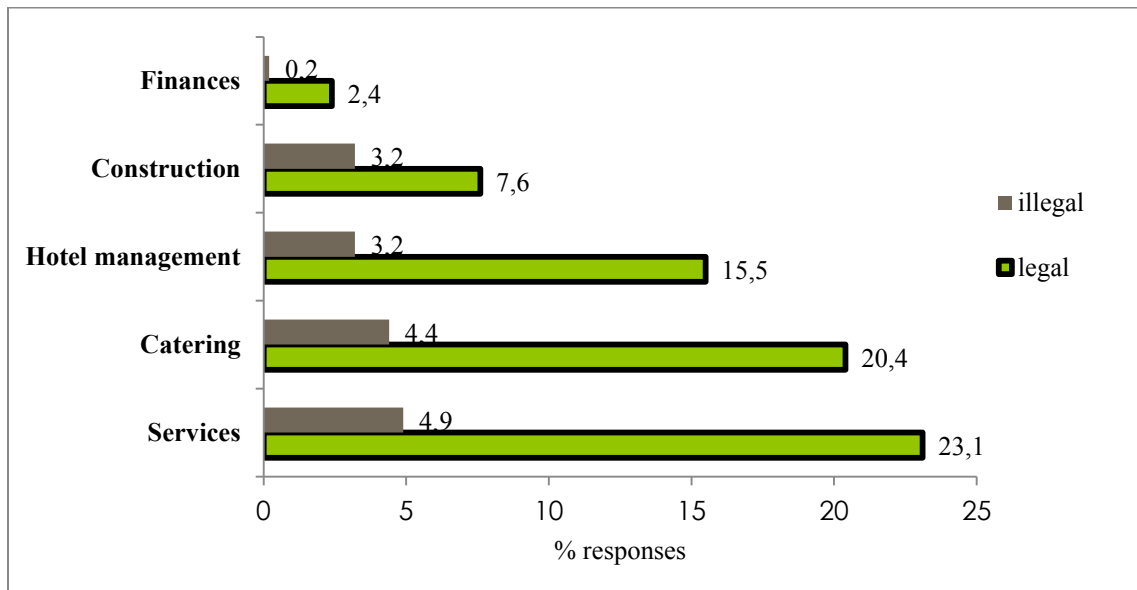
Chart 3 Return migrations of higher educated persons by country of last residence



Source: Study based on individual research.

An important issue in the survey was obtaining information about the type of job performed abroad in the context of its commensurability with the emigrants' professional qualifications. Highly qualified emigrants from Poland took up employment mainly in the sectors connected with services (28%), catering (24,8%) and hotel management (18,7%). Legal employment was the dominant form.

Chart 4. Type of job performed abroad



Source: Study based on individual research.

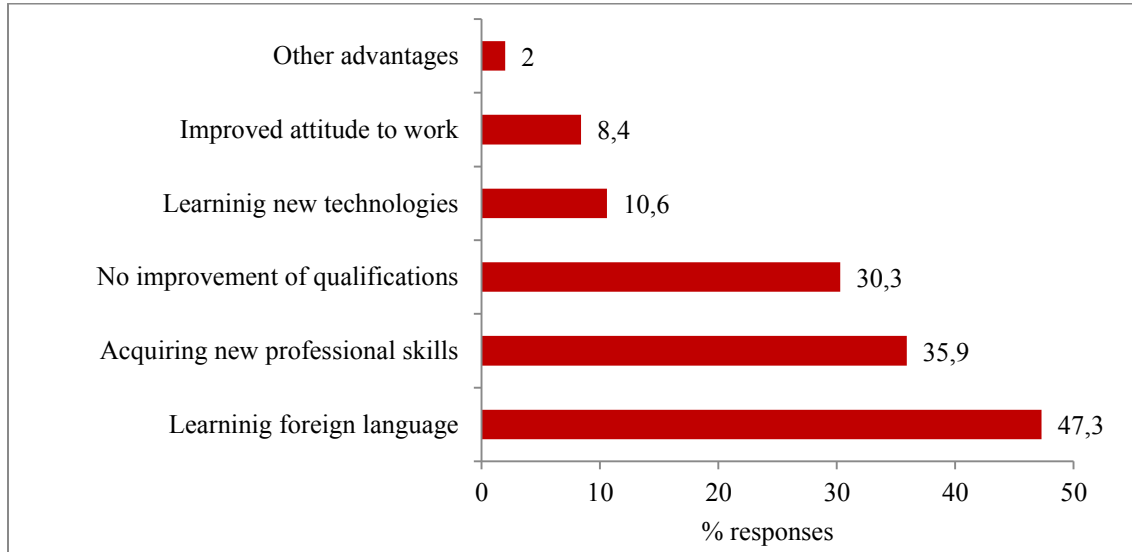
Unfortunately, however, almost 2/3 of higher educated remigrants admitted that they worked abroad below their qualifications, and only 18% stated that their employment was commensurate with their professional qualifications. The results obtained within this category of remigrants may be worrying because of the danger of brain waste. In a 2007 OECD report titled “International Migration Outlook”, this phenomenon is referred to as occupational over-qualification and concerns persons whose professional qualifications are higher than the job-related requirements. On their return home such persons can be subjected to double marginalization resulting from lack of work commensurate with their qualifications and to difficulties in reintegration on the domestic labour market. This can affect higher educated persons in a particularly strong way since while staying abroad and performing jobs which are incommensurate with their education they suffer from a break in their professional career (Iglićka 2010).

From a different point of view, emigrants’ taking up employment below their professional competences is often a deliberate action and finds its justification in the theory of dual labour market (Piore 1979). This behaviour is a consequence of economic reasons for the mobility of the employees, whose goal is to generate financial means. The issue of how prestigious the job is seems to be of secondary importance. Emigrants take up employment in the so-called secondary labour sector⁴ in response to the demand from foreign employers. The remuneration offered (relatively higher than in the country of origin) to immigrants and the temporary nature of the job compensate the inconveniences resulting from taking up employment below their professional qualifications.

Despite taking up employment which is not commensurate with their education, migrants view positively the professional experiences gained as a result of economic emigration (chart 5). Nearly half of the higher educated respondents appreciated the opportunity to learn a foreign language while staying abroad for economic reasons. Another advantage, mentioned by more than one-third of those polled, was the acquisition of new professional skills. Additionally, ca 10 % respondents considered learning about new technologies to be a valuable experience. Performing a job abroad also influenced the improvement of work attitudes in general.

⁴ Typically, jobs taken up in the secondary sector of the labour market are remunerated with lower salaries, lower prestige, and limited opportunities for professional promotion in comparison with the conditions offered to employees in the primary sector.

Chart 5. The influence of working abroad on the improvement of remigrants' qualifications



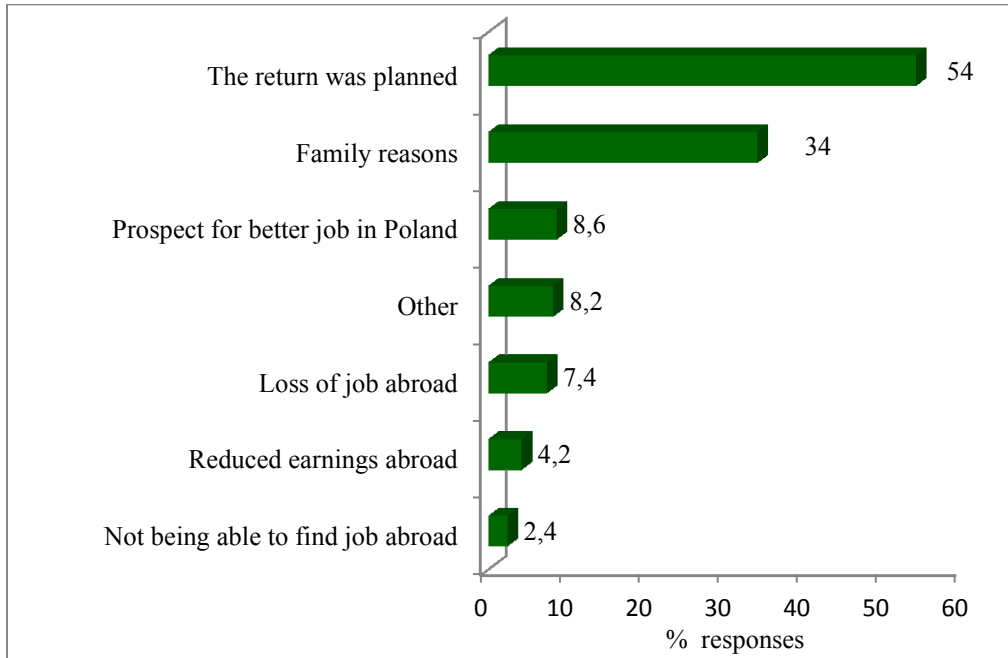
Source: Study on the basis of individual research.

The above mentioned advantages higher educated migrants benefit from while working abroad may prove to be an important asset when they seek employment after the return to their native country. In particular, potential employers are likely to appreciate foreign language skills and contact with new technologies. Based on this assumption, it can be argued that finding employment below one's qualifications abroad should not be perceived only in the context of brain waste. The essential thing is learning new skills, which enrich the quality of remigrants' social capital and may turn out to be helpful in the process of readaptation on the labour market in the migrants' country of origin.

An important issue in the debates concerning migration processes are determinants of returns from economic migration to Poland. Both scholars (e.g. Szyłko-Skoczny 2009; Żołędowski 2009) and the mass media made the assumption that the worsening situation on the international labour market, a consequence of global economic crisis, would have an impact on the increasing number of return migrations to Poland. Therefore, an important part of the empirical research was to establish the actual reasons for remigration.

Over one half of higher educated respondents admitted that their return from economic migration was planned by them. This was due to the specific type of mobility they opted for, namely the so-called temporary migration, which basically means going away for a specific period of time with the intention of coming back. In addition, one-third of the remigrants under analysis returned to their country of origin due to family issues. On the other hand, the situation on the labour market in the emigration countries was cited as the reason for returns relatively less frequently. Only 7,4% respondents mentioned loss of job abroad. Reduced earnings and the impossibility of finding employment influenced the decision to return to Poland in the case of 4% and 2% of the respondents, respectively (chart 6).

Chart 6 Reasons for return emigration of higher educated persons



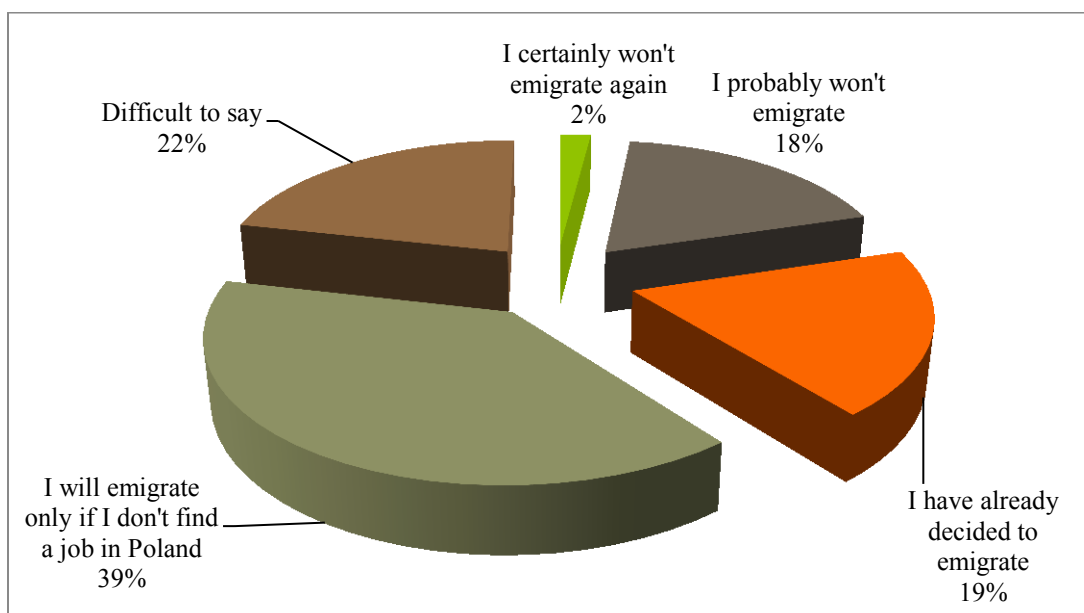
Source: Study based on individual research.

The results of the research unequivocally demonstrate that higher educated Poles' returns were determined mainly by the realization of migration plan. This state of things can be accounted for thanks to the theoretical foundations of New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), which emphasize the temporary nature of migration and the fact that return is perceived as part of a certain migration strategy. Return migration is a consequence of achieving economic goals (in the form of higher earnings, savings, and money transfers) (Stark 1991).

In addition, by referring to the typology of remigration created by F. Cerase (1974) it is possible to term higher educated persons' returns from economic migration as a return of conservatism. This type of return refers to those persons who achieved their economic goals during emigration and return to the country of their origin in order to spend the money they earned abroad.

Another important problem is an assessment of the permanence of returns from economic migrations. Research conducted so far demonstrates that only 20% of higher educated respondents were not going to take part in economic emigration again. Nearly one out of five respondents already decided to go abroad again, while two-fifths of the respondents explained that making a decision like that would depend on the difficulty of finding employment in Poland (chart 7).

Chart 7 Higher educated persons' emigration plans



Source: Study based on individual research.

Based on the results of the research and R. King's theoretical framework (1978), it is possible to distinguish types of higher educated Poles' return migrations depending on the degree of permanence of these returns. The dominant forms are seasonal returns (involving people who take up seasonal employment, e.g. in agriculture, hotel management) and temporary ones (resulting from the given person's personal or professional situation, e.g. termination of contract). Permanent returns applied to one out of five returning persons.

However, one has to bear in mind that the assessment of permanence of return migrations is based on what the respondents declare. Various factors can influence the actual realization (or abandonment) of migration plans, e.g. personal ones or those connected with the situation on the labour market in the sending country and the receiving country. Additionally, it should be remembered that nowadays we are dealing with a blurring of distinction into typical forms of migrations, including also return migrations. Scholars doing research on migrations point out to liquidity as a feature characterizing the contemporary transfers of populations and the new type of mobility, the so-called liquid migration (Engbersen 2009). Therefore, it is not possible to establish in a definitive manner whether return migrations are permanent returns or they are merely temporary.

5. Concluding remarks

Return migrations are an important type of societies' mobility. In particular, the issue of higher educated persons' returns from economic emigration is significant in the context of the socioeconomic situation in the migrants' country of origin. Remigration of highly qualified persons may indirectly contribute to the socioeconomic development in the given country.

To sum up the issues touched upon in this article, one can state that Poland's accession to the EU has had a considerable impact on the increase of Poles' temporary migrations. A relatively big percentage of higher educated Polish emigrants is not a consequence of increased departure of this category of persons, but rather it results from Poles' educational structure. In addition, the research results indicate that equally frequently these persons return to their country of origin.

Although two-thirds of Polish higher educated emigrants who took part in the survey worked below their qualifications (taking up employment primarily in catering and hotel management), one should not unequivocally categorize this trend in terms of brain waste. What needs to be considered is that emigration can improve the quality of the emigrating persons' social capital. Many of the remigrants who took part in the survey admitted that during their economic migration they learned a foreign language, acquired new skills and got into contact with new technologies. Apart from that, in accordance with the tenets of the dual theory of labour market, taking up employment below one's professional qualifications is a deliberate action on the part of emigrants, for whom the principal goal is to earn money. It is possible because foreign employers voice demand for foreigners to work in the secondary sectors of their labour markets.

Higher educated Poles' return migrations are a result of realizing a migration plan (according to NELM theory), rather than of a deteriorating situation on the labour market in the countries receiving emigrants. The dominant type is the conservative returning migrant (according to F. Cerase's typology), who achieved the planned financial benefits and now is returning to his/her country of origin in order to spend the money.

In conclusion, the economic emigration of higher educated persons can be assessed positively, especially in the case of those migrants who return to the country of their origin, since while staying abroad they were able to gain professional experiences and earn money. From the point of view of Poland's socioeconomic situation, it is crucial that remigrants use financial and social capital in an optimal way. Thus, the persons returning from migration should be offered help in reintegrating on the domestic labour market by creating conditions encouraging them to return (e.g. by simplifying the rules of conducting economic activity).

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