

**REPUBLIC OF POLAND**  
**PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**



9 EAST 66th STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021

TEL. (212) 744-2506

*Check against delivery*

Commission on Population and Development  
Thirty-ninth session  
Agenda Item 4: General Debate on national  
experience in population matters:  
international migration and development

**S T A T E M E N T**

by

**Mr. Kazimierz KUBERSKI**

**Under Secretary of State  
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy**

**Poland**

New York, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006

## **Introduction**

Poland fully supports the statement made by Austria on behalf of the European Union. Let me just add a few more comments on our national experience in the field of international migration and development.

Poland still remains a country where the number of emigrants exceeds the number of immigrants (data from 2004: the emigration: 18 800; the immigration: 9 500). However, in 2004 the highest number of immigrants since 1960 and the lowest number of emigrants since 1993 were noted.

The main directions of the permanent emigration of Poles are: Germany, the United States and Canada. Significant numbers of people emigrate permanently also to Austria, France, the United Kingdom, Australia and Italy. Recently, a decrease in emigration to Canada and Australia has been observed, while emigration to such European countries like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands has increased. Most of emigrants from Poland are people in the working age (females 18-59 and males 18-64) and many of them emigrate within the framework of family re-unification. Permanent emigrants from Poland are more often men (approximately 52%) and are usually young. The structure of emigrants by sex depends on the country of destination. Women dominate among permanent emigrants to Italy (64%), Belgium (54%), Austria, France, Sweden, Australia; while men dominate among persons leaving e.g. for the United Kingdom (64%) – (data for 2004). Generally, it has to be underlined that migrations from Poland have a predominantly seasonal character and are undertaken for economic reasons.

The main countries of origin of immigrants to Poland are: Germany, the United States and the countries of the former Soviet Union – mainly Ukraine. Since mid-1990s, immigration from Vietnam and Kazakhstan has become more visible. Immigration from Canada, the United Kingdom, France and Italy is also relatively large. Generally, males slightly dominate (51% in 2004) among permanent immigrants. However, the structure of immigrants by sex depends on the country of origin. Females dominate decidedly (over 70% in 2004) among immigrants from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, while men constitute larger part (over 65%) of immigrants from Austria, Spain and Vietnam. Most of the immigrants are young and well educated.

## **Labour migration of Poles**

The analysis of the migration flows after 1989 indicates that this period was not homogeneous regarding the migration of the residents of Poland. In the years 1990-1997 the emigration was characterized by a much lower intensity than in the 1980s, and it even decreased, while the circulation mobility was relatively stable. After 1998 the foreign migrations clearly started to grow. This growth concerned mainly the temporary migration (circulation migrations and short-term stays abroad, connected with undertaking temporary jobs). Therefore, in the years 1990-2001 the extent of emigration from Poland reached 800 000, which in comparison with the number of 1.2 million emigrants in the years 1980-1989 indeed denoted a decrease in the scope of emigration (from around 110 000 -120 000 annually to around 65 000 -70 000 annually).

After 1 May 2004 when Poland joined the EU, a deepening of the trends already observed since 1998 has been noted, i.e. the mobility level of the Polish residents has been slightly increasing. However, the fear of a mass migration from Poland and other countries of the region, along with its accompanying negative effects, expressed by the majority of the old EU Member States, did not prove true. As the predictions from the pre-accession period showed, the increase in labour migration from the EU 10 to the EU 15 turned out to be

moderate. And opening up the labour market by Sweden, Ireland and the United Kingdom did not bring about negative social and economic effects either. The economies of these countries have even gained substantial profits from the immigration from the new Member States. Liberalisation of access to labour markets has also considerably contributed to legalization of the status of many people already present on these markets before the EU enlargement.

The membership of the EU did not change the traditional directions and specificity of labour migrations from Poland, which focuses on seasonal jobs, especially in sectors like agriculture, horticulture, fruit farming, stock-breeding, forestry, construction, catering and tourist services. A significant number of seasonal workers base their employment on permanent, long-term contracts with their employer. On the basis of the approximate data it can be stated that in 2004 around 600 000 Polish workers started working in the EU. The most popular destinations were: Germany (411 000), the United Kingdom (73 500), Italy (around 37 000), Ireland (32 000), the Netherlands (20 000), Spain (14 500), France (9 000) and the Czech Republic (over 8 500), and also Norway (16 000) – an EEA member state. The Polish citizens employed abroad constitute 3.5% of the total number of professionally active people in Poland in 2004 (17 million).

The labour migration has an impact both on increasing the professional and language qualifications of workers, as well as on the improvement of living conditions of workers and their families (an increase in spending on household development, financing the further education of the workers or their families), as well as on the development of the local community (investing the money earned abroad on the local market, developing enterprises, stimulating the demand for local goods and services etc.).

Yet at the same time, in the case of long-term migrations, the outflow of human capital from the Polish labour market and a “brain drain” phenomenon can occur.

### **Foreigners in Poland**

Since the beginning of 1990s, an increase in number of foreigners entering Poland each year has been observed. After the accession to the European Union Poland has become even more attractive country for all forms of immigration, including an economic one.

Since 1991, when Poland became a party to the Convention of 1951 relating to the status of refugees, about 30 000 persons have applied for this status in Poland and about 2 000 have been granted that kind of protection.

Poland's preparations for the membership of the EU required adjusting the domestic laws to the *acquis communautaire* by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004. In order to fulfil those obligations, since Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 Poland has introduced a visa requirement for citizens of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

During the process of harmonization of internal law with the EU *acquis* the Polish Parliament passed a new act on granting protection to foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Poland. That act entered into force on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 and *inter alia* established a new form of protection for foreigners looking for safety on the Polish territory: a subsidiary protection in a form of a tolerated stay. Since Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003 till the end of last year the permit for a tolerated stay was granted to 2 682 persons, including 2 516 citizens of Russian Federation (nearly all of them declaring Chechen nationality).

In 2005, similarly to previous years, more than 50 millions foreigners visited our country. In the same year about 25 000 persons were granted the permits to reside for a specified period, while more than 4 000 others were granted the settlement permits. Most of the applications

for a residence permit and for a settlement permit were submitted by citizens of neighbouring countries (Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Germany).

Another issue that needed to be solved was repatriation. According to the Polish law, repatriation is supposed to enable the persons of Polish origin to come back to Poland from some former Soviet Union countries. It concerns those people or their ascendants of Polish origin that were persecuted and displaced to Asian parts of the Soviet Union in the time of the Stalin's regime. And after the Second World War they had no possibility to return freely to our country. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2000 the Polish Parliament passed the Act on repatriation, which entered into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001. Between 1997 and the end of 2005, 4 966 persons of Polish origin and members of their families were resettled to Poland as repatriates.

Poland's accession to the EU, a free flow of capital and services, an increase in foreign investments are the factors that make Poland an attractive country for the foreigners. They come to our country for different reasons: as businessmen, investors or tourists. Another group of foreigners entering Poland is a growing number of migrating workers. Attractive work conditions and salaries in Poland as well as the political and economic instability in the foreigners' countries of origin, are the main reasons of that labour migration. Poland's location on the intersection of the main migration routes and the membership of the EU are additional attracting factors.

The foreigners who want to start working in Poland have to take into account legal restrictions. The regulations, which have been in force since the beginning of the 1990s, restrict the access to the Polish labour market for foreigners. As a rule, they can only work on the basis of a work permit (with an exception of regulations concerning a free movement of workers within the EU).

So far Poland has not been faced with such challenges in foreign immigration like some other EU Member States but it seems that it is just a matter of time. The globalisation processes, which favour the economic and cultural exchange and the increase in foreign contacts, will have a significant impact on that.

## **Conclusions**

Despite the growing interest in the Polish labour market, currently foreigners do not constitute a problematic issue. They fill up the gap in the local labour markets in businesses and jobs in which there is no interest among Polish citizens. A full analogy can be found in regard to the Poles employed abroad. And the phenomenon seen in this way should be judged positively, as a form of a rational use of European and international human resources.

Poland is currently in the process of defining several aspects of its migration policy in order to address the challenge of migration in a more effective way. Contemporary globalisation processes influence migration patterns worldwide, also in Poland. The history shows that Poles have been actively taking part in those processes. The accession to the European Union has brought Poland even closer to the global and most of all, European system of migrations. Poland is not only an emigration country, but is also becoming a destination for foreign immigrants.