



## **ABSTRACT**

This paper provides a synthesis of existing knowledge on the post-accession wave of Polish migration to the United Kingdom, placing it in the context of historical and contemporary flows. It discusses available data on migration trends and pinpoints their shortcomings. Finally, it introduces the background to the CPC project 'International mobility and its impact on family and household formation among Polish migrants living in England and Scotland', drawing attention to the significance of geographical location, and the urban and rural divide for the formation of the new Polish communities.

## **KEYWORDS**

Migration; Polish; United Kingdom; EU enlargement; trends; urban; rural.

## **EDITORIAL NOTE**

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# **‘NEW’ POLISH MIGRATION TO THE UK: A SYNTHESIS OF EXISTING EVIDENCE**

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## **Introduction**

The EU enlargement of 2004 was a highly consequential one for the United Kingdom. The opening of its labour market to nationals of Accession Eight (A8) countries resulted in one of the largest and most intensive migration flows in contemporary European history. Although the new migrants forming this flow have come from various Eastern European countries, the overwhelming majority have arrived from Poland. The Polish community appears to be the fastest growing migrant community in present-day Britain: by the end of 2007, Poles became the single largest foreign national group resident in the UK, up from the thirteenth position in early 2004 (Pollard et al. 2008). Understandably, the Polish presence in Britain has become widely discussed in recent years, attracting attention from the media, academia, and wider society alike. We would like to add a new angle to this debate.

This paper aims at providing the background to our project entitled ‘International mobility and its impact on family and household formation among Polish migrants living in England and Scotland.’<sup>1</sup> We start from an overview of Polish migration to Britain, briefly touching upon historical flows and then moving to a more focused analysis of contemporary trends. Next we discuss the issue of statistical data on post-accession flows and its shortcomings. The picture of present-day Polish migration received on the basis of statistical data sources will then be presented. Finally, we shall examine the existing gaps in knowledge on Polish migrants in the UK and demonstrate how we hope our project will help fill some of these gaps.

## **Migration of Poles to the United Kingdom: an overview**

Migration from Poland to the United Kingdom is by no means a recent phenomenon: it began on a small-scale as early as in the sixteenth century. Hence, the tradition of Polish migration to the British Isles is a long-standing one. The nature and size of the flows were different at particular points in the history of the two countries, though the

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<sup>1</sup> This project is part of the work programme of the migration strand of the new ESRC Centre for Population Change (CPC). CPC is a joint initiative between the University of Southampton and a consortium of Scottish Universities in partnership with the Office for National Statistics and the General Registrar Office in Scotland. It is directed by Professor Jane Falkingham (University of Southampton) and co-directed by Professors Maria Evandrou, Sue Heath (both at Southampton) and Paul Boyle (University of St Andrews).

two largest flows took place first during the Second World War and its aftermath, and next in the post-accession period.

The following section provides a brief overview of the history of Polish migration to the UK and the changing trends over time.

### **Polish migration to the UK in historical perspective**

The history of migration from Poland to the British Isles dates back to the sixteenth century, when a few Polish Protestants arrived in Britain to study the doctrine and tactics of the post-Reformation church. In the second half of the seventeenth and in the eighteenth century, with the growing Counter-Reformation movement in Poland, the numbers of Polish Protestants coming to England, this time to seek refuge, marginally increased. However, Polish migration to the Isles intensified towards the end of the eighteenth century after the political disintegration of the Polish state in 1795. Since that time England, in addition to France, became a refuge for Polish politicians and soldiers who were anxious to acquire British support in defence of their country's right to freedom. This trend of political migration of Poles to Britain continued throughout most of the nineteenth century, with the Polish community expanding to such a degree that by 1867 the first Polish chapel and Polish centre were established in London.

The latter part of the nineteenth century brought about a new wave of Polish migration to the British Isles. It marked the beginning of an era of large overseas emigration from (the still disintegrated state of) Poland to various destinations around the world. At the time, Polish emigrants to Britain were arriving predominantly from the Prussian partition, as following Bismarck's colonisation policy great numbers of ethnic Poles were expelled from their homes. Therefore, this wave of Polish migrants stood in stark contrast to the previous ones: it consisted of 'ordinary people' rather than religious refugees, ex-soldiers or political activists. By the end of the nineteenth century the Polish community in Britain had become a well-established one with three main centres: in London (where the Polish Roman Catholic Mission was founded in 1894), Manchester with the neighbouring counties of Lancashire and Cheshire, and Lanarkshire in Scotland.

The trend of economic migration from Poland to Britain which started towards the end of the nineteenth century continued until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. However, in the years following the war the popularity of Britain as a destination country for Polish migrants had significantly dropped, with only a small number of Poles emigrating there (758 persons in the years 1919-1931, as compared to over 522,500 Poles received by France in the same period). Nevertheless, as a consequence of the circumstances of war and the events that followed it (e.g. lack of financial means and transportation to return to their politically re-established homeland or the economic crises of the early twenties), the Polish community became stronger and further consolidated in the inter-war period.

The Second World War and its aftermath brought about a new chapter in the history of Polish migration to Britain. After the German Invasion of Poland in September 1939, the British government agreed to home the Polish government-in-exile. Moreover, following the collapse of the French defence system, Polish troops fighting there were transferred to the British Isles, where in turn they played a key role in the defence of the country (especially in the Battle of Britain of 1940). During the war, Polish soldiers fighting all over the world continued to make their way to Britain, and by 1945 the total number of Poles constituting the Polish Armed Forces under the British Command had grown to 249,000.

Following the end of the Second World War, the British government took a number of favourable steps towards Polish settlement in Britain. Firstly, Polish soldiers were permitted to demobilise and remain in the country. Secondly, a policy of bringing in displaced people from the labour camps of Europe was introduced to fill labour shortages in the labour market. Hence, the Polish Resettlement Act of 1947 resulted in attracting two main groups of Poles to the UK: families and dependants of ex-members of the Polish Armed Forces (both those who had fought in Britain and in other countries) on the one hand, and ex-Displaced Persons coming to Britain under one of the Schemes for the European Voluntary Workers on the other (Zubrzycki 1956). The massive wave of Polish wartime and post-war emigrants resulted in an unprecedented influx of Poles to the United Kingdom and the rapid growth of the historically-established Polish community: it had grown to over 160,000 persons by

1951 (Fihel & Piętka 2007, Burrell 2009: 2-3). Thus, the thousands of soldiers and civilians who arrived in Britain either during the Second World War or in the years immediately following it created the traditional Polish émigré community in Britain: these were the political refugees who were not able to or did not wish to return to the homeland which had come under the Communist regime (Zubrzycki 1956).

The flows of migration between the two countries were sustained in later years, yet up to 1989 the scale of Polish migration to the UK was much smaller, estimated at around several thousands of people over the period. It consisted mainly of the families (the wives and children) of Poles settled in the UK, though a number of political refugees from Poland also arrived (Fihel & Piętka 2007). Only one relatively larger wave of Polish migration occurred throughout this period, when thousands of dissidents arrived in the UK following the imposition of martial law in Poland in the winter of 1981 (Garapich 2007: 5).

### **Dynamics of contemporary Polish migration to the UK: from 1989 to present**

Contemporary migration of Poles to the UK, which gained momentum especially after the country's accession to the European Union, is a rather different one in character to the post-war wave: it no longer consists of political refugees, but of economic migrants seeking 'normality' and a 'better future' (Galasińska & Kozłowska 2009).

The fall of the Communist system in 1989 brought about regained freedom of travel and intensified international migration from Poland, also into the UK. A few factors lay behind this phenomenon, one of them being the desire to make use of the very much desired freedom of movement, another, the country's economic transformation. By the mid-1990s recession had set in and brought with it a sharp increase in the total level of unemployment: from 6.5 per cent in 1990 to as much as 19.4 per cent in 2003, reaching a staggering 30% in certain regions (GUS 2008). Significantly, a high level of youth unemployment became an especially conspicuous phenomenon in Poland (Fihel et al. 2008). Hence, in the wake of EU enlargement the situation in the Polish labour market was very difficult, in some regions even dramatic, which created a considerable migration pressure. Nevertheless, the institutional conditions for Poles seeking work abroad were rather unfavourable in the pre-accession period. Hence the

greatest migration wave from Poland took place only after the institutional changes marked by the 2004 EU enlargement, with the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Sweden fully opening their labour markets to A8 nationals. In consequence, the UK became the one major destination country for Polish migrants.

### **Trends in Polish migration in the pre-accession period**

The decade of the nineties was generally dominated by short-term and circular migrations from Poland, though the scale of such movements is difficult to estimate due to their predominantly clandestine and transient character. In the case of the UK, some indication of the intensity of short-term flows prior to accession is provided by the results of the 2003 Labour Force Survey (LFS), which suggested that there were 34,000 Poles living in Britain for a period of less than 12 months in that year (Salt & Millar 2006). Still, this number does not apply to short-term migrants exclusively, but rather captures the volume of recent inflow into the country. The overall number of Poles living in Britain at the time was much greater, a fact demonstrated by census data. According to the National Census of 1991, there were 73,700 Polish-born people living in the UK in that year. This number fell to 58,000 in 2001, mainly due to the ageing of the post-war migration wave (57% of Poles in the census being aged over 64) (Drinkwater, Eade, Garapich 2006), but also due to considerable return migration over the decade (Fihel, Górny, Matejko 2006; Fihel & Piętka 2007). However, it is likely that the figure of Polish-born nationals quoted by the 2001 Census was a significant underestimation as many Poles were living in the UK illegally at the time and therefore would be 'invisible' in the survey data. Nevertheless, a considerable increase in the number of legal entries was noted already in the year prior to EU accession. National Insurance Number (NINo) registration figures show that while in the 2002/2003 fiscal year Poles were not yet a visible migrant group in view of the number of NINo applications (being outside the top twenty nationalities), by the end of March 2004 they had already shot up to the ninth position on the list, having made 11,200 applications (Fihel & Piętka 2007).

Undoubtedly, Polish migration into the UK had intensified throughout the nineties and early 2000s. As Drinkwater et al. (2006) note, from the late 1990s Poles increasingly took advantage of a provision granted by the Europe Agreement of 1991

(ratified in 1994) between the EU and candidate states. It allowed nationals of these states to establish themselves in the UK as business persons: either as self-employed, or owners of companies, or in partnership. Since there was no minimum capital requirement, Polish migrants could establish themselves in low-income businesses, such as window cleaning (Spencer, Ruhs, Anderson & Rogaly 2007: 15). In consequence, a significant increase in numbers entering the British labour market via the self-employment route was observed. Home Office data demonstrates this fact: for example, in 2003 a growth of 156% in the number of Poles granted an extension to stay in the country as a person of independent means or as a businessman took place (Drinkwater et al. 2006). Nevertheless, it has also been widely acknowledged that a substantial number of Poles had entered the country on other premises (be it a student or a tourist visa) and were working illegally in the clandestine economy of the UK, though their numbers were impossible to estimate (Drinkwater et al. 2006; c.f. Düvell 2004; Jordan 2002; Trevena 2010a). Still, the scale of such practices was reflected by certain data sources: in 1996 Polish nationals came as third amongst those being identified for illegal entry (Düvell 2004), while information from the Immigration Service Enforcement Directorate for the years 2001-2003 revealed that Poles were by far the most likely national group to be refused entry to the UK in each of those years (Drinkwater et al. 2006). Leaving issues of the accuracy of numerical estimates aside, the number of Polish migrants entering the UK was without doubt already growing in the years preceding the accession (Pollard, Lattore & Sriskandarajah 2008).

### **The post-accession migration wave**

On 1 May 2004 the UK, as one of only three 'old' EU countries (Ireland and Sweden being the other two), fully opened its labour market to nationals of A8 (Accession 8) countries. The decision of the British government to follow such a policy was largely based on economic premises (Fihel & Piętka 2007). Throughout the mid-1990s and early 2000s the British economy was undergoing considerable economic growth: in 2004 unemployment rates were very low, below 5 %, while the number of vacancies was high (ONS 2008), resulting in considerable labour shortages. Therefore, A8 nationals were granted permission to take up work in the British labour market without any restrictions; the only formal requirement was that they register their employment with the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) within 30 days of starting

it. A huge increase in the number of arrivals from the new Member States followed, most notably of Polish nationals. According to WRS registration figures, in the period 1 May 2004 to 31 March 2009, the highest proportion of approved applicants was from Poland: 66% of the total, amounting to over 625,000 applications in total. In consequence, the UK became the most important receiving country for Polish migrants, attracting more than half a million persons, a 25-fold increase since 2002, and changing traditional migration patterns from Poland. In fact, recent migration from Poland to the UK is one of the most rapid and intense flows in contemporary Europe (Fihel, Kaczmarczyk, Mackiewicz-Łyziak & Okólski 2008). The 2004 accession thus proved to be a milestone: arguably it has brought about the largest ever wave of immigration into the UK (Salt and Rees 2006 after Drinkwater et. al 2006: 2).

The Polish community appears to be one of the fastest growing among migrant populations in the UK: by the end of 2007, Poles became the single largest foreign national group resident in the UK, up from the thirteenth largest group in early 2004 (Pollard et al. 2008: 5). In comparison to earlier migration waves, the scale of this new migration wave is the biggest in modern British history. While the UK census of 2001 enumerated 466,000 people born in India, 321,000 born in Pakistan, 255,000 in the Caribbean and 154,000 in Bangladesh (Kyambi 2005 in Burrell 2009: 7), and 58,000 born in Poland, the number of Polish-born a few years later, in 2008, was estimated at 520,000 (Upward 2008). These other migrant populations, which have already been long-established in the country, are at present much larger than the Polish population when considering the second and third generations; however, the numbers of arrivals from Poland (as well as other A8 countries) in the few years following EU accession marks a significant shift in the country's migration profile (Burrell 2009: 7). According to a recent report published by the Institute of Public Policy Research (2008) migration from Poland (and the other new member states) is 'one of the most important social and economic phenomena shaping the UK today' as 'this movement of people has dramatically changed the scale, composition and characteristics of immigration to the UK' (Pollard et al. 2008: 7).

The inflow of Polish migrants to the UK following EU-accession has indeed been very intensive, and this fact is reflected by various statistical data. For example, the increase in the number of Polish nationals entering the UK in the years 2003-2005 has

been 4-fold. The number of NiNo registrations from Polish nationals provides an even more vivid example of the rapid increase in numbers of migrants. As mentioned earlier, up to the fiscal year 2002/2003 Poles constituted a minor group of applicants for NiNo numbers, yet already in the 2003/2004 fiscal year there was a considerable increase in the numbers of applications from Polish nationals, who consequently became the ninth biggest group of foreign-born NiNo applicants. In the following fiscal year their numbers grew as much as 5-fold, and Poles have since occupied the first place in the rank of foreign-born NiNo applicants, accounting for 26% of all applications in 2005/2006 which amounted to 171.400 applicants (Fihel and Piętka 2007). As previously noted, WRS registration figures clearly indicate the scale of the increase: in the period 1 May 2004 to 31 March 2009 the highest proportion of approved applicants was from Poland: 66% of the total, amounting to over 625,000 applications in total (Accession Monitoring Report 2009: 8). The Polish Central Statistical Office estimates that the number of Poles staying in the UK for at least two months has gone up from the modest figure of 24,000 in May 2004 to 690,000 at the end of 2007 (Fihel et al. 2008b). Although the figures provided by various sources differ, all of them illustrate the unprecedented scale of Polish migration to Britain following the accession.

Nevertheless, it has become visible in the last few years that this migration wave has been decelerating. After a period of rapid growth since 2003, the number of Polish migrants coming to the UK started to slow substantially from the second half of 2007 (Pollard et al. 2008: 5). This downward trend is reflected by the substantial and continuous decrease in the numbers of Polish applicants since that year. While in the first quarter (Q1) of 2007 there were 36,000 Polish applicants, a year later there were 32,000, and in Q1 2009 there were only 12,000 applicants from Poland, a fall of 43% over one year and the lowest number of registrations in any one quarter since 2004 (Accession Monitoring Report 2009). At the same time, there seems to be an increased propensity for return migration of Poles since 2007 (Pollard et al. 2008: 20). Therefore, the most recent trends in Polish migration to the UK indicate that the largest wave of migration has probably passed, the change in economic climate in the UK with the country entering the global economic crisis arguably also having impact on the process. According to Upward (2008), over the next few years it is expected that the net migration from Poland to Britain will fall, as outflows will continue to rise

and inflows will continue to fall. Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski (2009) support this thesis. They maintain that Poland has by now to a large extent ‘exported’ its pool of surplus labour, which has resulted in a significant decrease in migration pressure within the country. Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski thus argue that the huge wave of Polish migration that occurred upon EU accession and gained momentum in the years 2005-2006 may be perceived as the ‘last emigration’ from Poland; not in terms of continuity of the process, but in terms of the great intensity and considerable size of outflows.

### **How many Poles live in the UK? Problems with statistical data**

As mentioned in the earlier sections of this paper, numerical estimates on the numbers of Polish migrants residing in the UK have proved to be a challenge. It has been widely acknowledged that British sources of migration statistics are far from perfect and render estimates a highly problematic matter (Fihel&Piętka 2007, Green et al. 2008, Pollard et al. 2008, Upward 2008). At the same time, Polish data sources on outflows from the country (based on the principle of official de-registration from residence in the state by the migrant) also lack accuracy, and hence may serve mainly as a source of complementary information rather than reliable data (Fihel et al. 2008b).

The following British sources are customarily used to draw statistical data on the post-accession A8 wave: Worker Registration Scheme, National insurance Number registrations, International Passenger Survey, and the Labour Force Survey (Pollard et al. 2008)

A8 nationals who wish to work in the UK for at least a month are required to register on the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). The WRS thus gathers information on A8 migrants specifically, and is commonly used as the major source for drawing data on the post-accession migration wave. It collects data on details of employment, intentions as to length of stay, and dependants living in the UK at the time of application. Nevertheless, it has several limitations. First and foremost, it depends on voluntary registrations. Meanwhile, there is evidence that a number of A8 nationals who should register on the scheme do not do so. A survey carried out by IPPR suggests that more than 40 per cent of Poles who have worked in the UK since 2004

and have now returned to Poland were not registered on the WRS (Pollard et al. 2008: 18). Moreover, a significant number of working migrants are exempt from the scheme, most notably those who are self-employed (according to the LFS, the proportion of such migrants stands at 14 per cent). The total number of A8 workers not registered on the scheme has been estimated at between around a quarter and a third (Fife Research Coordination Group 2008, University of Surrey 2006 after Pollard et al. 2008: 18), indicating that figures based on WRS registrations are likely to be significant underestimations. A further issue with WRS data is that it basically provides data on inflows exclusively, as migrants are required to register once they take up employment (and re-register every time they change employer within the first 12 months) but not to de-register when leaving the country. Thus, WRS data does not provide any information on outflow or on migrant stocks.

National Insurance Numbers (NINo) are allocated by the Department of Work and Pensions to overseas nationals who take up work legally or claim benefits in the UK, and include information on the date of arrival in the UK as well as date of registration. However, as with the WRS data, the NINo system does not record outflows or length of stay.

The International Passenger Survey (IPS) collects annual data from passengers entering and leaving the UK. It provides reliable information on aggregate flows in and out of the UK, yet it is less useful as a data source on A8 migration dynamics. Firstly, the survey defines a migrant as someone who intends to stay in the UK for at least a year, thus overlooking considerable numbers whose stay is short-term, and producing a relatively small sample size of migrants. Moreover, IPS data is available only at the aggregated level of A8 nationals which renders breakdowns by country impossible. Lastly, information on A8 migrants has only been collected since 2004, limiting its usefulness as a source of longitudinal data.

The Labour Force Survey, carried out by the Office for National Statistics, is a comprehensive quarterly survey of households that aims to provide information on the labour market. It includes information on country of birth and nationality, and provides data on a consistent set of variables over long time frames, thus allowing for longitudinal data analysis, including that on migrants. Nevertheless, the LFS also has

a number of limitations. Firstly, it is based on population samples, and is thus subject to sampling error. Such error becomes proportionally larger in case of smaller population numbers, which is the case with the sub-population of migrants. Moreover, the LFS shares all the drawbacks of survey-based samples, e.g. potential respondents' unwillingness to take part in the survey: response rates tend to be lower for minority groups. Therefore, while the LFS may provide data on the socio-economic characteristics of migrants, applying statistical measures with a view to enlarging the sample size of the migrant pool is necessary to ensure data reliability.

Considering all the above mentioned shortcomings of the major sources of migration statistics in the UK, estimates as to numbers of migrants should be treated with caution. Most analysts combine various data sources so as to receive reliable information, yet it should be kept in mind that any figures quoted are merely estimations, and there is no certainty as to the exact numbers of A8 country nationals currently living in the UK.

## **Characteristics of Polish post-accession migrants in the UK in view of statistical data<sup>2</sup>**

### **Demographic profile of post-accession migrants (age, sex, marital status and dependants)**

Polish (and other A8) nationals arriving to work in the UK have been young: of those who applied to the WRS between May 2004 and March 2009, at the time of registration 81% were aged 18-34, the majority within this figure being in the younger, 18-24 category. Only 12% of the registering migrants were aged 35-44 (Accession Monitoring Report 2009). It can thus be argued that Polish (and other A8 nationals') migration to the UK (as well as other destination countries for that matter) presents a case of 'youth drain': in terms of the demography of Poland, young migrants are strongly overrepresented (Grabowska-Lusińska & Okólski 2009: 97).

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<sup>2</sup>Since the majority of data on post-accession migration is available at the aggregate level of A8 country nationals (or in some cases a combined aggregate of A8 and A2 nationals), when describing the characteristics of Polish migrants A8 nationals in general will often be referred to. Wherever data on Polish migrants in particular is available, this will be provided.

As to the male-female ratio for A8 migrants registering with the WRS, over the period of May 2004 to March 2009 it was 56:44. Recently, however, in Q1 2009 it had reached the perfect balance of 50:50 (Accession Monitoring Report 2009). As follows, while more males were arriving for work in the first years after accession, the trend is no longer as strong with more equal numbers of men and women registering for work. However, in the case of Polish nationals the gender imbalance in the first few years after accession was greater than the A8 average: LFS data demonstrates that while in the period 2004-2006 the A8 average was 53.5% males, the respective figure for Poles was considerably higher at 61.4% males (Drinkwater et al. 2006). Hence, we might expect that regarding the present-day gender ratio among Poles, males are still likely to outnumber females. *Nota bene*, considering the demographic situation of Poland, the fact that more males were migrating to the UK than females (and this trend holds for other destination countries as well) is interesting as in the overall population of Poland it is women that outnumber men (Grabowska-Lusińska & Okólski 2009: 96).

At first sight, the picture stemming from analysis of data on marital status is that new A8 migrants are predominantly single: according to LFS data only 36.9% arriving in the years 2004-2006 were married (the figure for Polish nationals being 38.6%) (Drinkwater et al. 2006). Nevertheless, this picture becomes slightly modified if we consider categories other than the single/married dichotomy. LFS data from 2007 found that 58 per cent of A8 and A2 nationals were in fact living as couples in the UK, either being married or living in a civil partnership or cohabiting (Pollard et al. 2008: 25). Hence, although a large proportion of A8 (and Polish) nationals are unmarried, it would be a mistake to assume that they are in fact all living as single persons.

Still, notwithstanding the marital status of A8 (and Polish) migrants, it seems that only a small percentage has children living with them in the UK. Overall, in the period between May 2004 and May 2009, only 8% of workers registering with the WRS declared they had dependants living with them in the UK (and this figure includes both dependent adults and children). Amongst those who stated they did have dependants, their average number was 1.6, and children under the age of 17 constituted under 60% of the total number. According to LFS estimates, in turn, 13

per cent of accession state nationals living in the UK in 2007 were aged 16 or under. Though accessing the exact numbers of children among the migrant population is again proving to be difficult, it is worth noting an upward trend in the proportion of registered workers with dependants. In the twelve months to March 2009, 12% of registered workers stated that they had dependants living with them in the UK at the time of registration, a figure 4% higher than in the overall period since EU accession (Accession Monitoring Report 2009). Other data sources also point to the growing numbers of children among the Polish migrant population. According to the Department of Children, Schools and Families, Polish is now the most commonly-spoken first language among non-English-speaking newly-arrived migrant school children across England (Department of Children, School and Families 2008 after Pollard et al. 2008: 27).

A rapid growth in numbers of births to Polish women residing in the UK has also been noted in recent years: from 924 births in 2001 to as many as 13,333 births by 2007, placing Polish mothers as second among all foreign-born women giving birth to children in Britain (Tromans, Natamba and Jefferies 2009). The trend of increasing births to women of Polish origin is clearly still continuing: in 2008 16,101 such births were recorded (ONS 2009).

Osipovič (2007), in her analysis of LFS data for the period 1995-2006 looks at births of children who have at least one Polish parent. Apart from confirming the general increase to births of children of Polish descent in the UK, she draws attention to the changing patterns of parenthood in the case of Polish males and females following EU accession. Her analysis of statistical data for the period 1995-2006 shows that in 2005, for the first time within a decade, births to both Polish parents outstripped the previously most common situation of births to Polish females and non-Polish partners (2,098 births as compared to 1,462, respectively).

To sum up, the fact that the majority of Polish migrants are at a stage of their lives where people form partnerships and have children may be highly consequential for the destination country. As a recent report (Green et al. 2008: 40) rightly notes: ‘Over a relatively short period, many migrant workers may have children – so placing pressures on maternity services, pre-school and school services’. Nevertheless, the

alternative situation might be that ‘many young migrants may not want to stay in the UK if/when they have children.’

### **Geographical distribution**

The distribution of post-enlargement migrants around the UK differs significantly from that of other immigrant groups. A8/A2 nationals of working age are half as likely to live in London as other immigrants on average, and have gone to parts of the country that have previously attracted very few migrants (Pollard et al. 2008: 6).

Overall, the highest numbers of NiNo and WRS applications from A8/A2 nationals since 2004 have been in London and the South East. Nevertheless, a significantly smaller proportion of A8/A2 migrants live in and around the capital than foreign-born residents as a whole. Moreover, all regions of the UK have received significant numbers of post-enlargement migrants, with Polish NiNo recipients being registered in every locality in Britain in 2007 (Rabindrakumar 2008 in Pollard et al. 2008: 28). Notably, 23 per cent of all WRS registrations between May 2004 and September 2006 were from A8 migrants working in the rural areas of England (Pollard et al. 2008: 29). The British countryside had thus become an important recipient of Polish/A8 migration; as has been noted: ‘the pattern of migrant worker arrivals, particularly in proportion to the local labour force, is highly concentrated in some specific rural areas’ (CRC Briefing Paper: 2007). It can thus be concluded that Poles arriving to the UK after EU enlargement have been highly employment-orientated and generally ‘go where the work is’. Such a wide geographical dispersion of migrants of one single nationality is a new phenomenon in modern British history.

### **Employment and working conditions**

The new migration wave of Poles is generally perceived as young, hard-working, highly motivated and capable (Kohn 2007). This fact is borne out by statistics, which demonstrate both the youthful profile and at the same time the very high employment rate among the ‘new Europeans’. In December 2007, 84 per cent of migrants of working age from A8 and A2 countries were in employment, a figure among the

highest for all immigrant groups, and nine percentage points higher than the UK-born average (Pollard et al. 2008: 5).

A8 migrants typically work longer hours for poorer pay than the native population. In 2005/2006 Poles were working 41.5 hours per week as compared to the 36.5 hour average among the native population (ranking as second among the 25 largest foreign-born populations in the UK after USA nationals). Meanwhile they were paid an average of £ 7.30 gross per hour as compared to the £11.10 average earned by British nationals (placing them at the very bottom of the wage ladder among the 25 largest foreign-born populations in the UK) (IPPR 2007).

Nationals of A8 countries have been overwhelmingly employed in low-skilled jobs. Consistently since accession, the top four sectors in which A8 migrants have been employed are hospitality and catering, agriculture, manufacturing, and food, fish and meat processing.<sup>3</sup> The top twenty occupations within which A8 nationals are employed have also remained largely consistent over the post-accession period, the most popular six being process operative/other factory worker, warehouse operative, packer, kitchen and catering assistants, cleaner/domestic staff, farm worker/farm hand (Accession Monitoring Report 2009).

In comparison to the employment structure of the native population, A8 nationals are overrepresented in certain sectors of the British economy, namely manufacturing, construction, distribution, hotels and restaurants, and transport and communication. The contrast between the level of employment of A8/A2 nationals as opposed to British-born is especially visible in the manufacturing sector, the figures being 32% for post-accession migrants and 13% for British nationals, respectively (Pollard et al. 2008: 35).

Recently arrived Eastern Europeans are primarily employed in low paying jobs despite possessing reasonably high levels of education (Drinkwater et al. 2006: 18). Therefore, in the case of all A8 nationals working in the UK, but especially in the case

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<sup>3</sup> The top sector of employment according to WRS data is administration, business and management, covering 40% of applications. However, the author of this report has chosen to leave this sector out of the analysis, since the majority of workers employed within it work for recruitment agencies and are in fact employed in a variety of industries (most likely the other top sectors mentioned, as suggested by the occupational structure).

of Poles, returns to education are low. An IPPR survey of returnees found that educational attainment had no significant impact on respondents' earnings. What is more, workers of higher education qualifications were more likely to be working in elementary occupations such as cleaning than those with vocational skills, who were more able to find work in skilled trades (Pollard et al. 2008: 37).

Although the number of A8 and A2 nationals working in high-skilled jobs has been generally low, there has been an increase in numbers in such sectors. For example, between 2005 and 2007 the General Medical Council recorded an increase of over 25 per cent (around 1,300) in the number of doctors from A8/A2 countries, principally Polish (Pollard et al. 2008: 36).

Amongst A8 workers who registered with the WRS in the period from May 2004 to March 2009, 51% were in temporary employment and 46% in permanent employment (3% did not provide the information). However, the proportions employed on a temporary or permanent basis varied considerably between sectors, with the majority of temporary workers being employed in agriculture, and the majority of permanent workers being employed in hospitality and catering and in manufacturing (Accession Monitoring Report 2009).

### **Educational profile**

Since the late 1990s, Great Britain has attracted highly-educated migrants from Poland (English language being a significant pull factor in this case), and this trend has continued in the post-accession period. According to analyses of Polish LFS data from the period of May 2004 – December 2006, 22.5% of post-accession migrants to the UK had higher education qualifications, while near 50% had A-levels or equivalent qualifications, as compared to 22.4% of Poles with vocational qualifications and only 6% with lower qualifications than vocational (Lusińska-Grabowska & Okólski 2009: 112).

One of the reasons behind these rather high education levels of the post-accession migrants is the huge increase in levels of education among the Polish population in general. Following the educational boom of the early 1990s, the numbers of tertiary-

level graduates in Poland rose sharply: from 89,000 in 1995 to 364,000 in 2003 (GUS 2008). Nevertheless, the share of highly educated persons is higher among migrants than among the Polish population in general, and in the case of migration to the UK, self-selection according to educational level is particularly strong (Fihel et al. 2008).

Polish migrants in the UK have 13.6 years of full-time education on average (the figure for other A8 nationals being 11.9 years). According to analyses of LFS data, in December 2007 the average age for leaving full-time education among Polish nationals was 20.5, compared to 17.5 among UK citizens. Of the 25 largest immigrant groups in the UK, Poles ranked sixth in terms of length of time spent in full-time education (IPPR 2007: 20). Despite this fact, as earlier mentioned, Poles as well as other A8 migrants have predominantly been employed in elementary occupations. However, according to the analysis of Drinkwater et al. (2006: 17), among all A8 migrants it is specifically for Poles that returns to both education and experience are the lowest. There are a number of reasons behind this process.<sup>4</sup> One factor significantly hindering occupational advancement on the British labour market, at least in the initial stages of migration, is lack of professional experience, as a considerable number of tertiary educated migrants from Poland arrive in the UK directly upon graduating (Fihel et al. 2008a).

### **Welfare entitlements**

A8 nationals have limited access to state benefits in the UK until they gain legal right to reside in the country. In order to gain this right, they must be in continuous employment (with breaks of no more than 30 days) for 12 months. The only exceptions to this rule are child benefit and tax credits, to which all A8 nationals gain entitlement immediately after starting working in Britain (though lose these entitlements if they become unemployed within the 12-month period). After being in employment for one year, A8 nationals are entitled to claim income-related benefits.

Although increasing, the proportion of A8 migrants (including Poles) claiming state benefits in the UK remains low in relation to the total number of claimants (Accession

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed review of barriers to professional advancement in the case of Eastern Europeans working in the UK see Currie (2007), Csedő (2007), and Trevena (2010a).

Monitoring Report 2009). Only 2.4% of all A8 workers registering for National Insurance numbers between May 2004 and December 2007 claimed benefits (Pollard et al. 2008). The highest number of claimants is for child benefit. LFS data for Q4 2007 suggests that almost exactly the same proportion of A8/A2 nationals claimed child benefit (4%) and tax credits (9%) as UK nationals (5% and 10% respectively) (Pollard et al. 2008: 32). According to IPPR estimates, 12% of the population of Polish nationals living in the UK was claiming child benefit in 2007 (IPPR 2007: 29).

### **Living conditions**

As to the housing situation of post-accession migrants, no statistics at national level are available. Knowledge on living conditions is thus gathered from local authorities and sometimes analysed at regional level. Moreover, a number of small-scale quantitative and qualitative studies have been carried out on the issue.

New migrants coming to live in the UK typically reside in poor quality accommodation that is often inappropriate to their needs in terms of size, design, location, facilities, and services. Polish migrants are no exception to this rule. It has been found that Poles usually live in privately rented accommodation (as social accommodation is not available to the majority), which is often overcrowded and characterised by poor physical conditions (Robinson et al. 2007a: 26). What is more, this phenomenon concerns tied and independent private rented accommodation alike (Robinson et al. 2007b). The major reason behind this phenomenon are living costs in Britain: accommodation in the private sector is rather expensive considering Polish migrants' level of earnings, hence the necessity to share and the commonplaceness of overcrowding in homes occupied by Poles.

Another problematic issue relating to housing is homelessness. Attention has been drawn to the fact that limited entitlement to benefits means that Eastern European migrants who fail to find jobs, or who lose their jobs unexpectedly, can become homeless. What is more, destitute A8 nationals are not entitled to even the most basic homelessness services in most cases (Shelter 2008). Though no exact figures on the numbers of homeless Poles in the UK are available, it has been acknowledged that this phenomenon exists, and that numbers appear to be rising. The biggest numbers of

homeless Eastern Europeans are found in London, where they account for 15% of rough sleeping (CLG 2008). However, instances of homelessness in the case of Polish nationals have been reported across the country (c.f. media reports).

Interestingly, according to British researchers, Poles residing in overcrowded and/or poor quality accommodation tend to be ‘phlegmatic about their situation, rarely regarding it as problematic or a cause of concern’ (Robinson et al. 2007: 43). Robinson et al. (2007) explicate this fact by Poles’ low expectations towards housing resulting from the perceived temporariness of their situation on the one hand, and finding living in houses in multiple occupation beneficial in a number of ways on the other. However, one more factor connected with the Polish context is significant here: that Poles are generally used to living in overcrowded (by British standards!) and poor conditions. Housing shortage and affordability are acute problems in Poland where the average living area per person is the lowest in the whole of Europe (Domański 2007).

### **Contemporary migration of Poles to the UK: what do we and what don’t we know?**

The overall picture we receive from the above presented statistical data on Polish post-accession migrants is that they are predominantly young and rather well-educated singles, mostly males. They have few dependants and often live in overcrowded and poor accommodation, typically rented from private landlords. They are keen workers who work more hours than the natives and for lower pay. The overwhelming majority are employed in elementary occupations, for which they are typically overqualified. Only a small number is claiming state benefits. Still, as has already been pointed out in this paper, available statistical data sources cannot provide an accurate picture of this migration wave and should be treated with caution.

A number of qualitative and quantitative studies complement the knowledge on Polish/A8 migration gained from statistical data. The many regional reports provide us with information on the situation of Polish migrants in various locations across the UK. Nevertheless, the majority of these focus on issues relating to employment

(occupation, working conditions, earnings) and the impact of the migrants on local labour markets (generally estimated as highly beneficial since migrant workers are filling gaps in labour supply rather than displacing local workers). Less frequently do they touch upon the social aspect of the migrants' lives or issues relating to their family life.

Nevertheless, family matters are of crucial importance to Poles, as borne out by research. For example, an IPPR survey of returnee migrants carried out in Poland demonstrated that over one-third decided to go back either because they wanted to reunite with their family, or their spouse/partner/other family members were returning home (Pollard et al. 2008). Louise Ryan and her research team (Ryan et al. 2009), who carried out a qualitative study of recent Polish migrants in London focusing on transnational ties, point to the fact that even the young and childless participants were often deeply involved in family networks. For example, in a few cases it was the adult children already working in the UK who actively supported their parents' migration: provided them with accommodation, found them work, helped to settle in and gave them emotional support. Ryan (et al. 2009) emphasizes that in the case of Poles wider family ties are highly significant, and that migrants' planning and decision-making are often implicated in complex family relationships and considerations. Therefore, not only parents and/or children, but also siblings, cousins, grandchildren, aunts and uncles also appeared to be important to the migrants' stories of mobility and relocation. Clearly, family is of great importance to Poles while international migration has critical impact on the lives of families. Nevertheless, to date little research has been done on matters relating to the family life of new Polish migrants.

Social relationships between Poles and the receiving society are also a so far under-researched area. The few studies touching upon the subject found that the majority of post-accession migrants, regardless of gender, spent most of their time with other migrants, either compatriots or other nationals, but rarely spent much time with British people (De Lima et al. 2005, Spencer et al. 2007). This is often the consequence of how the migrants work: many, especially those working in rural areas or in teams with co-nationals, have in fact little contact with British people. Another aspect closely linked with the migrants' social life is where they live: accommodation and neighbourhood have a great influence on whom migrants socialise with. Many

post-accession migrants in larger towns and in cities live in neighbourhoods inhabited by their compatriots and/or other immigrants, thus limiting their contacts with British people. In rural areas, in turn, this may or might not be the case, yet it is quite typical for the new migrants to share accommodation with other migrant workers. Therefore, it is these people they tend to have more social contact with than the native population (Spencer et al. 2007).

However, working or living among Britons does not always lead to establishing closer social relationships with them. The language barrier may be one of the reasons behind this phenomenon, but others are the cultural differences and varying levels of education among the migrants and their British co-workers or co-inhabitants. As has been mentioned earlier, Poles have fairly high levels of education yet typically work in low-skilled jobs, and moreover live in poorer, working-class areas. This leads to a clash of cultural norms between the migrants and the natives: apart from sharing similar job responsibilities and/or living in the same area, the better-educated Poles generally have little in common with their British co-workers and neighbours. What is more, they often feel they are treated with an air of superiority by the Britons (Trevena 2010b). Notwithstanding, a common perception among Poles and other Eastern Europeans is that British people are polite and friendly, but at a rather superficial level, and do not actually wish to let migrants into their social circles. Significantly, the majority of A8 migrants establish more contacts with the natives with time, yet this does not necessarily mean that they forge more friendships with them. Poles and other migrants from Eastern Europe generally believe that regardless of how much time they might spend in the UK, they will never feel totally at home in their new country as they will always be perceived and treated as foreigners by the native population (Spencer et al. 2007, Trevena 2010b).

Hence, it is not only issues such as work and earnings that may effect the Polish migrants' future decisions as to settlement or return. It seems that where, how, and with whom they live are equally important matters. Significantly, 'where' in this context relates to four different notions of space: at the level of country (Britain/Poland/other), at the level of area (city/town/village), at the level of neighbourhood, and at the level of household.

## **The urban vs. rural context of ‘new’ Polish migration**

As has already been mentioned, what is new about the post-accession wave of Polish migration is that the newcomers are greatly dispersed geographically, taking up work and residence even in the most remote areas of the British Isles. However, to date, little research has been done on how and with whom Polish migrants in the UK live. Scotland, a region generally characterised by depopulation and thus actively encouraging in-migration, provides a good example of this phenomenon. While in the fiscal year 2004/2005 the number of NINo registrations increased in the UK by 19% overall, the respective figure for Scotland was 50%, attributable largely to increased inflow from new EU member states, especially from Poland. In some areas of Scotland the growth in numbers of migrant labour in the same year has been even more striking: e.g. Tayside experienced an increase of 95%, 45.5% of all non-UK nationals’ registrations being made by those from A8 states. However, it should be kept in mind that these sudden increases have taken place in an area of generally low in-migration prior to EU accession, and hence the scale is in fact smaller than it may seem. In real numbers, between the fiscal years 2002/2003 and 2003/2004, 660 Polish nationals registered for work in the district of Tayside (Communities Scotland 2006).

Migrating to rural areas is a very different experience to migrating to a town or city for a number of reasons. Firstly, in some rural areas ethnically and culturally diverse in-migration on a relatively large scale is a novel phenomenon, and one not always welcomed by the community (Jentsch et al. 2007: 36). Secondly, the nature of work in rural areas typically differs from that undertaken in urban settings: it is predominantly work in agriculture or food processing, or in hospitality. While in 2005 the UK average for A8 nationals employed in these sectors was 47%, the Scottish average was 69% (Home Office 2005). Also, those employed in rural areas tend to be employed on short-term rather than long-term contracts, frequently carrying out seasonal work. Moreover, in comparison to urban areas, accommodation proves to be more difficult to secure in rural areas. As follows from research carried out in the Highlands and Islands, a few issues prove to be problematic in relation to housing migrants in that area. Not only the short supply of long-term accommodation and its high costs in relation to quality, but also prejudice on the part of private landlords

encountered even by the British employers seeking homes for migrant workers (Jentsch et al. 2007). In consequence, work in the countryside is more often tied with accommodation than in the urban context: rural employers more frequently provide homes for their migrant workforce (often finding they have little other choice). Also, due to the already mentioned critical shortage of suitable housing, overcrowding is a more acute issue in the rural areas. Another drawback of rural locations is that they typically offer limited opportunities for social interaction outside the workplace, which results in the migrants' 'clustering' with compatriots and other (migrant) co-workers. Finally, accessing various amenities and facilities (e.g. entertainment or internet access) is generally troublesome for rural migrants, as is gaining additional qualifications and doing training courses (e.g. language courses). On the one hand such difficulties are attributable to transportation problems (lack of own transport and simultaneous inaccessibility of public transport or its affordability), on the other to higher costs of various services. For example, it has been found that learners in rural areas could pay twice as much as their urban counterpart (Jentsch et al. 2007). Therefore, migrants to rural areas typically face more challenges than those who migrate to cities: they are often socially and culturally isolated, and have greatly limited opportunities for job change and educational or professional advancement.

Considering that migrant retention has become a crucial issue in the rural context, the above matters are of importance not only to the migrants, but also increasingly so to the agrarian communities within which they work (and more broadly to the British economy and society). Many small towns and villages across the UK (and in Scotland in particular) have been facing issues of depopulation and considerable labour shortages; EU migrants have in consequence become of key importance to these areas. Thus, the policy of the local authorities generally encourages migrants to settle within the locality. Employers, who have been struggling with serious recruitment problems prior to EU accession, have also warmly welcomed the new pool of labourers, especially as the strong work ethic demonstrated by Eastern Europeans (Poles being singled out in particular) is generally praised and highly valued by British employers. It is often contrasted with the incapability of the local labour force: employers share the view that natives do not wish to undertake physically demanding and mundane work for low rates, and British labourers have thus been described as unwilling, inefficient and unreliable. Many employers, especially in severely depopulated areas

have also pointed to the fact that due to a sheer lack of local workforce they had no other option than to turn to migrant workers (Rogaly et al. 2006).

However, there are a number of factors which may deter the new migrants from settling in rural areas. Though Polish (and other Eastern European) migrants working in rural areas are welcomed by the authorities and employers, this is not necessarily the case with the local communities. It has been found that migrants in isolated locations are more prone to hostility on the part of local people, who are either resentful that the incomers are 'stealing local jobs' (Robinson et al. 2007a: 26) or believe they form a threat to community tradition based on 'a set of shared values and beliefs' (Jentsch et al. 2007). Gaine (2008: 56) even notes instances of hatred crime against Polish immigrants in the district of Arun. Therefore, migrants in rural areas may in particular suffer from social isolation, especially if they are not living or working along compatriots. Another crucial factor that may discourage migrants from remaining in rural areas is the fact that in terms of employment, little else than low-skilled and low-paid positions is available. As in the case of A8 nationals in the UK in general, it has been noted that a considerable proportion of Polish migrants working in rural areas are overqualified for the type of jobs they are doing (de Lima et al. 2005). At the same time, as follows from research carried out in rural Scotland (Jentsch et al. 2007), those better qualified typically voice the ambition to move to higher-status employment. However, considering the labour market structure in rural areas, migrants who would like to opt for 'better' jobs are basically forced to follow the pattern of British rural youth who know that 'in order to get on, you have to get out' (Jentsch et al. 2007: 51). Finally, as has been earlier underlined, rural areas are typically characterised by chronic housing shortages. Therefore availability of accommodation and its over pricing pose a serious challenge to long-term stay, especially for those migrants who need to move out of tied accommodation once their contracts finish (de Lima et al. 2005: 68).

With regard to local economic development in rural areas of Britain, Polish (and other A8) migrants can provide the much-needed labour and skills on the one hand, and help to rebalance the demographic profile in areas with shrinking populations on the other. Hence, migrant retention is an issue of crucial importance there. However,

whether the migrant workers will wish to remain in such areas long-term remains to be seen.

### **Introducing the project: ‘International mobility and its impact on family and household formation among Polish migrants living in England and Scotland’**

The post-accession migration wave of Poles to the UK has two major (and new) characteristics: first of all it has been one of the most rapid and intensive flows in contemporary Europe and has significantly changed the composition of immigration into the UK, and secondly, its geographical distribution across the British Isles is the broadest in history. In consequence, Polish migration to the UK has attracted particular attention of the media, scholars, and the wider society in the recent years.

Although there already exists a body of literature on this new migration wave of Poles to the UK, many aspects of the phenomenon are still under-researched. Some of these have already been pointed out in this paper. For example, we know little about the social relations between Poles and the wider society, about how location influences various aspects of the migrants’ lives and their future choices, and how international migration per se impacts on their family lives and vice versa. We would like to fill some of these gaps in knowledge.

The research project ‘International mobility and its impact on family and household formation among Polish migrants living in England and Scotland’ is part of the work programme of the migration strand of the new ESRC Centre for Population Change. The purpose of our study is to establish emerging patterns of household and family formation amongst the community of ‘new’ Polish migrants in the UK, and draw conclusions on the implications these might have for future demographic change amongst the UK population. The major research questions are as follows:

1. How do ‘new’ Polish migrants in the UK form households? What factors influence their household formation choices? How do these change over time?

2. How does international mobility affect the family life of these migrants? How do those who are separated from their closest relatives ‘do family’ at a distance? How does migration impact on decisions of post-accession Polish migrants to form families either in the UK or in Poland?
3. How do ‘new’ Polish migrants interact and integrate with the host society?
4. What are the future intentions of these migrants? Are they planning to have children in the UK and to bring them up here? What motivates their decisions to stay in the UK or return to Poland?

Finding out what influences Polish migrants’ decisions to remain in the UK, and in rural areas specifically, is a matter of key importance to British policy makers. Therefore, some of our research questions relate to location specifically. We are interested to know:

5. What is the dependence between location and household formation? In cities, Polish migrants are largely limited to living in the ‘worse’ areas, where accommodation is cheap, yet living conditions are bad. In rural areas in turn, sheer availability of accommodation has often been voiced as problematic. What are the migrants’ household formation choices under the circumstances?
6. What is the impact of location on Poles’ social interaction with the community?
7. How does living in a given location influence the migrants’ plans to stay, move further or return to their home country?

In order to be able to gain insight into these issues, we will be carrying out fieldwork across Britain in two different regions, in Southern England and in Scotland, and in two different settings within both these regions, one urban and one rural. We will thus be interviewing migrants in Southampton, Glasgow, rural Dorset and Highland Perthshire. Both the cities we have chosen for the purposes of our research have a strong tradition of migration from Poland with established Polish communities since the Second World War, and are moreover characterised by particularly high numbers of Poles arriving in the recent years. The rural locations we shall be targeting, in turn, will be new migration areas, where Poles have arrived to work only following EU

accession. Such a selection of research locations should give us a strong basis from which to draw conclusions on area-related factors influencing the migrants' decisions.

A number of quantitative and qualitative studies point out that the recently-arrived Polish migrants are often uncertain about their future: consistently around one-third state that they have unspecified plans and do not yet know whether they would like to stay in the host country or return home (e.g. Eade 2007, Ryan et al. 2009). Our project thus aims to establish to what extent family life and location might influence these decisions, and how we could expect Polish migrants to impact on demographic trends in the UK in the future.

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