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# The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective

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POLISH-NORWEGIAN  
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# **The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective**

- **During the 1980. and the 1990. political refugees from diverse parts of the world arrived to Norway. In the 1990. a quota program for seasonal workers in agricultural sector was introduced. Seasonal Workers originated from Eastern Europe, primarily Poland.**
- **Expanding free movement of workforce and a common employment market to the EEA did not have much effect on the migration patterns to Norway till the year 2004. In the year 2004 Norway decided to enforce “transitional measures” for labour migrants originating from the new EU Member states.**
- **EU-8 citizens got access to the labour market on the basis of an offer of a full-time position for one year. Wage and working conditions were required to be similar to ones provided for a Norwegian worker. The transition period was continued to May 2009.**

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- **Measures implemented in this period aimed at limiting social dumping, but they applied only to individual labor migrants working in Norwegian based companies or to workers hired out from a subcontracting company based in Norway.**
- **The law did not refer to “service providers”. Therefore employees working for subcontracting companies, temporary work agencies based in Poland, and workers who worked as independent contractors, as service providers, were not covered by generally applicable in Norway collective agreement on wages.**
- **Companies using the services of subcontractors could pay their workers less and even could not honor the regulations of the health, safety and working environment act.**

# **The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective**

- **The Norwegian transitional restrictions on labour migration from EU's new member states that were in operation between 2004 and 2009 provide us with a unique source of data. Although the transitional restrictions were revoked on May 1. 2009, the registry scheme was in operation until September 30 the same year.**
- **From 2004 until the registry scheme was changed, a total of 141 926 CEE citizens – of which 91 325 from Poland – were granted residency permits in Norway. Another 13 270 Polish citizens – almost exclusively women and children – were granted residency based on family reunion with someone working in Norway between 2004 and 2009.**

**Table 1:** *New residency permits granted to Polish citizens each year, percentage of each cohort who held valid permits by the end of each subsequent year, and number of people from each cohort who held valid permits by September 30 2009. N=91 325*

Year of first permit	New permits	% who still had a valid permit at the end of each year					Valid permits by 30.09.2009	
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	%	N
2004	7544	74 %	59 %	53 %	47 %	40 %	37 %	2766
2005	10141		78 %	60 %	53 %	44 %	41 %	4116
2006	20190			82 %	58 %	48 %	44 %	8889
2007	25689				79 %	49 %	41 %	10634
2008	22268					69 %	37 %	8148
2009	5493						85 %	4655
<b>Total</b>	<b>91325</b>						<b>43 %</b>	<b>39208</b>

Source: Friberg's calculations based on the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration's database over Polish citizens granted residency permits in Norway between 2004 and 2009.

**Table 2:** *Total share and gender ratio by sector of employment for all Polish migrants 2004-2009 (N=81 853). Currently (30.09.2009) valid permits by sector of employment (N=36 130). Stayer ratio and family reunion for the 2005 cohort by sector of employment (N=8 507).*

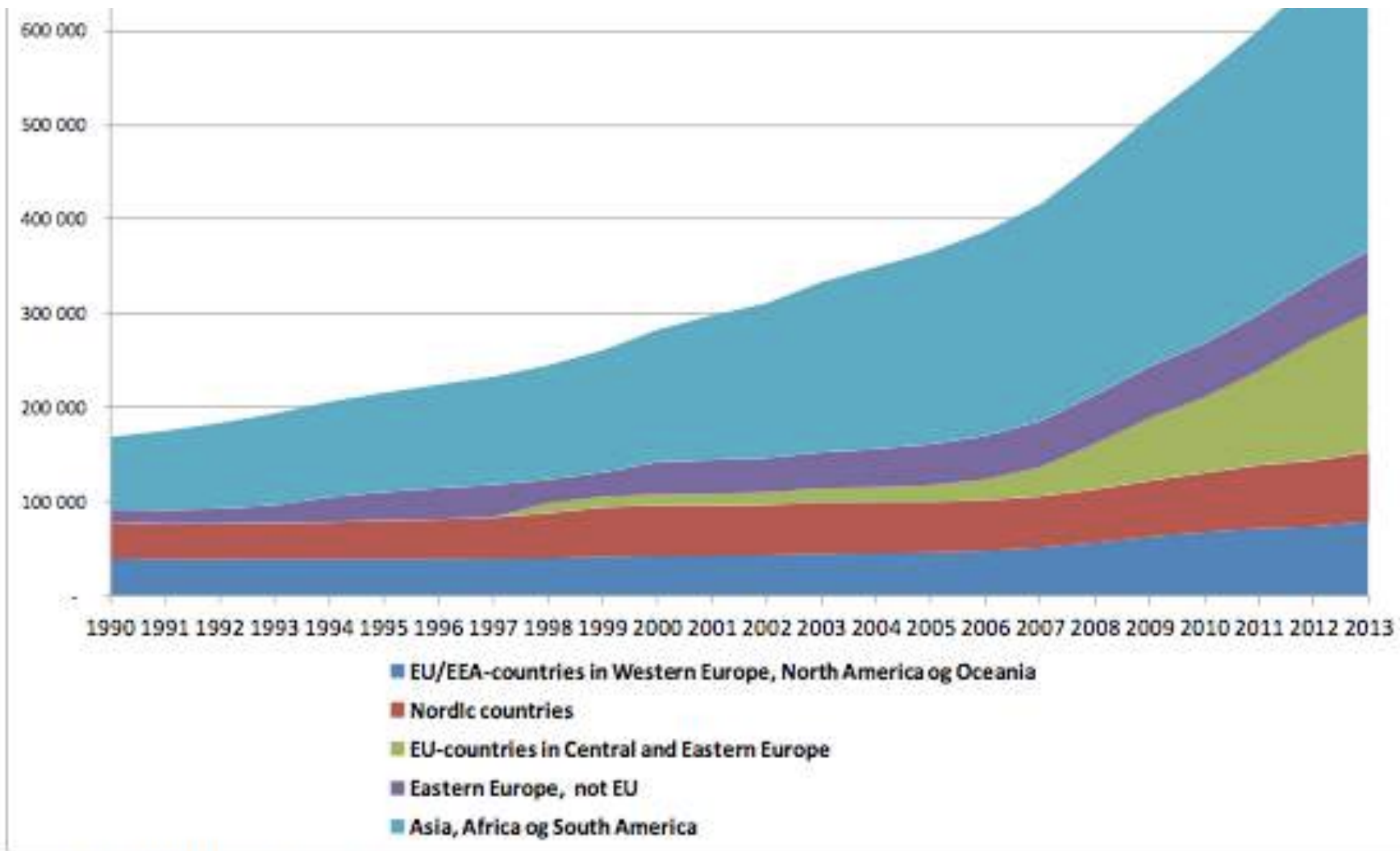
SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	All migrants 2004-2009 (N=81853)	Gender ratio M/F (N=81853)	Current valid (N=36130)	2005 cohort Stayer ratio (N=8507)	2005 cohort F a m r e u n i o n (N=8507)
Construction and related work	27 %	91/9	32 %	62 %	17 %
Agriculture, fishing and fish farming	24 %	64/36	8 %	14 %	3 %
Temp agency work and related services	22 %	95/5	27 %	64 %	14 %
Industrial manufacturing, mining and petro.	14 %	92/8	19 %	60 %	15 %
Retail trade, hotels and restaurants	10 %	73/27	11 %	44 %	14 %
Other services (IT, health care, education etc.)	3 %	66/34	3 %	38 %	11 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	100 %	83/17	100 %	42 %	11 %

Source: Friberg's calculations based on the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration's database over Polish citizens granted residency permits in Norway between 2004 and 2009.

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- Although statistical data on settlement and return migration is difficult to acquire, particularly within the free movement context, there is no doubt that migration from Poland since the year 2004 constitutes the largest single migratory flow to Norway in history.**
- What can be said about the recent composition of resident immigrants is that the largest country of their origin is Poland with 82 601 persons. The next country is Sweden (37 467 persons), however the Swedish do not even reach a half of the Polish number (stock at the 1 January 2013, Statistics Norway).**
- According to CSO (2014) there were 71 thous. Polish migrants in Norway at the end of 2013. Norway has been the fifth (after UK, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands) country of destination for Polish migrants.**

**Figure 1.** Immigrants and Norwegian-born with two immigrant parents. Country background.1990-2013



Source: Statistics Norway, copied from International Migration 2012-2013 – IMO report for Norway, p.36.



**Table 3.** Immigrants and Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents: the ten largest groups as of 1 January 2013.

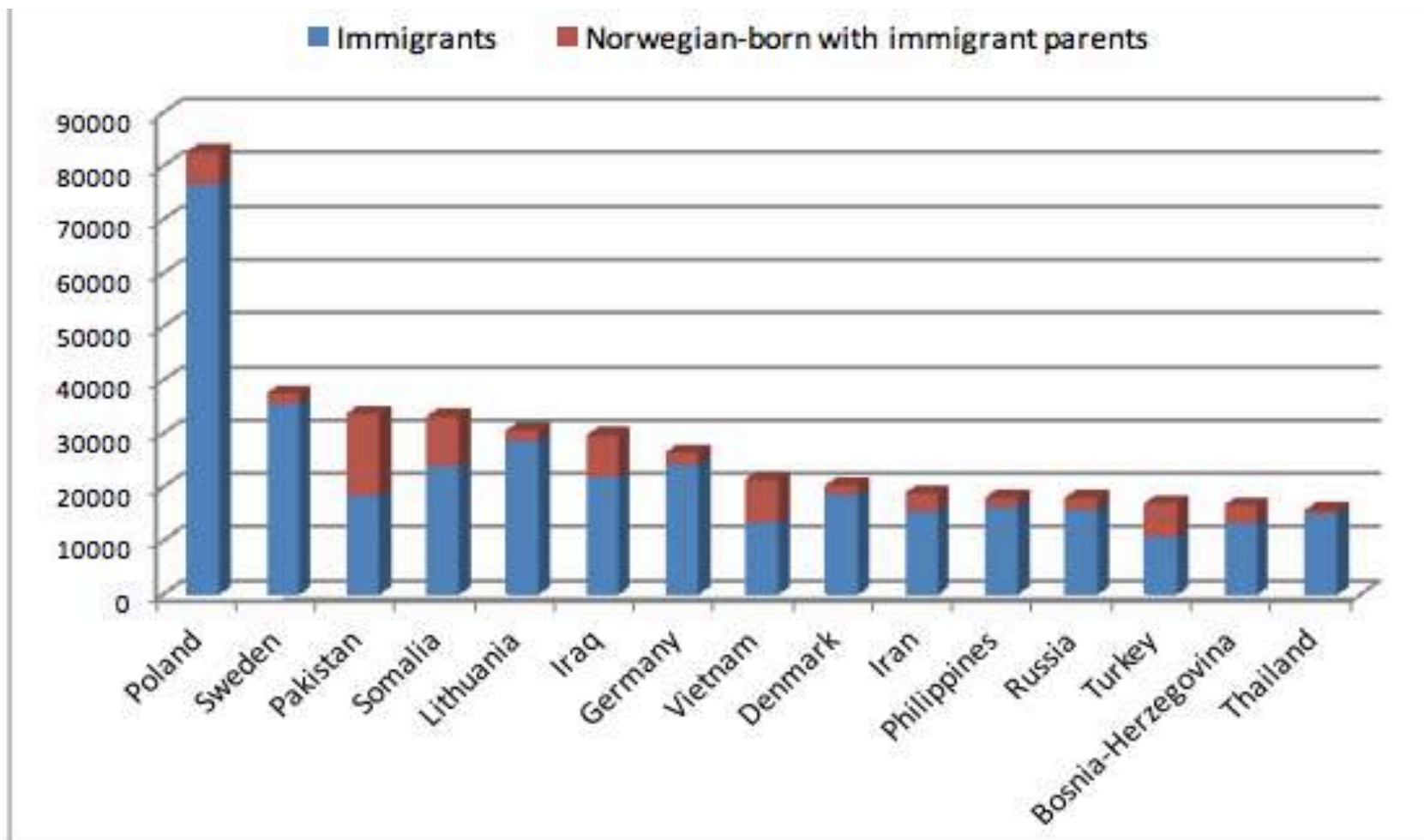
Country	Number	Increase from 2012 to 2013	Percentage of all immigrants and Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents
Poland	82 601	10 498	11,6
Sweden	37 467	889	5,3
Pakistan	33 634	897	4,7
Somalia	33 117	3 722	4,7
Lithuania	30 540	6 599	4,3
Iraq	29 614	679	4,2
Germany	26 398	715	3,7
Vietnam	21 351	480	3,0
Denmark	20 304	481	2,9
Iran	18 861	948	2,6

Source: Statistics Norway

# **The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective**

- **As research has shown, Polish post-accession migration to Norway has been related to restructuring of labour intensive sector such as construction, and increasing informalisation and casualisation of labour relations that have traditionally been strongly regulated in Norway. A strict separation between standard and atypical forms of employment is characteristic for Norwegian labour market. Polish workers find employment mainly in two niche sectors – constructing and cleaning.**
- **Generally, illegal employment is becoming less significant. However, this trend differs in its intensity with regards to the type of sectors. The biggest changes have occurred within cleaning sector and sectors outside the two Polish niches.**

**Figure 2.** Major groups of immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents. 1.1.2013



Source: : International Migration 2012-2013 – IMO report for Norway, p. 37.

# **The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective**

- **“(...) contrary to the most cleaners and workers in other sectors, most Polish construction workers reported that they only worked alongside other Poles and that at work they spoke only Polish, a testament to work organizations in the construction industry strictly separated along lines of language and nationality” . (Friberg 2012b, p320)**
- **In case of Polish migrants, employment in labour intensive sectors does not seem to be just a stepping stone into the regular labour market. Quite contrary, it seems more justified to state that Poles are impounded to temporary, atypical forms of employment, exposed for less favorable treatment (lower wages, harsh working conditions and exploitation) and for higher risk related to fluctuation in labour demand than the native residents of Norway.**

**Table 4 . Sectors and terms of employment in 2006 and 2010 compared. Per cent**

	Construction work		Cleaning		Other	
<b>Terms of employment</b>	2 0 0 6 (n=289)	2010 (n=292)	2 0 0 6 (n=108)	2 0 1 0 (n=81)	2 0 0 6 (n=57)	2 0 1 0 (n=81)
<b>Permanent legal jobs in Norwegian companies</b>	15	19	3	17	20	48
<b>Temporary and atypical legal employment (posted subcontractors, agency work, etc.)</b>	54	52	11	25	44	42
<b>Illegal employment (have no written contract and do not pay tax)</b>	32	28	86	58	37	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Friberg 2012b

# **The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective**

- **Nationwide survey conducted in 2009 among employers in labour intensive sectors (construction and industrial manufacturing) has shown that lowering the number of workers hired through temporary staffing agencies and subcontractors was the most common solution to meet reduced labour demand, which was caused by economic crises of 2008-2009. Not surprisingly, Poles were affected more by the crises than natives. The registered unemployment rate for the whole population sustained below 3 percent while among Polish workers was much higher.**

**Table 5.** Unemployment among Polish migrants in Norway, 2007-2012

	2007K4		2008K4		2009K4		2010K4		2011K4		2012K4	
	UP	%LF	UP	%LF	UP	%LF	UP	%LF	UP	%LF	UP	%LF
Both sexes	296	1,5	1224	4,2	3114	9,3	4031	10,2	3101	6,6	3344	6,2
Males	144	1	986	4,4	2582	10,5	3238	11,2	2155	6,2	2214	5,6
Females	152	3	238	3,3	532	5,8	793	7,2	946	7,3	1130	7,5

UP – Unemployed persons

%LF – Registered unemployed in per cent of the Polish labour force (per cent)

Source: Statistics Norway (SSB)

Source: Quoted after Ryndyk  
(2013)

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- **Regardless the crises of 2008 and 2009 Polish migrants did not massively return to Poland, which was not only a case of migration to Norway. Surveys conducted in Oslo (Friberg 2012b) and data gathered by Statistics Norway indicate a trend towards more long term settlement. In 2006 Polish migrants in Oslo were predominantly male, working temporarily commuting back and forth between Norway and Poland, where their remained their families. In 2010 the proportion of Polish women in Oslo reached 36 percent (26 percent in 2006) and approximately half of them claimed that they had arrived in order to join their spouses. Just to compare, almost all men pointed economic reasons of their arrival to Norway. It is also interesting that in 2010 most of the non-single respondents reported that their spouses lived with them in Norway (52 percent, while in 2006 it was only 20).**



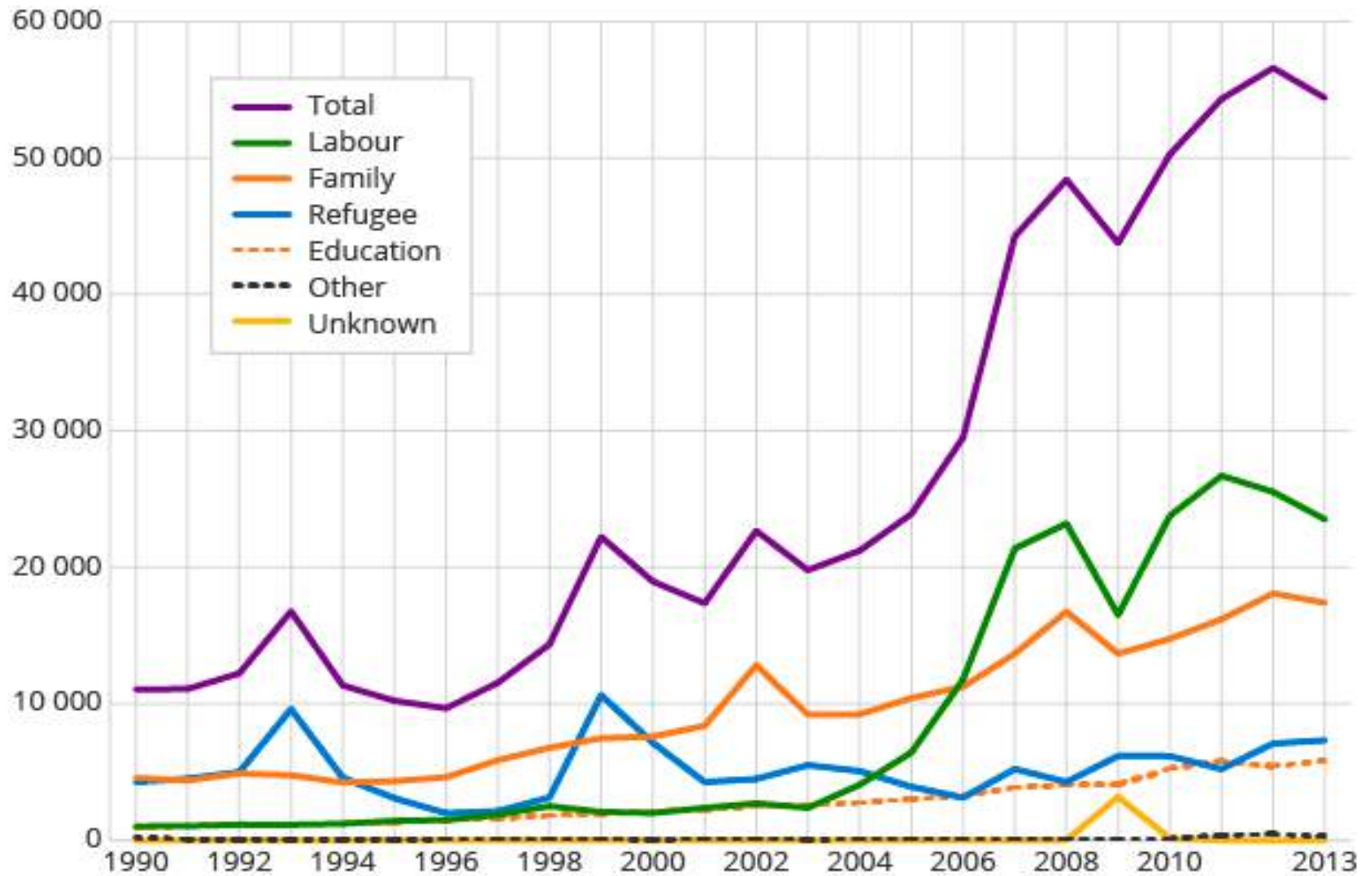
# **The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective**

- Polish immigrants are not included in immigration policies since their movement and access to Norwegian labour market is regulated by EU/EEA supranational principles. Thus, the existence of Polish migrants in Norway is regulated by labour laws. They are not included in any integration programs, such as language learning programs, that are offered to non-Europeans. Their adaptation and migration decisions are therefore related heavily to their position at the labour market – their access to jobs and financial security. Since a demand for flexible workers in labour demanding sectors, such as construction, industrial manufacturing and cleaning is quite permanent, migrants were offered new temporary assignments. Some of them prolonged their stays in Norway since they still could not reach their target earnings. Simultaneously, due to the growing informal network more jobs are available to newly arriving Polish women.**

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- **Although, Poles, as EU citizens, within national policy are not included in any integration programs, there are cases when municipal public agencies are seeking ways to integrate them. One of the examples is recalled by Baba and Dahl-Jørgensen (2010) - the municipal government established Norwegian language courses to help unemployed Polish construction workers to learn Norwegian and to find new jobs locally outside the construction sector. For the authors it illustrates that local public agency has acknowledged the presence of “permanent” Polish residents and has sought to integrate them although this practice contradicts national policy.**

**Figure 2.** Immigration by reason for migration. 1990 – 2013



Source: Statistics Norway

**Table 6.** Family immigration – major countries. New permits and EEA-registrations. 2003 - 2012

Countries of origin	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Total, of which:</b>	<b>10 469</b>	<b>12 750</b>	<b>13 035</b>	<b>13 981</b>	<b>17 913</b>	<b>20 766</b>	<b>18 112</b>	<b>21 526</b>	<b>24 577</b>	<b>24 333</b>
Poland	247	390	748	1 702	3 292	4 423	2 773	4 612	4 376	4 516
Lithuania	106	162	238	382	643	749	655	2 132	2 356	2 384
Thailand	780	1 099	1 014	943	1 073	1 214	1 248	989	1 176	1 227
Somalia	652	689	929	913	1 003	1 179	1 027	685	1 331	1 210
Philippines	396	437	433	412	618	580	703	766	975	1 007
Germany	401	563	558	768	1 456	1 630	835	1 140	1 166	913
Eritrea	26	42	34	49	78	142	237	430	869	728
India	132	162	176	246	496	478	431	361	533	641
Russia	797	742	653	595	658	607	620	506	610	627
USA	322	423	355	410	453	528	459	410	465	584
Pakistan	518	496	461	392	431	438	500	344	412	492
Afghanistan	387	318	507	471	362	445	391	358	382	337
Iraq	940	909	933	626	436	654	762	554	554	271
Stateless	94	109	88	131	205	534	539	317	242	146

Source: International Migration 2012-2013 – IMO report for Norway, p.16.

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- **At this point it is also worth to recall findings from a research conducted in Rogaland (Ryndyk 2013). They contradict the widely spread assumption that the high cost of language training in Norway impedes Polish migrants from learning Norwegian language. An obstacle should be rather defined in terms of tough working conditions that leave no time for language learning. The above mentioned study, although not representative in terms of statistics or national scope, put some light on socio-economic integration of Polish migrant workers and the living conditions of Polish families, which are related to the work in “Polish” niches. Since jobs available for majority of post-accession Polish migrants do not provide earnings and conditions comparable with those available for natives, an average Polish migrant worker cannot afford renting proper accommodation, many live in small flats located in basements or attics.**

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- **Such conditions affect many aspects of private life among Polish migrant families. They may have implications for the school performance of the migrants' children. In short, current situation if prolonged can put into question values related to “equality” that are said to be a pillar of the Norwegian society.**
- **The issue is serious since the labor market seems “to be unwilling to accept the Polish workers entry into the labor force other than as unskilled workers (...) Major actors in the labor market seem to share this attitude. A study for example shows that the Norwegian Confederation of Employers (NHO) is positive to labor migration, but under the conditions that they return back to their home country once they are not needed” (Baba and Dahl-Jørgensen 2010).**

# **The Poles in Norway – the Polish perspective**

- **Former expectations related to free movement of people within EEA can, at least, partially be questioned. More and more Poles decide on more permanent settlement instead of circulation between Norway and Poland. It is a challenge not only for them but for the Norwegian society and policy, in particular. Although the state, as one can see, has a limited power to control flows of people within EEA, it is exposed to the consequences of migrants presence, especially, their maladaptation and growing inequalities in Norwegian society.**



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Thank you for you attention



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