



INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NEXT STOPSKI LONDON

**Public Perceptions of Labour Migration
within the EU. The Case of Polish
Labour Migrants in the British Press**

**Joanna Fomina
Justyna Frelak**

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Executive Summary

- The discourse on Polish immigration in the British press is strongly embedded into a few broader debates: on immigration, immigrant integration and the multicultural state, as well as the UK's membership in the EU. Both the EU and immigration are highly sensitive issues in the British politics. The British press is tuned to the readers' Eurosceptic and anti-immigration attitudes, and for this reason one rarely finds a positive case for (Polish) immigration in newspapers.
- There is striking dissonance between the generally positive image of Polish migrants and the much more ambivalent perception of Polish migration to the UK and its impact on different spheres of public life. The traditionally apprehensive attitudes towards migration to a large extent explain such a discrepancy.
- Tabloids especially tend to put different types of migratory flows (legal economic migration, refugees, illegal migration, etc.) all into one bag. In this way the discussion on opening the UK labour market to workers from new EU member states is often contaminated by other largely unrelated issues, e.g. *bogus* asylum seekers.
- The 2004 enlargement of the EU was presented in an ambiguous way. On the one hand, the entry of the former Soviet bloc states to the EU was presented in a congratulatory tone as a sure sign of achieving democratisation, higher standards of public life, and a free market economy by the new member states. On the other hand, tabloids especially also mourned the recently gained and lost again sovereignty of the Eastern European countries. Such incongruence can be explained by Euroscepticism characteristic for most of the British press.
- The representations of Poland are often conflicting, even if found in the same newspaper or even the same article. All newspapers see Poland as a young liberal economy; it is the UK's ally in keeping the federalisation of Europe at bay and a country that has already proved itself a reliable partner

of Britain in the struggle against the Nazis. Yet, Poland is presented as a bureaucratic, somewhat backward country, currently ruled by populists, nationalists and religious fundamentalists. Poland is portrayed as a country with high unemployment, meagre wages and lack of opportunities, especially for young graduates.

- The motivations to emigrate are presented as predominately economic, but newspapers also mention those of seeking career development opportunities, as well as of escaping an unfavourable political situation and malfunctioning institutions. It is rather centre-left newspapers that pay attention to the political situation as a motivation to leave the country.
- Polish migrants are portrayed predominantly in favourable terms. Much attention is paid to Poles' industriousness, reliability, good quality of work and readiness to work for moderate wages. They are also presented as dynamic, willing to integrate as well as taking an active stance on their (working) rights.
- The main obstacle towards full integration is the lack of adequate knowledge of English, which is the reason many Poles are bound to accept work below their professional skills.
- Only a small share of articles dealt with Poles as criminal perpetrators. Lack of knowledge of traffic rules as well as ignoring the ban on drink-driving appear to be the most frequent offences.
- The British press does not confine itself to presenting a stereotyped image of Polish migrants. In particular, readers of quality papers have been presented with an array of people of different walks of life, occupations, motivations and aspirations. The identified types of Polish migrants, which are classified according to their life and work patterns, are portrayed in the press – the *storks* (seasonal workers), *hamsters* (who save to invest in Poland), *foragers* (intentionally unpredictable), *koala bears* (without prospects, often jobless and homeless), and *salmons* (intending to stay in the UK). In 2007 the share of Poles who are non-menial workers represented in the press has been increasing. What unites most Poles is their much-praised work ethic.
- The perceptions of the impact of Polish migration are more complex and ambiguous. There are many conflicting messages sent out to the reader. As a rule, tabloids, with *the Daily Mail* being an unquestionable champion here, much more often beat the chauvinistic drum and associate social problems with Polish immigration than quality papers. In many instances, the depictions of the negative impact of the inflow of Polish migrants (the strain on public services, housing, etc.) have been in fact attacks on the government for its alleged failure to properly manage the opening of the labour market, or its unwillingness to have an open and sincere debate on immigration.

- With regard to the economic impact, all newspapers acknowledge that the inflow of Poles has boosted the economy and benefited not only many businesses by filling in labour shortages but also regular people by making different services more affordable. However, in 2004 Polish immigration was also seen as dumping wages and causing unemployment for local workers as well as threatening the welfare state, with the fears of welfare system abuses and a huge strain on public services being most pronounced. The tabloids in particular often resorted to well-known anti-immigration arguments, or “genuine concerns” as they called them. In 2007 the arguments about Poles stealing jobs somewhat subsided, as more information about Polish migrants demanding higher pay started to appear in the newspapers.
- Quality newspapers also devoted much attention to the strain on public services, yet they rather concentrated on the fact that the government statistics were not reliable and thus public services were not financed adequately. In other words, these newspapers emphasised that it was not the decision to “invite” Eastern European migrants that was wrong, but rather the mismanagement of public services based on inaccurate (or perhaps deliberately underestimated) calculations.
- Notably, even quality newspapers by and large disregarded the fact that since Poles work and pay taxes, they cannot be denied the protection of the welfare system. Such an opinion was voiced only once in the debate between two left-wing intellectuals, David Goodhart and Khalid Koser, published by the *Guardian*.
- A separate strand in the press coverage of the economic impact was the so-called “Polish pound”, in other words the money earned and spent by diligent Poles. Newspapers often relate the steps taken by the ever-increasing number of businesses in order to attract the interest of the new consumer group (e.g. Polish-language-speaking staff, Polish brands).
- There are also several major social problems that the press associates with the opening of the borders and the arrival of Polish labour migrants: an uncontrollable wave of illegal migration and trafficking in people, the rise in xenophobic attacks directed against the new migrants, the exploitation of Polish workers (sometimes by fellow Poles), the squalid living and working conditions, and homelessness. Polish immigrants are rarely held responsible for these problems, yet the presentation of their arrival in such a negative context by association makes the perception of their impact more negative.
- Cultural contribution is not a very recurrent theme in the discussion of the impact of Polish migrants in the UK. However, newspapers have noticed that the presence of a new ethnic group has become increasingly more visible thanks to Polish food shops, a variety of newspapers published

in Polish, Polish culture festivals, and Polish Sunday schools. It is rather quality press that pays attention to various aspects of the Polish cultural contribution.

- Poles are treated as just another ethnic group in the multicultural society. Newspapers write about many instances of public institutions adapting to the needs of a new migrant group in a neutral way. Yet, sometimes the steps assisting Poles' adaptation to the new country are reported in a negative tone, as undeserved or unmotivated special treatment and an additional strain on public services, which related to the broader debate on immigrant integration.
- There are no instances of contrasting Poles with other A-8 countries' migrants. However, Poles are better rated against migrants from the two new members, Bulgaria and Romania: it is not only a matter of better professional skills, but also public safety.
- Despite the presence of metaphors with negative connotations used to describe Polish immigration to the UK, the language should not be considered as strongly discriminatory against Poles. All too often seemingly very negative metaphors are employed in rather neutral or even positive contexts. This dissonance should be blamed on the nature of the press language that tends to be sensational and exaggerated in order to attract the reader's attention.
- Ultimately the message sent out to the reader is muddled: Polish immigrants are highly appreciated, but post-enlargement Polish immigration – as any mass migration – has its costs and benefits, and may pose a threat to certain aspects of life in Britain.

Introduction

The present report is a result of the research project “Public Perceptions of Labour Migrations within the EU. The Case of Polish Labour Migrants in the British Press” funded by the Foundation for Population, Migration and Environment (PME).

The project is one of a number of the IPA’s studies focusing on the perceptions of Poland, Poles and Polish foreign policy abroad. Before Poland’s accession to the EU, the IPA conducted research on the perceptions of Poland and Poles in several EU member states as well as perceptions of these states in Poland. The outcome of the 1998-2001 research was published in the book *Obraz Polski i Polaków w Europie [The Image of Poland and Poles in Europe]* edited by Professor Lena Kolarska-Bobińska (2003). Research on the perceptions of Poland in Germany and France was conducted again two years after Poland’s EU accession. The IPA also published reports on the perceptions of Poland and Polish foreign policy reports in the press in five EU member states (Warchala, 2002; Fałkowski, 2004). The present publication’s focus is limited to the British press. It concentrates exclusively on the UK press coverage of migration from Poland to Britain following the EU enlargement and the decision of Tony Blair’s Cabinet to open the British labour market to citizens from new member states. The issue of labour migration from Poland was cursorily addressed in earlier research, but the scale and the public interest (in both Britain and Poland) seems to warrant a more thorough examination.

Our aim is to take an in-depth look at the representation of Polish migrants in the British press and their perceived impact on the “British way of life” in the economic, cultural and political sense. The Polish media often alarmed their audiences about the exaggerated or even hysterical reaction of the British media towards the inflow of Polish migrants. From what the reader of the Polish press could understand, the liberalisation of the labour market in the UK was presented as the influx of migrant workers who come to take jobs from nationals, seek welfare benefits and then go home after they have brought havoc. Our task here is to systematically investigate how Poles have been

represented in both quality and tabloid press. The reader will then be able to judge how representative the articles reprinted by the Polish media were for the general manner of representing Polish migration to Great Britain.

The UK has been a country of migration for centuries. Its colonial past has played a fundamental role in the economic and cultural shaping of the country. Many Britons made far away countries their homes especially in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The 1950 saw the redirection of the tide of migration: it was now the colonies that were knocking on the island's door. Yet, being a "world island" in the sense that Brits could stay, lay rules, make reforms in the territory covering half of the world was one aspect. Having this world suddenly coming to Britain to stay was something completely different. People from India or the Caribbean spoke the same language, yet they looked very different from the native Britons. Immigration from former colonies triggered a wave of racial riots, legislation restricting migration, and what is especially interesting for us, a profound continuous anti-immigration campaign in the press. Alleged pressure on housing and public services, the abuse of welfare state and stealing work from locals were the most commonly cited arguments in the press in favour of limiting immigration from the colonies. What is more, as Charles Husband aptly noted, the British have developed their understanding of contemporary events through the discourse of "coloured immigration". "The racialisation of the British understanding of the ethnic transformation of their population was rapid and has proved to be persistent" (Husband, 2005). To put it bluntly, the term "immigrants" has come to mean "people of colour", whereas, the task of the state has been defined as to protect them from racial discrimination, and later – to support their cultural and religious claims and needs.

Britain's accession to the EU in 1973 slightly changed the character of migration. However, with the exception of the poorer member states (Spain and Portugal), new temporary scares – e.g. migration from equally affluent EU member states – were not something to worry about. This was just the same as the case of immigration from Australia and New Zealand. These "desirable" immigrants did not stick out from the crowd, boosted the economy and usually went home after earning enough money. They also did not demand any special treatment. The new 2004 enlargement, strongly advocated by the UK in the hope of keeping the federalised Europe at bay, brought about another wave of migration that seems to be much more controversial. On one hand, the new migrants look similar to white Britons, share the Christian religion and European history and culture. But they also come from a considerably poorer country, with no relation to Britain's imperial past and thus no perceived responsibilities towards it, as well as no linguistic affinity. Will the press ignore it, as the white influx that can melt quickly in the wider population, just as their grandparents did several decades ago? Or will the (sections of) press

remain vigilant as in the case of the previous (coloured) immigration from poorer countries and employ its traditional scaremongering tactics?

By now we know that the new wave of immigration has not passed unnoticed. On the contrary, all newspapers have devoted a lot of attention to the influx of newcomers from Central Europe, especially from Poland, being the largest of “the new ten”. What is more, perceptions of this wave of migration, as presented in the press, are often complex and conflicting, encompass various spheres of life and are shaped by historical, economic and political considerations.

The present report comprises four chapters. The first chapter will provide the context for the discussion of the press coverage of Polish migration in the UK. It looks at the debate on the EU enlargement in the member states, and especially in the UK. This chapter also sheds more light on the phenomenon of the migration of Poles to the UK and concentrates on the statistics with regard to those who have left Poland after May 2004, including the most attractive destinations, employment profiles and working conditions as well as the prospects of return migration.

After a chapter describing the methodology in the second chapter, the third chapter is an attempt to present a synthetic picture of the Polish migration as represented in the British press and thus will focus on the choice of the analysed newspapers as well as some quantitative analysis of the studied phenomenon. We decided to analyse both quality and tabloid newspapers as all too often tabloids in fact define the topics of interest that quality newspapers select (that proved especially visible with regard to the preoccupation with the numbers of labour migrants expected to come to the UK). Tabloids, with their massive circulations and appeal to the voter, cannot be easily dismissed.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the qualitative analysis of the perceptions of Polish migration to the UK in the British press. The preliminary research showed that there was a dissonance between the perceptions of Polish migrants and perceptions of their impact on the various aspects of life in the UK. Thus, for analytical purposes this chapter is divided into two main parts: one devoted to the perceptions of Polish migrants (as individuals and as a group) and the other devoted to the perceived impact of Polish migration on the various aspects of life in Britain.

The title of this report was inspired by one of the articles published by *the Evening Standard*. We hope that it will not only allow the reader to better understand the reactions of the British society towards labour migration from Poland but that it will also contribute to a more informed debate about the challenge of migration for Europe in the 21st century.

The authors of this report would like to thank to the British Council for granting us the opportunity to use its online database of British newspapers.

1. Polish Emigration after May 1, 2007

The 2004 European Union enlargement process was accompanied in the “old” member states by a tumultuous debate on whether to open labour markets to workers from accessing countries. Indeed, as of May 1, 2004, the European Union population was to expand by about 75 million people. Certain old member states worried about the uncontrolled influx of immigrants from the new member states where living standards and wages were much lower. Consequently, most old member states decided to impose transition periods prior to opening up their labour markets. Now, a few years after the enlargement, it is evident that their actions were primarily motivated by *fears and scepticism of the “unknown”* (European Citizen Action Service, 2005).

The most controversial aspect of the debate on the free flow of workers out of the new member states resided in its anticipated economic consequences. The debate often included contradictory opinions coming from research communities, trade unions and political parties, each with its own concept of how to best manage economic migration. An important role in the debate was also played by the mass media, which raised various issues associated with migration – from catastrophic prophesies of labour markets flooded by cheap workers to dramatic appeals for liberalising labour markets as a necessary step in countering the demographic slump. In some countries, the debate on opening up the labour market became a part of politicians’ endeavours to win votes. It was also strongly influenced by popular protests and a stereotypical outlook on migration issues, and therefore it lacked substantive arguments.

This report aims to depict the newest wave of Polish emigrants and compare the reality with the image presented by the UK media. It starts with a brief overview of the present situation regarding the freedom of movement of the labour force within the enlarged EU. The debate on the free flow of workers from the new member states during the negotiation period will also be examined in the light of the most frequent arguments for and against liberalisation. Particular emphasis is put on Polish migrants in the UK, by

presenting recent trends in migration from Poland to the UK, the migrants' socio-economic profile and their impact on the economy.

1.1. Labour Market Liberalisation

In response to fears of the market being flooded by cheap workers from the new member states, the Accession Treaty provided the old member states with a possibility to control access to their labour markets. Transition periods were divided into three separate phases according to the "2 plus 3 plus 2" formula. Phase 1 was in effect from May 1, 2004 to April 30, 2006, and after two years the EU member states could decide whether to extend access restrictions. At the same time, the European Commission critically examined the existence of transition periods in a free movement of workers and disapproved of their continued use (European Commission, 2006).

Formally, transitional regulations lose effect five years after accession to the EU, i.e. in 2009. However, they can be extended for two more years when the labour market of the given member state is or can be seriously disturbed by migration. Thus, transitional regulations can be in effect only until 2011 (Duszczyk & Wiśniewski, 2007, p. 6).

Only Sweden (with serious concerns), Ireland and Great Britain did not take advantage of the possibility to limit EU-8 citizens' access to their national labour markets. Other countries at the time of accession kept the restrictions. In response, Poland introduced reciprocal limitations on the citizens of those countries (they were abolished in January 2007).

Over time the positive impact of migration on the economy and labour market in countries such as Great Britain or Ireland convinced other states to open up their labour markets as well. Gradually, the three countries mentioned above were joined by others: Finland, Spain, Portugal and Greece abolished restrictions after two years in May 2006, Italy in June 2006 and the Netherlands in May 2007. Luxembourg is also opening up its labour market to Poles and citizens of other states which joined the EU on May 1, 2004 (*Rzeczpospolita*, October 6, 2007). Today only Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France and Germany continue to impose restrictions, albeit in a somewhat relaxed manner, requiring a work permit from citizens of other EU countries.

1.1.1. The Debate on Opening the Labour Market

In accession negotiations, those that concerned a free flow of workers from new member states were among the most controversial. They were accompanied

by a stormy debate in the media and among the population. Their ultimate outcome was a compromise reached to appease the public opinion on both sides of the fence, as otherwise the support for enlargement was in danger of plummeting (Duszczuk, 2002, p. 95). It is useful to take a closer look at main arguments for and against opening up labour markets in the old EU member states, as they were also present in the debate that took place in Great Britain.

Most often, arguments in favour of imposing access restrictions were associated with the popular fear of a flood of cheap labour force coming from the countries with a lower standard of living and wages. However, studies of migration movements that took place after Southern European countries (Greece, Spain and Portugal) joined the EU showed that no intensification was to be expected. Nevertheless, opponents of liberalising migration regulations argued that the two situations were not comparable. In their opinion, the gap in the economic development between member states would be much greater after this phase of enlargement and so would be the motivation to look for work abroad.

The negative attitude to opening up labour markets was also influenced by exaggerated assessments of anticipated immigrant numbers. The arrival of cheap workers was believed to lead to higher unemployment and dropping wage rates (Hamburg Institute of International Economics, 2006, p. 2). For example, in a poll conducted in 2004, 75% of Germans said that the enlargement would cause higher unemployment. In France, the “Polish plumber” advertisement became a symbol of the threatened domestic labour market. All that was exacerbated by the fear of a higher burden imposed on the social insurance system as a result of so-called “social tourism”. Yet another argument present in the debate was that foreign workers would compete with domestic workers for the same jobs and, as a result, would push them out of the labour market.

The evident benefits obtained from opening up labour markets (i.e. filling the gaps in the labour market, its complementary character) were not sufficient arguments to convince countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France and Germany. Among the old member states, migration was most feared by Austria and Germany, mainly because of their geographical proximity to poorer countries, which makes emigration cheaper and, therefore, facilitates the decision to emigrate. Evidence in support of this thesis was provided in statistics showing that 80% of Central and East European migrants would come after the fall of the Iron Curtain specifically to Austria and Germany. In Germany’s case, other arguments most often cited in favour of upholding restrictions related to the popular fear of flood by the cheap labour force. Another point in favour of maintaining the status quo was the high unemployment level and the claim that existing instruments (bilateral

agreements) effectively managed a selective recruitment of foreign workers. The Germans also feared that immigration would increase the cost of social insurance (Centre of Migration Research, 2006). According to some German commentator, opening up the local labour market would cause a flood of unskilled East Europeans because those that were better-skilled already went to countries like Great Britain and Ireland (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 6, 2007). An important role in the debate was also played by trade unions, which opposed the liberalisation of immigration regulations.

Matters took a somewhat different turn when the German government decided in September 2007 to relax access restrictions for migrants highly skilled in certain specialisations and for foreign graduates of German universities (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 19, 2007). On the other hand, national politics, in other words the wish to please voters, caused politicians in some countries – particularly Austria and Germany – to extend the transitional period as far as allowed under the Accession Treaty, i.e. to 2011 (Niklewicz, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, arguments in favour of opening up the labour market to migrants won in only three countries. In Great Britain and Ireland, that decision was motivated mainly by their countries' good economic condition, low unemployment level and the need for a larger labour force. Similar opinions dominated in Sweden. An additional argument stressed by Sweden during negotiations was that the promotion of high employment rates required higher labour-force mobility and that the EU enlargement could contribute to that (Duszczuk, 2002, p. 191).

However, in Sweden's case, the debate took a great deal of unexpected turns. In 2001, the social-democratic prime minister of Sweden was the first to suggest opening up his country's labour market, but a few months prior to the enlargement he was already advocating the introduction of work permits for migrants from the new EU member states in order to avoid social tensions (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 31, 2004). The Swedish parliament passed the decision to abolish labour market restrictions for EU-8 workers only after a stormy debate and at the last moment.

Despite opening up their labour markets, Great Britain and Ireland decided to introduce a registration requirement for EU-8 workers. In Great Britain, the system was called the Workers' Registration Scheme (WRS) and was established partly after the government was criticised for having no effective instruments to monitor and control migration. The WRS was designed as a tool to control illegal migration and monitor its impact on the economy. In addition to establishing the WRS, the government also decided that labour market access restrictions would be re-imposed if the economy suffered as a result of liberalisation (Home Office, 2004).

Moreover, as a result of public pressure and in view of Germany's decision to impose temporary labour market protection measures, Great Britain introduced restrictions on immigrants' access to the national social security system. Immigrants can apply for selected social security benefits (such as unemployment benefits) only after having worked for 12 months and provided that they confirm their resident status) (Institute for Public Policy Research [IPPR], 2006, p. 6). The enlargement was to be accompanied by a campaign conducted under the slogan: "*You can come to the UK to work, if you register, but you cannot claim benefits*".

Another debate emerged soon after that, this time about opening up labour markets to Bulgarians and Romanians after their countries joined the EU on January 1, 2007. As a result, access barriers were removed in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden. Great Britain and Ireland maintained them. Even though Romanians migrate mainly to Italy and Spain, and Bulgarians to Spain, Germany and Italy, the hottest debate flared up in Great Britain. Despite arguments in favour of the "open door" policy, the decision to apply a transition period was backed by the argument that the poorer the country of emigration the more migrants it will send to Great Britain (Centre of Migration Research, 2006). Bulgaria and Romania have a lower GDP per capita than any other state admitted in the past. Additionally, British tabloid headlines were suggesting that hundreds of thousands of Bulgarians and Romanians were already packed and ready to emigrate (Stewart, 2007). While stressing the positive economic impact of immigration from the EU-8, the British authorities justified the latest introduction of a transition period also by saying that time was needed to reform the immigration policy (Home Office, 2006). However, in reality, the government panicked after it had grossly underestimated the number of people who would come to Great Britain after 2004 and this time conceded to public pressure (Szczerkowski, 2006).

1.2. Polish Migration to the UK after May 1, 2004

It turned out three years after the 2004 enlargement that the rate of migration to some countries, particularly the UK and Ireland, had been grossly underestimated. Before 2004, the Home Office estimated the annual number of migrants that the UK could expect to range from 5,000 to 13,000. Instead, 605,375 people registered with the WRS between May 1, 2004 and March 31,

2007. That group is dominated by Poles – 65% of all registrants¹. The percentage is so high because some Poles had been clearly working in the UK illegally and were able to legalise their status only after Poland joined the EU (Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2007 p. 6). Moreover, there were no reliable records of how many Poles migrated to the UK in the 1990s. The restricted access to the German labour market – a traditional destination of Polish migrants – was given as another reason for the error in estimating the number of expected migrants.

There is also a group of economic migrants that did not register with the WRS because of the registration cost (£ 90). In a poll conducted by the Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM) with Polish migrants, 64% confirmed being registered. Consequently, the actual number of Polish economic migrants who took up employment in the UK after 2004 is much higher than the official figure.

The magnitude of migration from the EU-8 came as a total surprise. Despite evident economic benefits drawn from immigration so far, it raised concerns as to what might happen if the labour market stays open.

According to a report published by the Institute for Public Policy Research based on Labour Force Survey figures, in 2006 Poles were the third largest immigrant group in the UK (318,600), after migrants from India and Ireland. A typical Polish migrant worker is young and childless. The Polish migrant community has more men (53%) than women and the 25-44 age group dominates (IPPR, 2007, p. 11). Poles that came to the UK after the EU enlargement are younger than their predecessors. The pre-enlargement group had more women than men. This changed after 2004 (Fidel & Piętka, 2007, p. 14).

Let us reflect on the reasons behind this mass migration. Even though respondents declare that their primary motivation for leaving Poland was financial, they by no means belong to the poorest strata of the Polish society. Indeed, as studies of the Polish émigré community in the UK show, they belong to active and enterprising part of the society.

Public opinion polls on Polish emigration indicate that the emigrants' wish to take up employment in other EU member states is associated primarily with age and their job situation. Young people belong to the group that is most keen to find work in one of EU member states. After the EU enlargement, the labour market preference has distinctly shifted from Germany to the United Kingdom (Public Opinion Research Centre, 2006).

Poles decide to emigrate not because they cannot find any kind of work in Poland, but because they want to make a career and have a higher standard of

¹ Existing registers make it possible to estimate the number of people who came to Great Britain to work. However, it is not possible to state precisely how many are actually working at present.

living. Responses to questions on the reasons for emigration often contain a strong condemnation of Polish public institutions and political life (Ciacek, 2007, p. 59). This having been said, it should be kept in mind that for these people emigration is not an escape from “Polish hopelessness”. It only shows that Poles take advantage of an opportunity to make their aspirations come true, whether it be in Poland or abroad.

1.2.1. Urban or Rural Origin?

What is the origin of Poles who immigrate to the UK? The available data do not answer this question unequivocally, especially since they cover all emigration from Poland. Less urbanised regions seem to be particularly susceptible to emigration. According to a 2006 public opinion poll, the desire to emigrate is most common among small town residents. Dwellers of large cities are less likely to emigrate, obviously because there is more work in large cities and it is easier to find it (Wiśniewski & Duszczyk, 2007). These trends are also described in *Diagnoza Społeczna 2007 (Social Diagnosis 2007)* concerning the migration experience between 2005 and 2007. According to the research, the inhabitants of the provinces of Podkarpackie, Lubelskie and Dolnośląskiego were most likely to emigrate.

Polish workers have been settling in different areas of Great Britain, mainly in the southeast, south and southwest of England. Initially they settled in large cities, but with time they moved to smaller but fast growing towns. In regions such as Scotland, Poles appeared only after the EU enlargement (Centre of Migration Research, 2007, p. 2). It is in these small towns that the Polish presence is most visible and important.

1.2.2. Unskilled and Highly-Skilled Workers

At the time of Poland’s accession to the EU, there were 650,000 reported vacancies on the British labour market. As there was a demand for workers from the EU-8, finding a job was (and still is) relatively easy. Poles and other immigrants most often work in either highly specialised jobs or jobs that not require any skills. The latter type dominates. Men find work mainly in construction and the hospitality industry (women – in the hospitality industry and in healthcare (Fidel & Piętka, 2007, p. 13).

Poles have held a high standing also in terms of education, which is higher than other immigrants and native Brits. Unfortunately, education does not seem to translate into success on the job market. The most worrisome fact is

that educated immigrants are doing menial jobs and, consequently, are poorly paid. This is probably partially a result of not having adequate language skills. Poles that have recently arrived earn several pounds less than immigrants in the same jobs who came to the UK before 2000 (about 7.3 pounds an hour) (Eade, Drinkwater & Garapich, 2006, p. 6). It is the lowest rate paid to all 26 nationalities studied for the report, and is lower than the rate paid to Somalis, Turks and the Chinese.

Despite the low pay, Poles are among the hardest working people in the United Kingdom – their average working week has 41.5 hours. Only Americans put in more working hours, but they have better jobs and are paid almost 2.5 times more than Poles. The native average is 36.5 hours per week at about 11 pounds an hour (IPPR, 2007, p. 22). As for Poles, they treat this situation as temporary – a short-term sacrifice to accumulate savings.

1.2.3. Types of Polish Migration

The conduct and strategies used by migrants in the UK can be better understood with the typology applied by the Centre for Research on Nationalism, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CRONEM) in its study of Polish migrants in London. Migrants were divided into several groups. *Storks* – typical seasonal workers often in low paid jobs living by the principle: maximum profit and minimum cost; *hamsters* – they save their earnings for future investment in Poland; *foragers* – they do not reveal their plans as they want to maximise their opportunities – their conduct is marked by “intentional unpredictability”; and *salmons* – those who insist they will not go back to Poland or maybe only to retire there. The media also often treat us to examples of another type of Polish immigrant, the *koala bear*: always drunk, stuck in the UK after a disastrous emigration attempt, without a job or any work prospects, sleeping in parks and train stations – a type that the Brits would best like to see on a train bound back for Poland.

Hamsters and *storks*, which apply the principle of maximum profit at minimum cost, are those whom the British media praise as reliable and effective employees, valued for their work ethics. They work several jobs for which they are often overqualified and have no free time or personal life. They are the type of migrants with whom the Brits are most often contrasted. Their motivation stems out of the reason why they have migrated: to make money in the UK and return, rather than to settle there.

Aspirations possessed by the other two groups – *foragers* and *salmons* – are already higher. These are people whose career path “from a shoeshine boy to a millionaire” is regularly featured in the press. They treat working in jobs

below their qualifications as a step on the path to social advancement. Indeed, they appreciate the non-economic benefits of these jobs (learning the language, acquiring experience, etc.).

1.3. Departures and Returns

It is not possible to specify how many of migrants who have found work in the UK will return to Poland. So far, they have been extending their stay. Not all migrants are interested in making some quick money and then returning home. CRONEM studies show that the majority of Polish migrants in London is not thinking of going back. This is confirmed by an ARC Rynek Opinia study of the intention to return, which shows that 55% of Polish migrants in Great Britain are not planning to return to Poland within the next five years (Pelowski, 2007). However, declarations of a relatively speedy return should be taken with a grain of salt as a migrant's plan can easily change and may well end up with the New Year's Eve declaration: "maybe next year".

Nonetheless, Poles in Great Britain keep in close contact with their families and friends in Poland and follow current Polish events. Nowadays, it is easy with the Internet and cheap telephone connections. Maintaining contact with people in Poland and visiting the home country also has an economic purpose – as confirmed by bank transfers and investment plans, often related to buying real estate (Rutkowski, 2006).

The decision to go back will depend on whether the Polish economy is overhauled and whether there is an environment in Poland propitious to achieving one's professional goals. Young people, accustomed to the higher standard of living they found abroad, will expect the same from life in Poland. The family situation is another factor that may convince some migrants to return. It should be kept in mind that the latest wave of migration is made up of people who are young and childless, and who after a period of time spent abroad may want to return to Poland to start a family. Moreover, when educated migrants who hold menial jobs find out that the path to social and professional advancement is closed for them in the UK, they may decide that it is time to go back to Poland. Some, although not many, have gone back already. Those who go back use the experience gained abroad to their advantage when they go for job interviews in Poland. In addition, some migrants may decide to go back because they cannot get used to living in a new place. But not Poles in Great Britain – they adapt easily and quickly.

Poles that are not intent on staying abroad may return to Poland and then just as easily decide to leave again. Returns and departures are commonplace

for them because they can be abroad physically without severing ties with their community in Poland – they can live in two worlds at once.

1.4. The Impact of Polish Migration

Labour-market liberalisation has had a good economic effect in countries that have admitted immigrants. Independent studies and a European Commission report confirmed the economic benefits of immigration, albeit slight ones. Predictions that the natives would be pushed out of the labour market if it opened up did not come true. It turned out after the enlargement that workers from the EU-8 supplemented the shortage of labour force in the EU-15 (IPPR, 2004). There were a great number of vacant jobs in the UK before the enlargement and the arrival of immigrants from the EU-8 has not changed that to a great extent. New foreign workers have filled jobs which the Brits did not want to do. Even two years after accession, 30% of employers were still short-staffed.

Neither did Polish migrants cause a reduction in wage levels. Such a reduction could have taken place if they competed with the Brits for the same jobs. However, the reality is different – workers from the new EU member states concentrate on other economic sectors than the Brits and, therefore, do not compete with them.

According to the cited European Commission report, the level of employment among EU-8 migrants working in Ireland, Spain and the UK was even higher than that among the locals. What is more, the employment rate grew in all UK economic sectors after May 1, 2004 except fisheries and agriculture, where it stayed level (IPPR, 2007, p. 34). Additionally, opening up the borders to workers from the EU-8 made it possible to scale down the grey economy, which had tangible taxation and social advantages (European Commission, 2006).

Furthermore, nowhere in the EU has there been a large-scale trend among EU-8 immigrants to cheat the local social security system. For example, Sweden did not impose any restrictions in this area, yet its generous social security system was not the main reason for immigrating to that country. Indeed, the number of emigrants who went there was much lower than in Ireland and the UK.

One of the main arguments in the British debate on opening up the labour market was the fear of “social tourism”. Three years after the enlargement it can be safely said that the fear was unjustified. Poles do not burden the British social care system. They almost never draw unemployment, sickness or inability benefits. In 2005-2006, as many as 85% of employable Polish

migrants in the UK were working, only 4% were unemployed and the other 1% was not looking for work. In comparison, the average for the British natives is 78% employed and 4% unemployed (IPPR, 2007, p. 18). Only 1% of Polish migrants collect benefits offered to the most destitute compared to 39% of Somalis and 21% of Turks. Only 12% of Poles in the UK collect child benefits against 14% among the natives and the record of 40% among Somalis. Few Poles live in social housing (IPPR, 2007, p. 30). And yet the UK government decided to maintain restrictions in migrants' access to social security benefits (Home Office, 2005).

Poles have also become an attractive consumer group. According to estimates of Centre for Economics and Business Research, the Polish pound is worth more than £ 4 billion a year (Brady, 2007). Despite common belief, most of the earned funds are not transferred back home. Many Poles working in the UK, usually young and single, prefer to enjoy their free time with their new acquaintances and have an active consumer life – that means spending those earned pounds in the UK. Signs and advertisements in Polish are now widespread in Britain wooing these potential clients with a variety of products and services.

No matter whether they stay or return to Poland this group has created many new opportunities for both UK and Polish companies. The presence of so many Polish workers has contributed to the expansion of money transfer firms and companies offering cheap calling cards or travel to Poland. Many of these firms operate as intermediaries, benefiting from the fact that many immigrants do not know the language or British procedures.

One of the first sectors that became aware of the “Polish pound” was the banks, which started to employ Polish-speaking staff and adapt their offer to the new consumers' needs. The banks were immediately followed by corner shops and the supermarkets, which also noticed the growing niche on the market. As a result, they are now offering a variety of Polish products such as borsch, golabki, flaki and goulash.

Public service providers have also become tuned into the needs of a new immigrant group: police officers have an opportunity to attend Polish courses, there are road signs in Polish, and schools have observed the need to introduce lessons on Poland. The Polish presence is also very visible. There are many new Polish newspapers in stands and Polish masses in Catholic churches. The Polish vote has been crucial during Scottish local elections.

To conclude, even a cursory glance at the debate on opening up the labour market shows that all participating countries feared a flood of unskilled migrants who intended to cheat them out of social security benefits instead of finding work. However Poles and other migrants from Eastern Europe have impacted the labour market and have contributed to boosting economic growth

rather than deprive Britons from jobs. At the same time, ethnic food, festivals, and children at schools make migrants from the new EU member states particularly noticeable and somewhat of a social phenomenon.

2. Methodology

2.1. Analytical Framework

The main aim of this study is to present the image of Polish immigrants as it appeared in the British press before Poland joined the European Union and three years after. Therefore, in the course of the study we monitored both types of daily press: prestigious newspapers read by trendsetting elites and tabloids – (often overlooked in studies of this type). We believed that tabloids should be also taken into account – since in addition to having an important voice in the public debate they very often lead debates on many aspects of public life. Therefore, they should also be taken into consideration in an analysis of migration to the United Kingdom as reported by the British press. Newspapers selected for the study also represent distinct political options – from liberal and social-democratic to conservative.

When the press reports the news and, hence, shapes our understanding of reality, it is all too often governed by the inside logic of the news production brand and, consequently, inflates the news content to reach the broadest possible readership.

The study extended over the following periods: from January 1, 2004 to August 31, 2004 and from January 1, 2007 to August 31, 2007. This separation enabled us to collect material needed to analyse changes in the perception of Polish immigration and changes in the opinion on opening the labour market to citizens of the new EU member states.

It was not our goal to conduct a systematic analysis of differences in the approach taken by the monitored newspapers or to focus on changes in that approach between the analysed periods of 2004 and 2007. Nonetheless, we do, of course, devote a certain amount of attention to the particularly perceptible differences. Having said this, our primary objective is to present a comprehensive synthetic perception of Polish immigrants and consequences of immigration as

presented in the British press. This is why we have selected a high number of newspapers and monitored them for extensive periods.

The thematic scope of this study is covered by the following questions:

- How did the British press present the discussion and decision to liberalise the labour market? What arguments in favour and against liberalisation were used most often?
- How were the consequences of opening the labour market presented in 2004 and then in 2007?
- Which issues and topics connected to Polish immigration dominated the press (e.g. economy, work, crime, culture, everyday life, etc.)?
- What type of language dominated publications on Polish immigration?
- What image of the Polish immigrant was shown in the media? Was it comprehensive or fragmentary? Which categories/groups were described?
- How did the press describe Polish immigrant workers? For example, how did they fare against British employees? Were Poles perceived as competitors to Brits on the labour market?
- What stereotypes were presented in the press?
- Did the depiction of Polish immigration change a few years after opening up the British labour market? If yes, how?
- Were Polish immigrants compared to immigrants from other countries?

In our analysis of the image of Polish immigrants presented in the British press we used quantitative and qualitative analytical tools. The quantitative tool counted units of information that contained terms like “Polish immigrant” or other related words. For the sake of simplification, these information units were divided into articles (including editorials), feature stories and notes (i.e. brief messages such as one-sentence press agency reports published with or without a short commentary).

The quantitative tool was primarily used in specifying how often materials on Polish immigration appeared in the British press during the two selected periods. In other words, we wanted to determine if Polish migration to the UK was perceived as a significant phenomenon with important consequences for that country or if it was treated as a marginal occurrence. We also wanted to discover the impact of those materials (positive, negative or rather neutral). Since the cognitive material obtained as a result of an in-depth qualitative analysis is much more valuable, we decided to restrict the quantitative analysis to basic elements of the message.

In the qualitative analysis we focused on reappearing threads. As Norman Fairclough (1989) correctly notes, the effect of the media is cumulative and based on repeatability of specific ways of describing reality, defining cause-and-effect connections and shaping the reader’s attitude to the given

issue. At the same time, the absence of a theme, thread or attribute associated with the given issue may also prove important. In turn, Mrozowski (1997) points out that when we analyse the portrayal or image of a given group we in fact analyse the multiplicity of methods of its verbal description. Therefore, we cannot speak of a cohesive and unambiguous image, but only of its dominant traits. Furthermore, Mrozowski stresses the difficulty involved in separating the image of immigrants from the description of processes in which they participate: “the journalistic view of reality is peculiar in that it treats the description of a person as an element of the reported event rather than an autonomous message” (1997, p. 4). Conscious of that dependency, we have nonetheless noted that the tone used in describing Polish immigrants differed from the tone used in describing the influence of their presence in the United Kingdom. Thus, for analytical purposes, we have decided to separate the descriptions of Polish immigrants (usually positive) from the descriptions of the effects of opening up the labour market and letting in workers from Poland.

2.2. The Choice of Newspapers

The press in the UK is traditionally divided into broadsheets and tabloids. Yet, in fact all broadsheet newspapers but *The Daily Telegraph* have changed their format to smaller ones – compact, by-liner, etc. Thus today even if we speak of broadsheet newspapers, they usually do not differ in size that much from tabloids. We will refer to former broadsheet newspapers as quality newspapers. Quality newspapers, as the name suggests, are newspapers aimed at the middle-class audience. They usually provide a complex analysis, are more balanced, and adhere to journalist ethics. Tabloids are aimed at entertaining their readership with catchy titles and a sensationalist presentation of news, usually presenting speculations as facts (Bobiński, 2004).

Some of the newspapers were selected due to their huge circulation (*the Sun* or *the Daily Mail*), while others were chosen due to their popularity. There is also one regional newspaper, *The Evening Standard*, which often concentrates on the London area, but is also influential.

The Daily Mail is a tabloid with right-wing allegiances that is trying to occupy a more upmarket position and claims to be the voice of Middle England. It is known for its anti-Europe, anti-immigration stance and social conservatism. Its average circulation is about 2,400,000². It also has its Sunday edition, *Mail on Sunday*, which is covered by the study.

² All circulation numbers can be found at Audit Bureau of Circulation, <http://www.abce.org.uk>.

The Sun is a tabloid daily newspaper that boasts the highest circulation of about 3,108,000, which makes it the best-selling English-language daily in the world. It can be described as populist and sensational, famous for its “Page Three” girls, i.e. photographs of nude women in every issue of the newspaper. *The Sun* is published by News Group Newspapers of News International, a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation. *The News of the World* can be considered the Sunday equivalent of *The Sun*. It has supported Tony Blair, the Labour government and its major reforms from 1997.

The Evening Standard is a regional tabloid (London area) with a strong financial emphasis, but also carrying national and international news. Its circulation is about 263,100.

The Daily Telegraph is the only quality paper still printed in the traditional broadsheet format. It supports conservative values. *The Daily Telegraph*, as well as its sister newspaper, *Sunday Telegraph*, is now owned by the Barclay brothers. Its average daily circulation is about 901,200 copies, which makes DT the highest selling quality newspaper in Britain.

The Times is a quality newspaper with centre-right political affiliations. It is published by Times Newspapers Limited, owned by Rupert Murdoch’s the News Corporation group. The daily circulation is about 692,600 copies. Its sister newspaper is *The Sunday Times*.

The Guardian is a quality newspaper owned by the Guardian Media Group. It has strong liberal/social democratic credentials. Despite its rather limited circulation of 355,750 copies per day, it is an influential quality daily, popular with intellectual elites. *The Observer*, the Sunday sister newspaper, is on the whole slightly to the right of *The Guardian*.

The Financial Times is a British international business newspaper. It is a daily newspaper published in London that has had a strong influence on the financial policies of the British government. It is a part of the Financial Times Group, a leading business information company. The newspaper is printed in 19 cities across the globe; it has a daily circulation of over 480,000 and a readership of more than 1.6 million people worldwide.

3. Quantitative Analysis

In the analysed periods, the studied British newspapers wrote about Polish immigration 382 times. This number includes the following units of information: articles (including editorials), feature stories and notes. Comparing 2004 and 2007 one may easily notice a considerable increase in the number of texts devoted to Polish immigrants. In the studied period before and directly after the EU enlargement, 148 texts were published compared to 234 three years later (see Table 1).

Table 1. Units of Information Concerning Polish Immigration in 2004 and 2007

Newspaper (abbreviation)		2004	2007	total
Tabloids	Daily Mail (DM)	18	59	77
	Mail on Sunday (MS)	2	2	4
	Evening Standard (ES)	29	32	61
	Sun	19	27	46
	News of the World (NW)	2	4	6
Broadsheets	Daily Telegraph (DT)	14	15	29
	Sunday Telegraph (ST)	5	2	7
	Financial Times (FT)	13	34	47
	Guardian (G)	13	15	28
	Observer	5	6	11
	Times	22	30	52
	Sunday Times (STimes)	6	8	14
total		148	234	382

In 2004 the *Evening Standard* (20%) and *the Times* (15%) published majority of articles on the Polish immigration issues, the *Times* followed

closely by *the Daily Mail* and *the Sun* (together 26% publications). On the other hand, in 2007 the majority of articles were published by *the Daily Mail* (25%), *the Financial Times* (15%) and *the Evening Standard* (14%) (see Table 2).

The overall attitude of the materials from 2004 is difficult to define, as there is no clearly dominating tone, either positive or negative. Around 30% of all materials were positive. At the same time, articles with a negative and ambivalent tone dominated in the tabloid segment (around 30%), balanced by positive or neutral texts in the quality press (36%).

Table 2. Tone of the Analysed Materials in 2004 (%)

Newspapers/tone	positive	negative	neutral	ambivalent	Total
Tabloids	9	17.5	8	13	47.5
Broadsheets	19	5	17	11,5	52.5
Total	28	22.5	25	24.5	100%

The situation has changed in 2007, with around 50% of the publications having a neutral tone in both broadsheet and tabloid press. Similar to 2004, the articles with a negative and ambivalent tone have dominated in the tabloids (around 17%).

Table 3. Tone of the Analysed Materials in 2007 (%)

Newspapers/tone	Positive	negative	neutral	ambivalent	Total
Tabloids	4	17	23	10	54
Broadsheets	11	4	25	6	46
Total	15	21	48	16	100%

The tone of the publications and changes over time seem to be directly linked with themes concerning migration reappearing in the British press. In 2004 one may notice a stormy debate on EU enlargement, opening of the British labour market and expected influx of workers from new EU member states. The catastrophic visions of migrants flooding the UK and threats associated with migration from Eastern Europe have appeared especially in tabloids. This kind of information was neutralised by other newspapers that seemed to compete in showing the positive aspects of the decision to liberate the market.

In the second analysed period publications concentrating on the everyday life of Poles or the impact of immigration dominated. In other words, the Pole was not an 'abstract, imagined immigrant' anymore. Besides a few exceptions, the texts were neutral in tone and reported on various themes related to the

presence of such a great number of Poles in the United Kingdom. At the same time, it is important to note that a considerable number of articles concerning Polish workers was placed in the broader context of UK migration policy and the UK's membership in the EU. Thus, those negative sentiments were not directed against Poles but rather against the government for its perceived failings in these areas of public policy.

4. Representation of Polish Migration in the British Press

4.1. The Political Context: Migration and EU Enlargement in the British Political Debate and the Media

The perception of Polish labour migrants and their impact on the British economy and society has been shaped by two important factors: attitudes towards immigration in general and attitudes towards the European Union and its enlargement to the East to include the formerly communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, before we examine the press coverage of the Polish immigration phenomenon, an overview of these two broader issues seems necessary to place the topic in the proper perspective.

Immigration is one of the most important concerns for the British voter, competing for the top priority only with crime and public order (Ipsos MORI, 2007a). Anti-immigration attitudes seem rather widespread, and for decades a considerable majority of the British people have believed that there is too much migration to the British Isles (Ipsos MORI, 2007b). A certain persistent feature of the British public debate on immigration is a conviction that the Island is already over-crowded, and thus any immigration – the “coloured” one in particular – to Britain is undesirable³. In general, there is a right-left cleavage with regard to immigration, with the right wing being predictably antagonistic towards migration and the left wing being tentatively pro-immigration. Yet, since the debate has been going on for decades and has touched upon not only the question of newcomers’ numbers but also the issues of racism, xenophobia,

³ As early as in 1974 Derek Humphry and Michael Ward wrote: “The island people are peculiarly prone to persuade themselves that they are overcrowded, and when words like ‘invasion’ and ‘Asian flood’ appear in their morning newspapers they fear their standards of living will deteriorate and their material expectations be that much harder to realize”.

or integration, both sides have mutually influenced and shaped their positions. Thus, the right wing cannot be openly xenophobic and anti-immigration anymore, but it rather emphasises the need for better management and control of immigration as well as prevention of abuses. For example, as former Tory leader, Michael Howard, accused of being antagonistic towards immigration, explained: “We aren’t against people coming here, working properly. We are not, however, going to allow our system to be exploited or abused” (*G*, Feb. 11, 2004). In the 2005 election campaign one of the Conservatives’ billboards tapped into the public fears by claiming: “It’s not racist to impose restrictions on immigration”. Underneath there was a sly wink-wink-nudge-nudge question: “Are you thinking what we are thinking?”

The generally anti-immigration media mostly adopt a similar attitude. As Philo aptly noted, “A neurotic and xenophobic concern with policing Fortress Britain has remained a recurrently popular theme in British media coverage over the last decade” (Philo as cited in Husband, 2005). Yet, unalloyed xenophobia is also not acceptable in the media anymore. Moreover, as racism and xenophobia are pushed to the extremist end of the public debate, the rest of the population can regard themselves as moderates, and thus the “reasonable and genuine concerns” of the public are fairly legitimate (cf. Husband, 2005). Therefore, the press generally does not express open racist and xenophobic statements, but it rather voices those “reasonable and genuine concerns of the public”: “Sensible, controlled immigration: Fine. Uncontrolled, mass immigration: Madness” (*Sun*, March 2, 2007). It is notable, that there is a peculiar assumption in this quotation that *the Sun*’s opponents are in fact in favour of “uncontrolled mass immigration”, even if they do not admit that openly.

Due to such a definition of the situation, as well as due to the pressure from the grassroots (Humphry&Ward, 1974), the centre-left has found itself in a position where it has to constantly prove that it is not “soft” on migration. Making a positive case for immigration has been believed to be politically suicidal. Instead, the government as well as other pro-immigration groups have to emphasise and repeatedly demonstrate that important steps are taken to control migration, and that their aim is to strike a good balance between the liberal labour market and prevention of abuses of the welfare state. Just as Tony Blair pledged immediately before the accession of new members to the European Union: “We will neither be fortress Britain, nor will we be an open house” (*ES*, April 27, 2004).

As one might have expected, Tony Blair’s decision to open Britain’s labour markets to citizens of new member states from Central and Eastern Europe has boosted the ferocity and significance of the general migration debate in Britain. As *the Evening Standard* complained:

Lack of debate on immigration, lack of sound and clear immigration policy, first promises then pretending to be. NOT SINCE Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech in 1968 has immigration ranked so high on the national agenda. This is almost entirely the fault of the Government – hence today's immigration summit, chaired by the Prime Minister (*ES*, April 6, 2004).

Other newspapers also emphasised the government's lack of control over the migration policy, and attributed it not just to the general incapability of the Labour Party, but also to the loss of sovereignty to the benefit of omnipotent Brussels: "... talking about the Poles brings us to a pertinent question: how many people in the long term will Britain be obliged to accept from other countries whether it likes it or not? And that depends not on the inclinations of the government but on the expansion of the EU which is already inexorably under way" (*ST*, April 11, 2004). As it was already mentioned, the migration debate had become strongly linked with the debate on EU enlargement.

Thus, the other factor defining the coverage of the Polish immigration is the attitude towards the EU and its enlargement. As *the Guardian* aptly noted, Polish immigration – always perceived in the context of the enlargement – cannot escape the associations with the hated or mistrusted Brussels: "Seen through the narrow lens with which Britain suspiciously gazes at all things that emanate from Brussels, the enlargement of the European Union may seem to present little cause for celebration and big cause for anxiety" (*G*, April 30, 2004).

The Euroscepticism permeating the British society had to have some influence on the Blair government, which had always "been wary of alienating readers of *the Mail* said to be representative of the voters of 'middle England'" (Swatridge, 2004: 40), and has been tapping into the fears expressed by the Eurosceptics and often afraid to take a strongly pro-European stance.

At the same time, the UK was one of the strong advocates of the enlargement seeing the new member states as important allies against France and Germany, who should help keep the federalisation of Europe at bay and advance the cause of free market economic reforms. Therefore, the British press, including the Eurosceptic newspapers, could not be very critical of EU enlargement, even if they disapproved of the greater institutional idea behind it. Thus, one of the striking features of the press coverage of the enlargement was the ambiguity with which journalists greeted the newcomers to the EU. For example, *the Mail on Sunday* mourned the lost independence of the new member states from the perspective of Britain's 'terrible' experience with the EU:

HOW sad it was to watch as so many countries, free for a season, were marched into the prison camp of ex-nations which the European Union is fast becoming. For me, it was specially upsetting to see the Czechs, Poles and Lithuanians – whose struggles

against Soviet domination I witnessed at first hand – meekly taking the yoke of Brussels” (*MS*, May 9, 2004).

This view was also supported by *the Sun*, which noted that “the business-hungry newcomers may find they have exchanged one totalitarian regime for another. Brussels won’t be brutal, but it will be bureaucratic” (*Sun*, April 30, 2004). Yet, in the same article, *the Sun* emphasised that the EU enlargement was a cause for celebration and a reason for taking pride in for the new members: “Every *Sun* reader should applaud tomorrow as ten new states join the European Union” (April 30, 2004). And another newspaper, far from being Euro-enthusiastic, claimed that EU membership is also an important achievement on which Central and Eastern Europeans should be congratulated: “Everybody should celebrate the fact that the former communist countries of eastern Europe, as well as others, have progressed far enough to be on the verge of joining the EU” (*STimes*, Jan. 11, 2004). *The Evening Standard* wrote in a similar vein:

THE LAST rivets of the Iron Curtain were scattered to the four winds this weekend, as Poland, Hungary and six other former Soviet satellites and republics (plus Cyprus and Malta) joined the European Union, and won the right of free movement and, eventually, work in any of the EU’s 25 member states. This is a genuine cause for celebration” (*ES*, May 4, 2004).

In other words, even for the Eurosceptic press EU membership was a token of progress and the success of transition from communism of their new European neighbours, the sign of final downfall of the Soviet Empire and a civilisational leap for the still exotic Eastern European countries.

The above discussed two factors – immigration and enlargement – defined the context in which the decision of Tony Blair’s government to open the labour markets to workers from the countries which joined the EU on May 1, 2004 was discussed in the press. Since even those rather Eurosceptic newspapers, such as *the Daily Telegraph*, *the Evening Standard* and *the Sun*, celebrated the enlargement, they were reluctant to condemn the opening of the labour market. A similar attitude was shared by the (cautiously) pro-European papers such as *the Financial Times*, *the Guardian* and *the Times*. *The Daily Mail* stands out as the only deliberately Eurosceptical (not to say Europhobic) and anti-immigration newspaper among those analysed.

At the same time, when analysing the press coverage of the EU enlargement and the ensuing Polish immigration to the UK, one cannot help but notice how strongly the anti-immigration attitudes, characteristic of the right-wing press, have defined this debate. Thus, the tabloids especially attacked the government for its soft approach to the new wave of immigration, whereas the more pro-immigration press, e.g. *the Guardian*, rather encouraged

the readers to take a cool perspective and tried to placate their fears by claiming that there was much exaggeration in what tabloid and right-wing press reported. Thus, while *the Daily Mail* was preoccupied with the difficulties in predicting the numbers of Poles coming to Britain, being a sign of the government's lack of control over the whole process and the future abuses of public services by new migrants, *the Guardian* devoted much space to explaining the steps taken by the government in order to prevent the exploitation of the welfare system by the newcomers.

In fact the early debate around EU enlargement and opening the borders to Polish workers was rather dominated by speculations about the numbers of people who would come to the UK. The government reports predicted a rather low number of people, whereas anti-immigrant groups given voice in tabloids warned about millions that would come within several years. The lack of reliable figures caused much uncertainty and anxiety with regard to the expected inflow of migrants: "ANYBODY trying to predict labour migration patterns in the European Union in the wake of the accession of 10 new member states in May would be better off consulting Mystic Meg than depending on economic think tanks for coherent analysis" (*STimes*, Feb. 15, 2004).

Fears regarding the great scale of migration to the UK were boosted when Sweden suddenly wanted to withdraw from its promise to open its labour market, making the UK and Ireland the only countries welcoming migrant workers. The tabloid press usually emphasised that most likely the UK would be "flooded" with immigrants from new member states and accused the government of refusing to admit the true scale of the phenomenon:

I nearly forgot the history lesson Mr Blair gave us, designed to suggest that immigration has gone on throughout history so there is nothing new about it. Well there is. Again it is the scale. Mr Blair mentioned the success of the East African Asians. Nobody doubts that, nor the wider contribution they have made to our society. But they were only about 27,000 spread over a couple of years or so. We are now taking nine times that number every year" (*DM*, May 1, 2004).

Interestingly enough, it was not only the centre-left newspapers that tried to placate the readers' anxiety about the level of immigration from new member states after the enlargement. The *Daily Telegraph*, a conservative quality newspaper, also published a number of articles that rejected the claim that there would be a "flood" of immigrants from these states as well as argued that even if many of them would come, they would not stay for long. For example, one journalist wrote: "Forget the notion that Britain will be swamped by a tidal wave of immigration from eastern Europe after enlargement" (*DT*, May 1, 2004). Another journalist added that "Poles, Czechs and Slovaks work as nannies, gardeners and café staff to improve their English and gain qualifications. Most

want to return to their homeland in a few years time and dismiss scare stories that after May 1 Britain will be overwhelmed by an invasion of eastern Europeans” (*DT*, Feb. 4, 2004).

Other newspapers also wrote that the enlargement would not change much, since those entrepreneurial and courageous Poles who were ready to leave their country to look for better life had done that already. The director of the Jobpilot recruiting agency told *the Evening Standard*: “Any one who really wants to work in Britain is already there. The others, who are complaining that they have no work, no money, will talk about it but most of them will just keep on grumbling and sit tight. Entry to the EU is not going to make a big difference to that situation” (March 9, 2004). In other words, with the exception of consistently anti-immigration *the Daily Mail*, and to some extent *the Sun*, in most newspapers the rather alarming articles focused on the uncertain numbers and the impact of the Polish immigration as well as the government’s indolence were balanced by articles mitigating fears and concerns connected with the enlargement outcome.

Thus, the most characteristic attitude towards the opening of the labour markets at that time can be described as “for, and even against”, that is, to support labour migration “in principle” but to criticise the government for an allegedly inadequate policy response to the challenges associated with mass migration:

The panicky xenophobes are wrong to think that everyone coming to Britain from eastern Europe is a scrounger who will steal housing and jobs from trueborn Brits. The liberals have it wrong when they loftily try to pretend that immigration does not impose terrible strains on all our existing resources – housing, schools, hospitals, and the job market, which is not limitlessly expanding” (*ES*, Feb. 20, 2004).

To abate these fears and accusations, the government had to show that immigration is under control. *The Sun* welcomed the Prime Minister’s “hard-hitting speech” in which he declared that “JOBLESS immigrants are to be banned from getting free council houses under tough new measures unveiled by Tony Blair today”. And the PM will “not tolerate those who come to live off the state. And he will warn migrants: ‘Everyone must pay their way’” (*Sun*, April 27, 2004).

The compromise solution, championed by Tony Blair’s charismatic Home Secretary David Blunkett, was to resist calls for restrictions on employment, such as permissions, but instead to limit access to welfare benefits by demanding an employment record in the UK before a person becomes eligible for such benefits. Besides, the Workers’ Registration System has been introduced with the aim to help control migration flows and their impact on the

economy and if need be, introduce further restrictions. These moves were generally welcomed by the press:

David Blunkett deserves enormous praise for opening Britain's doors to immigrants from Eastern Europe, while restricting their rights to social security, housing benefits and other privileges of the British welfare state. This wise, if belated, compromise will help the economy, honour the Government's long-standing promises and enhance Britain's influence in the EU, while helping to silence some of the xenophobic ravings of Britain's tabloid press. It will also bring sanity back to a debate on two hugely important political issues – the future of the welfare state and of multicultural Britain – that could dominate the next general election (*Times*, Feb. 26, 2004).

As it turns out, the lack of a clear consistent approach to opening the labour market for Eastern European workers intensified fears and concerns regarding migrants putting pressure on public services and housing, unemployment, as well as abusing benefits system. The recurrent if belated attempts of the government to show its “tough” position on immigration only reassured the anti-immigration wing that their diagnosis of the situation was right and now the government had to admit it. *The Evening Standard* agreed that there were “powerful arguments” in favour of a liberal approach to EU immigration, it also emphasised that the government needs to decide which approach it favours and be transparent about it in order to “win back public trust”: “the Government's fault has first of all been to let immigration from Eastern Europe run ahead almost without controls: it is no exaggeration to say that the immigration system is now in chaos. Second, and almost worse, the Government has tried to disguise this by the familiar smokescreen of tough sounding crackdowns and initiatives” (*ES*, April 6, 2004).

The debate surrounding the Blair government's decision to open Britain's labour markets to migrants from new EU member states has largely set the context in which the phenomenon of the Polish migration to the UK has been described in the British press. First of all, it is important to point out that often what seems like a negative presentation of Polish immigration to the UK is in fact a critique of the British government for allegedly being “too soft on migration” in general, and this anti-immigration moral panic has existed for decades, especially in some newspapers. It is therefore crucial to distinguish two dimensions of the press coverage of this phenomenon: *the images and perceptions* of the Polish migrants and the perceived *impact* that Polish migration have on the British society. Sometimes, as we shall see, some of the positive features ascribed to migrants (such as their excellent work ethic) can be at the same time perceived as having negative social consequences (taking jobs away from the Brits). Therefore, in our analysis we shall separately

examine the two aspects of how Polish labour migration is presented in UK print media: the image and the impact.

4.2. The Perceived Image of Polish Immigrants in the UK

4.2.1. Images and Settings

When analysing the perceptions of a given group of people by others, it is worth looking at the settings in which these people are presented as well as at the choice of persons (within this group) that are depicted. We should ask ourselves the following questions: do we always meet the same kinds of people and thus we have an impression that those few people are in fact representative of the rest? Or rather do we meet a variety of people in different contexts, with different life stories, different ambitions and motivations? Moreover, it is significant to determine whether the people presented to us, as the audience, are given a voice, or whether we are fed ready-made opinions and impressions of these people by journalists. As far as the representation of Polish migrants in the British press is concerned, it is notable that the readers are presented with a vast array of diverse images of people. Even though at the centre of journalists' attention are (prospective) workers, usually young people, often graduates, either seeking a job or already having one, we also meet many other types of people. In this array of images of Poles in the UK there are bank managers, and gangmasters, construction workers, and prestigious university students, crime victims and crime perpetrators. The following quotation emphasises that Poles in the UK are not limited to low-paid low-skilled jobs, but in fact permeate all sections of the labour market: "Poles are working everywhere. They are cleaning City offices, but they are also running them. They are building homes, but also buying and selling them. Great success has come to some, hardship to others, and the majority lie in between" (*Times*, June 16, 2007).

Poles are also presented in different life situations. With regard to that, there is a considerable difference between the press coverage in 2004 and 2007. In 2004 press articles, the readers most often met Poles on board of a coach heading West to look for jobs and better life opportunities, while in 2007 we meet Polish migrants not only at work, but also at cultural festivals, at universities, inside shops they own and clubs they have founded, and also sleeping rough in the streets and in prisons.

What is more, even traditionally anti-immigration newspapers often present very positive images of Polish migrants. *The Sun*, for example, was trying to placate its readers' possible fears about Poles' assimilation and impact by drawing attention to the experience of the archetypal immigrant country, the USA: "America also has a large number of people descended from Polish immigrants who went on to achieve fame and fortune" (*Sun*, April 30, 2004). The article went on to present its readers the achievement of Liberace, the world famous pianist, Ruth Handler, creator of the Barbie doll, Arthur Miller, the playwright, or Zbigniew Brzeziński, national security advisor to Jimmy Carter.

Life Stories

In order to illustrate this variety, several life stories of Poles, found in abundance in the British press, are presented below. It is notable how different they are from one another. Such varied images help construct the complex perception of Polish migrants in the UK.

Magdalena Harvey came to Britain from Poland as a student in 1991. She opened her first deli, Polish Speciality, in 1999 in Hammersmith, because she thought there was a gap in the market. "So we started to import food from Poland for our shop, and to make it cost-effective we sold excess stuff to other shops". After 2004, her business boomed. She now has a second shop in Streatham and there are three further Polish Speciality franchises in Stockwell, Ealing and Oxford. The brand name appears on 150 products, and she imports 1,500 lines from suppliers in Poland. She supplies 400 stores from a cash-and-carry in Croydon, as well as importing for the cash-and-carry chain Booker, Morrisons supermarket, Budgens and Londis (*Times*, June 16, 2007).

Greg had been sleeping around the back of Oxford Street, away from other rough-sleepers. He had explained his circumstances to the security guard there, and the guard allowed him to stay. Just yesterday, after 47 nights, a charity gave him a sleeping bag.

Over the first two weeks, Greg fell in with other Polish homeless and began drinking. But after two weeks he was determined to stop. One night in Oxford Street he was hit on the back of the head before having his bag stolen. Now he kept a bag of important possessions hidden at all times.

He was no longer depressed. He had a new goal: to get off the street and find a new job. His ex-girlfriend knew what had happened to him and offered to pay for his ticket home, but Greg did not want to go back. He was a proud man who was surprised and

ashamed to find himself sleeping rough, and wanted to stay and fight his way out. What he really wanted, in his secret dream, was to rebuild his life in England and invite his children to be educated here at university. His children, a boy of 16 and a girl of 12, did not know how he was living and he was grateful to his ex-girlfriend for not telling them (*Times*, Feb. 25, 2007).

Jurek Nowak is a gangmaster, an illegal trader in the services of vulnerable workers from the heart of Britain's black economy, whose occupation has now acquired a decidedly sinister patina. The 42-year old Pole arrived in Britain four years ago, with a small bag of clothes and a pocket full of dreams. Today he claims to earn more than Pounds 80,000 a year and runs a top-of-the-range Mercedes Vito van and two Ford Transits for transporting his human cargo. It's a long way to come from the son of an impoverished Polish farmer who grew on the scraps his father scratched from some of Poland's least fertile land....Jurek suspects that it will take a while for his business to fizzle out. "Many don't understand the rules. They will still come to this country with no money and speaking no English. They will still need me" (ES, Feb. 13, 2004).

Few people epitomise the dynamism and international outlook of this horde better than **Roksana Ciurysek**, a founder of the Polish City Club, a networking organisation for successful Poles in London that stages regular cocktail parties, lectures and seminars for its upwardly mobile members. We meet at a coffee shop close to the offices of the American investment bank where she works in hedge-fund sales. She arrives, immaculate in an Armani suit, juggling two BlackBerries, with just half an hour to spare before her next meeting.

With a master's in management and economics, she came to Britain to work for the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and then to specialise in emerging markets for the US bank. She speaks Polish, Russian, English and Spanish, and is working on her French and Italian. She took a year off to study photography in Vancouver and has had exhibitions of her work there and in London (*Times*, June 16, 2007).

It is also significant to note that apart from describing Poles journalists use many direct quotations in the life stories, thus giving the migrants their own voice and subjectivity as well as making Poles more familiar to the readers. Authors sometimes try to imitate the pronunciation to give a bit more authentic flavour to their reports, yet they do not do it in a ridiculing or too condescending manner, but rather struggle to make their story more entertaining:

Katarzyna doesn't travel much. Weekends mean Crewe with its limited range of attractions. She shares a spotless terraced house with two other Polish girls. What does she dislike most about Britain?

"Your breath, your breath smells very different. Polish breath is better".

Oh.

"It is the flour or something. Polish breath is much nicer to eat. British breath is softer, whiter, not so good" (DT, Feb. 28, 2007).

Motivations to Emigrate

While depicting Poles and their lives in the UK, newspapers have also tried to answer the question regarding what brings Poles to Britain, why they are eager to leave their families and ordered lives and fly to Britain in such considerable numbers. The main motivation of Poles to emigrate, as presented in the British press, is economic. "They have been fleeing rural regions where unemployment can top 50 per cent to work in Britain as fruit-pickers, electricians or au pair – earning to eight times as much as they would at home" (*MS*, May 2, 2004). Apart from the simple rationale of earning three or four times more in the UK, many migrants are presented as having no other option: "I have no choice. I can earn Pounds 5,000 a year in Poland or I can... work as a locum doctor for about Pounds 60,000 in Britain. What do you think I should do?" (*Times*, May 1, 2004). "Cracow is so beautiful and I could never imagine not coming back, but the salaries are so low. In the end, people have to go" (*DT*, Feb. 28, 2007). Moreover, Britain offers more opportunities not only for economic gains but also for personal and professional development. "Who goes away from Poland? Young people who are fed up. They are looking for a new challenge. They want to check the possibilities" (*Times*, June 16, 2007).

Yet, motivations to leave Poland are more complex than just a lack of economic opportunities. *The Guardian* cites Nick Pearce, the director of the Institute of Public Policy Research, who mentions "growing political instability" as one of the factors (*G*, Feb. 28, 2007). However, only more liberal newspapers draw attention to the political insecurity and hostile climate as a motivating factor for leaving the country. *The Observer*, for example, devoted much space to the plight of Polish gays, for whom intolerance, especially under the incumbent government, is the sole reason to leave Poland for Britain. To illustrate this claim, the newspaper quoted one of the gay activists: "Most of the people I know are now in England because of the current political situation. Not for economic reasons, but because of the persecution of homosexuals going on here. It's impossible for gays to be themselves in Poland" (July 1, 2007).

To sum up, the readers of the British press are presented with diverse images and life stories of Polish migrants, those of success and those of failure, manual workers, and high earning international company managers. These versatile images form a foundation of more complex perceptions of Poles and help to avoid pigeonholing Polish migrants as exclusively low-paid guest workers.

4.2.2. Perceptions

The heterogeneity of the images of Poles and situations in which the readers can meet them is a point of departure for us to examine the perceptions of Polish migrants in the UK. Here we are interested in how Poles are characterised by the press, what qualities they possess according to journalists, and what significance and meaning is attached to their presence in the UK. Are these perceptions coherent or conflicting? Finally, does such a presentation of Poles help to build a rather positive or negative attitude towards Polish immigrants among the readers of the British press?

Polish Work Ethic

As far as depiction of Polish migrants is concerned, most of the attention of the press from the right-wing and anti-immigration *the Daily Mail* and populist *the Sun* to the left-wing *Guardian* was given to what has become the almost proverbial “great work ethic” of Polish migrants. All of the newspapers emphasised that Poles are hard-working, reliable, ready to work long hours, inexpensive, and skilled. “The word Pole has become shorthand for cheap, reliable worker, adored by the middle classes for keeping down prices and by the Chancellor for assisting the battle with inflation” (*Times*, June 16, 2007). *The Daily Mail* and *the Sun* even cited a survey among Scottish contractors, developers, architects and civil engineers, where 80% of surveyors claimed that “their experience of Eastern European workers was ‘very positive’”, and Poles as well as other migrants from new member states were “harder working, had a better attitude and were more skilled than Scots. Another manager cited in this article said that Poles were “exceptional tradesmen” ready for work at 7.45, when their Scottish colleagues were still drinking tea (*DM*, March 22, 2007; *Sun*, March 22, 2007). As *the Sun* reported, even Prince Charles employed two Polish workers. The readers could learn from the article that: “The prince personally interviewed both staff and was very impressed” (*Sun*, Feb. 13, 2007). In this way, “Polish” has also become a synonym for “gainful work”: “I know people who discovered that their Polish nanny was actually Lithuanian, but had pretended she was Polish because she thought that made

her more employable” (*Times*, June 16, 2007). As many newspapers wrote, employing Poles has become a no-choice strategy for British businessmen, and even anti-immigration hard-liners had to admit that. Several papers reported with certain satisfaction that Robert Knapman, the leader of the UK Independence Party (a strongly anti-Europe and anti-immigration fringe party) and MEP, employed Polish labourers to restore his country mansion. This was “after warning that open borders in the European Union would lead to a ‘flood of migrants’ that would be ‘bad for Britain’. He said he had nothing against Polish people individually and admitted that his employees were popular with local staff and customers and praised their work ethic” (*G*, Jan. 6, 2007).

There was no criticism of Poles as employees in any of the analysed newspaper articles. The following quotation sums up well the positive image of Polish workers in the UK: “Ptryk’s clients have only one criticism – there is only one of him, which means they have to wait weeks sometimes months for his services” (*Observer*, Feb. 22, 2004). There was only one instance of scepticism voiced by a Pole with regard to the fabled Polish work ethic. “You can be a very different person in different circumstances... If you were a doctor earning Pounds 400 a month would you be very motivated in you work? I am not surprised that some people can be hard-working somewhere and lazy somewhere else” (*Times*, June 16, 2007). Taking into account that Polish immigration is economic, exclusively positive opinions about Poles as employees are very significant.

Poles as an Economic Threat

Poles and (Un)employment. The Polish work ethic combined with readiness to work for low wages is not a reason for enthusiasm for everyone. As the British press readers can learn, the influx of cheap and reliable workforce creates unnecessary competition for local unskilled low-paid workers. This aspect of the Polish presence on the British Isles is usually ignored or dismissed by quality papers, but it is often highlighted by tabloids, which attempt to balance their appeal to both middle and working classes. Thus, despite the general upbeat tone of the studied articles, there are many instances in the tabloid press when journalists either themselves paint Poles as those who steal jobs from Brits or cite such opinions leaving them without a commentary. “Low-paid workers face a fight for their jobs as cheap labour floods in from ten new EU states” (*Sun*, Feb. 18, 2004). A similar concern is expressed by the *Daily Mail*: “...large influxes of immigrant labour can have damaging economic consequences. People who will work for low wages depress rates for existing workers” (Feb. 12, 2004). Yet, in other articles, these statements are balanced by opinions that Britain has labour shortages anyway, and the jobs taken by Poles are not attractive for British workers. “They will fill jobs

in areas where there is skills shortage or take up work shunned by us” (*Sun*, May 10, 2004).

Poles as a Burden on the Welfare State

Another aspect of the negative image of Polish immigrants in the UK is the connotation with “benefit tourism” and pressure on housing and public services. For instance, *the Daily Mail* claims that Eastern Europeans place “huge pressure on schools, hospitals, and other public services” (*DM*, Jan. 8 2007) and “Poles are driving up prices at the lower end of the market” (*DM*, Feb. 3, 2007). Yet, this is not a coherent message, as in other articles the same newspapers point to the fact that Poles are also paying taxes and thus contributing to the economy and are entitled to use public services.

Moreover, these critical assessments are mainly aimed against the government, which initially underestimated the number of people who would come after May 2004, as well as has failed to respond adequately to the arrival of large numbers of new immigrants⁴. Thus, *the Sun* quotes a local councillor saying: “It’s hard to arrange the new services without any advice, warning experience or extra resources. The Government were saying nothing” (*Sun*, Feb. 17, 2007). The dominating message, in other words, is that although Poles have become the source of problems in some areas, in fact it is the Labour government who is to blame here. The problems and challenges associated with the presence of a large number of Poles are mainly used to criticise the political adversaries.

Poles as an Attractive Consumer Group

Another perception of Poles connected to their economic activity in the UK is that of constituting an important consumer group. Polish migrants in the UK are also represented as a group very attractive for retailers and service providers who do everything to attract the so-called “Polish Pound”. Many articles in both tabloids and quality newspapers discuss new food lines in supermarkets or Polish-speaking staff in banks. In other words, Poles are seen as a relatively prosperous and successful group, many companies are ready to compete for their money.

We will elaborate on these themes (Poles as an economic threat and Poles as a consumer group) in the next part devoted to the impact of Poles on the UK economy. Yet, here it seems important to mention these perceptions of Poles as economic actors, without which their image would be incomplete.

⁴ The government statistics with regard to the expected number of migrants were inaccurate; moreover, they often do not cover those migrants who are not registered. The central funding depends on the number of inhabitants of a given area. As a result, public services in areas that attract large numbers of migrants have been underfinanced.

Dynamic High Achievers

Apart from the fears about the economic aspect of the presence of a large number of Poles in the UK, the image of Poles is surprisingly positive. Polish migrants in the UK are represented not only as hard-working, but also as determined, dynamic, well-educated people who are not afraid of any work, yet they have ambitions and aspirations for the future. They want to earn and save money, gain new skills and devote these new assets to bettering their own and their families' lives as well as their home and their adopted countries. There are a number of stories of Poles who have materialised their dreams in Britain. *The Daily Telegraph* treats its readers to a story of a young Polish student who has been dreaming of taking part in the Oxford-Cambridge boat race from the moment he first saw it on TV at the age of 14. Today he is the first Pole ever to take part in the race (*DT*, April 7, 2007). *The Financial Times* devotes several pages to the story of a young Polish student of the prestigious London School of Economics. As the daughter of a middle-class family from rural Poland, she manages to enter this elite university and is granted a scholarship thanks to her resolve and talent (March 24, 2007). Even those who perform low-skilled jobs are on the whole dynamic and upwardly moving: "Employers like the Poles... But they are often working at a level below their qualifications because of poor English. As they remedy that, they move up" (*DT*, Feb. 28, 2007).

Poles = Catholics

All the analysed papers have drawn attention to the fact that Poles are predominantly practicing Catholics. "Congregations are now bursting with young people, all with massive enthusiasm for faith and liturgy" (*Times*, Feb. 15, 2007). The religiosity of Poles is usually presented as something positive. Although the British society is largely secular, on the one hand, the presence of different religions is treated as cultural richness by many on the liberal left, and thus a thriving Catholic Church is perceived as a positive phenomenon. On the other hand, this situation is also acceptable for the conservative right, as it usually implies respect for traditional values, law-abidance, and the preservation of Britain as a Christian country in the face of large numbers of Muslims and representatives of other religions. As *the Sun's* interviewee reports with approval: "These Poles are very religious and they all had ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday" (Feb. 28, 2007).

Integration of Poles into the British Society

"*Proud to Wear My Union Jack...Knickers*". As it follows from the analysed articles, on the whole Poles integrate well, even if there are some exceptions to that rule. "Most of the people who come here to work find work

and enter the system and make a place for themselves in our way of life. For a small but significant minority, their arrival heralds the start of painful saga of decline” (*Times*, Feb. 25, 2007). The dominating image of Poles as part of the British society is that of nice and sociable people, who are willing to integrate, have English friends, and want to share their heritage with the local people. “Mirek had bought an 18-year old caravan and joined the Perkins caravanning club. He has been on short trips with new English friends, towing their own caravan, and he and Beata hoped to tour round the UK ‘with our new friends’, said Mirek, ‘in our new kingdom’” (*Times*, Feb. 25, 2007). Also, despite fears about the strain on the schooling system caused by the arrival of too many Polish children, *the Sun* quotes a school teacher reporting that “the Polish children in the school have integrated well and have learned a lot of English” (*Sun*, Feb. 17, 2007).

Many Poles are quoted acknowledging double loyalties. They do not want to give up their Polish heritage, yet they are willing to blend in and be proud of their adopted homeland. In Scotland, even a new pattern of tartan, the Polish tartan, has been invented. Poles living in Scotland are eager to buy kilts made of this Polish tartan, as a way of expressing their double loyalties. “I want to buy a kilt because I am living in Scotland...But I am a Polish Scot. I feel this represents me” (*Times*, Jan. 20, 2007). As another interviewee of *the Times* explains: “I wear my Union Jack knickers with pride, although I would never dream of expressing similar sentiments about Poland in such a way – it would not occur to anyone there to make underwear out of the national flag” (*Times*, May 3, 2004).

Poles Behaving Badly. The integration of Poles, as presented in the British press, is not entirely free from problems. On the one hand, many Poles are not used to ethnic and racial diversion and it takes time and effort for them to become a part of the multicultural society. “One Polish woman, Aneta Kania, says she had never seen such diversity until she came to Slough. “I was very shocked by the mix. At first I thought it was a bit scary” (*Times*, May 20, 2007). Moreover, schoolchildren raised in a culturally homogenous society cause ethnic tensions. “Headteachers reported that pupils were moving their desks away from Asian and black children in fear and saying that white people were superior” Whereas “...some parents asked whether their children would be taught by ‘darkies’” (*Observer*, April 15, 2007).

Another aspect hampering integration is some Poles’ ignorance of British laws. Lack of knowledge of traffic rules as well as ignoring the ban on drink-driving appear to be most frequent offences. “A SHERIFF yesterday called for cops to visit a vegetable farm to tell foreign staff about our traffic laws – as he banned a Pole for drink-driving. Sheriff George Evans said: ‘We

keep getting these workers in Court” (*Sun*, May 12, 2007). Whereas, *the Daily Mail* devoted its first page to a story on Poles poaching swans and fish.

A separate place in the discussion of the underside of the presence of Poles in the UK is occupied by the issue of homelessness. A small but visible group attracts much attention, especially of the sensation-seeking press. There are stories of people sleeping in private loos and gardens as well as rough-sleepers. As *the Daily Mail* informs its readers: “POLISH immigrants are coming to blows for the privilege of sleeping in public lavatories at a cost of just 20p per night” (May 4, 2007). Interestingly enough, many homeless Poles are reported to refuse to go back to Poland, because they are too proud. The homeless are depicted as another unnecessary burden on the British society. Yet, the more liberal newspapers also try to show the human tragedy behind the phenomenon as well as emphasise the fact that this can happen to many, especially in the context of welfare benefits restrictions (e.g. *Times*, Feb. 25, 2007).

Moreover, *the Times*, on a lighter note, depicted difficulties connected to the blending of cultures: “But there are drawbacks to this Polish plunge into all things Scottish. David Olejnic, 7, visited his relatives in Poland last year. “The Polish doctor said there was something wrong with his mouth”, said his mother, Ela. “He couldn’t seem to elocute properly. Then we realised the problem: he had an Edinburgh accent” (*Times*, Jan. 20, 2007).

Poles Strike Back: Anti-Discrimination and Labour Rights

It is also significant that especially in the 2007 studied period Polish migrants are represented as dynamic, self-reliable people, taking an active stance on their labour rights. In contrast to the 2004, Poles are no longer prepared to work long hours for wages considerably lower than their British counterparts. They would not tolerate discrimination at work. Several articles were devoted to Poles joining labour unions, encouraged also by the Polish trade union *Solidarność*. Moreover, the fact that three Polish women won a court case against their former employer accused of underpaying and verbally abusing them received much publicity. What is more, the story of a Polish factory worker Vicky’s battle for equal pay with her British colleagues was featured in the popular soap opera “Coronation Street”. As *the News of the World* reports, anti-racism campaigners have praised the TV series “for tackling discrimination at work” (*NW*, March 11, 2007). The support for fighting against discrimination by right-wing tabloids is not surprising, since this is done in so-called “enlightened self-interest”. Poles who demand equal pay and do not dump wages anymore make the competition between Polish and British workers more fair. To sum up, “there are signs that the country’s vast East European workforce is starting to fight back against poor working conditions and discrimination”, as a lawyer “overwhelmed by inquires from

Polish workers about workplace rights” said to *the Times*. He also believes that “The number is definitely growing” (May 19, 2007). The question remains whether this change in the perception of Poles will diminish the fears of the working class.

Poles and Others

It is also interesting to see how Poles are represented in comparison to other groups, in particular the British people as well as other migrants. In the studied periods there were no instances of a comparison between migrants of old and new member states, there were however mentions of a similar phenomenon of scare-stories about floods of migrants dating back to the accession of Spain and Portugal (e.g. *DT*, May 16, 2007). The more “optimistic” earlier predictions of the numbers of Poles to come to the UK were partly based on the fact that those scare stories never materialised. Yet, in the press Poles are often compared and contrasted with the local inhabitants as well as other migrant groups. Interestingly enough, when facing the comparison with other migrant groups Poles usually score high points.

Poles and Brits. As it was mentioned before, all newspapers often emphasise the fact that Poles are very hard-working, and this becomes especially evident in comparison to locals. As *the Daily Mail* states: “When it comes to hard graft, tradesmen from Eastern Europe are knocking spots off their Scottish counterparts” (*DM*, March 22, 2007).

On the other hand, the tabloids sometimes present Poles as people who not only do not abide by the rules, but they also do not want to learn them. In the above-mentioned article about Poles and Lithuanians who are poaching swans and fish, an angling club official complains: “Every time I try to explain them that they can’t treat our waters as a larder they just pretend they do not understand” (*DM*, August 7, 2007). The readers cannot be sure whether the culprits actually understand English, but the official is rather confident that breaking the rules is just a matter of bad will and not a result of a misunderstanding. He may be right here, though poaching swans is not a regular sport and pastime in Poland either. In fact the whole story sounds like a bit like UFO spotting. It is difficult to verify it, yet tabloids are known for printing made-up sensational stories⁵.

Interestingly enough, the tabloids were also happy to admit that the flow of people is not one-way and Brits also do not always behave according to their

⁵ For example, the Sun published a story about the British comedian Freddy Starr eating his girlfriend’s hamster under the headline, “Freddy Starr Ate My Hamster”. After some time, when the journalist was asked whether that was true, he answered: “Of course not!” In May 2006 the BBC nominated “FREDDIE STARR ATE MY HAMSTER” as one of the top British newspaper headlines of all time. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sun_\(newspaper\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sun_(newspaper)).

stereotype of the law-abiding citizens. One author writing for *the Sun* seems to have no doubt about who's better off here: "We've got Polish plumbers and the Poles have 'Men in Skirts' – which is what they are calling drunken Scotsmen who have made Poland a favourite destination for stag weekends" (March 23, 2007). The same author writes that "[a]ngry Poles are calling for party-mad Scottish visitors to be arrested – for lifting up their kilts and flashing" (*Sun*, March 21, 2007).

Poles and other Migrants. Apart from an anecdotal mention of a Lithuanian nanny who claimed to be Polish in hopes of increasing her employment chances, there are no instances of contrasting Poles with other A-8 countries' migrants. However, Poles are better rated against migrants from the two new members, Bulgaria and Romania: it is not only a matter of better professional skills, but also public safety. "Ministers are said to be increasingly concerned that the newer immigrants will be less skilled than the Poles and Czechs, who have filled vacancies in a range of jobs including hospitality, construction and fish-processing. A leaked Government report last year revealed that nearly a third of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria would be 'undesirable', many of them criminals" (*DM*, Jan 8, 2007).

Moreover, Andrew Marr, a famous British journalist and political commentator, sees parallels between the waves of migration of the 1960s and today and claims that there are always those more and less welcome migrants. He compares Poles to the highly successful group of migrants from East Africa fleeing political persecution, who were well educated and rather affluent when they arrived in Britain. They often serve as the epitome of successful integration of migrants in the UK. "Young, educated Polish or Czech people had come to Britain to earn money before going home again to acquire good homes, marry and have children in their rapidly growing countries. The economic growth of the early 2000s was fuelled by the influx of energetic and talented people, often denuding their own countries of skills, making their way in Britain as quickly as the East African Asians had before" (*DT*, May 16, 2007). In contrast to Poles and other Central and Eastern Europeans, the arrival of South Europeans seems to be rather a threat to Britain. As Marr notes: "But there are always two sides to such changes. Criminal gangs of Albanians, Kosovars and Turks appeared as novel and threatening as Jamaican criminals had 30 years earlier" (*DT*, May 16, 2007).

Poland and Britain

If there are differences between Poles and Brits, surely there should be differences between Poland and Great Britain. The various perceptions of each country and of its people mutually shape each other. The perceptions of Poland are important for the debate on EU enlargement and they explain Poles'

motivations to leave their country. In this section, we will look at how Poland is portrayed in comparison to the UK in the British press. We will analyse how the press presents the economic, political, and cultural differences in both countries

Economic Aspect. As one could expect, Poland is presented as a country with high unemployment, meagre wages and lack of opportunities, especially for young graduates. In contrast to that, Great Britain is the land of economic opportunities, among other things, due to its labour shortages. “Many of their struggling citizens harbour dreams of a better life in Britain – often leaving behind desperate conditions and discrimination in their impoverished homelands” (*Sun*, April 26, 2004). As a young Polish woman complained to *the Daily Mail* journalist: “The money we have does not buy us anything... We have the opportunity for a job in Britain, whereas here we have nothing” (*DM*, May 1, 2004).

Yet, there also exists a contrasting view of Poland – that of a young liberal economy, developing and changing at a fast pace. It is viewed as an ally of the UK’s free market economy. Poland, as one of the “new nations”, was described as follows: “One of the success stories of the new Europe, Poland is in the process of transforming itself from a one-party state to a parliamentary democracy in a remarkably short period of time. Gleaming corporate skyscrapers have taken root in Warsaw, and private shops and cafes have established themselves in even the most provincial of rural towns” (*ES*, April 22, 2004). This quote rather testifies to the potential that Poland possesses, and in that sense both images of Poland are compatible. Although much has been done already and the chosen direction of development is right, there are still many challenges in front of the young democracy.

As a country in the midst of transition, Poland is also associated with bureaucracy, which makes the lives of ordinary people more difficult as well as hampers economic development. It is also unfriendly for foreigners conducting business in Poland: “UK investors who want a holiday home must be willing to withstand bureaucracy: those without Polish nationality must apply for consent from the Polish Interior Ministry or be willing to set up and buy through a Polish company” (*Times*, May 4, 2007). Moreover, as a Polish interviewee explains: “It’s less stressful. When you buy a car in England, it’s easy. In Poland when you buy a car you go to the tax office, there is so much bureaucracy” (*Times*, June 16, 2007).

Cultural Aspect. It is often emphasised that Poland is a culturally homogenous place, in contrast to Britain, which takes pride in its cultural diversity. Although Poland is becoming more tolerant, it is not as easygoing as Britain, where “hidden in a vast crowd, people can be themselves without any complaint of intolerance” (*Times*, May 3, 2004).

In contrast to vibrant and colourful Britain, Poland is described as a bleak and unattractive place – “a grey country with sad people” (*ES*, April 19, 2004). It has become even more boring after a vast part of its entertainment business has followed the migrants to Britain: “They really killed the night life here, man... It used to kick ass but now it’s dead. All you have to do is go to London and you can see everyone there. It’s sad, dude” (*FT*, Jan. 30, 2007).

There are also instances of the “exoticisation” of Poland. It is sometimes presented as a far away, frosty and culturally backward country. As *the Daily Telegraph* briefly describes the visit of Deputy chief executive at the London Stock Exchange to a family wedding in Warsaw, the author informs the readers: “He’ll be making a toast too and the Poles prefer vodka to champagne, which is understandable considering the weather. Luckily today’s forecast is for better temperatures (it should rise to a scorching -2C) which should at least comfort Wheatly’s daughters who are bridesmaids. ‘Goodness knows what they are going to wear,’ he says” (Jan. 10, 2004). Surely -2C is not the temperature completely unusual for the UK, not to mention partiality to strong liquors.

Political Aspect. As far as political issues are concerned, there are two distinct themes here. On the one hand, right-wing newspapers especially emphasise the close ties between Poland and Britain, as well as Poland’s strong support for the USA. There is a suggestion that thanks to the enlargement Great Britain has gained strong allies in the EU against the sclerotic old continent member states, such as Germany and France. “These countries [new member states -JF] are staunchly pro-Britain and pro-America - unlike others who owe a great debt to the USA in two World Wars” (*Sun*, April 30, 2004). *The Times* wrote in a similar vein: “Portugal might be Britain’s oldest ally but Poland is a distinctly natural partner as well” (August 6, 2007).

On the other hand, especially after the 2005 elections and the formation of a conservative-populist government, Poland is often presented as a country that has serious problems with respecting minorities’ rights, as well as being an unreliable and unpredictable political partner. “...not only the xenophobic, anti-semitic and ultra-Catholic culture flourishing in Poland, but a government plagued by eccentricity, chaos and mutual loathing” (*STimes*, August 19, 2007). It is especially notorious for its extremely adverse atmosphere for gays and lesbians. “Poland’s Roman Catholic right-wing government has openly homophobic members and Polish media recently announced that the Health Ministry had created a special committee responsible for ‘curing gays’” (*Observer*, July 1, 2007). Whereas, *the Sunday Times* paints a gloomy picture of Poland under the rule of national religious fundamentalists:

Pint-sized, rotund, with anachronistic choirboy haircuts, the monozygotic Kaczynskis (“Cash-inskis”) President Lech and Prime Minister Jaroslaw dream of bringing Poland to “rightful” prominence on the world stage. First they aim to rid the nation of

corruption by purging Poland's enemy within every communist collaborator, however minor or reluctant (a task, in their view, left undone after the Soviet collapse in 1991). Then they intend to raise a beacon of Catholic Polish nationalism to shine out across a continent sunk in materialism, pornography, homosexuality and godlessness – their frank estimation of the European Union that welcomed them in 2004 (*STimes*, August 19, 2004).

To conclude, the most striking finding of our research is the fact that Poles as individuals and as a group are presented in a predominantly positive way: Poles are wonderful workers and are willing to integrate, they are active and determined and ready to stand up for their rights, they slowly permeate all sections of the society and are not just stuck in lowly jobs. Poles are a more “desirable” immigrant group than e.g. immigrants from Southern Europe. Of course, any newspaper is far from idealising Poles, journalists do report of e.g. crimes committed by Poles. But criminal activity is not presented as an inherent feature of all Polish migrants. Whereas, the perception of Poles as an economic threat rather concerns their perceived impact resulting from the allegedly poorly managed migration process. Moreover, in contrast to 2004 when newspapers most often wrote of Poles seeking low-paid jobs, in 2007 readers meet people of different walks of life. All in all, the portraying of Polish migrants in the British press helps to build a rather favourable attitude towards Poles among the British public. What is presented in more controversial terms in the press coverage is the impact of such a considerable group of migrants, which we will discuss in the next section.

4.3. The Perceived Impact of Polish Labour Migration

As we have argued earlier, the image of Poles coming to Britain in search of employment should be distinguished from the perception of the kind of impact that their immigration has on the British society and its institutions. In the following sections, we will examine the more pronounced arguments regarding the economic as well as social and cultural impact of Polish immigration to the UK in more detail.

4.3.1. The Economic Impact

The Labour Market

It has been already mentioned that the dominating image of the Poles in the British press is that of hard-working reliable employees. It would be logical to expect that Poles' presence on the labour market should be seen as very

positive. Indeed, as *the Observer* reported, many British businesses have profited from employing Poles: “‘I’d forgotten how much work you can get out of one person before I started employing Poles.’ That’s what one of the many hundreds of UK businesses which have benefited from the influx of workers from the Eastern European accession countries told David Frost, director-general of the British Chambers of Commerce” (*Observer*, Jan 7, 2007).

It is also often emphasised that Poles fill labour shortages and take jobs unwanted by local workers. It was especially *the Financial Times* that emphasised the rationale of skills shortages that can be filled with Central European workers behind the liberalisation of the labour market. “The voracious appetite shown by business for workers from European Union accession states should prove one important point to ministers: given the tight labour market, immigrants are essential to the smooth running of the economy” (*FT*, April, 2004). In another article published on the same date the newspaper reported: “Faced with a national skills shortage, employment agencies are already increasing their presence in the future EU states, with agencies seeking out partners and taking on staff to tap the new pool of labour. Trade bodies representing doctors, dentists, teachers, caterers, builders and business services said they were short of labour and would welcome migrants” (*FT*, April 10, 2004).

What is more, in 2007 the newspaper also claimed that the Polish migrant workers have not saturated the labour market, and despite the influx of Polish workers “businesses still suffer from acute labour shortages” (*FT*, June 5, 2007). *The Guardian* also left without commentary the opinion of the immigration minister, Liam Byrne: “Migrant workers from the accession states are benefiting the UK by filling skills and labour gaps that cannot be met from the UK-born population” (Feb. 28, 2007). Whereas *the Evening Standard* also supported the opinion that Poles take up jobs that the British do not want. “More than three quarters of EU migrants are in low paid jobs, typically earning between [pounds sterling] 4.50 and [pounds sterling] 5.99 an hour – suggesting most are filling jobs which British citizens may be reluctant to take” (*ES*, August 21, 2007). The newspaper even quoted a migration expert saying:

Across London there are lots of the important ‘3D jobs’ – those which are dirty, difficult and dangerous – that need to be done to keep the city thriving and are being done by Poles and other East Europeans....London needs people who can build things, drive buses, remove the rubbish and do all the other service jobs that are essential....The arrival of the Poles means these jobs are being done at a price that isn’t creating huge inflationary pressure and the economic impact is generally very positive (*ES*, March 5, 2007).

The Guardian was also trying to persuade its readers that “[c]ontrary to popular belief, workers arriving from eastern Europe can have a positive impact both on the EU labour market and their home states” (*G*, Feb. 3, 2004). *The Evening Standard* emphatically wrote that “[m]uch of London’s economy, particularly in construction and childcare, would fall apart without Central and East European labour” (*ES*, Feb. 6, 2004).

The fact that the Poles are largely Catholic is rarely mentioned as a factor determining their value on the labour market. In one instance, however, Polish Catholicism has become a special asset in Northern Ireland, where the Catholics have been traditionally reluctant to serve in the police forces, which has made filling the 50 per cent quota reserved for the Roman Catholic community almost impossible. As *the Times* reported, Poles came to the rescue:

As anyone in urgent need of a plumber will testify, Polish immigration has some obvious benefits – a fact that hasn’t passed by the Police Service of Northern Ireland...Nearly 1,000 of the Province’s burgeoning Polish community have responded to a police recruitment drive – and they are nearly all Catholics. Poles accounted for 12 per cent of the 7,749 applicants, which could provide a lifeline for a force that has struggled to attract Catholic recruits (*Times*, Jan. 12, 2007).

Even *the Daily Mail*, commenting upon the decision to invite Eastern European workers to Scotland, wrote: “In the future the critical issue will not be how we prevent poor and desperate refugees from exploiting our benefits system but how we persuade diligent economic migrants to give a shot of adrenaline to our faltering economy” (*DM*, Feb. 12, 2004). The statement was mitigated by a warning that this migration should be managed very carefully.

Yet, there is another side to the presence of a large number of cheap and reliable employees. The tabloid press in particular, but sometimes also quality newspapers, pointed out the threat of unemployment for many British low-skilled workers as a result of the liberalisation of the British labour market. Still before the enlargement *the Daily Mail* warned that “[m]igrants will put more UK workers on the dole”, and explained further on that “BRITAIN could face two years of rising unemployment as job seekers flock into the country, a top forecaster predicted (Jan. 4, 2004). Such opinions were especially frequent in 2004, when even the economically liberal *the Times* saw some reason behind the fears related to opening the borders: “Even Britain, vigorous champion of the free market, is erecting barriers with indecent haste, fearing, with some justification, that migrant Poles might displace Britons as desirable employees” (*Times*, Feb. 25, 2004). According to newspapers, since Polish migrants were ready to take up jobs for much less than their British colleagues, local low-skilled workers had either to work for even less, or lose their jobs. As a result of a growing number of people who find it more

beneficial to live on the “dole” than to earn their living, the very idea of a welfare state becomes threatened: “The welfare state faces a meltdown as new arrivals drive down wages and make unemployment benefits seem too generous” (*Sun*, Feb. 18, 2004).

An interesting voice in the debate belongs to Julie Burchill, a well-known left-wing commentator, who criticised the government as well as left-leaning newspapers for deterring the fight of the working class for better wages. She accused the “socialists” of “being in favour of the mass immigration of a foreign servant underclass rather than supporting the efforts of the native working class...to use a shortage of labour in order to push pitifully low wages up” (*Times*, Feb. 28, 2004). In a similar vein, *the Daily Mail* accused the liberal left of hypocrisy: “It is ironic that Left-wing politicians who usually make the case for increased wages and guaranteed working conditions ignore this reality [that migrant workers depress wages –JF] when they choose to stress the benefits of economic migration (*DM*, Feb. 12, 2004).

In the article aptly entitled “Why give jobs to Poles and not our lost generation?” Peter Hutching, *the Mail on Sunday* columnist, examined at the question of the Polish migrants’ impact on the labour market from the perspective of older employers forced into early retirement. The “lost generation”, according to the author, comprises “perfectly healthy people... pushed out of skilled work for the crime of being more than 50 years old” (*MS*, April 11, 2004).

Articles about the pitiful position of British manual workers caused by the liberalisation of the market also appeared in 2007. *The Sun*, for example, wrote about an instance where British workers were denied jobs because of their nationality: “JOBLESS British builders have been told: ‘We only want Eastern Europeans and Poles’” (*Sun*, May 3, 2007). This example once again shows that even very positive stereotypes can have negative consequences, and the positive discrimination of Polish migrants may breed hostility among working classes as well as their advocates.

Another interesting aspect of the impact of the inflow of Polish migrants to the UK as depicted in the British press is the growing skills shortages in Poland after so many skilled workers have left for Britain. The already quoted Peter Hutching claimed that Britain simply had no right to continue skills drain from poorer countries: “Not merely we have no need to staff our industries with Poles and Bulgarians, we have no right to strip poor countries of their technicians, doctors and nurses” (*MS*, April 11, 2004).

Another disadvantage related to the presence of Polish migrants on the British labour market was reported by *the Evening Standard*, whose columnist claimed that the gaps on the labour market should have been filled by domestic migration from the north to south of Britain on the basis of a report prepared by

a conservative think tank Civitas: “So some of the vacancies for which Blunkett grants work permits could in fact be filled by northerners and Scots” (*ES*, April 11, 2004).

The tabloids beat this drum even louder by pointing out that the British suffer twice as much, since the Poles steal work from local workers and the British taxpayer’s money is wasted due to the lack of a work force in Poland. “Brussels has given billions to Poland for new roads, bridges and factories much of it out of British taxpayers’ pockets. But so many skilled Poles have left for Britain, there are not enough left to build them. Meanwhile, British craftsmen are crying out for work because Poles are being hired on lower wages”. The description of the dramatic situation of the British workers is followed by a sarcastic rhetorical question: “Will we see coachloads of our bricklayers and chippies heading for Warsaw?” (*Sun*, Jan. 18, 2007).

By 2007, the fears of a long period of unemployment faced by local low-wage workers have slightly subsided, as newspapers have noticed that Poles have started fighting for better working conditions and better earnings. As *the Mail on Sunday* reports: “POLISH plumbers and builders have hiked their prices – allowing British tradesmen to win back some of the business they lost when their Eastern European rivals arrived in the UK three years ago.... Charlie Mullins, head of Pimlico Plumbers in London, said: ‘We are getting more jobs because the Poles aren’t as cheap as they were’” (*MS* April 15, 2007). As it was mentioned before, in this period many articles about trade unions helping Poles to fight for better work conditions also appeared. If the trend continues, one may expect that the presence of Poles on the labour market will not be associated so strongly with worsening the situation of low-skilled British workers.

The Welfare State

The concern that preoccupied all the studied newspapers in the period preceding the opening of the borders was the so-called “benefit tourism”, in other words, the possibility that Poles and migrants from other new member states would be coming to the UK only to apply for unemployment (and other) benefits that are incomparably higher than in their home counties. The problem became especially acute when Sweden, the other large economy ready to open its borders, decided to introduce restrictions. The Blair government, faced with attacks from the Tories, had to prove that they were tough on migration and especially on those who wanted to milk the generous welfare state without really contributing to the economy. The Tories demanded the introduction of work permits for the new migrants, whereas the government was trying to find a way out that would allow to have the best of the two worlds – an open labour market and protection of the economy from “benefit tourists”. Finally,

a decision was taken to introduce the duty to register as an employee, as well as the possibility to claim benefits after a period of time in employment in the UK.

During this period the newspapers were reporting about the government's considerations, consultations, debates and talks with regard to introducing safeguards that would minimise the abuse of the welfare state by the new immigrants. "In an effort to prevent the country being seen as a 'soft touch' for so-called benefit tourists, immigrants from new member states... will have to work for a year before claiming welfare" (*FT*, Feb. 24, 2004).

The Daily Mail emphasised that it is only the UK that is so naive as to fully open its labour market and disregard the risks related to that: "BRITAIN yesterday became the only major EU country still willing to open its doors to a huge influx of Eastern Europeans after Sweden vowed to introduce restrictions" (*DM*, Jan. 31, 2004). The article pointed out that even liberal-minded Sweden decided to impose a transition period. "But the Foreign Office continued to defend Britain's stance, claiming it would be 'good for business and good for Britain'... Announcing the U-turn yesterday, Swedish premier Goran Peterson – a close ally of Tony Blair – said: 'We would be naive if we didn't see the risks'" (*DM*, Jan. 31, 2004).

Generally pro-immigration newspapers were put on the defensive by tabloids and market liberalisation critics and had to explain that in all likelihood the enlargement would not result in making the British taxpayer fund hordes of benefit seekers from poor countries. *The Guardian*, for example, explained that benefit tourism was not very likely, since only the migrants "who have become integrated into the economic system, but who then become temporarily unemployed" can claim benefits (Jan. 21, 2004). In a similar vein, *the Daily Telegraph* wrote that "THE IMMINENT expansion of the EU has prompted fears of an influx of benefit-seeking immigrants from eastern Europe. But the reality is that many immigrants are well-qualified professionals willing to take low-paid, menial work that would probably be spurned by those educated to a similar level in Britain" (*DT*, Feb. 7, 2004).

The Evening Standard also pointed to a larger problem faced by the welfare state, namely that easily available and high benefits do not motivate people to work and earn their living: "IF ALL benefits were more difficult to obtain – whether you were born here or not – we should become a more self-respecting and healthier society" (*ES*, Feb. 20, 2004).

Typically for *the Daily Mail*, the newspaper merges together asylum seekers and economic migrants showing that all newcomers use and abuse the generous British state, while the government does nothing to prevent this. In an article devoted to the accession of ten new EU member states, the newspaper complained: "The amount spent on legal aid lawyers for immigration and

asylum cases has risen nearly eightfold since Labour came to power” (*DM*, May 1, 2004).

After a lot of discussion of “curbing benefit tourism” in 2004, the issue returned again in 2007, yet with considerably less resonance. As *the Daily Mail* reported, “the migrants – not only put enormous pressure on schools and hospitals – but are also receiving up to [pounds sterling] 75 million in benefits” (*DM*, Feb. 28, 2007). *The Evening Standard* also showed that the migration of Poles to the UK had its costs and that Poles as well as other Eastern Europeans not only contribute to the economy but also benefit from the welfare state provisions: “...the numbers claiming benefits is rising. The figures reveal there were around 69,000 successful applications for child benefit and 38,578 recipients of tax credits. A further 803 East Europeans have qualified for state help because of homelessness and 3,600 have won entitlement to income support or jobseeker's allowance” (*ES*, August 21, 2007).

The most typical message is well summed up by an article in *the Evening Standard*, which emphasised the ambiguity: “We welcome those who want to work. They are the majority. But the minority attracted by welfare benefits cannot be allowed to take unfair advantage of a system not designed for them” (Feb. 6, 2004). According to the newspaper, it is important that those prospective benefit scroungers are in the minority.

Another aspect of the socio-economic impact of Poles in the UK, which is presented by newspapers, is the pressure on public services and housing. Even before the accession, there were concerns that public services are not prepared to cater to a large number of newcomers. “... there are fears services like schools and hospitals, already strained, will not be able to meet the new demands” (*Sun*, April 26, 2004). With some relief the press reported on government policies aiming to limit such threats: “JOBLESS immigrants are to be banned from getting free council houses under tough new measures unveiled by Tony Blair today. In a hard-hitting speech the PM will make it clear he will not tolerate those who come to live off the state. And he will warn migrants: ‘Everyone must pay their way’” (*Sun*, April 27, 2004). Still, articles devoted to real and especially potential abuses of the public services were abundant.

Problems with affordable housing were frequently discussed in relation with labour migration from Poland. Many articles described the squalid living conditions of the Polish migrants, especially just after the enlargement, when most local councils were simply unprepared for such considerable numbers of new inhabitants. “When Poles started coming to Crewe in big numbers in 2004 some were said to have slept in cars, paying a few pounds a week for access to bathrooms. That may be more myth than reality, but there were certainly landlords in the town who grew fat on the influx of people looking for cheap

rentable housing. It was not uncommon for eight or 10 to be squeezed into one small, dilapidated terrace house, two or three to a bedroom” (*DT*, Feb. 28, 2007).

Yet, as readers can learn from the press, ten people living in one house is not the worst possibility, as both quality and tabloid press reported about homelessness among Poles. This has been seen as both a social and economic problem, as the costs of helping the homeless could be too high to be borne by local authorities: “COUNCIL chiefs are to charter buses to transport homeless eastern Europeans back to their native countries. Westminster council is to pay to send the destitute migrants home after thousands entered Britain when their countries joined the European Union, only to face life on the streets” (*ES*, July 30, 2004).

Health care, traditionally an important and controversial political issue, was of particular concern here. The tabloid press could not help engaging into some scaremongering, merging together many different issues: high levels of HIV-infected in the Commonwealth of Independent States with the expected inflow of Poles, migrant workers with asylum seekers. For example, *the Daily Mail* wrote that “[t]he Government’s decision to welcome workers from these countries raises the prospect that some of those suffering with HIV will come seeking free Health Service care. There is growing concern that looking after asylum-seekers, refugees and so-called ‘health tourists’ is costing the NHS billions of pounds a year” (Feb. 18, 2004).

Moreover, *the Daily Mail*, with its boundless journalistic inquisitiveness, learned and reported a particularly outrageous case of health care system abuse concerning a widely publicised case of the rapist and murderer Kunowski: “In the period between the two attacks, of which Kunowski has been found guilty, he was treated to a free heart bypass on the NHS, even though he was an illegal immigrant” (*DM*, April 1, 2004). The readers who have the ability “to connect the dots” would realise that the British health system is over-porous (even such a monster and illegal migrant as Kunowski could use it). Thus, the reception of Kunowski’s case demonstrates to *the Daily Mail* readers how easy it is for Poles to abuse the NHS. *The Sun* also accuses the authorities of not doing enough to protect British citizens’ rights: “The fact this perverted illegal immigrant was able to get a heart bypass on the NHS – despite a lack of medical records – also shows the UK authorities’ utter lack of respect for their own citizens” (April 4, 2004).

Quality newspapers also devoted much attention to the strain on services, yet they rather concentrated on the fact that the government statistics were not reliable and thus public services were not financed adequately. Thus, “Richard Stokes, leader of the council, describes official statistics as ‘not fit for purpose’.... Estimates have failed to keep pace with what is happening on the

ground and public services are suffering as a consequence... The migrants that come to Slough are hard-working and bring great benefit to the local economy but the council remains severely underfunded because of these poor statistics” (*Times*, May 20, 2007). In other words, as the quotation shows, these newspapers emphasised that it was not the decision to “invite” Eastern European migrants that was wrong, but rather the mismanagement of public services based on wrong (or perhaps deliberately underestimated) calculations.

Notably, even quality newspapers by and large disregarded the fact that since Poles work and pay taxes, they cannot be denied the protection of the welfare system. Such an opinion was only voiced once in the debate between two left-wing intellectuals, David Goodhart and Khalid Koser, published by *the Guardian*: “And as long as they are working and paying taxes, why shouldn’t they use our public services and draw some of our benefits?” Koser rhetorically asked his interlocutor (Feb. 14, 2004). The pro-immigration-minded press rather focused on mitigating the tabloids’ concerns.

“The Polish Pound”

Another aspect of the impact that the migrants from Poland have on the economy is related to their growing purchasing power. All the newspapers have reported different steps taken by businesses in order to attract the so-called “Polish pound”, in other words, the money earned and spent by diligent Poles. Already in 2004, newspapers were reporting about supermarkets introducing Polish products or even whole Polish food lines, e.g. *Pudliszki* by *Tesco*. As the newspapers report, by 2007 Polish food has become ubiquitous, and some retailers have tried to tackle the possible language barrier: “Retailers have been quick to cater for the Polish palate. All major supermarkets now stock Polish food, with some introducing notices and labelling in Polish. Kingfisher, the owner of B&Q, has dual-language signs in selected stores to help Polish builders find what they need (*Observer*, June 24, 2007).

Moreover, starting from 2004, newspapers have often reported that banks have been adapting their offers and their services to the needs of the new migrants. One of the most important considerations was again the language barrier – the newspapers report about new possibilities to open an account in Polish. The special needs of the new group of customers having families in a different country have also been addressed. As *the Financial Times* reports: “It is difficult to imagine a community more attractive to Britain’s banks than the hundreds of thousands of mostly young Poles who come to the UK... In the scramble to win their business, financial institutions have been employing scores of Polish-speaking staff, translating brochures and application forms into Polish and bringing new products to the market” (April 24, 2007). The attractiveness of a relatively young and prosperous community for businesses

was also noticed by tabloids: “Heinz is launching a range of food aimed at Britain’s burgeoning Polish community...Lucy Clark, of Heinz, said: ‘The UK’s Polish community continues to grow at an exceptional rate and offers retailers tremendous potential...’” (*DM*, March 31, 2007).

Interestingly enough, the quality press and tabloids often make very different conclusions on the basis of the same facts. *The Financial Times* emphasises the profits for banks that handle the cash earned by Poles: “Britain’s banks are fighting an intensifying battle to capture a slice of the “Polish pound”... The “Polish pound”...offers a rapidly growing and largely untapped market for businesses in a wide range of sectors. With many Poles looking to send money to family or personal accounts back home, banks and financial services are at the forefront of the drive to win their customs” (*FT*, April 24, 2004). At the same time, the tabloids accused Poles of stripping the British economy of cash, as they noticed that Poles also send their earnings back home: “POLISH immigrants sent home almost [pounds sterling] 1 billion in the first three months of this year, it was revealed yesterday. The cash taken out of the UK economy would otherwise have been spent in shops, restaurants and other businesses here” (*DM*, June 28, 2007). The argument is mitigated by a statement that the scale of this phenomenon is not large enough for it to have major impact on the economy, at least for the time being: “Although the sum is too small to dent the health of the British economy, MPs warned that it could begin to have an impact if the trend continues. Businesses will be forced to tighten their belts if cash paid out in wages is being sent out of the country, rather than spent here” (*DM*, June 28, 2007).

To sum up, the economic impact of Polish migration as presented in the British press is ambiguous. On the one hand, the press, including tabloids, has noticed that the presence of Poles has benefited not only many businesses by filling in labour shortages but also regular people in the need of manual workers (house help, gardeners, plumbers, etc.). On the other hand, Polish immigration was also seen as causing unemployment for local workers as well as threatening the welfare state, with the fears of welfare system abuses and huge strain on public services being most pronounced. Especially the tabloids often beat the xenophobic drum, using all too well known anti-immigration arguments, or “genuine concerns” as they would call them.

4.3.2. Social and Cultural Impact

Accommodating the New Wave of Migrants

The policy of multiculturalism that has been in place for a number of years in the UK assumes the adaptation of public service providers to the needs of

various groups, including migrant groups. At the same time, many such policies are perceived as putting newcomers into a privileged position and they infuriate some people. This ambiguity has been well reflected in the press coverage of the accommodation of Poles' needs in the UK by various public institutions. On the whole, newspapers report on the accommodation of Poles in the UK in a relatively neutral tone. Yet, from time to time, tabloids also try to present such accommodation actions as undeserved or unmotivated special treatment.

As it appears, the main barrier to the integration of Poles into the British society is the language. Due to the insufficient level of English, public services providers have to introduce translation services, language courses or provide directions and instructions also in Polish. A good example is *the Sun's* reporting on the introduction of Polish-language road signs, which is presented as outrageous decision by local governments that puts Polish drivers in a curiously privileged position over the speakers of other languages including English: "UK town puts up road signs...in POLISH. BARMY council chiefs have baffled local drivers by putting up road signs in POLISH. Highways chiefs splashed out on the warnings – not repeated in English – despite only SIX PER CENT of locals coming from Poland...Last night it emerged the signs were ILLEGAL. The Department for Transport said they breach traffic regulations and the council had failed to get permission to put them" (*Sun*, Feb. 16, 2007). In order to emphasise the inappropriateness of the local council's move, the author of the article pointed out that the signs were erected without proper authorisation, i.e. illegally.

In some cases, in spite of the best intentions of the public authorities to improve communication with the new migrants, this process was hindered by occasional translation mishaps. As *the Daily Telegraph* readers could learn, "The sign in Polish on the A49 should have read: 'Spikes in road, wait for help.' Unfortunately, an error in translation had produced the disconcerting advice: 'Spikes in road, wait for pornography'. Crewe, it seems, has some way to go in accommodating its newest inhabitants" (Feb. 28, 2007).

The Sun also reported that "WARDENS are having to learn Polish - to beat a language barrier with foreign cons. A recent immigration wave has seen Poles coming into the prison system – but many can't speak a word of English. Prison officers are now learning the Polish translation of key terms such as 'lawyer', 'dinner' and 'exercise'" (*Sun*, May 2, 2007). The tone of the article was rather neutral, yet the information could stir rather negative emotions: "it is not enough that those Poles commit crimes in our country, we also have to learn their language in order to communicate with those criminals" (*Sun*, May 2, 2007).

Yet, on many instances, newspapers relate different steps embraced to make the lives of Poles easier without implying that they will be a burden for the rest of the society. “Councils have already introduced road signs in Polish to help confused lorry drivers to follow diversions. Now television will do its bit to help new arrivals feel at home...S4C, the Welsh-language channel, will be the first in Britain to offer subtitles in Polish....The previously bilingual S4C, which has a mandate to bring Welsh culture to viewers, believes that the Polish influence on the country is here to stay” (*Times*, Feb. 10, 2007).

It is interesting that, it was assumed that since Poles are largely Catholics, a multicultural state should provide their children with Catholic schooling.

More Catholic schools could be needed for the children of Polish migrants who have sought work in Britain since EU expansion, the Home Secretary said yesterday.... John Reid, the Home Secretary, said migration had to take social factors into account including the impact on public services. He said: “One issue is the demand for Catholic school places as a result of the children of Poles who have come to this country”. This statement by the government official appeared without a commentary and thus taken for granted by the press (*Times*, June 22, 2007).

Curiously enough, none of the newspapers noticed that in Poland very few pupils attend Catholic schools (although in most public schools children attend classes in “religion”, usually taught by the clergy).

Polish Cultural Contribution

Cultural contribution is not a very recurrent theme in the discussion of the impact of Polish migrants in the UK. Yet, newspapers have noticed that the presence of a new ethnic groups has become more and more visible thanks to Polish food shops, a variety of newspapers published in Polish, or Polish culture festivals and Polish Sunday schools. Great Britain is a country proud of its multicultural face, which welcomes cultural contributions from the migrants groups that settle in on its shores. Poles are also treated here as just another ethnic group that will enrich the British culture. It is rather quality press that pays attention to various aspects of the Polish cultural contribution. Thus, *the Times* writes: “You might notice the new Polish stores (alongside the Asian stores), the recruitment agencies, the former Scotch Corner pub that was now a Polish restaurant, the Catholic churches offering masses in Polish” (*Times*, Feb. 25, 2007). In another article, *the Times* also mentions the growing Polish-language press that helps the Polish community to integrate and to find necessary information regarding various aspects of life: “For the crucial information on where to spend their hard-earned British pounds and to keep abreast of the issues affecting their communities, Poles have an ever-expanding choice of newspapers and magazines. In Ealing, the epicentre of the new Polish community, Caesar Olszewski edits *Goniec Polski*, or *The*

Polish Times. It started out four years ago as a 16-page monthly and is now an 80-page free weekly with a print run of 30,000 and a claimed readership of 100,000, mostly 20 to 45-year-olds” (*Times*, June 16, 2007). Other types of mass media are not lagging behind: “LONDON’S first Polish-language radio station will be launched this weekend to cater for the burgeoning Eastern European community” (*ES*, August 30, 2007).

The newspapers have also noticed that Poles try to straddle the two worlds, sending their children to British schools but also opening Saturday schools so that they could also learn the language and culture of their grandparents: “There are already more than 50 Polish Saturday schools around the country offering language and cultural lessons” (*Times*, Feb. 10, 2007). It is not clear, however, whether such language classes are also meant for non-Poles.

It was mentioned before that one of the important connotations of the Poles in Britain is the Catholic faith. This is not surprising especially since the arrival of a relatively large number of Catholics has significantly changed the face and composition of the Catholic Church in Britain. Many newspapers reported about “importing” Polish priests in order to cater to the needs of the boosted church ranks. As newspapers reported, many congregations have considerably increased. “The numbers of Polish migrants to Edinburgh has doubled attendance at the city’s Catholic cathedral. St Mary’s Cathedral holds two additional services each week in Polish for the estimated 3,000 extra churchgoers” (*Times*, Feb. 21, 2007). “A recent report by the Von Hugel Institute at Cambridge University suggested the Catholics could soon overtake Anglicans as the country’s most active churchgoers because of the rise in eastern European immigrants since their countries joined the European Union in 2004 (FT, Feb. 17, 2007).

It is important to point out that the press has noticed that Polish cultural presence is not limited to providing exclusively to the needs of an ethnic group: sauerkraut and *pierogi* are not just to satisfy the palates of the homesick Poles, but Polish food is becoming fashionable with the British, finding its niche in the vast palette of ethnic cuisines. As the *Times* reports: “Retail experts predict the Poles will be responsible for the next ethnic food culture adopted by British people” (*Times*, March 31, 2007). What is more, Poles want to share not only their food but also food for thought. As *the Evening Standard* reported, a first Polish-language FM station “will host a series of shows designed for a Polish audience and for Britons interested in learning about Polish culture” (*ES*, August 30, 2007). The tone of the discussion of the cultural contribution of Poles is well summarised by Cardinal Keith O’Brien quoted in *the Financial Times*: “The contribution, economically, culturally and spiritually, of migrant workers to Scotland will be greatly enriching” (*FT*, Feb. 17, 2007)

Threats to Public Order: From Illegal Migrants to Victims of Rising Xenophobia

Polish immigration to the UK is not just ubiquitous *pierogi* and Polish-language road signs. There are also several major social problems associated with their arrival. At the same time, one has to notice that Polish immigrants are rarely held responsible for these problems. Yet, their arrival is often presented in a rather negative context, especially in the context of criminal activities and illegal migration. For a less discerning reader the question whether a migrant worker is a victim or a perpetrator may not be very important. An article about racial tensions may leave the reader with an impression that after the UK opened its borders to the migrants from the East, the country has become less safe. The same goes for the context of illegal migration and asylum seekers, in which Polish immigration to the UK is sometimes presented in such tabloids as *the Sun* and *Daily Mail* as well as their Sunday editions. Such a merging together of two unrelated topics may taint the perception of Polish migration to the UK, especially if the reader is prone to anti-immigration attitudes.

In the pre-accession period, newspapers generally refrained from associating Polish migrants with criminal activity. There were some exceptions to that, however. On the one hand, Kunowski's case received much negative publicity just before the accession. Obviously, no newspaper claimed that all Polish migrants were like that, yet some emphasised that he was undistinguishable from any other regular Pole. "ANDREZEJ [original spelling – JF] Kunowski stepped off a coach at London Victoria in October 1996 after a 30-hour bus journey from Warsaw in his native Poland. With [pounds sterling] 500 and \$100 cash in his pocket, he was typical of thousands of Poles who come here on tourist visas as illegal immigrants" (*DM*, April 1, 2004).

A lot of media attention was given to the exploitation of Polish migrants, also by dishonest fellow Poles. As *the Times* reported: "Polish conmen operating in London are said to be tricking migrants from Poland into paying cash for nonexistent jobs in Britain....Some have been victims of 'scams' in which they handed over cash to fraudsters with promises of non-existent jobs and housing" (*Times*, June 5, 2004). *The Evening Standard* even published a long interview with a Polish conman, who explained his "business" in details.

In 2007, *the Sun* described the plight of Polish migrants: "Once here, they end up ten to a room, ruthlessly exploited and paid cheapskate wages. If what is happening in Slough is not state-sponsored slavery encouraged by the Labour Party, I don't know what is" (*Sun*, May 4, 2007). On the one hand, the newspaper presumably shows compassion for the Polish workers, while on the other hand, the reader may arrive at the conclusion that massive migration from Poland has made British society less fair as migrants are bound to be

exploited by other Poles and Britons alike. Such a presentation of an indirect negative impact can often be spotted in the press.

Another aspect of the impact of the Polish migrants in Britain is a rise in xenophobia. Just as it was shown above, although most newspapers describe Polish immigrants as victims rather than perpetrators of xenophobia and racially motivated crimes, this still produces a negative context for the presence of Poles in the UK. Already several months before the accession, *the Evening Standard* warned readers that a lack of well managed migration and public debate on the subject would only cause a rise in xenophobia after the new wave of immigration: “Doubts about immigration isn’t the same as hatred of strangers. But unless the subject is discussed honestly, xenophobia of a very ungentle sort is exactly what we’ll get” (*ES*, Feb. 18, 2004). *The Sun* expressed similar misgivings, while it merged two issues – economic migration and asylum: “Worse, people who until recently would have been welcome new migrants, risk a backlash from citizens whose hospitality has been abused by asylum seekers” (*Sun*, April 30, 2004).

Especially in 2007 newspapers also reported incidents of racially-motivated crimes against Poles: “A GROWING number of attacks on Polish bar workers is being blamed for race hate crimes rising to new record levels in the Capital. Police are now dealing with an average of three racist incidents every day after another rise in complaints of abuse and attacks” (*G*, June 27, 2007). Despite the fact that it is not Poles who perpetrate racially-motivated crimes, the reader may get an impression that one of the outcomes of the arrival of Poles is the rise in xenophobic crimes. Even if such articles give a bad name to the locals, it is implied that after the EU enlargement Britain has become a less safe place to live. Tabloids also to some extent justify such behaviour towards Poles by pointing to the allegedly bad immigration policy that resulted in previous abuses.

Another concern expressed by the press was the possibility of the arrival of illegal migrants from third countries, posing as Poles and taking advantage of the alleged weakness and corruption of law enforcement institutions in Poland. The always-vigilant *Daily Mail* reported on the eve of the accession: “A HUGE illegal trade in passports and identity papers from countries joining the EU tomorrow has been exposed by undercover investigators” (April 30, 2004).

The tabloids emphasised that the very opening of borders would trigger a wave of uncontrollable illegal migration from other countries, by association making Polish economic immigration also undesirable:

Hordes of illegal immigrants are using asylum camps in Poland as a springboard to the good life in Britain...Desperate people from all over the world are heading to the former Iron Curtain country – now seen as the gateway to the West. Once in Poland they apply for asylum and are put in the camps for nothing. Then – aided by ruthless

people smugglers – it's next stop Britain, the land of handouts and free housing. Mafia gangs are already smuggling human cargo into Poland before transporting them to their final destinations. And from May 1, when Poland joins the EU, even more illegals are sure to fulfil their dream of reaching the riches of the West" (*Sun*, April 3, 2004).

The newspaper, however, does not explain in what way the enlargement and liberalisation of the labour market would assist human trafficking, since Britain does not fully participate in the Schengen agreement and border passport controls are still in place also after the enlargement.

On the day of the accession, *the Daily Mail* was more specific and informed its readers that "Police and immigration officers fear citizens from outside the ten new states will use black market documents from them to try to enter. In the Baltic states border guards are struggling with an explosion of doctored passports" (*DM*, May 1, 2004).

Just after the accession, *the Sun's* sister newspaper, *the News of the World* promised its readers to reveal the true impact of opening the borders to the migrants of new member states: "On day EU floodgates open, we reveal how illegal immigrants can stroll into UK with phoney passport" (*NW*, May 2, 2004). Yet, in what followed there was no information about "phoney passports" or any other ways for illegal migrants to enter Britain. The only "revelation" concerned "a new refugee threat": "But as ten new states joined the European Union yesterday, there was a new refugee threat on its eastern borders-from countries still excluded like Russia, India, war-torn Chechnya and Afghanistan, where thousands are determined to head west for richer countries like Britain" (*NW*, May 2, 2004). After making a strong and attention-catching entrance but without giving any details to support that argument, the newspaper presented a large quotation from David Blunkett, in fact placating readers' fears about the new migrants possibly abusing the British welfare state:

There has been talk of floods of people coming here but readers need to be aware of the strong measures we have taken to ensure that they will not be able to exploit our social security, housing and benefits systems. Citizens planning to stay here for more than a holiday or business trip will have to register. And if they don't, or lack work or money, then they can't expect to be supported by us (*NW*, May 2, 2004).

It is rather typical for *the Sun* and *the News of the World* that after an alarming headline, the contents of an article are relatively neutral. Yet, the very context in which Polish immigration to the UK is presented creates a rather unfavourable atmosphere.

Thus, once again, although the Poles are not directly accused of breaking the law (it is not even said that those "ruthless people traffickers" are in fact Poles), yet their arrival is associated with the threat of a flood of illegal

migrants. It is also notable how the issues of the EU enlargement and the liberalisation of the labour market have become contaminated by unrelated issues of asylum seekers as well as illegal migrants. All too often newspapers cram legal economic migrants, illegal economic migrants (bogus asylum seekers), and refugees all in one bag. And it is not characteristic exclusively of the tabloids: “Jobless Poles swell rise in migrants from the east but asylum seeker numbers fall” reported *the Guardian* recently (Feb. 28, 2007).

It may come as a surprise that relatively little space was devoted to crimes committed by Poles in Britain. One notorious case was broadly discussed in the press as an example of the weakness of the government institutions responsible for dealing with such threats to society was that of convicted killer and rapist Andrzej Kunowski: “THE conviction of killer Andrezej Kunowski emphasises just how slack our border and immigration controls have become... How many more animals are being let into Britain by a Government too interested in meeting bureaucratic targets?” (*Sun*, April 5, 2004). Nevertheless, articles about Polish migrants perpetrating crimes were not frequent. Relatively the most attention was paid to Poles breaking traffic laws. Thus, *the Daily Mail* rarely forgot to mention the nationality of a perpetrator of a crime, especially resonated with some national stereotypes, such as a ‘drunk Pole’: “Last year, a drunken Polish farm worker killed a newlywed couple as he drove without lights on the wrong side of the road” (*DM*, Feb. 19, 2004). Another offence strongly associated with Poles in the British press was already mentioned poaching fish as well as poaching swans. Sensation-hungry *the Daily Mail* even devoted the first page to a report about Poles’ peculiar culinary habits. Yet, once again, articles about Poles perpetrating crimes were rather rare in the studied periods.

In general, although there were relatively many instances where the arrival of Polish migrants was reported in a negative context – as a threat to public order – Poles were rarely portrayed as directly responsible for that. However, by association, Polish migration is responsible for increased illegal migration and rise and xenophobic crimes. Moreover, the press reports about crimes perpetrated by Poles, yet this is not given much attention.

To conclude, although the perceived image of Polish migrants in the UK is rather positive, the impact of Poles on the cultural, social and economic life in the UK is presented in more controversial terms. For example, Poles (who often stand for all post-2004 enlargement migrants) are perceived as a threat to the employment chances of the British and as a burden on the welfare system. To a large degree this situation is attributed to the alleged mismanagement of the opening of the labour market by the government. Thus, scare stories and anti-Polish immigration articles are primarily criticism of the government that has been too soft on migration, which is a British obsession. At the same time,

it goes without saying that such anti-immigration moral panic articles, even if they are not aimed directly at Poles as such, have a negative impact on the overall perception of Polish migrant workers in the UK. Fortunately, as we tried to show in this chapter, those negative articles are often balanced by more neutral accounts of the impact of Poles on the life in Britain.

4.4. Some Remarks on Language

The aim of this report was not a detailed linguistic analysis of the studied texts. We were rather interested in the messages sent out to the British readership by the national dailies. Yet, the style usually affects the substance in some way, and thus we cannot escape commenting upon the language used to depict Polish immigration to the UK.

On the whole, the language is relatively neutral in the case of both tabloids and quality papers. There are no openly discriminatory expressions used in relation to Poles. Negative opinions are very often mitigated or balanced by more positive opinions in such a way that the overall message of a given article is relatively neutral. If there are stereotypes, they are positive – the most recurring characteristic of Polish migrants in the UK is their great work attitude. Yet, there are many fixed phrases with negative connotations used to refer to the arrival of Polish immigrants that might create an impression of very negative publicity, even scaremongering.

Negative Metaphors

A recurring feature of the studied articles devoted to the Poles' presence in the UK is the use of negative metaphors. Especially frequent are *natural disaster metaphors*: “towns flooded by immigrants”; *war conflict metaphors*: “army of nannies”, “armada of crowded tourist buses”, “hordes of tradesmen”, “set to ‘invade’”; or *crime metaphors*: “a gang of...Poles”, a “crackdown on migrants”. However, despite their immediate negative and destructive connotations, these metaphors seem to be what George Orwell called “dying metaphors”, used by journalists to escape “the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves” (Orwell, 1954, p. 164). In other words, they are simply clichés that have lost their real imaginative power and are used simply out of habit of using sensational language and catchy phrases.

There are two main reasons why such strong language should not be treated as a mark of a conscious massive attack on Poles by the British press or the “hysteria”, as it was sometimes referred to in the Polish press, but rather looked upon as the overuse of “dying metaphors”, irritating but not that harmful. On the one hand, these negative metaphors strongly contrast with the dominating

positive image of Poles and their presence in Britain. To give an example, the same journalist who writes about “hordes of nannies and plumbers” later explains “the word Pole has become shorthand for cheap, reliable worker, adored by the middle classes for keeping down prices and by the Chancellor for assisting the battle against inflation” (*Times*, June 16, 2007). Surely, “a horde of cheap, reliable workers” is not something negative. The following quotation shows that the author is not very aware of the strongly negative connotations of plundering and looting that the word “horde” has, especially for Central Europeans: “Fittingly, one of the few Polish words that has been borrowed by the English language is *horda*, which became ‘horde’, meaning a tribe of migrating nomads” (*Times*, June 16, 2007). How formulaic has the word “flood” become in relation to the description of arrival of a considerable number people is also well illustrated by the sentence from a *Financial Times* article: “The Catholic Church, whose ranks are being swollen by a flood of Polish immigrants, is working with trade unionists to stem the abuse of migrant workers by rogue employers” (*FT*, Feb. 17, 2007). The quoted sentence does not convey a negative picture of Polish migrants, yet it seems the journalist could not help referring to the arrival of Poles in the UK as a “flood”.

On the other hand, such war or natural disaster metaphors are characteristic for the press’ sensational and emotive language on the whole. Phrases with such negative connotations are used not only to describe Poles in the UK, but also to depict rather neutral situations and phenomena. Thus, journalists also write about “hordes of shoppers”, or use “legal wrangles”, a “bruising week” in Whitehall (*Times*, Feb. 14, 2004) to refer to legislation debates. What is also interesting is the fact that all newspapers in our study use these metaphors except for the very language sensitive and politically correct *Guardian*. Therefore, we cannot say that it is just the tabloids that try to paint an apocalyptic picture of the influx of Poles into the UK. Having said this, one has to bear in mind that such language still affects the perception of the issues discussed in the press and obviously does not help to build a positive picture.

A Voice of Their Own

It is also significant that all newspapers amply use direct quotations from Polish immigrants. In this way, Poles that are given their own voice are more active and empowered. They are not just some faceless group, but real people with different life stories, motivations and dreams who are enabled to speak directly to the reader. What is more, there are a large number of quotations from people affected by immigration without journalists’ commentaries or conflicting opinions expressed by other people. In such instances, it should be assumed that these opinions are shared by the authors of the texts.

From Pole to Pole: The Use of Puns

The use of puns is very characteristic for the British press. Especially tabloids, which seek to captivate their audience's attention by entertaining coverage of events, often employ a play on words in the titles of their articles. The words "Pole", due to its numerous meanings and a number of idioms containing this word, is attractive material for word playing. For example, the article "Poles of attraction" (*Sun*, May 4, 2007) talks about the Polish culture festival as part of an anniversary of a local town. Readers can learn that "attractions include arts and crafts exhibitions, traditional music concerts as well as a Polish banquet". Here "Poles" mean Polish migrants, whose festival may be attractive to local inhabitants, yet the phrase's immediate connotation is magnetic poles of attraction and repulsion. Another example can be the title of *the Sun* article "Go Pole to Pole" (April 28, 2007), which first of all makes one think of travelling around the world, going from the North Pole to the South Pole. The article, however, discusses the special cheap rate phone box established in Midlands, so that Poles can call their families and friends home – so the migrants will be able to talk Pole to Pole. Moreover, "pole" also may be associated with a telegraphic/telephone line pole. The title also alludes to the distance between Poland and Great Britain. Whereas, "Poles apart" (*Sun*, May 21, 2007) employs an idiom meaning being completely opposite or separated. This article talks about prison wards that intend to learn Polish in order to break the language barrier with prisoner Poles who do not speak English.

Puns are also made on the typical Polish adjective ending "-ski". For example, *News of the World* titles its article "It's your Co-opski" (*NW*, July 1, 2007) informing readers that Co-op stores have started selling Polish food products, and so they will be more familiar for Poles. "Next stopski London!" (*ES*, 9 March, 2004), in its turn, is a report from Warsaw about Polish migrants heading for London.

The names of Polish cities, even if misspelled, also appear to be a fruitful source of puns. "There are certainly lotz of them. And as a consequence, as we report today, the University of Lotz is opening an outlet in London" (*ST*, March 28, 2004). "Lotz" is a misspelling of Łódź, and since there are "lotz" (or rather "lots") of Poles in the UK, it certainly makes sense for the University of Łódź to open its branch in London, as *the Sunday Telegraph* convinces its readers. Whereas, the story of a large number of Poles that have found jobs and their new homes in Crewe and so have changed the little sleepy town is titled "They came, they Warsaw...and they conquered; Poles who queue to get into Crewe" (*Sun*, Feb. 17, 2007). The title obviously alludes to the famous *Veni, Vidi, Vici*. The name of the Polish capital is put instead of the word "saw" but also draws the reader's attention to the fact of how different Crewe is now.

“Welcome to Crewe or, to put it in Polish, Witamy w Crewe – a little part of Warsaw in Cheshire” (*Sun*, Feb. 17, 2007).

Notorious Misspellings

The language may be attractive to the readership, yet what strikes a Polish-speaking reader of the British press is the amount of misspellings of Polish proper names. These misspellings are not simply typos but rather errors of ignorance on the side of journalists. It is especially striking to see such errors in a country so proud of its multiculturalism and respect for otherness and thus assumingly careful and sensitive to foreign names. Yet, *the Sunday Telegraph* journalist is apparently oblivious to the name of the Polish populist party “Samoobrona” (Self-defence) and calls it several times “Samo Obrama” (*ST*, March 28, 2004). Whereas, Łódź is simplified to Lotz even if that makes the life of a pun-loving journalist much easier (*Times*, August 6, 2007). Polish first names and surnames are all too often misspelled, yet the most interesting example is when a journalist uses an exclusively male name to call the interviewee’s wife: “He came, to England in spring 1999, leaving his wife, Janusz, and four children...” (*ES*, Feb. 13 2004). Obviously these instances of misspellings do not have a negative impact on the image of Poles and are apparent only to a more demanding reader. They create an impression of a lack of expertise on the reported subject.

To sum up, despite the presence of metaphors with negative connotations used to describe Polish immigration to the UK, the language should not be considered as deliberately discriminatory against Poles. The language of newspapers tends to be exaggerated; catchy phrases, plays on words, alliterations and metaphors are very often employed in order to attract the reader’s attention. This is especially true for tabloids; however, quality newspapers are also not free from overstatements and embellishments. However, the impact of figures of speech should not be analysed without their context, which makes it possible to see the broader message sent out to the audience. As the analysis shows, all too often seemingly very negative metaphors – which were used to express strong anti-immigration sentiments several decades ago – have become clichés and are employed in rather neutral or even positive contexts. It goes without saying that negative metaphors in particular do not help improve the image of Polish migrants in the UK; their use is rather the outcome of thoughtlessness than intentional scaremongering. Thus, this dissonance should be blamed on the nature of the press language. In newspapers not every armada is set to invade.

Conclusion

The Polish public opinion is frequently alarmed about the allegedly negative way in which the British media portray the fellow Poles looking for better life in the UK. However, a systematic examination of the coverage of Polish migrants in the British press shows that these misgivings are largely unfounded. The British press univocally acknowledges Polish good work ethic and relatively good integration of Poles into the British society. More ambivalent is the press' evaluation of the consequences of opening the UK labour market. It is therefore important to differentiate between the image and the perceived impact of Poles in Britain. The newspaper criticism is not directed against Poles, but usually against the government, which has not adequately prepared the country for the influx of such a considerable number of immigrants. In other words, what is often erroneously perceived by Polish media as Pole-bashing is in fact the Labour government-bashing, which to a large extent is conditioned by long-standing anti-immigration and Europhobic sentiments in the British press and society.

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