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## UKRAINIANS' CRISIS IMMIGRATION TO POLAND – A CHANCE FOR POLISH DEMOGRAPHY?

### Abstract:

The accession to EU in 2004 has initiated the unprecedented in the Polish newest history mass emigration to the Western Europe – far beyond 2 millions of our countrymen reside temporary out of our state borders. Growing tendency is permanent, emigrants do not want to return to their homeland. At the same time the total fertility rate in Poland decreased dramatically in comparison to the beginning of the economic transition period (the beginning of the nineties). These demographic tendencies represent a serious threat to the future of Poland. Official forecasts suggest that in 2050 the population in Poland will decrease to the level between 32 and 36 million of people, and its age structure will be highly unfavorable. And now, since 2014, we have witnessed the unexpected new migration trend in the Ukraine-Poland direction. The estimates indicate that today about 1 million Ukrainians reside legally or illegally on the Polish territory, and their number raises. The author tries to indicate some significant statistics

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in order to provide necessary data for further considerations on the issue.

**Key words:** Ukraine, Poland, immigration, emigration, demography, visa, temporary stay, “Employer’s declaration (...)”, repatriation, law on foreigners, foreigners’ work.

### **The introduction – a word on the post-accession emigration of Poles**

The information presented in the previous year by the Central Statistical Office<sup>2</sup> shows<sup>3</sup> that at the end of 2014 the number of 2.320 thousands of Polish citizens (representing approximately 6,6% of the whole population of the country) resided temporarily beyond the borders of their homeland. The main destinations of our countrymen invariably remain the countries of the European Union (1.901 thousands), Germany and the United Kingdom in particular. The statistics reveal that with the exception of the period between 2008 and 2010 the number of Poles abroad grew year by year, and the decline in the number of Polish citizens in some EU countries affected

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<sup>2</sup> Główny Urząd Statystyczny.

<sup>3</sup> „Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004 – 2014”, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa, 05.10.2015r. [„The information on the range and the directions of the temporary migrations from Poland in the years 2004-2014”, the Central Statistical Office, Warsaw, 05.10.2015]; [/http://stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5471/11/1/1/szacunek\\_emigracji\\_z\\_polski\\_w\\_latach\\_2004-2014.pdf/](http://stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5471/11/1/1/szacunek_emigracji_z_polski_w_latach_2004-2014.pdf/)

by the crisis, such as Spain and Greece, were offset by a much higher increase in others.

Many opinions have already been expressed in reference to the question of the balance of profits and losses for our country that resulted from such a turn of events. Such aspects of the emigration like a possibility to gain experience, language skills, or build capital by young Poles, as well as frequently mentioned and beneficial for our economy impact of money transfers to family members from migrant workers, create a positive picture of the phenomenon. This last element is usually overlooked in economic statistics, although it represents admittedly variable but significant contribution to the level of affluence of Polish households. It is estimated that at its peak, between 2005 and 2007, the value of private transfers to Poland exceeded 2% of GDP, what stands for the amount of over 20 billion PLN per year<sup>4</sup>.

Most experts, however, share the opinion that benefits of Polish emigration are short-lived, and their "economic impacts (..) will be (...) very severe. Poles will contribute to their residential countries prosperity, mainly in the EU. Polish economy will suffer losses, and

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<sup>4</sup> „Wpływ przepływów pieniężnych na polską gospodarkę w latach 1992-2012 – raport Western Union, przygotowany przez Centrum Analiz Społeczno-Ekonomicznych - CASE”, Warszawa, 29 czerwca 2012 [„The money transfers’ influence on Polish economy in the years 1992-2012 – Western Union report, prepared by the Centre of Social-Economic Analysis – CASE”, Warsaw, 29 of June 2012] [http://www.case-research.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2012\\_Western%20Union%20Raport.pdf/](http://www.case-research.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2012_Western%20Union%20Raport.pdf/)

money transfers will decrease gradually<sup>5</sup>.” From a geopolitical point of view, mass emigration results in reducing of the nation’s vitality primarily in a very empirical, almost tangible dimension. The research shows that it has a permanent character, increasingly the whole families are heading for better life abroad not only their providers<sup>6</sup>. From the psychological point of view a possible return-decision is more difficult as the period spent on emigration grows longer. It should be taken into account that the descendants of outgoers will probably not return to the country of their ancestors. They would not have such strong impulse for resettlement as the economic one that drove for their parents for departure. Additionally, it is highly possible that they would be culturally bound with the country they grew up in.

The perfect storm is rising upon our country. According to the Central Statistical Office data for 2014<sup>7</sup>, in 2050, depending on which one out of four of its estimates would come to reality, the population of Poland will oscillate between 32 and 36 million with the rate of people over 65 between 31,3 and 35,7 percent! Let us know that in 2013 that rate reached 15,8%. Quoted data takes into account

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<sup>5</sup> „Emigracja Polaków po 2004 roku i jej skutki”, Biuletyn OPINIE FAE nr 9/2014, Warszawa, 17.06.2014 r, [„Poles’ emigration after year 2004 and its consequences”, OPINIE FAE bulletin No. 9/2014, Warsaw, 17.06.2014]

<http://fae.pl/biuletynopiniefaeskutkimigracjipolakow.pdf/>

<sup>6</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>7</sup> „Prognoza ludności na lata 2014-2050”, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa 2014 [„The populationprognosis for years 2014-2050”, Central Statistical Office, Warsaw 2014];

[http://stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5469/1/5/1/prognoza\\_ludnosci\\_na\\_lata\\_2014\\_-\\_2050.pdf/](http://stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5469/1/5/1/prognoza_ludnosci_na_lata_2014_-_2050.pdf/)

migration factors what will influence the demography in Poland assuming that a balance between the emigration abroad and the immigration from abroad will be negative for our country up to approximately 2035, after which it should remain positive. Given the rapid increase of Ukrainian immigration to Poland since 2014, the Central Statistical Office's forecast should be updated – in the part of migration predictions. Unfortunately, there is no possibility to anticipate how dynamic the new trend (the Ukrainian immigration) will be in the nearest future. Nevertheless, it seems that the demography in Poland is determined by rather low TFR (total fertility rate). It oscillates between 1,22 and 1,4 since 1999 whereas at the beginning of nineties it was even 2,0<sup>8</sup>.

One of the emigration results is a significant decrease of unemployment rate in our country which, after the accession to EU, between May 2004 and October 2008 fell down from almost 20% to record-breaking 8,8%<sup>9</sup>. Although this indicator, due to the world economic crisis of 2008, increased in subsequent years, it dropped once again to the level of 8.8% in June 2016, the first four-year period of decline in unemployment is the direct consequence of an outflow of more than two million of our citizens to the richer EU countries. It is very naive to judge it positively. Similar situation of the poorest state

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35

<sup>9</sup> Official data of the Central Statistical Office; [/http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/stopa-bezrobocia-w-latach-1990-2016,4,1.html](http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/stopa-bezrobocia-w-latach-1990-2016,4,1.html)

in Europe – Moldova – is worth mentioning. According to statistical data, estimated unemployment rate in the country dropped between 2010 and 2015 from 8% to less than 5%<sup>10</sup> (a great statistical result, is it not?). At the same time between 15% and 20% of its population stays permanently abroad<sup>11</sup>. Fortunately, Poland is far away from the economic status of that little country, as well as to its highly ineffective employment structure with the extremely high ratio of working in budgetary sector, but the analogy is visible. Not to mention the case of Moldova, the low unemployment rate in Poland is very important for the subject of the article which is the immigration of citizens of Ukraine to Poland.

## Ukraine

The economic migrations of Ukrainians have a long tradition. Far before the advent of the political crisis at the turn of 2013/2014, the number of Ukrainians working outside their homeland on a permanent basis exceeded one million people. The main directions of travel were Russia and the European Union. There are interesting data on changes of destination countries. According to the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) in issue 187 of its "OSW Commentary"<sup>12</sup>, there

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<sup>10</sup> [www.statista.com/statistics/513349/unemployment-rate-in-moldova/](http://www.statista.com/statistics/513349/unemployment-rate-in-moldova/)

<sup>11</sup> "Forecasting migration between the EU, V4 and Eastern Europe – Impact of visa abolition" – the Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) report, Warsaw, July 2014, p. 181

<sup>12</sup> Marta Jaroszewicz „Kryzysowa migracja Ukraińców”, Komentarze OSW, nr 187, 19.10.2015, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich im. M. Karpia [Marta Jaroszewicz „The crisis

was a significant change in the years 2010-2012. The place of current leaders: the Czech Republic and Italy, was taken over by Poland. Among the factors which could be decisive in this respect one can indicate Polish liberal visa policy which *i.a.* has introduced in 2006 a possibility to perform the work by citizens of former six Soviet Union countries, Ukraine included, without an obligation to obtain a work permission from the competent local authority<sup>13</sup>, proximity of Poland in comparison to the above-mentioned countries, and a significant decrease in unemployment which resulted in a lack of manpower in Polish companies.

Referring to the destabilization of Ukraine as a consequence of the “Maidan Revolution” and Russia’s military intervention in 2014 in Crimea and Donbas initiated enormous immigration flows – of both internal and external character. According to the official data, the internal migration has reached the number of 1,5 million people resettled within the Ukraine from the Crimea and war areas. At the same time, the emigration flow to Russia (pro-Russian Ukrainian citizens) could have involved even half a million people<sup>14</sup>. The increase

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Ukrainians’ migration”, OSW (Centre for Eastern Studies) Commentaries, No. 187, 19.10.2015]/ [http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/komentarze\\_187.pdf/](http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/komentarze_187.pdf/)

<sup>13</sup> Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 30 August 2006 on the foreigners’ work performance without the work permit obtaining obligation (Official Journal 2006 No. 156 pos. 1116)

<sup>14</sup> Marta Jaroszewicz „Kryzysowa migracja Ukraińców”, Komentarze OSW, nr 187 [Marta Jaroszewicz „The crisis Ukrainians’ migration”, OSW (Centre for Eastern Studies) Commentaries, No. 187]

of the immigration to the EU countries has not gained such significance with one exception – the case of Poland.

### **Administrative and legal context**

Before we put our attention to the statistics which shows the trends, a few words on the possibilities of legal stay and work in Poland for Ukrainians from the legal and administrative point of view. It is not the purpose of this paper to describe in details the current procedures in this regard, but rather to illustrate the general picture so that a person who is a layman could understand the definitions used in the article later on.

Citizens of Ukraine are obliged to get a visa before they enter the EU borders. Apart from transit visas (type "A" and "B"), a foreigner may apply for a visa type "C" which entitles him/her to stay in the Schengen Area (after one or several entries) for 90 days within half a year, or a visa type "D" that allows entry and continuous stay in Poland or several consecutive stays lasting more than 3 months in total. The Law of 12 December 2013 on foreigners defines the specific purposes for obtaining a visa. It is easy to guess that a visa issued for tourism would be the visa type "C", and for business or work purposes would be type "D", which gives the possibility for longer stay in one of the EU countries, such as Poland. It is important to remember that a national visa type "D" does not exclude the possibility for traveling to other Schengen Area countries, unless it contradicts the purpose of



the stay in our country, which was the basis for obtaining it. However, when analyzing the following statistics, we shall remember that for many Ukrainian citizens who do not have the possibility to obtain a type "D" visa (e.g. due to a lack of connections for finding a potential employer), even a visa type "C" will be the gate for longer stay in our country. It is a kind of open secret that the majority of Ukrainian citizens who come to our country with a visa type "C" often intends to take an illegal job. A long-term visa obtaining, which is very often a next step, is only a simple formality when one eventually finds an employer.

The above mentioned Law on foreigners specifies the possibilities of obtaining a residence permit in Poland – temporary or permanent ones. A temporary residence permit (issued for a period not longer than three years) is usually justified by the desire to work in Poland (which represents 66% of all permits issued in the period between 1 January to 31 July 2016 ), the second most often purpose is education (studies). Family reasons and others are marginal.

The data on the number of permanent residence permits issued, as well as long-term EU resident permits, are of no importance for our subject (the increase in migration movement on the Ukraine-Poland direction). They usually involve the people who have inhabited Poland for several years already, or who have some origin connections with the country. Therefore, statistical graphs below have a supportive

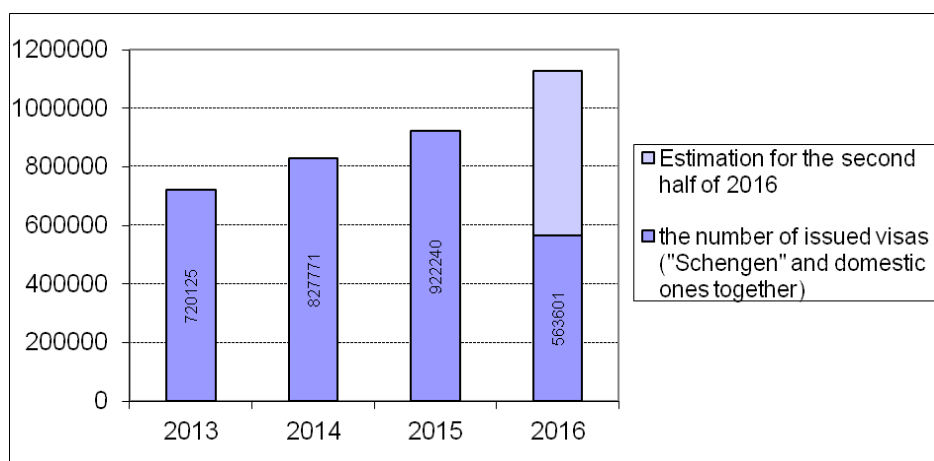
character. However, they illustrate the fact that with a lapse of time more Ukrainians are willing to settle in Poland.

It is worth to take a look at liberalisation of the policy in regard to foreigners' work in Poland, which is reflected in the above mentioned regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 30 August 2006 (see footnote 12). This regulation has introduced the possibility of employing citizens of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation or Ukraine without obligation for them to obtain a standard work permission. A sufficient ground for a foreigner to obtain a work visa in this case is to submit to the Polish diplomatic mission a document confirming a desire to hire them by a particular Polish employer. The document, "The employer's declaration on the intention of employing a citizen of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation or Ukraine", includes employer's and employee's data, information on salary, position and terms of employment, and shall be registered in a nearest labour office that confirms that there is lack of manpower on the local market. "The employer's declaration (...)" is the basis for seasonal or temporary work since it empowers to work performance for six months during the one-year period only. It is obvious that getting a standard long-term work permission for a foreigner, who has already worked on

“The employer’s declaration (...)” basis already, is not a big problem if only there is a good will of the employer.

## Statistics

In order to picture the migration tendencies on the Ukraine-Poland direction the author of the article has used the official data published by Polish government’s institutions. Below most important figures are presented.

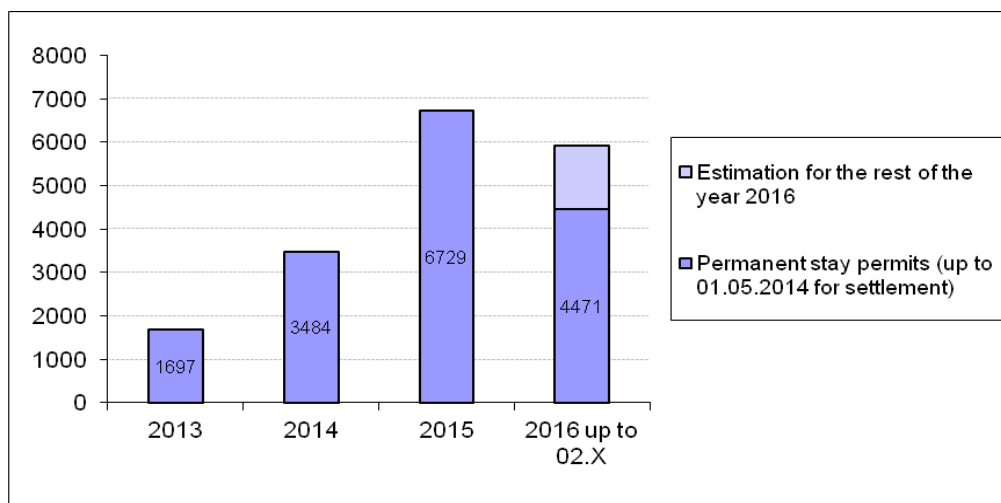


**Fig. 1:** The number of „Schengen” and domestic visas issued for Ukrainian citizens by Polish diplomatic missions in the years 2013-2016 (note: for 2016 the number refers to the first half, the column is lifted as an estimation for the rest of it).

Above on the graph 1 the chart which pictures the number of visas issued by Polish diplomatic missions for citizens of Ukraine in the years 2013-2015<sup>15</sup> and first half of the 2016<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> „Raport na temat obywateli Ukrainy wg stanu na dzień 28.02.2016 r.”, Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców [“The report on the citizens of Ukraine for the day 28.02.2016”, the

Below on the graphs 2, 3 and 4 the number of administrative decisions of the Foreigner Office with regard to the legalisation of foreigners' stay in Poland, issued for citizens of Ukraine in the years 2013-2016<sup>17</sup>.

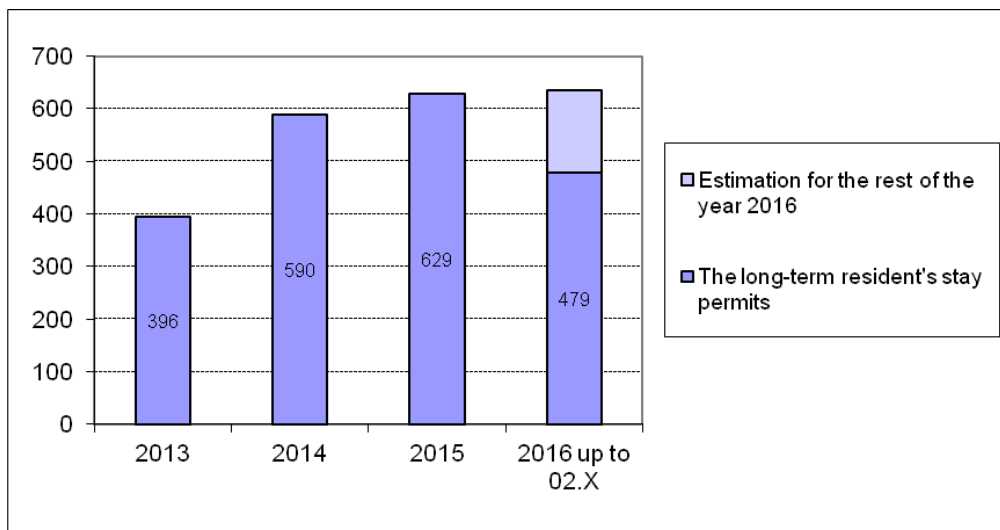


**Fig. 2:** The number of permanent stay permits in the years 2013-2016.

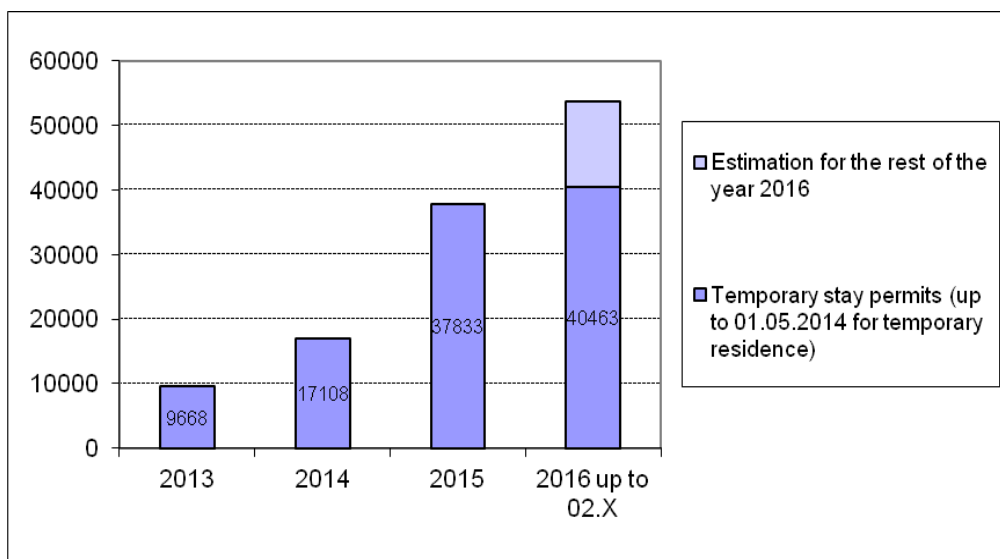
Foreigners Office]; /file <http://udsc.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/UKRAINA-28.02.2016-r..pdf/>

<sup>16</sup> „Migracje do Polski w I poł. 2016 roku – krótkie podsumowanie statystyk”, Europejska Sieć Migracyjna [„Migrations to Poland in the first half of 2016 – the short summary of the statistics”, the European Migration Network]; <https://www.emn.gov.pl/esm/aktualnosci/14051,Migracje-do-Polski-w-I-polowie-2016-r-krotkie-podsumowanie-statystyk.print/>

<sup>17</sup> „Raport na temat obywateli Ukrainy wg stanu na dzień 07.08.2016 r.”, Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców [“The report on the citizens of Ukraine for the day 07.08.2016”, the Foreigners Office]; <http://udsc.gov.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/UKRAINA-7.08.2016-r..pdf/>



**Fig. 3:** The number of long-term resident's stay permits in the years 2013-2016.



**Fig. 4:** The number of temporary stay permits in the years 2013-2016.

On 1 July 2016 citizens of Ukraine held over 83 thousand valid residence cards (stay permits) on Polish territory, and in the years

2013-2015 the number of applications, both for permanent and temporary stay, statistically doubled year by year. In the first months of 2016 the number of applications for permanent stay decreased, whilst for temporary stay increased when compared to the same period of 2015<sup>18</sup>.

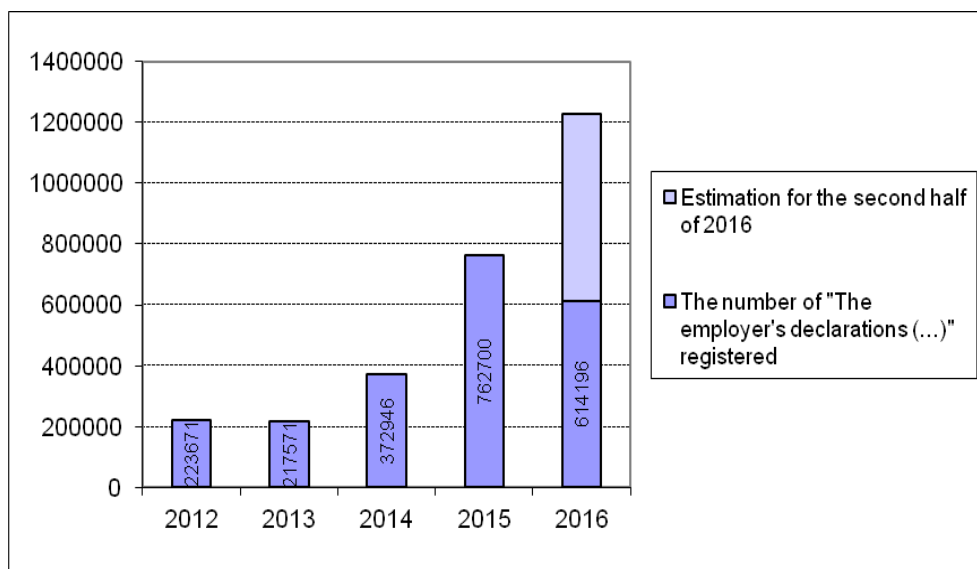
The temporary stay permit (up to 1 May 2014 the temporary residence permit)<sup>19</sup>, and for permanent residence (up to 1 May 2014 to settle) are not only legal possibility for stay and work in Poland. Another one is to get the work visa type "D" on the basis of a Polish target employer (which can be both a legal person, and a natural person who does not perform a business activity) "The employer's declaration to employ citizen of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation or Ukraine". The visa together with "The employer's declaration (...)"entitles for work on the Polish territory for a maximum total period of 180 days during one full year (for details see above).

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>19</sup> On 1 May 2014 a new Law on foreigners of 12 December 2013 (official journal 2013, pos. 1650) has come into force; it replaced the expression „temporary residence” with the „temporary stay” one, and” settlement permission” with „permanent stay permit”.

Below on the graph 5 statistics on the number “The employer’s declarations (...)” registered in Polish labour offices (the value for 2016 concerns only its first half)<sup>20</sup>:

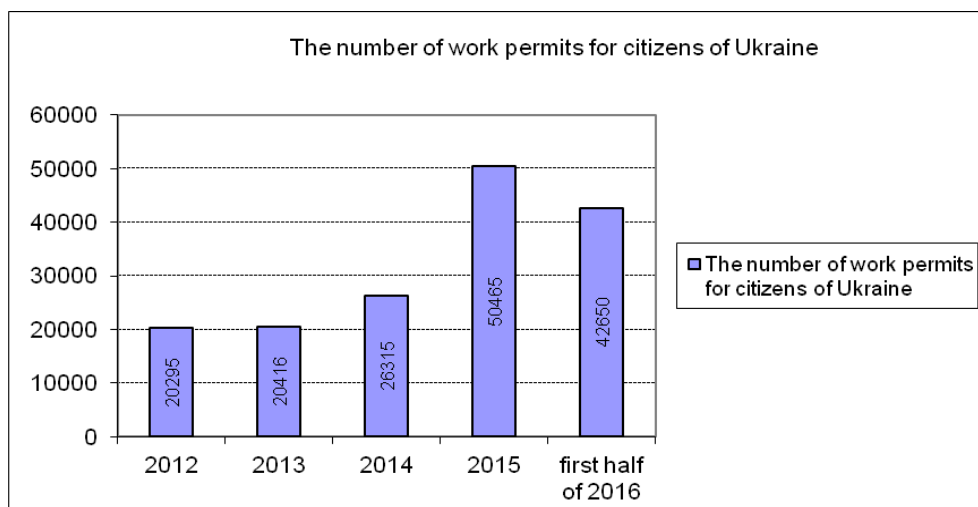


**Fig. 5.** The number of “The employer’s declarations (...)” registered for citizens of Ukraine in the years 2012-2016

As you can see in the chart above, in 2015 there was more than twofold increase compared to the year 2014, and the first half of 2016 shows a similar trend.

Finally, the statistics (Fig. 6) on the number of work permits issued for citizens of Ukraine in the years 2012-2015 and the first half of 2016<sup>21</sup>:

<sup>20</sup> Dane statystyczne Ministerstwa Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej [The statistical data of the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Policy]; <https://www.mpips.gov.pl/analizy-i-raporty/cudzoziemcy-pracujacy-w-polsce-statystyki/>



**Fig. 6:** The number of work permits in the years 2013-2015 and a first half of 2016.

An interesting calendar-relating picture of migration phenomenon emerges from the data above. It indicates unambiguously the year of 2014 when the increase in the most important categories (temporary stay permission, registered “Employer’s declarations (...)”, and work permissions) has been initiated, and next two years (2015-2016) when it has continued.

Although one can see here a clear chronological correlation with the political events in Ukraine, it should be noted that the migration of Ukrainian citizens to Poland has financial, not political, character. If we accepted this thesis, we should recognize that it is actually the economic crisis caused by the political and military ones which is the cause for the phenomenon. It is supported by statistics on

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*



the number of applications for international protection submitted by citizens of Ukraine – in the first seven months of 2016 there were 800 (as of 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2016) only<sup>22</sup>. The refugee status was granted to 16 persons. There's no doubt that in comparison to the hundreds of thousands of registered legally working citizens of Ukraine these numbers are quite small. The conclusion is that the Ukrainians come to Poland for work, not for political asylum.

Given the macroeconomic indicators of the country, we should not be surprised. For two years: 2014-2015 GDP *per capita* of Ukraine continued to decline hitting the rock bottom in the first quarter of 2015 with a score of -17.6% (yes, minus!). The first growth had its place in the first quarter of 2016 – 0,1%<sup>23</sup>. As inflation regards, for almost the entire 2015 (the worst one) it maintained the level of 40% compared to the respective months of the previous year<sup>24</sup>. The Transparency International ranked Ukraine a shameful number 130<sup>25</sup> in its Corruption Perceptions Index for 2015 as the last out of all European countries. Every possible economic experts' comment on Ukraine leave no illusion as per prospects of the country for the coming years.

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<sup>22</sup> "Raport na temat obywateli Ukrainy wg stanu na dzień 07.08.2016 r.", Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców ["The report on the citizens of Ukraine for the day 07.08.2016", the Foreigners Office]

<sup>23</sup> <http://pl.tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/gdp-growth-annual>

<sup>24</sup> <http://pl.tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/inflation-cpi>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015/>

When analyzing migration statistics on the Ukraine-Poland direction, it's worth to take a closer look to the before-crisis forecasts (or "before-war" one which refers to the military actions in Donbas and the expression of which is preferable by some commentators).

Besides the above-mentioned forecast for the Polish population in the years 2014-2050 prepared by the Central Statistical Office, a very interesting and professional OSW (the Centre for Eastern Studies) report titled "Forecasting migration between the EU, V4 and Eastern Europe - Impact of visa abolition"<sup>26</sup> and released in July 2014 - did not take into account such a large influx of Ukrainians to Poland as well. It is based on interviews with a number of experts from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (using a research method of *Delphi*). The author rightly anticipated that with the lapse of time the employment of workers from behind the river Bug will raise gradually but her assumption was that the liberalisation of the visa policy and work law for foreigners by Polish authorities would bring only a moderate increase of migration<sup>27</sup>. As we can see, unexpected turns of history can surprise even experts.

### **Polish authorities' actions**

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<sup>26</sup> "Forecasting migration between the EU, V4 and Eastern Europe – Impact of visa abolition" – the OSW (Centre for Eastern Studies) report, Warsaw, July 2014.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 108

The Analysis of actions taken by successive Polish governments leads to the conclusion that, generally speaking, they favour immigration in Poland in two key areas: immigration of people of Polish origin and increase in the workforce for Polish work market.

The former has waited a long time for the regulations which would unambiguously encourage Poles for repatriation operation from the East (inhabitants of the former Soviet Union). The Repatriation Law of 2000<sup>28</sup> has left the initiative in local authorities' hands (municipality councils) who were supposed to provide a residence for coming families. The costs of the operation could be subsidised by the state budget on the basis of an agreement with the respective voivode. Projected funds for grants, Polish language and retraining courses were very modest. No wonder that from the beginning of the term of above mentioned law only more than 5,000 compatriots from the former Soviet Union benefited from it, although it is known that only in Kazakhstan about 35 thousand people hold Polish nationality. As the representatives of the current government declare, the newly prepared Repatriation Law which is coming into force at the end of 2016 would shift the burden of the issue to the state institutions which should result in much greater efficiency<sup>29</sup>. Far more important to the people of Polish origin living abroad was the

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<sup>28</sup> Law on repatriation of 9 November 2000 roku (*Official Journal* 2014.0.1392)

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.tvpparliament.pl/aktualnosci/anna-maria-anders-ustawa-o-repatriacji-trafi-do-sejmu/25153857>

adoption of the Law on the Pole's Charter<sup>30</sup>. By the end of 2015 Polish authorities issued over 160 thousands of these for people living in the former Soviet Union countries. In the vast majority the citizens of Belarus and Ukraine become their holders, with low prevalence of the former. The work on the amendment of the Law, which would significantly facilitate the settlement and obtaining Polish citizenship by card holders, is ongoing<sup>31</sup>.

The law regulations concerning foreigners' work in Poland has been liberalised in 2006 along with the regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 30 August 2006 on the foreigners' work performance without the obligation to obtain a work permit (official journal 2006 No. 156 pos. 1116). Above mentioned graph on the number of "The employer's declarations (...)" shows the unambiguous trend. Despite the huge number of work permits applications, a good pace of Polish foreigner's offices' bureaucratic work is observed (a term for its consideration does not exceed usually a one-month period).

Taking into account the timetable of legislation adopted, which gradually liberalises the rules of the foreigners' employment, and

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<sup>30</sup> Law on the Pole's Chapter of 7 September 2007 (Official Journal 2014, pos. 1187); The Pole's Chapter is designed for the former Soviet Union countries' citizens or the stateless person from such country; it entitles to ordinary Polish citizen's benefits, like: business activity and work without a work permit obtaining obligation, the education free of charge, etc.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/karta-polaka-beda-zmiany-w-karcie-polaka-czy-to-droga-do-repatriacji-,artykuly,377350,1.html>

which tries to meet the eastern Polish diaspora expectations, one can feel like it was constituted at the time when the Law and Justice party was in charge. However, if one looks at the migration policy strategy of the rival political power being at the helm of the power in Poland in recent years, expressed *i.a.* in the document "Polish Migration Policy - current state and postulated actions"<sup>32</sup>, accepted by the Council of Ministers on 31 July 2012, it defines priorities identical with the position of their political opponents. Namely, the document emphasises the post-accession mass emigration from Poland as a demographic challenge linked to the probability that emigrants would not return to the home country. It raises the question of the "old" Law on repatriation's (see above) low effectiveness, as well as the need of our country's "special interest" for people of Polish nationality in the East in the context of their return to the homeland, their integration on the Polish labour market and in Polish society. It mentions the Law on the Pole's Charter, as an important element of the policy in regard to Polish diaspora. It notes also that foreign workers fulfill a complementary role on the Polish labour market working on positions unattractive for Poles, but with the passage of time the situation may

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<sup>32</sup> „Polityka migracyjna Polski – stan obecny i postulowane działania”, Warszawa, lipiec 2012, Zespół ds. Migracji Departamentu Polityki Migracyjnej Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych [„Migration policy of Poland – the current state and postulated actions”, Warsaw, July 2012, The Migration Team of the Migration Policy Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs]

change, and the Polish labour market is likely to be increasingly attractive for foreigners.

The recommendations for the Polish migration policy point to the need of making the admission possible and facilitating the legalisation of foreigners' stay in Poland mainly for persons of Polish origin, Polish citizens' relatives, people studying in Poland, connected professionally or by business with our country, as well as for other categories of people<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, what is recommended is further liberalisation of legislation in regard to foreigner's work, that would meet the labour market's needs, and the measures for the promotion and facilitation of foreigners' studying in Poland, especially by individuals of Polish origin.

As for the final matter, these actions bring the desired effect. Data show that each following year the number of foreign students in Poland increases. In the academic year 2015/2016 it was already 57119, 30589 of which are students from Ukraine (previous year numbers, respectively – 46101 and 23392<sup>34</sup>). However, given the phenomenon is not crucial for our considerations, we would not go deeper into the issue.

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the government's actions on this sphere are not aimed at migrants of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 14

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[http://www.perspektywy.pl/porta1/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2899:w-polsce-studiuje-57-119-studentow-zagranicznych-ze-157-krajow&catid=22&Itemid=119](http://www.perspektywy.pl/porta1/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2899:w-polsce-studiuje-57-119-studentow-zagranicznych-ze-157-krajow&catid=22&Itemid=119)

Ukrainian origin directly. However, if one takes into account that in 2015 about 98% of the registered "Employer's declarations (...)" concerned citizens of Ukraine, it is hard to resist the impression that every regulation in this regard refers mainly to them, not to the other five countries' citizens which are granted with this special facilitation for work in Poland without the obligation to obtain a work permit.

In the context of the phenomena, the public debate on immigration to Poland also concentrates almost exclusively on the issue of Ukrainians. One of the most interesting voices is the position of the Polish Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers<sup>35</sup> which opts strongly for the use of our neighbor's demographic potential by *i.a.* immediate legalisation of stay of all Ukrainians residing on the territory of the Republic of Poland (a curiosity because Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers recommends to further extend the solution above also to Belarusian and Vietnamese, as a "preferred due to their diligence and seamless assimilation")<sup>36</sup>.

### **The migration from the Ukraine as our lifeline?**

We are witnessing far-reaching demographic changes in Europe. Whilst most media focused on the so-called "Migration crisis"

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<sup>35</sup> Związek Przedsiębiorców i Pracodawców (ZPP)

<sup>36</sup> „Raport – Imigranci z Ukrainy ratunkiem dla polskiej demografii” Związek Przedsiębiorców i Pracodawców, Warszawa, styczeń 2016 [„Report – the immigrants from Ukraine as a rescue for Polish demography” Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers, Warsaw, January 2016] <http://zpp.net.pl/files/manager/file-596945f12121e4fd3e2ab09d36dd1b62.pdf/>

after rapid influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Middle East and North Africa to the Western Europe, there are changes in Poland. Not that mediumistic, not that noticeable, but of huge importance for the future of our country in the forthcoming decades. As we noted at the beginning of this elaboration, the low fertility rate of Polish families in conjunction with the mass exodus of Poles through the open borders after the EU accession, creates an extremely pessimistic vision for the future of Poland as a depopulated country of old people. At the same time – since 2014 – a wave of Ukrainians has reached Poland. We can estimate about 1 million of people (providing that a hard to calculate number of illegal workers is added) fulfill Polish after-migration generation gap in 40%. Many of them work in Poland temporary or in rotation-mode (see statistics on “The employer’s declarations (...)” above) but provided the economic crisis in Ukraine is to be deeper, even the geographical proximity would not stop the integration processes similarly as it is with Poles in Germany. From the ordinary Ukrainian family’s point of view, the main factor when choosing the place for living would be for sure the difference in life standards between respective countries.

At the moment, the influx of Ukrainian citizens to Poland appears to be the only important factor, which seems to have the potential to stop the negative demographic trends in our country. Would it happen? It seems to be possible, given the pessimistic economic prospects for Ukraine. We shall not forget, however, that at



the present moment the European Commission is working on lifting the visa regime for Ukrainian citizens<sup>37</sup>. It is difficult to predict how new circumstances will influence the migration decisions of Ukrainians – will they prefer to emigrate to richer countries of Western Europe?

Practically, all Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland currently do not face any difficulties when travelling further away from our country to the west. Poland is in the Schengen Area, the control on the border with Germany has been lifted several years ago. Moreover, about a half of visas issued for citizens of Ukraine by Polish diplomatic missions are the Schengen visas (in 2015 a number 456085 out of total 922240), making the travel throughout Europe possible. They do not, however, entitle to work legally, nor to stay for a longer than 90 days within any 180-day period. It seems, that this is the key factor which determines that the average worker from Ukraine prefers to be employed by the Polish farmer for several Polish zloty per an hour instead of working for a several Euro at the German *bauer*.

Despite the development of new technologies, the availability of which often determines the importance of particular countries on the international arena, the demographic potential remains one of crucial factors deciding on the position on the geopolitical map of the world. It is essential when speaking about the state economy or mobilisation possibilities in case of war. The intention of the study's

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<sup>37</sup> <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/ke-zniesienie-wiz-dla-ukrainy-i-gruzji-mozliwe-jeszcze-w-tym-roku/08lzhw>

author was to emphasise the most important pieces of the puzzle, which is the phenomenon of migration in Poland. There is no doubt that political decisions on the issue would have a significant influence on the future of our country in the next few decades, and their effects will be one of the major determinants of the Polish position on the geopolitical map of Europe and of the world. And we should be aware of it.

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