Polish migrants in the UK - membership in trade unions

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Unionisation and public participation in Poland

**Trade unions density** - 10% of labour force
4% of Poles (CBOS, 2013)

**Public participation** – 10-15% (Social diagnosis, CBOS, European Social Survey)

**Frequency in Elections** – 20%-55% (State Election Commission)

**Generalized social trust** – fifth lowest level in the EU (European Social Survey)
# Polish migrants in the UK

**Polish migrants in the years 2004-2012**

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>2,130 mln</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Europe:</strong></td>
<td>1,816 mln</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UK:</strong></td>
<td><strong>637 000</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>500 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>118 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>the Netherlands</td>
<td>97 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>97 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>65 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>63 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>48 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>38 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>37 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>28 000</td>
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Three waves of Polish migration to the UK

1st wave: post-WWII migration 1941-1951
Scale: 160 000

2nd wave: political(&economical) migration ‘Solidarity migration’
1952-1989
Number: 74 000 Poles in the UK (UK Census, 2001)

3rd wave: economical migration 2004-till now
Scale: 637 000 in 2012 (National Statistical Office, 2013)
Number: 850 000 (Polish Ambassy in the UK, 2012)
London: 157 000
Political and social engagement of Polish migrants in the UK

Policy of trade unions in the UK: organization of labour market interest only. Trade unions as corporations

No specific trade unions with ethnic background
Integration of migrants on labour marked and in unions’ structures

- Policy of ethnic antidiscrimination and education of employees and employers. (70s / 80s)
  Migrants recognized by TU as a potential and significant group on the labour market

- Migrant units in trade unions: UNITE – Migrant Worker Support Unit, UNISON – Migrant Worker Participation Project

No registry of TU members with foreign background
Rise of migrant members’ number
Polish migrants in trade unions in the UK

Recruitments strategies:

Regular recruitment
UNISON: information action on benefits from trade union membership, trainings for Polish leaders on civil society, information voting campaigns
Polish Activist Network (inspired by UNISON) 30-40 members.
Support of Polish employees and trade unions membership campaigns
- Innovations in migrants recruitment: community unionism in the Northern Ireland
Polish migrants in trade unions in the UK

Barriers in Polish migrants’ unionisation:

- Membership fee
- Fear of being laid off
- Passive social attitude
- Lack of recognition of trade unions' role (strength) in the UK

Illegal employment – unknown scale
Thank you

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