

# Migration Case Study

Poland to the UK

- On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 Poland was one of ten countries admitted to EU.
- 8 of the 10 were Eastern European – A8 (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia & Hungary)
- The other two were Malta and Cyprus

## **Poland to the UK - History**

- By law any resident of an EU nation has the right of free movement amongst all of the other member states.
- On accession to the EU it was anticipated that emigration from the A8 countries in particular would lead to an increase in immigration into more prosperous areas of the UK.
- Unemployment was higher and the standard of living was lower amongst these East European countries
- The UK government predicted an increase of 15000 migrants from the A8 moving to the UK for employment

## **Poland to the UK - History**

- The UK government predicted an increase of 15,000 migrants from the A8 moving to the UK for employment
- However by July 2006 447,000 people from eastern Europe had applied to work in the UK (nationals from the a8 countries are required to register with the WRS\* if they wish to work for over a month)
- 62% (264,555) were from Poland
- By the end of 2006 this number had increased to 370,000 but this did not include an estimated 150,000 self employed workers from A8 countries who did not have to register with the WRS
- The Polish embassy estimated the number of Poles in the UK to be between 500 and 600 thousand - This would mean the Poles would be the third largest ethnic minority in the UK

\*Home Office's Work Registration Scheme

## Poland to the UK - Reality

## Push factors

- Average unemployment in Poland of 18.5% in 2005
- Youth unemployment of around 40%
- Rural unemployment in some areas of over 40%

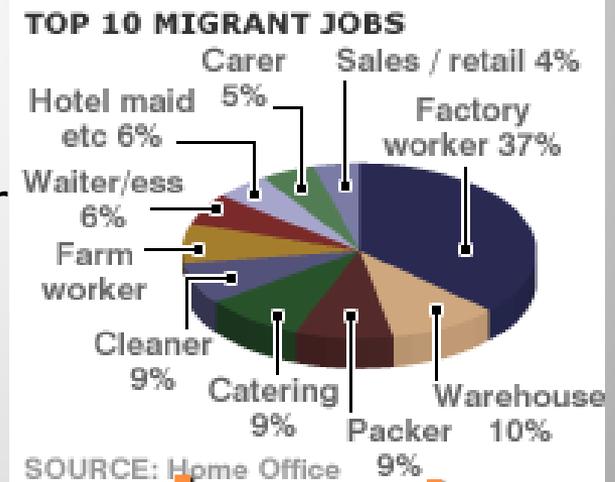
**Poland to the UK - Reasons**

## Pull Factors

- Unemployment in the UK at 5.1%
- Skill shortages along with high demand for skilled and semi-skilled labour
- Vacancies in the UK for Oct-Dec 2007 were 607,900
- GDP in Poland was \$12,700 per head compared to \$30,900 in the UK – average earnings
- UK were one of only three countries who did not restrict the numbers of immigrants from the A8 countries (the other two being Eire and Sweden)

**Poland to the UK - Reasons**

- Skilled and semi-skilled industrial workers and tradesmen
- Typical earnings of around £150 per month back in Poland
- Often with young families
- Many polish students taking a gap year
- Vast majority employed within factories, as warehouse operatives, cleaning duties, farm workers.
- Majority intending to stay for short periods <12 months
- Earnings in the UK typically £6 per hour



## Poland to the UK – the migrants

- No real geographic concentrations unlike previous migrants
- Many located in rural counties as well as large urban areas
- Assisted by low-cost airlines (UK-Poland flights operate between 18 UK and 9 polish airports)

**Poland to the UK – distribution**

Debate may still rage but...

## Benefits

- £2.5 billion contributed to the economy by eastern European immigrants
- Between .5% and 1% of UK growth in 2006 attributed to the same workers
- 80% of migrants between 18 and 35 years old – N.I. contributions help UK cope with aging population
- New migrants typically hard working, enthusiastic, skilled and flexible
- Offset inflationary pressures caused by rising fuel prices allowing interest rates to remain low (source Bank of England)
- They filled a skills gap (language of government and big business), in reality they took on undesirable low paid jobs

**Poland to the UK - benefits**

- Exploitation of workers by unscrupulous employers
- Tensions in areas that have previously not experienced large scale immigration
- Increased pressures on education placed by children of immigrants
- 427,000 migrant workers who successfully registered to work brought with them 36,000 dependents - spouses and children. Some 27,000 child benefit applications were approved.
- Possible additional stress on NHS (though 30% of doctors and over 10% of nurses in the NHS were born outside the UK)
- Demand for housing leading to higher rents/prices
- High proportion of wages being returned to Poland

## **Poland to the UK - concerns**

It is hard to prove many usual arguments

- Immigrants place a strain on the NHS?
- They take the jobs filled by low skilled school leavers?
- Net benefit to the economy?
- The amount of political spin?
- Has immigration benefited the better off more than the low paid?

**Poland to the UK – the debate**

In terms of political effects...

- UK govt. facing demands for increased immigration controls
- Rise in support for far right political groups that may feed off resentment (BNP)
- Discrimination that may lead to civil unrest
- Concern over EU powers to limit UK control over borders

**Poland to the UK – political**

- Of the eastern European migrants approximately half have already returned home.
- Rate of inward migration is slowing as conditions in Poland improve and the cost of living in the UK has increased (weak pound).
- Will the UK be facing a fresh wave of low paid migrants to fill the vacancies left?

**Poland to the UK – the future**

- Increase in church attendance – majority of the Poles are Catholic
- The value of exposure to different cultures for those in the UK – eg. children in the same schools
- An influx of new/revitalised providers of local services e.g. ethnic food retailers in run down areas
- An aid to becoming a true multi-cultural society diluting concentrations of one or two ethnic minorities?

Are these long term benefits?

**Social benefits to the UK**

What were the effects on the source country?

- Brain drain of skilled workers seeking employment abroad
- Loss of entrepreneurial spirit as those that emigrate tend to be the biggest risk takers
- Injection of foreign cash as wages are repatriated.
- Less pressure on resources
- Political will to raise standards of living back home

**Poland to the UK – Poland**