Poland

Migration flows in Poland are still largely outward, although emigration began to slow down in the second half of 2007. According to labour force survey data, in the second quarter of 2008, the number of adult emigrants who were staying abroad for more than three months fell 5% compared to the same quarter of 2007. This was the first decrease in the number of migrants from Poland registered by the LFS since the end of 1990s. In addition, short term movements dropped to 45% of the total in the fourth quarter of 2007, declining further to 30% in the second quarter of 2008.

Most of the outflows continued to be directed to EU-15 countries, mainly to the U.K., Germany and Ireland. However, all these destinations received fewer migrants from Poland in the second quarter of 2008 compared to the same period of 2007. Conversely, the Netherlands recorded a 16% increase in the inflows, thus becoming the fourth country of destination for Polish migrants. This was partly due to the free access to Dutch labour market accorded to EU-8 workers as of 1 May 2007.

Immigration to Poland remains low. According to the Central Population Register, 57 550 foreigners were permanent residents of Poland at the end of 2007, only 0.15% of the total population. The three main national groups were Germans (21%), Ukrainians (11%), and Russians (6%). However, there are some signs of increasing immigration: in 2007, 27 170 residence permits were granted to third country nationals, a 2% increase over 2006.

Since 2004, Poland has been among the OECD countries showing the largest increases in inflows of foreign students (18% in 2004-2006). In 2007, the number of students rose 20%, to 13 695. While most students continue to arrive from ex-USSR countries and Europe, a significant rise in the number of students coming from Asia and Africa was observed.

About 12 150 long-term work permits were issued in 2007, 13% more than in 2006. In the first half of 2008, 8 154 work permits were issued, 42% more than in the respective period of 2007. The main country of origin of foreign workers continued to be Ukraine (32%), followed by Vietnam (9%), Moldova (8%), Belarus and China (7%). The number of permits granted to skilled workers increased by 56%. In addition, between October 2007 and September 2008, 150 000 foreigners, mainly Ukrainians, worked in Poland under the work permit exemption (regulations introduced on 30 August 2006, amended in January 2008).

On 1 January 2009, following Poland's entry to the Schengen Area, the bilateral agreement on local border traffic between Poland and Ukraine was implemented. Residents of the border area may regularly cross the border and stay in the area for a maximum of 60 days each time. Local border traffic permits are valid for two years, and can be extended to five years.

In October 2008, to cope with the growing shortages of qualified workers, the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy proposed to amend the Act on Promotion of Employment and the Institutions of the Labour Market of 2004 in order to simplify the work permit procedure. However, trade unions are calling for restrictions on non-EU foreign workers, to make room for returning Polish emigrants hit by the economic crisis. The narrowing of the earning gap between the EU-15 and Poland, owing both to recent improvements in the Polish labour market, and to the appreciation of the zloty, had started to encourage return even before the economic situation in the host countries worsened. Data from the Polish Population Register show that the pace of returns has accelerated in the last two years. Surveys carried out in the UK and Ireland confirm this trend. Though Poland's economy remains more robust than many amid the global recession, unemployment edged up to 10.9% in February 2009.

On 29 May 2008, the second amendment to the Act on Protection of Aliens came into force, introducing a new form of humanitarian protection, subsidiary protection, granted to people subject to risks in their country of origin but who do not qualify for refugee status.

For further information:
http://www.udsc.gov.pl/
www.stat.gov.pl
www.mpips.gov.pl