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Priorities and Developmental Directions of Polish Migration Policy

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- *Poland is slowly transforming into a country attractive to immigrants, mainly those coming from the East. At the same time, while Poles' mass westward emigration is unlikely, Polish migration policy faces various challenges, such as the need to prevent the outflow of specialists sought in Western European countries. On the eve of Poland joining the EU, there is an urgent need to work out the premises and priorities of migration policy of the Third Polish Republic.*
- *There should be a single institution tasked with shaping and coordinating Polish migration policy, for example an Office of the Representative of the Internal Affairs Ministry for Migration. There should be a parliamentary debate on the priorities and premises of migration policy.*
- *Poland should actively join the discussion on common EU migration policy by proposing the priorities of its own migration policy aimed at ensuring the protection of its future social and economic interests. Areas of priority include: prevention of the so-called „drainage of brains”, i.e. the outflow of Polish forefront specialists, and an active policy with respect to regions along the eastern border in case of a radical and long-term drop in cross-border traffic of people and goods.*
- *In the field of emigration, migration policy should take into account the protection of Poland's human and intellectual potential by creating conditions unfavourable to emigration by young people and specialists important to the Polish economy and science. Temporary migration may be put to use in summary reductions of problems associated with high unemployment.*
- *In the field of immigration, State policy should take advantage of the probable inflow of foreigners after the EU enlargement and try to attract specialists with qualifications important to Poland. Using the example of current EU member-states, Poland should establish quotas for recruitment of highly qualified specialists. On the other hand, to protect the interests of the local population, there should be more control over illegal employment.*
- *Polish migration policy should promote immigrant integration into society. To this end, a campaign should be conducted to regularise the status of the large number of foreigners who are now residing in Poland illegally.*

Poland does not have a migration policy

Migration policy constitutes a peculiar area of State activity – it deals with sovereign state prerogatives but, at the same time, also involves citizens of other countries. This second aspect often contributes to the fact that migration policy is restricted by international law, particularly international conventions or various bilateral and multilateral State agreements.

For migration policy to be effective, compatible with the broad spectrum of State institutions and implemented in the shortest possible time, it must be backed by a migration doctrine. That doctrine may consist of a single principle, for example „Poland is and will remain a country for Poles” or „Poland is open to all citizens of the globe wishing to serve it and able to significantly contribute to its creative might and developmental

potential”. The migration doctrine may be in the form of an unwritten statement imbedded in the political consciousness (for example, expressed by a figure of authority) or of a constitutional provision.

Poland does not have a comprehensive migration policy – only its slivers exist. Neither is there a migration doctrine rooted in the political consciousness which can serve as a foundation for creating cohesive principles of a national migration policy. There exist several institutions that are trying to work out fragmentary premises of migration policy (usually dealing with phenomena that are within the competency of the given institution), but these activities are uncoordinated and the flow of information between relevant institutions is insufficient.

Poland is transforming from a country of emigrants to that of immigrants

Already more than 30 years ago, international migration has emerged as one of the main mechanisms of structural transformations in the majority of industrialised countries. In countries where acceptance of immigrants is a tradition, such as the United States, Canada, or Australia, the number of migrants has drastically increased and their ethnic origin has shifted from Europe (the main historical source) to Asia, Africa and Latin America. At the

same time, those European countries which for centuries have been sending out migrants are now their destination. In the 1980s, even Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece, i.e. countries that have been sending out migrants as recently as a decade ago, have started importing workers from Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

In the late 1990s, there were successive transformations associated with population movements, this time in Central Europe. This

region, traditionally viewed as one of the main emigration areas in Europe, has slowly begun to transform itself into an area of immigration. Poland is the best example of these changes. Although it is still a country of net emigration, the trends seen here in the 1990s resemble the situation of Southern European states in the late 1970s, i.e. before they transformed from countries of emigration into those of immigration.

Migration belongs to social phenomena that quickly react to changes in demographic, political and economic conditions. This is precisely why the flow of people, including that of the work force, has a fundamental significance to the functioning of labour markets during the time of ownership reforms, socio-economic transformations or geopolitical changes. And the EU enlargement in 2004 will be the largest geopolitical and economic change that Europe will have experienced since World War II.

The nature of the relationship between migration and the demographic situation in a given country is two-sided. This means that, on one hand, the

movement of population may modify the country's demography and, on the other, the given demographic situation may stimulate migration flows.

The freedom of people's movement in the European Union is one of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under the Community law. Workers constitute one of the categories of persons entitled under the Community law to migrate freely. Although the European Union has introduced relevant restrictions for Polish workers and divided the seven-year transition timeframe into 2+3+2 periods, one can expect the majority of EU member-states (with a possible exception of Germany and Austria) to open its labour markets either at the time of the enlargement or after a two-year transition period. However, we do not believe that labour markets will be opened fully. Instead they will open up to occupations and categories of people that are most in demand on European markets and apt to improve the dramatic demographics of potential recipient countries.

Western Europe needs immigrants at a growing pace

According to the latest demographic forecasts, the number of residents of the current European Union may fall from 344 million at the beginning of the 1990s to 304 million in 2040. That would be indeed a drastic drop in EU population. Assuming that technological progress will not cause a major fall in the demand for labour force and that there will not be any major increase in the number of working women,

the number of working-age people in the EU may drop from 155 million in 1990 to only 118 million in 2040.

In the period between 2001 and 2020, the anticipated annual demand for immigrants will amount to some 500,000. That demand may suddenly grow as of 2020, because from that moment on the working-age population will start declining and ageing even in countries such as France and Great

Britain. As a result of a controlled migration process meant to narrow the demographic gap, the number of people under the age of 65 may be maintained at a relatively stable level. An inflow of immigrants will not make the percentage of young people in the overall population that much lower, whereas the

burden of caring for old people will be more evenly distributed among young members of the society. The greatest need for accepting immigrants is in those countries where birthrate has been too low since the 1970s, e.g. Germany and Benelux.

Polish demographics and migration trend forecasts

Central and Eastern Europe has not gone through any significant demographic changes in the 1970s and 1980s. A visible drop in the number of births, change in the pattern of starting a family and process of population ageing – transformations that have started in Western Europe in mid-1960s – occurred in this region only in the 1990s. All scenarios lead inescapably to falling population numbers in the candidate-countries and to an acceleration of their populations' aging process after 2005.

The number of working-age Poles (aged 15 to 64) will grow up to 2020 by some 960,000. However, that growth will be affected by the growing number of older people, aged 45 and up (by approx. 1.4 million). The number of the working-age population between 15 and 44 (i.e. people with best chances of finding work) will fall by some 570,000 up to 2020. Consequently, the demographic factor will in no way promote emigration.

The extent of work search migration in the European Union will be smaller than the EU public opinion expects and various EU centres estimate. The phenomenon of migration to the EU will be

largely short-term, particularly in the initial post-integration period.

In the initial period after EU enlargement, Poland should expect an outflow of unqualified and uneducated citizens. It is unlikely that highly qualified people will leave in large numbers (in 2001, the West German government expected an inflow of some 10,000 computer experts from Poland - only 87 came). In my opinion, the extent of the outflow of qualified work force will depend on proposed wages and the interest shown by certain EU countries in Polish professionals such as computer specialists, doctors or nurses may indicate that those wages will rise, which may have a stimulating effect on emigration.

Recommendations

In Poland after 1989 we can observe a steady development of a two-tier labour market similar to that existing in current EU member-states for several dozen years. Next to the main labour market there is the so-called secondary labour market which employs, mostly illegally, immigrants who come mainly from the countries of the former Soviet Union. In spite of the high unemployment rate, local labour force does not want to work in certain branches of the economy (such as construction, geriatric and handicapped care, or housework).

There is an increasing similarity between EU member-states and candidate-countries as concerns the demand for qualified labour force, of which there is a shortage on the domestic market. In EU countries, e.g. Germany, there is a shortage of computer specialists and in Poland there is a shortage, for example, of foreign language teachers. As the economy of the candidate-countries grows, quota-based recruitment programs similar to those operating in the EU should be established in our region (such pilot programs for recruiting highly qualified foreigners are in place in the Czech Republic).

The migration policy doctrine of the Third Polish Republic should promote the inflow of foreigners to Poland and their integration into Polish society. To this end, a campaign should be conducted to regularise the status of the large number of foreigners who are now residing in Poland illegally (according to the Economy Ministry data, there are some 500,000 foreigners working in Poland illegally every year).

There is merit to certain recommendations included in the memorandum of the POLAND 2002 Forecast Committee attached to the Presidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences suggesting, among other things, that the Polish human and intellectual potential should be protected by creation of conditions unfavourable to emigration by specialists important to the Polish economy and science. In the area of immigration, state policy should take advantage of the probable inflow of foreigners, particularly specialists with qualifications important to Poland, in the interest of the labour market. On the other hand, more control should be established over illegal employment to protect the interests of the local population.

There exists a need in Poland to create an institution that would coordinate the work of hitherto dispersed institutions dealing with the slivers of migration policy. To this end, use should be made of the experience of West European countries and of positive models already in existence.

Migration policy of the Third Polish Republic should be rooted in the social consciousness to the same extent as is its economic and social policy. Therefore, relevant government agencies, political parties and non-governmental organisations should jointly initiate a topical public debate. There should also be a parliamentary debate on the topic of the priorities and premises of migration policy, in which political parties would present their view on the comprehensive content of migration policy.

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