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# **Survey Research on Job Migrations from Poland to the USA after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004.**

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## **Survey Research on Job Migrations from Poland to the USA after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004.**

All the results presented below refer, on an exclusive basis, to the **legal** job migrations from Poland to the USA after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004. The phenomenon of Polish job seekers' migrations to the USA is extremely difficult to examine whether in Poland or in the USA. It is the very nature of such migrations (employment that is quite often illegal, or a stay extended after the visa expiry date) that makes respondents unwilling to participate in any such undertaking. This is why the existing surveys of "American migrants" are mostly of a qualitative character, i.e. limited to a dozen or so in-depth interviews aimed at elucidating the mechanisms of migration.

The survey research described in this bulletin is the **first quantitative survey done in Poland in respect of a sample of individuals legally employed in the United States**. Still, since the questionnaire used in this survey research included 42 questions out of which some were of an open-ended type (respondents could give full meaningful answers to them instead of short or single-word responses) we have also managed to collect interesting and rich qualitative material.

The results shown below refer to the survey research done in the summer and autumn this year. The time critical demands and a desire to **update** our readers **on the most significant developments** in the respective area explain why the bulletin does not include any deepened statistical analysis and is limited to a descriptive part followed by short comments. What deserves mention here is the fact that the said results are only part of the whole survey research. Our project also covered migrants from Poland legally employed in Great Britain (results respecting that group of job seekers shall soon be published on: [www.csm.org.pl](http://www.csm.org.pl)).

**The objectives of the Project included research on:**

- **dependencies between the educational level and the amounts of money transferred by migrant workers;**
- **role of money transfers from migrant workers contributing to a better standard of living;**
- **role of visas /of liberal migration policies as impact factors in job migrations from Poland**
- **attractiveness of the countries being the main destinations for migrant workers from Poland;**
- **integration and assimilation of Poles in their host communities.**

The survey research was funded by the **German Marshall Fund of the US (GMFUS)** and conducted under the ***Migrations Program*** run at the **Center for International Relations**. The Project was headed by Prof. Krystyna Iglicka<sup>1</sup>. The Authors wish to acknowledge the kind contributions and cooperation in this huge undertaking of members of the Statistical Club at Warsaw School of Economics, representatives of the 'Poland Street' Association of Poles in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Association of Polish Engineers in Great Britain.

**As respects the USA, the survey research covered a group of 564 Poles employed legally in the USA under the *Work and Travel Program*.**

It is impracticable to do this type of survey on random samples. Consequently, we decided on target sampling.

**With regard to Poles legally employed in the USA, we decided to run the interviews with participants in the *Work and Travel Program* in Poland.** The *Work and Travel Program* enjoys widespread popularity. Over its more than dozen year long history tens of thousands of students have

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been legally offered placements at US companies under the Program. The Program is generally acknowledged as a highly renowned one. It is not unusual for students to apply for participation in it on an annual basis. Those eligible must be between 18 and 30 years old. Having regard to the fact that our interests were focused on the quantitative dimension of such phenomena as those including opinions on the US restrictive migration policies / the role of visas, on the attractiveness of the USA as a destination country for migrant workers and for potential settlers, and on contacts with Poles violating provisions of the US migration law, we have decided to do our survey on a sample of as many as 564 respondents despite the uniformity of the target population.

The sampling was purposeful, and the migration data were stratified by sex and by place of residence (area of origin). The idea behind such stratification is that the migration behaviours of the survey sample, however uniform it is, may differ due to such factors as the area of origin or sex.

As it follows from the *Work&Travel* experience, participation in the Program is dominated by population of small and medium-sized towns, with a higher percentage of men. In order to outline, in the general profile of the sample group, the qualities related to the area of origin of the participants in the Program we decided to interview respondents both at universities and in dormitories. The survey covered students pursuing the full-time studying option, from two State-owned universities: the University of Warsaw (384 respondents) and the Warsaw School of Economics (180 respondents). The survey was conducted in the summer and autumn of the 2007 year. What deserves special mention here is that the survey covered, in a way, **migration elite** i.e. young people attending elite Warsaw-based State-owned institutions of higher education.

## RESULTS

### I. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE ANALYZED SAMPLE

It was men who were the predominant group in the sample (56%), with the remaining 44% of women.

**Table 1 Respondents, by sex**

Men	Women	Total
318	246	564

Source: Own survey data

**Average age** of the respondents at the time of their leaving for the USA: **22.7** years old.

**Table 2 Respondents, by place of residence in Poland**

Place of residence – its population	Men	Women	Total
over 200 thousand	105	60	165
100 -200 thousand	42	27	69
50 -100 thousand	39	60	99
20 – 50 thousand	54	45	99
10 – 20 thousand	39	30	69
5 – 10 thousand	15	12	27
up to 5 thousand	9	12	21
Countryside	15	-	15
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

In the analyzed sample 29% of respondents came from cities with population of over 200 thousand, while the countryside was represented by not even 3%. **The largest percentage of respondents (60%) reported coming from small and medium-sized towns with population between 10 thousand to 200 thousand.**

The interviewers asked about the number of visits to the USA under the *Work and Travel* Program. Where the number of such visits was considerable, the next questions referred to the last visit only.

**Table 3 Respondents; by number of visits to the USA, and by sex**

Men		Women		Total
1 visit	>1 visit	1 visit	>1 visit	
<b>270</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

Respondents who had left for the USA more than once accounted for 21% of the analyzed sample. **It was women who showed a stronger inclination for repeated visits.** As many as 41% of them had left more than once under the Program as compared to 17% of the male respondents.

**Table 4 Respondents: by place of residence in Poland and by number of visits to the USA**

Place of residence	Men		Women		Total
	Once	> Once	Once	> Once	
over 200 thousand	90	15	45	15	165
100 -200 thousand	39	3	18	9	69
50 -100 thousand	33	6	42	18	99
20 – 50 thousand	45	9	36	9	99
10 – 20 thousand	30	9	15	15	69
5 – 10 thousand	15	-	12	-	27
up to 5 thousand	6	3	6	6	21
Countryside	12	3	-	-	15
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

The territorial diversification within the group of migrants who had left for the USA more than once seems to be similar to that which is representative for the whole sample.

## II. MIGRATION STRATEGIES: EARNINGS, SAVINGS, INVESTMENTS

The average net earnings that prevailed in the survey sample amounted to 3,000 – 4,000 PLN per month. Such were the amounts reported by 30% of the survey respondents. What deserves special mention is the fact that the next most often reported earnings interval was that over 6,000 PLN (22% of the respondents)

**Table 5 Respondents: by average monthly earnings, and by sex**

Average monthly net earnings (in PLN)	Men	Women	Total
1000-2000	3	9	12
2000-3000	33	33	66
3000-4000	90	81	171
4000-5000	54	42	96
5000-6000	39	54	93
Over 6000	99	27	126
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

The basic analysis of the survey sample structure shows a **considerable differentiation with regard to the earnings level on the grounds of sex**. As many as 31% of the male respondents and only 12% of the female respondents reported earnings that were in excess of 6,000 PLN. At the same time, the percentage of women reporting the lowest monthly earnings, in the interval between 1,000 and 3,000 PLN, was higher than that of men (17% compared to 11%). The average monthly earnings in the group of male survey respondents amounted to **4,720 PLN**, and in the group of female survey respondents: to **4,230 PLN**.

**Both the male and the female respondents used the multiple-visit strategy to increase their average monthly foreign earned income.** It should be remembered that within the survey sample it was women who showed a stronger inclination for repeated visits abroad. As many as 41% of them, as compared to 17% of men, left under the Program more than once. On the other hand, men seemed to be more efficient in using their networks of contacts and references resulting from their previous stays in the USA under the Program: the average monthly earnings in their group (male respondents who had made more than one visit to the USA) amounted to **5,500 PLN**. By comparison, the average monthly earnings for the corresponding group of women amounted to **4,750 PLN** (See: Table 6).

**Table 6 Respondents: by average monthly earnings, number of travels, and sex**

Average monthly net earnings (in PLN)	Men		Women		Total
	Once	> Once	Once	> Once	
1000-2000	3	-	9	-	12
2000-3000	30	3	27	6	66
3000-4000	81	9	63	18	171
4000-5000	51	3	30	12	96
5000-6000	36	3	30	24	93
Over 6000	69	30	15	12	126
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

80% of the respondents had brought home some savings from their stay in the USA. The percentage of men in that sub-group of the survey sample was higher than that of women (85% compared to 73%) (See: Table 7). Some respondents explained that the reason for their having no savings earned in the USA was their too low remuneration while in the States, and the unfavourable dollar exchange rates. In their opinion, it was more worth their while to spend the money earned in the USA on travelling around the States and on presents. However, it may be interesting to note that it was the female respondents, having their average monthly earnings lower than those of the male respondents, and accounting for a lower percentage of those saving the earned money, who **reported higher savings**. Consequently, the average amount of savings brought home from the stay in the USA *per capita* was that of **8,200 PLN** for the women's savings, and of **7,600 PLN** for the men's savings.

**Table 7 Appropriation of savings: by the most commonly cited purpose, and by sex**

Savings	Sex		
	Men	Women	Total
Stock investment	77	56	133
Current expenditures / tuition fees	63	50	113
Foreign travel	56	42	98
Debt repayment	14	8	22
Deposit account held with a bank	24	9	33
Electronic equipment	22	5	27
Other	14	10	24
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>450</b>

Source: Own survey data

As for the appropriation of savings by the most commonly cited purpose (as systematized by the Author: the respondents were free to indicate their own purposes), it did not differ for the respondents on the grounds of their sex. **What seems odd here are the similar *homo economicus* attitudes adopted by both the male and the female respondents** who indicated "stock investments" as the main purpose to which to apply their savings. Indeed, the years after 2004 marked in Poland a long boom in stocks which may partly explain such a conspicuous trend in the savings appropriation strategy followed by so many of the young people choosing, by virtue of their young age if not for any other reasons, more contemporary, but also more risky forms of saving money. What is meaningful in this context is the fact that **it was only 7% of the respondents who deposited their savings earned in the USA in bank accounts**. Additionally, some of the savings were also intended for tuition fees enabling further education, and for entertainment and travel abroad. This why the items "Current expenses / tuition fees" and "Foreign travel" top the list as numbers 2 and 3, accordingly. **The dominant savings appropriation strategies adopted by the survey respondents seem to be well thought over and highly rational.**

### III. MIGRATION DIMENSION OF THE RESPONDENTS' ENVIRONMENT IN ITS SOCIAL AND LEGAL TERMS. ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE USA AS A MIGRATION DESTINATION COUNTRY

This part of our survey was focused on a number of issues including a 'map' of contacts between the survey respondents and other Poles. We were going to find out whether, according to our respondents being young Polish people leaving for the USA under a well organized program offering legal job placements at American companies which means that they did not have to keep in touch with any Polish communities living abroad, the problem of Poles violating provisions of the American immigration law is a conspicuous one. While conducting the survey we put aside such issues as a possible impact of potential contacts with compatriots upon the social or economic status of the respondents. Our whole attention was focused on the quantitative dimension of the issue of illegal migrations from Poland. Unfortunately, the situation as reflected by the survey results was not too optimistic.

**Most of the respondents (52% of them) met, while in the USA, Poles who, having been granted regular tourist visas, worked in the USA illegally.** The respondents were of an opinion that it is common among Poles arriving in the USA as tourists to work illegally. This is additionally proved by the answers respecting the number of Poles met while in the USA. 37% of the respondents reported their contacts with 1 to 5 individuals, while 8% referred to a dozen or several dozen cases.

**The situation related to illegal stays in the US seems slightly better. 38% of the survey respondents reported having met, while in the USA, Poles who had illegally extended their stays in the States after the visa expiry date (See: Tables 8 & 9). It is not easy to assess this value. However eager we could be to put it off by saying "It's only 38%", I would insist that it is, in fact, as much as 38 percent.**

**Table 8 Respondents, by number of Poles met in the USA who had arrived there as tourists but, instead, worked illegally**

Number of Poles met	Number of respondents
1-5	207
6-10	39
Dozen or so	36
Several dozen	9
None	273
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

**Table 9 Respondents, by number of Poles met in the USA who had illegally extended their stays in the States after the visa expiry date**

Number of Poles met	Number of respondents
1-5	171
6-10	27
Dozen or so	18
Several dozen	-
None	348
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

**The survey has not provided explicit answers to the problem of visas perceived as migration policy instruments.** 30% of the respondents were of an opinion that visa requirements would prevent them from seeking jobs in the USA, while according to others (36% of the sample) visas would have nothing to do with **the frequency of their job migrations to the USA.** The remaining sub-group held no views on this issue (See: Table 10).

**Table 10. Respondents, by decision on job migration to the US after the removal of visas, and by sex**

Decision	Men	Women	Total
YES	96	75	171
NO	99	102	201
I DON'T KNOW	123	69	192
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

**The survey reveals a clear differentiation of the visa-related opinions, by sex.** For 41% of the female respondents removal of the visa requirements would not influence their potential decision on job migration to the USA. In the male respondents' sub-group the percentage of "YES" and "NO" answers was balanced, and fluctuated around 30 percent in both the cases.

Our survey was also focused on the **attractiveness of the USA as a job migration destination** for Poles after the EU enlargement. The responses are presented in Table 11.

**Table 11 Respondents, by opinion on the attractiveness of a legal job in the USA after the EU enlargement**

Attractiveness of the USA	Men	Women	Total
YES	36	30	76
NO	237	171	408
I DON'T KNOW	45	45	90
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

**For as much as 72% of the survey respondents a possibility to work legally in the USA is not an attractive option.** In this regard, no differentiation of the responses on the grounds of sex could be noticed. The percentage of both the male and the female respondents to whom a job in the USA was not an attractive option fluctuated around 70 percent. As it has already been mentioned, the questionnaire also enabled the respondents to give full meaningful answers to a dozen or so questions, in addition to ticking the right possibility. The attractiveness of having a job in the USA was one of those issues on which we were interested to hear about the personal views of the respondents.

As in the case of the responses related to investing the savings in the analyzed sample, the **maturity of the opinions given by the respondents on the attractiveness of a job in the USA was striking.** The respondents made it clear that the issues of the EU enlargement (and the resulting "openness" of the labour markets in the EU member countries to Poles) and of the attractiveness of having a job in the USA should not be linked together. They were of an opinion that a decisive, **negative factor was that related to the unfavourable dollar exchange rate** resulting in a relatively lower level of earnings (90% of the responses). The remaining respondents pointed out **higher traveling costs and longer distances** (making it impossible to visit their families in case they get ill or homesick) emphasizing, at the same time, the fact that the said **factors were of a permanent nature, and were irrelevant to the EU enlargement.** A motif that appeared in a number of survey responses was related to the mutual Polish and American relations connected with the existence of national stereotypes. Such responses are quoted below in full:

*In the States the stereotype of a 'stupid Polish boy' is still thriving, unlike in the EU. In America they don't appreciate Poles, even those highly educated ones. There is a strong anti-Polish lobby there. But we are still going to be easily lured by the States ... (l. 39)*

*I speak English fluently. Generally, everybody mistakes me for a German man or a Netherlander. Only when I reply 'Poland' to their traditional 'where are you guys from', and hear in response 'a Lecz Waleza', I can often see such compassion and disbelief in their eyes that I am who I am, that such an European-looking guy may come from such an uncivilized country as Poland (l. 56).*

What seems interesting is that the opinions given by the 13% of respondents according to whom chances for legal employment in the USA have not changed since the EU enlargement did not tie that fact to Poland's accession to the European Union, either. Here are some of those responses:

*Nothing has changed in the USA, it will always be a great challenge and adventure which the EU cannot rival. The States will always attract you like a magnet. The EU hasn't changed anything here. (l.3)*

*The costs of living in the States are by far lower than in the EU, so it pays well, but only for a longer period... So that such savings could outbalance the high initial costs of travel (l. 5).*

Compared to some of the above quoted results which were not always easy to interpret in an explicit manner, the data respecting the survey respondents' overall **potential for migration to the USA** are unusually clear. **As much as 80% of the respondents gave a negative answer.** A detailed structure of the survey sample, by intention to seek a permanent resident status in the USA while working there under the *Work&Travel* Program, and by sex, is shown in Table 12. Naturally, asking the respective question we started with the highest level of generalization. As a rule, while surveying the migration potential one gets the highest percentage of affirmative answers to the question "Have you thought about moving out of the country permanently?", and as one proceeds to more detailed questions the number of affirmative answers gets smaller. However, in the case of the analyzed sample negative answers prevailed on the level of the most general question.

The structure shown in the table beneath, together with the individual opinions/explanations of the respondents quoted below, proves **low attractiveness to the respondents of the USA as a migration destination, this time within the meaning of a migration destination for settlers.** What is interesting, in the grounds provided by the respondents for their individual decisions to remain in Poland an **extremely emotional patriotic tone** could clearly be heard. That element did not appear in the British survey.

**Table 12. Respondents, by intention to seek a permanent resident status in the USA during their last visit to the States, and by sex**

Intention to seek permanent resident status	Men	Women	Total
Yes	48	57	105
No	267	183	450
It is difficult to say	3	6	9
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

*Because Poland is NUMBER ONE in the world! (W. 16)*

*Americans are so superficial. The food is horrible. In Poland I have got good chances for development. My university studies are superb. I want to find employment suitable for my qualifications, instead of carrying bricks and being underpaid. (l. 48)*

*Why should I stay there? It's O.K. to leave for some time, but I love my country. (l.56)*

*I feel better in Poland. I don't like that country (i.e. the USA; the Author's comment). The States aren't my cultural environment, I have always felt uneasy there. I have been there three times already, but each time I came back as I don't like the life there ... It's horrible over there ... (l. 6)*

*I'm going to find employment suitable for my qualifications, which are not those of a manual worker. I don't see myself over there for good. Too far away from home, and I don't like the American mentality or the quality of life over there. The food is hopeless☹. (l. 13)*

*I'm a patriot. Poles are treated unfairly in the States. The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, but there's nowhere like home.*(l. 79)

#### IV. OTHER MIGRATION EXPERIENCE OF THE RESPONDENTS: THEIR WAY TO PERCEIVE THE USA AS CONFRONTED WITH THE EU AFTER THE RESPONDENTS' STAYS IN THE EU

What may be surprising is the relatively high international mobility of the analyzed sample. **As much as 28% of the respondents who got employed in the USA at least once after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004, managed to get a legal job in a EU member country as well, within the same period of time (i.e. by the autumn of 2007).** The proportions, by sex, were quite balanced: 29% of the male respondents and 27% of the female respondents worked in a EU member country after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004. (Table 13).

**Table 13 Respondents, by experience of legal employment in EU member countries after 1 May, 2004**

Employment in the EU	Men	Women	Total
Yes	93	69	162
No	225	177	402
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

What is interesting, however, is the fact that **in the group of female respondents who had experience of being employed in a EU member country as much as 35% of women reported having worked in the USA many times, while for men that proportion was much lower: 3%.** (See: Table 14). Therefore, a more intensive international mobility of women is what deserves a special attention here.

**Table 14. Respondents, by experience of legal employment in EU member countries after 1 May, 2004, by sex, by number of job-related stays under the Work& Travel Program in the USA**

Employment in the EU	Men		Women		Total
	Once in the USA	>Once in the USA	Once in the USA	>Once in the USA	
Yes	90	3	45	24	162
No	180	45	129	48	402
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>564</b>

Source: Own survey data

As it has already been mentioned, one of the focus areas of our survey research was the **attractiveness of the USA as a migration destination for job seekers. It was the attractiveness of the USA within this meaning, or as perceived by the respondents assessing it as a migration destination,** that underwent our further testing, with participation of those survey respondents who had already had comparable migration experience. What we understand by comparable migration experience for the purposes of this survey research is **legal employment** in any EU member country after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004 (Table 15).

**Table 15 Working conditions in the USA as compared to another European country in which the respondent found employment after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004**

Working conditions in the USA	Men	Women	Total
Much better	39	44	83
Much worse	42	25	67
Comparable in both the countries	12	-	12
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>162</b>

Source: Own survey data

**51% of the respondents who had worked in EU member countries as well opined that the working conditions in the USA were better. In general, those who considered the working conditions in the USA better than or comparable with those in a given EU country in which they worked after 2004 accounted for 59% of the sample.** However, that assessment of the working conditions was strongly differentiated on the grounds of the sex of the respondents. Only **42% of the male respondents compared to as much as 64% of the female respondents were of an opinion that the working conditions in the USA were much better.** Here are some of the opinions of the respondents who provided grounds for their options (original spelling):

*I felt safer there. To tell you the truth, it was a bit asexual, but there were no problems with flirting or unceremoniousness. It was O.K. with me then ... (F.I. 86).*

*I didn't wear my usual clothes at all. Only jeans and sneakers, as they call it. I stopped worrying whether this skirt or that lipstick would be O.K., and that was fine. (F.I. 421).*

*They are hopeless, I felt like a robot ... only those idiotic smiles of theirs, and work, man, like crazy all they long. No personal contacts whatsoever. (M.I. 198)*

*I wasn't concerned there, after all, but I found out that they have only 20 days off work; that's the way they are, so corporate as if they each thought that their whole life revolved around their company... but this was probably the way they had been brought up in, with such an attitude. (M.I. 423).*

**What was different were the respondents' opinions on their earnings (Table 16).**

**Table 16. Earnings in the USA as compared to another European country in which the respondent found employment after 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2004**

Earnings in the USA	Men	Women	Total
Much better	21	30	51
Much worse	63	39	102
Comparable in both the countries	9	-	9
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>162</b>

Source: Own survey data

**Opinions in favour of the EU prevailed: 63% of the respondents considered earnings in the EU higher, based on their own experience.** There was no differentiation of opinions in the analyzed sample on the grounds of the sex. 68% of the male respondents and 57% of the female respondents gave similar answers on that score.

## V. SUMMARY

The above results are not representative. The survey, as it was mentioned before, was done among 'migration elite': full-time students attending elite Warsaw universities. What is typical of that group is, in my opinion, their young age on the one hand (the average age of Respondent at the time of his/her leaving for the USA: 22.7 years old), and the surprising maturity of their opinions and attitudes, on the other hand. Our initial analysis of the survey allows reflection as below. The surprising factors:

- strong rationalization of the migration strategies and of the gains/losses account in the decision makers' migration calculus (number of visits to the USA -average earnings, earnings-savings-investments);
- ambivalent attitudes expressed in the opinions on the possible consequences of removal of the USA visa requirements
- number of contacts with Poles violating provisions of the USA migration law;
- strong rationalization of the argumentation respecting assessment of the attractiveness of the USA as a job migration destination compared to the EU in respect of the working conditions and the earnings;
- fall of the American myth in the context of migration of settlers;
- emotions expressed in the patriotic attitudes towards Poland and in the cultural differences between Poland and the USA;
- relatively high (as compared with the age) international mobility of the analyzed sample;
- higher international mobility of women.

The above conclusions shall be tested on the next stages of the Project implementation.