



Case study:

## **CROSS-BORDER LABOUR MOBILITY BETWEEN POLAND-GERMANY**



West Pomeranian Business School  
Szczecin, Poland, 2012

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## Introduction

The present case study focuses on cross-border mobility patterns taking place between Poland and Germany. It refers specifically to the stream of workers commuting in the north-western part of the borderland though trans-national migration of labour force (i.e. affecting transfer abroad persons' place of residence) remains outside the scope of the study. The tasks of the case-study is to provide an overview on level, structure, determinants and potentials of cross-border mobility, pointing out relevant best practices also revealing barriers and obstacles related to commuters between two distinguished borderline areas, namely West Pomerania Region (PL) and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (D). Geographic delimitation of the feasible Polish-German mobility is depicted in Figure 1.



Fig.1. Polish-German borderland of work force mobility study: West Pomerania Region and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

*Source: own elaboration based on Google map.*

The methodology applied in the studies encompasses desk research and analysis of available reports, research and data regarding economic and labour situation in the relevant subjects and regions. It was proceeded by own field research, conducted both in terms of online surveys and direct interviews (using a semi-structured questionnaire) of the Focus Group of qualified experts of the local labour markets, namely EURES advisors in Rostock and

Greifswald Employment Agencies, Entrepreneurs' Association, Private Job Placement Agencies.

Due to scarcity and diversity of the statistics and its low accessibility on regional level, the consistency of data for single border regions was given some priority over an overall comparability although the latter approach was elaborated in the report "Statistical analysis of the current situation of the South Baltic labour markets, South Baltic Professionals" (deliverable 3.1., 2012) and consequently applied in the presented case study.

The report is focused on the work force mobility in the north-western Polish-German borderland. Each section of the report is presented in comprehensive form with detailed attention to key aspects and results.

## **1. Comprehensive socio- and economic analysis of Polish and German regions**

The north-western part of Polish-German borderland consists of two neighbouring regions, namely West Pomerania (ZR) with the regional city centre of Szczecin with approximately 400,000 inhabitants and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (M-V) with capital in Schwerin (94,041 inhabitants), and Rostock (201,442 inhabitants) as the largest city. These two regions enjoy similar spatial parameters, respectively for West Pomerania 22 892 km<sup>2</sup> and for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 23 191 km<sup>2</sup> and are common in terms of population. West Pomerania accommodates 1.693 million people while Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is populated with 1.642 million inhabitants. Both regions are sparsely populated with 74.0 and 71.0 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and it is noticeably lower than EU-27 average of 116 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. Due to the negative natural population change, but mostly because of emigration waves of Germany's younger generation to the western regions of Germany, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern exhibits a strong de-population trend. In the period of 2006-2010 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern average population decreased by 3.2%, while in West Pomerania Region maintained the status quo in the number of inhabitants. Population is ageing especially in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Region where the old-age dependency ratio (2009) had already reached a high level of 32.3<sup>1</sup>. For West Pomerania Region loss and ageing of

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<sup>1</sup> The old-age dependency ratio indicates the relationship between working age population and elderly people. At the EU-27 level the total population aged 65 and over as a proportion of the working age population is 25.6 % (2009).

population (with the region's old-age dependency ratio at 16.9%) are so far of less importance. Despite common features of both regions like peripheral and coastal locations, deficits in infrastructure, quite similar economic structure (rural areas, maritime economies, coastal tourism) and the 78 km long border shared by the two neighbouring regions, these border regions display quite noticeable disparities. Level of the regions' economic development is significantly uneven and if measured by the regional domestic product per inhabitant (2009), economic wealth in West Pomerania might be by 37% lower than in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern<sup>2</sup>. If the economic growth results are to relate to the EU-27 average, it appears that both regions are still lagging behind in terms of economic development. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern GDP (2009) was 84% of the EU-27 average gross domestic product, while it was only 53% for West Pomerania. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's economic development lies far behind the German average. In 2010 the GDP per capita (in real terms) in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern equated to 71.7% of the German average<sup>3</sup>. Both regions suffer from a higher than nationwide average unemployment rate related to 15-64 years old population, in 2011 the unemployment rate in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern amounted to 10.2% (the average rate in Germany is 7.0%), in West Pomerania unemployment was at 11.8% and it was one of the highest in comparison with other Polish regions<sup>4</sup>.

There are significant differences in the level of wages in both regions. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern average gross wages and salaries are the lowest in Germany (amounted to 79.2% of the German average) and in 2009 remained at € 21,931 per employee (i.e. €1,828 per month). The highest gross wages per employee are paid in the field of private and public services (€ 25,297) and in manufacturing (€ 23,314), whereas the lowest are to be found in agriculture (€ 15,659) and in commerce, hospitals and transport (€ 17,173). Average gross hourly wage in the region was at € 16.01 in 2009. There again, the gross hourly wages are the lowest in agriculture (€ 10.23) and the highest in the service sector (€ 18.8) and in

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<sup>2</sup> Statistical analysis of the current situation of the South Baltic labour markets, South Baltic Professionals, deliverable 3.1., 2012.

<sup>3</sup> C. Perron, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; a regional profile, November 2011

<sup>4</sup> Regional EUROSTAT up date statistics.

manufacturing (€ 16.0)<sup>5</sup>. At that time Polish workers in West Pomerania used to earn less than half of that amount, an average of 750 euro per month<sup>6</sup>.

Analysis of Gross Value Added produced in economies revealed a different structure in the relevant regions. Even if the service sector dominates the economy of both regions, industry and construction, as well as agriculture are of greater economic importance for the Region of West Pomerania. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 77.3% of persons were employed in the service sector, followed by industry and construction with 19.6% and agriculture with only 4.0%. In West Pomerania a noticeably higher share of workers were employed in agriculture (8.7%) and in industry and construction (27.9%).

There is almost no emigration to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. More than half the emigrants are of European origin, with about 4.500 Poles<sup>7</sup>, who are far the biggest community among foreigners in the region. In West Pomerania Region the number of residents originating from Germany is an estimated 330 people<sup>8</sup>.

There are 27,484 Polish companies active in Germany, 94% of them entities registered in Germany's western regions and in Berlin. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is the region with a large concentration of Polish companies. In Uecker-Randow province alone there are over 200 companies of Polish origin active with the largest ones being Train Electric and Fleischmannschaft in Loecknitz, and also a recycling company in Gramzow<sup>9</sup>. However, the lion's share of them are small and family-type companies engaged in commerce (63 entrepreneurs), hotels (4), manufacturing (12), construction (36) and services (85)<sup>10</sup>. On the other side of the border, there are indications for 2,500 Germans working in Szczecin and in the vicinity. They are mostly employed in the construction sector (German companies are involved in the reconstruction of transport and port infrastructure), call centres and in

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<sup>5</sup> C. Perron, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; a regional profile, November 2011

<sup>6</sup> Polish-German-Czech Borderland, Urząd Statystyczny w Zielonej Górze, Zielona Góra 2010.

<sup>7</sup> J. Seges Frela, Polska migracja zarobkowa do Niemiec po 2004 roku, w: Znikająca granica. Nowa emigracja do Niemiec-perspektywa lokalna, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2012, Statistisches Bundesamt 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Raport z wyników w województwie zachodniopomorskim, Narodowy Spis Ludności i Mieszkań 2011, Urząd Statystyczny w Szczecinie, Szczecin 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Industrie-und Handelskammer Neubrandenburg 2011

<sup>10</sup> J. Seges Frelak, A. Kriszan, Charakterystyka pogranicza polsko-niemieckiego i społeczności lokalnych objętych badaniem, w: Znikająca granica. Nowa emigracja do Niemiec-perspektywa lokalna, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2012.

the transport branch, in the latter case in the port handling company and in the forwarding sector.

## **2. General outline of the regions' labour markets**

Key aspects of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and West Pomerania Region labour markets have been summarized in table 1.

Tab.1. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and West Pomerania Region labour indicators in 2010 (annual averages).

Labour indicators	M-V Region	Germany	ZR Region	Poland
Employment rate (% of population aged 20-64)	72.8	74.9	59.2	64.4
Employment growth (annual % change)	.	0.5	.	0.4
Female employment rate (% of population aged 20-64)	68.8	69.6	48.3	57.7
Employment rate of elderly persons (% of population aged 55-64)	56.4	57.7	30.7	34.0
Unemployment rate (% of labour aged 15-64)	12.4	7.1	12.3	9.6
Youth unemployment rate (% of labour force 15-24)	15.1	9.9	24.5	23.7
Long-term unemployment rate (% of labour force)	6.27	3.2	4.66	3.0

Source: EUROSTAT and adapted from Labour markets in the Baltic Sea Region; Comparative study on the economic situation and labour market situation. Recent developments, Wilke, Maack and Partner, November 2011, Statistical analysis of the current situation of the South Baltic labour markets, South Baltic Professionals, deliverable 3.1., 2012, Eurostat regional statistics information update 2012.

### **2.1. Polish and West Pomerania Region labour markets.**

Despite a constant employment growth during the crisis, Poland remained one of the EU countries with the lowest overall employment rates (64.6% by 2010). The same applies to the employment rate for women (57.7% in 2010) as well as to the employment of workers

55 years of age and older (34.0% in 2010). The share of temporary labour contracts is relatively high compared to the EU average. It amounted to over 27% in 2010. Especially young people are concerned, because it is estimated that more than 65% of the workers who are under 25 years old have temporary employment contracts. In Poland over two thirds of young graduates could not find a job appropriate to their education. Along with the EU accession, the emigration of Polish workers has increased rapidly. Between 2004 and 2007 the number of Polish workers taking up employment in other, mostly EU-15 countries, rose from 1 million to 2.3 million. Poland's population is in decline, it has fallen from around 38.6 million in 2000 to around 38.1 million people in 2009. Poland is one of the EU member states with the lowest fertility rates. Decreasing population and growing old-age dependency ratio (from 19% in 2010 to over 35% in 2030) and emigration of qualified workers are main challenges Polish economy is facing in the long term<sup>11</sup>.

West Pomerania Region with an employment rate at a low level of 59.2%, declining males' and females' employment and low working engagement of older workers experiences a complex situation on the local labour market. Unemployment rate stands at high level of 12.3% but the main problem relates to the high rate of youth unemployment, recently gone up to 24.5%. Generally, West Pomerania Region labour market situation is noticeably worse than the nation wide in all relevant aspects<sup>12</sup>. Short term changes undergone within years of 2010 and 2011 at the labour market of West Pomerania Region revealed some contradictory changes. Total employment in the region fell slightly to 59.0% and the long-term unemployment raised by 4.86%. On the other hand, the group of elderly workers was activated and the unemployment rate in the region by 2011 was reduced to 11.8%.

In West Pomerania Region, all in all, finding jobs by the young people and the high unemployment of both, males and females, are the key challenges of the local labour market.

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<sup>11</sup> Labour markets in the Baltic Sea Region; Comparative study on the economic situation and labour market situation, Recent developments, Wilke, Maack and Partner, November 2011.

<sup>12</sup> For in-depth analysis of the current labour market situation in West Pomerania Region and Mecklenburg Vorpommern, please revert to: Statistical analysis of the current situation of the South Baltic labour markets, South Baltic Professionals deliverable 3.1., 2012.

## **2.2. German and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern labour markets**

Contrary to most other countries in the EU, the economic crisis of 2008-2009 had only a very limited impact on the German labour market. As compared to the previous year, the unemployment rate in 2009 increased only by 0.3 percentage point and in 2010 declined again to the low level of 7.1%. The employment rate kept growing even during the downturn, and by 2010 it rose to a relatively high level of 74.9% (with the average in EU-27 at 68.6%).

A number of factors have been responsible for that<sup>13</sup>: (1) companies took advantage of the increased use of flexible working time arrangements, (2) they resorted to short-time work schemes on a large scale, (3) given the difficulties in hiring qualified workers in the past, many companies proved reluctant to lay off workers prematurely, (4) past labour market reforms and wage moderation have arguably reduced structural unemployment in Germany. During the last decade, the German labour market experienced a massive increase in flexible forms of work; the share of part-time workers increased to more than 26%, the number of workers with fixed-term contracts also increased in 2010 standing at nearly 15%. In fact, recent surveys have illustrated that most of the jobs created during the last years were flexible (i.e. part-time, on a temporary basis, agency work contracts) jobs<sup>14</sup>.

However, Germany is amongst those countries that are experiencing at utmost the demographic trends of ageing and decreasing population. The old-age dependency ratio (those of an age of 65 or older as a percentage of the total population) which in 2010 already was more than 30%, is expected to rise to more than 50% in 2035. In particular, regions in Eastern Germany (with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as a flag example) will be especially affected in the short and long run, due to massive emigration of young people to the western parts of Germany during the last two decades.

In comparison with the West Pomerania Region, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern records, a high rate of employment also in terms of women and older workers employment. Although unemployment in the region is declining, it still remains at the high level of 12.4%. Short term changes undergone on the labour market of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern within years of 2010 and 2011 confirm some positive trends. By 2011, employment in the region raised to

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<sup>13</sup> Labour Markets in the Baltic Sea Region: Comparative Study on the Economic Situation and the Labour Market Situation. Recent developments, Wilke, Maack and Partner, November 2011, s.36-37.

<sup>14</sup> Labour Markets in the Baltic Sea Region ..., s. 38.

73.4% and the unemployment rate declined to 10.2%. This was achieved mostly through development of employment among people of the age group 15-64 and apparently at the expense of the elderly workers whose employment engagement diminished to 55.6%<sup>15</sup>.

Nevertheless, the main challenge of the regional labour market is still the high unemployment within group of young people and the problem with raising long-term unemployment. The latter might be correlated with the phenomenon of structural unemployment, which comes to play in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

### **3. Comparative analysis of the labour supply and demand in the eligible markets.**

- In both regions young people (aged 15 to 24 years old) have been severely affected by the economic downturn and recession. Youth unemployment is twice as high as overall unemployment in both regions. Reasons for high youth unemployment and their weak labour market integration include their lack of practical experience but also a mismatch between education and labour markets demands. In comparison to labour market situation of West Pomerania, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern records a remarkably higher employment of elderly people (aged between 55 and 64 years old) and also a higher level of professionally active women;
- The low quality of the jobs offered in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern remains a big issue of the regional labour market. The region suffers from a labour market that offers few good and attractive jobs. Offered jobs are mostly for low skilled/unskilled labour force and offers are to a great extent of seasonal character. Seasonal jobs (such as farm works) are usually performed by retired people or students. Commuters are far more interested in permanent jobs or performed for the entire year because they usually support the whole family and it allows them for family planning;
- In January 2010 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern there were 39,000 unemployed, 89,900 employees that were low paid, 51,500 of which were women. One in five workers worked part-time and 84% of the part-time workers were women. The loss in work force of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern through emigration by 2009 amounted

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<sup>15</sup> Regional EUROSTAT statistics up date.

to 10,612 people while in 2008 and there were in region 76,000 outgoing commuters;

- Highly skilled and qualified Polish workers usually take up jobs in Berlin or in the western regions of Germany as there are more opportunities for better remuneration. Good specialists are also needed in Poland, especially in Szczecin, so highly qualified personnel is accordingly paid. While two neighbouring regions are looking for similar qualified staff because of similar economic structures, the income level in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is too low to attract qualified workers from West Pomerania Region. Polish job seekers do not stay in the cross-border region but move to the economic centres in West Germany and/or to the other EU countries;
- In West Pomerania Region the number of registered unemployed persons in September 2012 amounted to 102,487 persons, 54,495 of which females (53.2%). Regional labour offices registered 18,031 persons as unemployed beneficiaries (17.6%), 40,227 persons as unemployed in the rural areas (39.3%), unemployed with age 25 and less resulted in 17,437 persons (17.0%), with long-term unemployment suffered 53,565 persons (52.3%) while there were 27,271 (26.6%) jobless persons of age 50 years and more. As to results in September 2012, 4,050 persons successfully found jobs, and 5,976 persons were directed to the temporary and intervention works. Since 2010 the number of unemployed persons in West Pomerania remains at monthly average on high level of over 100,000 people<sup>16</sup>;
- Detailed analysis of unemployment structure in West Pomerania by the first quarter of 2012 revealed the following trends:<sup>17</sup>
  - by educational background the group of people mostly affected by unemployment were persons with primary (33.9%) and vocational education (27.1%), followed by people with post-secondary and secondary schools (respectively 18.7% and 10.7%) with the lowest share of higher educated persons (9.7%),

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<sup>16</sup> Barriers which constrains mobility, Presentation by Labour Office in Szczecin, Szczecin, November 2012

<sup>17</sup> West Pomerania Labour Market Observatory , Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy w Szczecinie, Szczecin 2012

- the most suffering by unemployment were people aged 25-34 years (28.3%), group of 45-54 years (20.0%), group of 35-44 years ( 19.5%) and 18-24 years old (17.0%),
  - by seniority, unemployment related at utmost ? to persons with employment history of 1-5 years (22.0%), those without experience (18.4%) and persons with professional career not exceeding 1 year (17.3%),
  - the share of long-term unemployed (i.e. over 12 months) was at an extremely high level of 35.6%.
- West Pomerania Region exhibits remarkable seasonal fluctuation in the work force supply and demand<sup>18</sup>. In the spring months of 2010 there were registered 6,548 vacancies while two years later it was reduced to only 4,386 work places offered. Most vacancies were present in service sector, in manufacturing, construction and agriculture. Almost no offers referred to non-skilled workers. There was also a low demand for plant and machine operators and skilled agricultural and fisher workers;
  - The most demanded professions by German employers (confirmed by their job offers) were engineers, nurses, caretakers of elderly people, welders, construction workers, mechanics and electricians, plumbers, gas and electrical fitters, cooks and waiters, and also catering personnel<sup>19</sup>. In the mid- and long-term German employers in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern expect major problems with the recruitment of staff for the care of elderly people, engineers, technicians, health care personnel (physicians, nurses) and social care workers;
  - The most demanded professions in the West Pomerania Region by 2012 relates to ICT specialists, service workers and technicians, managers and much less demanded are personal service persons and mechanics. Sectors with planned raising employment levels are wholesale commerce and trade, manufacturing, finance and insurance, information and communication, followed by hotels, catering and building branches<sup>20</sup>;
  - In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern economic activities with raising employment relates to manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, health and social sector while sectors

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<sup>18</sup> West Pomerania Labour Market Observatory, Labour Office in Szczecin, Szczecin 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Barriers which constrains mobility, Presentation by Labour Office in Szczecin, Szczecin, November 2012

<sup>20</sup> Barriers which constrains mobility, Presentation by Labour Office in Szczecin, Szczecin, November 2012

declining in terms of employment comprises transport, storage and communication, real estate and related services, public administration and education, and also social & personal service. In West Pomerania Region economic activities with raising employment relates to agriculture, construction, public administration and education, health and social sector, social and personal service while industry and transport, storage and communication are sectors with declining employment<sup>21</sup>;

- An average monthly wage in West Pomerania amounts to €750 while in Uecker-Randow, province in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the lowest average annual gross income per employee in 2009 amounted to €21,606 (€1,800 per month).<sup>22</sup> There are considerable differences between Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and West Pomerania regarding the level of remuneration for performed work. The average monthly gross salaries in all business sectors except agriculture were in Polish regions only 40%-50% of the gross salaries paid in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern;
- The expected economic gain benefited from outperformed work is the main driving force for mobility of Poles to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. At the other end of the range, workforce mobility of Germans to West Pomerania might be less aimed at gaining direct economic benefits, but driven by the need of acquiring an interesting and challenging job and professional advancement related to activities of German companies and/or foreign business development in Poland;
- Main reasons for Poles looking for jobs abroad are the difficult economic situation at home, no available jobs on the local markets, dissatisfaction with earnings, poor opportunities for advancement in the current job, a need for professional development. The highest percentage of Polish interested in working abroad relates to the unemployed people and students. Among Polish currently employed, the keenest on working abroad are unskilled and skilled workers, people employed in the service sector and administration but also technicians<sup>23</sup>. Possibilities of Poles entering the German labour market in the borderland are rather limited. Unemployment in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and high requirements concerning professional skills

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<sup>21</sup> Statistical analysis of the current situation of the South Baltic labour markets, South Baltic Professionals deliverable 3.1., 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Bundesagentur für Arbeit-<http://www.bundeslaenderranking.de>.

<sup>23</sup> D. Kucharski, Job mobility and migration of Poles, Baltic Sea Labour Network, December 2010.

make it difficult for Poles with low qualifications and poor knowledge of German to find employment on the other side of the border;

- Employers view on key disadvantages of the potential employee: lack of IT/ITC technologies, weak professional experience, low level of foreign languages command, lack of commitment and professional skills. Employers profile of the most demanded employee: aged between 26 and 45 years old, with social competencies like rectitude, fidelity, timeliness and responsibility, good manners and commitment, and with the most desired professional competencies like handling IT software, a driving license, good command of foreign languages, good work organization and the ability to work in teams<sup>24</sup>;
- Since Poland joined Schengen at the end of 2007, the Uecker-Randow district (as well as Brandenburg district Uckermark) has become a kind of suburb of Szczecin, a capital of West Pomerania. Poles work in Poland but live in Germany mostly because of lower cost of housing and benefits of social matters. They commute daily between places of residence in the eastern part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and their places of work in West Pomerania. More than 2,000 Polish families have moved to the German side of the border. The small town of Loecknitz, 24 km from the centre of Szczecin, has become the main destination of this movement. The most powerful factor which allures migrants/commuters from Poland is an attractive residential offer on the German borderland. This is caused by, above all, real estate prices which are significantly lower than in Poland as well as advantages resulting from a short distance to their mother country. The presence of active and entrepreneurial migrants/commuters from Poland becomes the factor which gives dynamics to the Eastern parts of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region and in the future it may facilitate changes of rather inactive attitudes of original inhabitants.

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<sup>24</sup> Barriers which constrains mobility, Presentation by Labour Office in Szczecin, Szczecin, November 2012

#### **4. Legal regulations regarding the labour mobility in the cross-border regions**

On 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2011 Germany has opened its labour market for the Polish workers. It means Polish workers and entrepreneurs are no longer subject of access restrictions to the German market, however, Polish entities providing services in Germany are obliged to abide provisions of the Law on the Posting Workers (Arbeitnehmerentsendegesetz, AEntG). Under this Law, foreign employers are compelled to secure minimum employment standards, in particular setting a minimum wage to cross-border employees performing their work in Germany. The Polish employees who work for a Polish employer in Germany or if employment contract is closed in Germany or personnel is leased, they must be remunerated like German workers, including minimum wages payable in nine branches, such as construction, electric equipment fittings, painting works, carpenter services. Other requirements concern a guarantee of maximum working time and minimum period of holidays granted and also mandatory conditions of social and safety working environment.

Some temporary provisions of labour require prior approval by the Federal Employment Agency and such temporary provisions are not allowed in the construction sector. Since November 2012 in the German eastern lands, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern included, a minimum wage for temporary workers was introduced and set at €7.50 per hour. Since 2013, the following branches have been obliged to pay minimum hourly wages for temporary employment provisions in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: construction €9.75, electro fittings €8.65, paintings €9.75, internal cleaning €7.00, personal service of elderly people €7.75, laundry services €6.75.

Since 2003 the reform of the German labour markets (Hartz reforms I-IV)) has been consequently introduced and, inter alia, there have been three different kinds of employment contracts implemented, namely:

- So-called “mini-jobs” for marginal employment; monthly maximum labour income since 2013 is set at €450 and it is free of contributions to the national insurance system;
- “Midi-jobs” there are jobs in the low-paid sectors and the monthly income is between €400 and €800; contributions to the national insurance system increase depending on the employee’s income and varies from 11% to 21%;

- Regular employment contracts with an income of more than €800 per month.

In West Pomerania Region there are not any restrictions for employment of cross-border workers unless employers obey a mandatory minimum monthly wage at the level of €330 and fulfil obligatory requirements as regards to safe and social conditions of works.

Recent studies on migration phenomenon of Poles to Germany have revealed that cross-border mobility and emigration was greatly influenced by opening the borders after 1989 and Poland's accession to the European Union and abolition of border control in 2007, but complete liberalization of the German labour market introduced on 1 May 2011 has not significantly changed the level and nature of cross-border mobility of Poles within the Polish-German borderland<sup>25</sup>.

## **5. Institutions in the cross-border area and sources of information about labour markets**

The Federal Employment Agency network is the largest public provider of labour market services in Germany. It has a network of 10 Regional Directories, 176 employment agencies and approximately 610 branch offices nationwide. Their most important tasks are job and training placement, career counselling and providing benefits replacing income such as unemployment benefits and insolvency payments. They offer also International Placement Services for those who think about working in Germany. It is supplemented by Job Boards ("Jobbörse") which helps in finding jobs or trainings. Polish public employment services system is organized following the similar pattern and consists of Federal Employment Offices (Labour Offices) and numerous local offices scattered within each regions. In West Pomerania there is the Labour Office with seat in Szczecin and with a branch in Koszalin and around 70 Labour Offices in the region. Main tasks performed by the labour offices relate to the prevention of unemployment and activation of the local labour markets. However, at the border crossings Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and West Pomerania Region there is neither some information point, a centre supporting cross-border mobility nor an official EURES Transnational Polish-German Partnership<sup>26</sup>, although two German and English speaking

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<sup>25</sup> J. Seges Frela, *Polska migracja zarobkowa do Niemiec po 2004 roku*, w: *Znikająca granica. Nowa emigracja do Niemiec-perspektywa lokalna*, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Poland and Germany, together with the other EU/EEA countries' Public Employment Services belong to the European Employment Services (*EURES*) network. The aim of EURES is to inform, guide and provide advice to

EURES advisors are available at the Employment Office in Szczecin (20-30 km away from the border crossings). The staff of the centre provides general information on social security, employment legislation and tax issues. The situation is on the German side is quite similar, where 6 EURES advisors who speak German/English are located in Rostock Labour Agency while only one advisor works in each of labour agencies in Pasewalk (recently it has been reinforced by another Polish native speaker advisor) and in Greifswald.

Active role of the Federal/Local Employment Offices and Agencies in fostering cross-border mobility and matching cross-regional job offers with potential workers is limited because of scarce resources and generally insufficient information and cooperation with the local labour offices located in the border line area. There are some indications that information exchange and collaboration between Employment Office in Szczecin and labour agency in Pasewalk have been initiated recently, but they need to be extended and reinforced. It is also worth mentioning that this kind of activity is focused on vocational and lower qualified jobs. In that situation cross-border recruitment actions organized by German companies in Szczecin region and/or by personal channels and internet though labour offices (federal and local ones) are by-passed and not involved.

Practical information about the German labour markets and job offers presented by German employers are subject of numerous cross-border job fairs organized in Szczecin and in the vicinity on a regular basis. However, statistical information about the phenomenon of job commuters, comprehensive and official information on social security, employment and tax legislation is still insufficient and scarce in the cross-border region - even though brochures were prepared by the Central Employment Service (ZAV) and distributed by EURES consultants in Poland.

## **6. Intercultural issues in the cross-border region**

Interviewed experts of the Focus Group suggested that mentality, culture issues and foreign language command are important obstacles on cross-border Polish-German mobility. However, recent studies on the current cross-border situation and emigration within the

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potentially mobile workers on job opportunities as well as living and working conditions in the European Economic Area and to assist employers wishing to recruit workers from other countries. In addition to this, the network provides advice and guidance to workers and employers in the border areas.

north-western Polish-German borderland has critically reviewed these issues and cast a new light on the Polish-German relations. Main findings are as follows<sup>27</sup>:

- Most commuters origin from the West Pomerania Region and have a history of contacts with Germans. Often, that is not equivalent to having advanced intercultural skills and knowledge of the neighbouring region. Many new migrants/commuters do not speak German or have only rudimentary knowledge of that language. That is one of the reasons for their reserve and difficulty in social integration;
- What is characteristic for the studied borderland is the pattern of cross-border mobility whereby the essential spheres of life (such as work or family life) are divided between the region of origin and the region of destination. Such a pattern means that commuters travel between Poland and Germany on a frequent basis (daily/weekly). As a consequence some of those people do not build strong social relations with Germans and form their own isolated communities;
- Commuters from Poland perceive German employees and institutions as strongly formalized, yet more effective than Polish ones. They see difficulties connected with formalized procedures as a typical feature of the German system and not as manifestation of prejudice of officials towards incomers from Poland;
- Difficulties in relations with Germans are experienced by, above all, those commuters who do not speak German and do not understand the specific and complexity of Germans procedures. A positive role of an intermediary in contacts with Germans is played by consultations and advisory centres, informal networks of Polish relatives and German acquaintances as well as employed increasingly in German public and commercial institutions Polish speaking persons;
- An important condition for the successful social integration between in-commuters and a local community is the creation of atmosphere for direct personal contacts. Polish who established close personal connections with inhabitants of their own locality have a very positive opinion of Germans. Similarly, Germans who often come into contact with Polish neighbours or co-workers perceive Poles positively. Entering

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<sup>27</sup> A. Łada, J. Seges Frelak, *Vanishing frontier. New Polish migration to Germany-local perspective main conclusions*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2012.

into close personal contacts between neighbours changes the stereotypical attitude and mistrust, and favours mutual interests in the culture of hosts and migrants;

- Very good neighbourly relations between inhabitants and commuters are usually established in small rural communities and tenant urban communities, traditionally occupied by an older generation of Germans, which are liked and respected. Negative experience and conflicts are most often provoked by relations between residents of post-communists blocks of flats. These blocks are usually the places occupied by Germans who suffer most from the effects of economic marginalization of the region. It does not facilitate building openness and entering into social relations for inhabitants and commuters;
- The past and difficult experiences which are characteristic for Polish-German relations are not forgotten, but today's relations between commuters and inhabitants of German borderland are dominated by a pragmatic approach and focus on the present and the future. The common tragic history is not a taboo, on the contrary-it even strengthens the bond due to the common past of Poles and Germans.

## **7. Analysis of the cross-border mobility between Mecklemburg-Vorpommern and West Pomerania Region**

For the purpose of the study, here cross-border workers are defined as employees commuting (commuters) on a daily or weekly basis or working for several weeks and months in another eligible region, however, this form of working abroad does not affect their place of residence. Consequently, dealing with cross-border issues, specific streams of commuters within eligible? Polish-German borderline areas were delimited. Recent information<sup>28</sup> revealed that the most frequently used border points by cross border workers (rough estimate) are as follows:

- Pommellen-Kolbaskowo, where the total number of cross-border workers is an estimated 2,000, 400 of which commute to Poland and 1,600 commute to Germany,

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<sup>28</sup> Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, August 2011, Helsinki.

- Linken-Lubieszyn, where the total number of cross-border workers is an estimated 300, whereas 50 commute to Poland and 250 commute to Germany,
- Albeck-Świnoujście, where the total number of cross-border workers is an estimated 100, 10 of which commute to Poland and 90 commute to Germany.

Totally it is estimated that 2,400 workers are commuting at the border-crossings of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and West Pomerania Regions, 460 of which commute to Poland and 1,940 commute to Germany.

Seasonally, at the coastal area of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and especially on Usedom Island, some 500 jobs in the tourism and restaurant industry are available for young Polish between June and August every year. They are usually employed in the kitchen or room service and cleaning, some with good command of German work at front desk (reception, waiters).

Present-day cross-border geographic delimitation and the level of cross-border mobility between two regions are depicted in Figure 2.

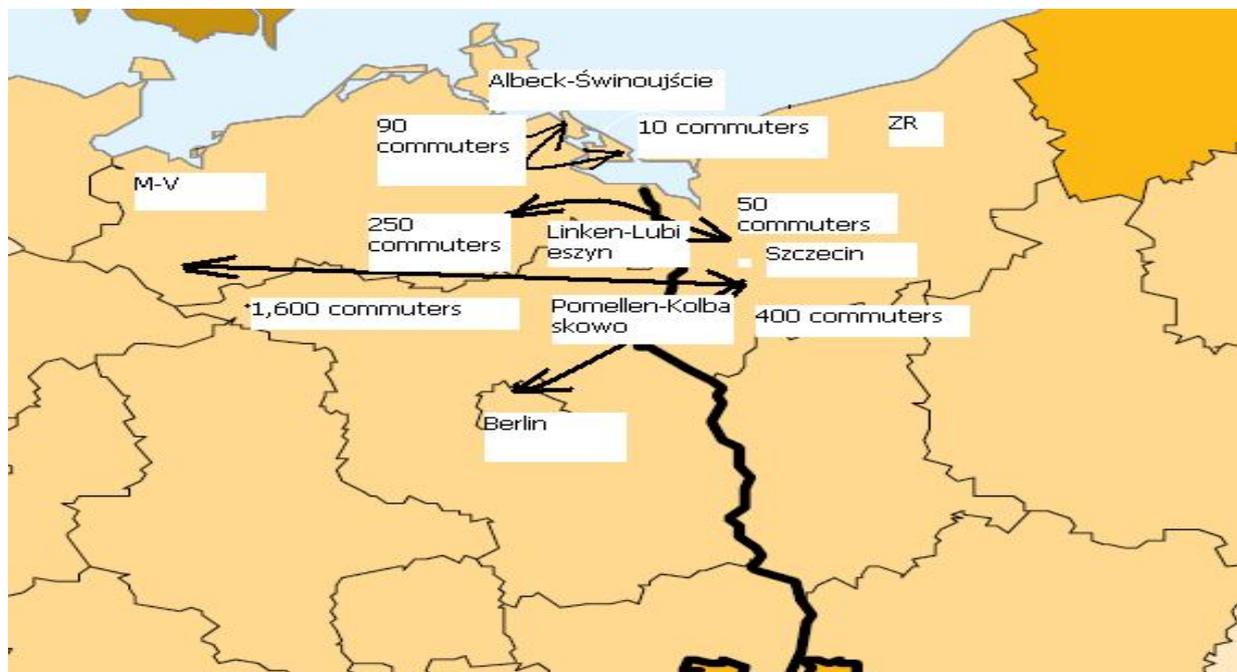


Fig.2. Polish-German cross-border mobility in the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and West Pomerania Region.

Source: own elaboration adapted from Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, August 2011, Helsinki.

The main branches attracting Polish workers are inland water transport, the construction industry, various services connected with renovations, repairs, modernisations of equipment and houses followed by agriculture and restaurant section. Lion's share of Polish workers can be found in Berlin, which is only 140 km away from the Polish border, and in Neubrandenburg. They are primarily engaged in construction works and employed with fixed-term contracts on a temporary basis. Fast development of Poles contracted within inland water transport is an effect of foreign investment of the Polish logistics company which took over the German waterways barge carrier only few years ago. These groups of workers, aged between 25 and 45, are usually middle and high-skilled and commute on a weekly basis, returning home on weekends.

Another group of Polish cross-border workers, an estimated 340 persons (17% of the total number of commuting Polish), is much dispersed in terms of destinations, qualifications, occupied branches and employment status. They occupy jobs in catering and restaurants, some of them are employed in the elderly people care service, agriculture and in health and social care. In contrast to the first group, in this case female commuters prevail and their qualifications, except for the health care sector, are lower on average. They are employed on temporary contracts and/or on a seasonal basis and commute daily and weekly (during the high season only monthly).

Most Germans take up jobs in West Pomerania Region as a result of business and trade cooperation and they relate to management and business administration, construction supervising, sales, representatives of German firms in the region. Only few of them are employed in education and health care. Their employment status is usually fixed-term contracts with weekly and monthly commuting frequency.

So far cross-border mobility is very unbalanced and in 80% refers to Polish commuters. Motivations behind cross-border commuting are different for Poles and Germans. While the first group takes up jobs because of much higher possible incomes, the mobility of the second group is mostly induced by the development of business and trade cooperation with West Pomerania Region.

Distinguished features of the Polish-German cross-border mobility within eligible regions are depicted in Table 2.

Tab.2. Major characteristics of the Polish-German cross-border streams of mobility.

Delimitation of mobility by cross-border points	Number of cross-border workers		Features, structure and type of mobility
	PL→D	D→PL	
Albeck-Świnoujście	90 and seasonally + 500	10	Mobility induced by local socio-economic region's assets and structure, middle and high skilled workers, longer-term employment and frequent daily commuting, main branches occupied: hotels, restaurants and catering
Linken-Lubieszyn	250	50	Mobility induced by small and medium scale business and trade cooperation, high skilled workers, longer-term employment based on daily commuting, main branches occupied: manufacturing and trade, agriculture products processing
Pommellen-Kolbaskowo	1,600	400	Mobility induced by medium scale business and trade cooperation, high skilled workers, longer-term of employment based on weekly/monthly commuting, main branches occupied: transport, construction, manufacturing and trade
Total	1,940	460	x

Source: own elaboration

## **8. Cross-border cooperation (projects, activities, measures) and good practices**

The main assumption, justified by interrelated issues is that cross-border mobility is to be induced by a system which comprises complex measures integrating and developing advisory, information and job matching services, supplemented and driven through cultural, economic and political collaboration activities between the regions of West Pomerania and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

A good practical example, yet at the initial stage, is the cooperation between the labour agency (Arbeitsagentur) in Pasewalk and Labour Office in Szczecin. Both institutions

participate in job and education fairs and since 2011 some 30 fairs have jointly and successfully been organized, mostly on the Polish side of the border.

Since May 2011, a Polish-German Help Desk hosted by Labour Office in Szczecin has been operating with its main objective to inform about work and learning/study opportunities in Germany. Its activity is also focused on developing skills in spoken German and Polish. Up to now, 1,488 Polish have been interested in taking up a job or starting education/studies in Germany.

Recently, the informal cross-border EURES partnership Odra-Oder in the Polish-German borderline has been activated. It operates, inter alia, in West Pomerania Region and it is coordinated by the Labour Office in Szczecin in which also Labour Offices in Swinoujscie, Police and Gryfino participate, on the German side it is coordinated by Neubrandenburg Labour Agency and it encompasses also Pasewalk and Stralsund Labour Agencies (Figure 3)



Fig.3. Informal EURES Partnership Odra-Oder at the Polish-German north-western borderland.

Source: [www.eures.praca.gov.pl](http://www.eures.praca.gov.pl)

Main duties of the Odra-Oder Partnerships cover vocational and language trainings and courses, study visits, workshops, meetings regarding specific business branches, employment opportunities, meetings with Polish and German employers and also initiation of job fairs in the cities of West Pomerania Region. Such job fairs take place on bi-annual and annual basis and are organized for example in Szczecin, Police, Świnoujście. Although official EURES partnership does not exist in the borderline area, the exchange of job offers through EURES advisors is developing and it seems to be the most promising and practical measure for fostering cross-border mobility. Ad hoc and once a week there is a consultancy

point for cross-border works organized at Szczecin Federal Labour Office and run by EURES advisors from Labour Agencies of Neubrandenburg, Straslund and Pasewalk. The consultation service was well-accepted by Polish job-seekers. In May 2011 there were about 60 consultations performed per day, at present there are about 20 daily. Also the discussed issues have changed; there are more questions on legal and social issues nowadays.

At EURES websites of Szczecin Employment Office in December 2012, there were approximately 70 jobs offered by German employers, mostly with fixed-term employment status and related to the vocational professions as electric and mechanic fitters, welders, mechanics, hotel staff, nurses, carpenters, to a lesser extent software computer operators, engineers and physicians.

Both regions are embedded in a dense network of partnerships at different levels and in various social, cultural and economic spheres. A very important element of cross-border cooperation was already established in 1995: the Euro Region Pomerania, a forum composed of partners essentially at municipal level with rural and urban districts from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, West Pomerania Region and Swedish Region of Skåne.

Euro Region Pomerania is an important partner that is closely connected with the implementation of the INTERREG cross-border cooperation programmes.

Some of the most promising projects in the context of fostering cross-border mobility are:

- the establishment of six Service-Advisory Centres in the cities located in the hinterland of West Pomerania (Karlino, Dębno, Koszalin, Myślibórz and Szczecin) also on the German side in Greifswald, Neubrandenburg and Schwedt; the main activities concern promotion of business environment in the Polish-German borderline area in order to strengthen activities of small and medium-sized enterprises, informing about requirements and conditions of conducting own companies and planning to run own businesses, also trainings for prosperous and potential entrepreneurs in the regions, supplemented by cultural and educational issues
- the establishment of two Contact-Advisory Offices, the first of which in Loeknitz (2009) and the second one in Szczecin, set only in 2011, their tasks include information of Polish and German inhabitants about social, tax and working conditions in local Polish and German communities, assistance with finding accommodation, provision of contacts with relevant

authorities, organization of language courses and social and cultural integration matters in cross-border areas.

A unique project “Cleveres Köpfchen” ([www.cleveres-köpfchen.de](http://www.cleveres-köpfchen.de)) which promotes vocational training for Polish school leavers has been running since 2011. Some Polish apprentices could be placed with German employers for vocational training however success rate should still be improved. Especially among Polish employees the project needs to be promoted. Due to a number of information sessions the project is well-known at Polish schools, among teachers and parents. Until now there have been 800 talks, followed by 200 applications leading to 15 signed contracts.

## **9. Main barriers and obstacles regarding the cross-border mobility**

The main barrier for the intensification of cross-border mobility, the development of contacts and a deeper mutual understanding is the inability to speak the German language. Latest studies revealed that only 8% of Poles can speak German on sufficient level. It is easier for Poles speaking German to find jobs and to integrate at work and in local communities; Polish commuters speaking German are better perceived by the employers and co-workers on the German side of the borderland. On the other hand, there is not much demand for Germans taking up Polish language and intercultural communication courses. The University of Greifswald offers the so-called “Polonicum” to students, a two- terms course in Polish language and culture. It provides language skills and knowledge for the later use in successful cooperation with Polish partners in the relevant professional fields. The University of Rostock does not organize such courses because of a lack of interest from German students. Courses for German employees planning to take up jobs in Poland were occasionally organized by adult education centres in Greifswald (2 courses) and in Pasewalk (13 courses).

Another obstacle, however of less importance than the linguistic barrier, results from the fact that many Polish workers do not have a car, so they depend on public transportation – bus and train services- which are insufficiently developed in the borderland, especially in the Uecker-Randow province. Exception is the island of Usedom (Swinoujście-Ahlbeck cross-border), where it works well due to the well-developed net of local public transport service.

While most German clients positively assess the enhanced local service offers due to the existence of Polish companies and shops, especially in the eastern part of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Some German entrepreneurs and representatives of lower social strata, however, fear competition from the Polish activities and protest against the alleged preference of commuters/migrants over local inhabitants by local authorities.<sup>29</sup>

The large scale of transnational emigration in both regions in form of significant outflow waves of Polish workers to other countries of EU-15 and of German workers to the western regions of the country reduce the number of commuters at the cross-border level.

There are also problems regarding the quality of job applications which often do not meet the requirements of the German employers, respectively the German standards. In Poland it happens that qualification and work experience do not match and it is not very common to work in the profession the applicants were trained for. This is an unfamiliar situation for German employers who cannot see continuity in the professional career of Polish workers.

The approval of formal qualification and degrees, especially in skilled and highly qualified professions is also a challenging issue. Qualifications of Polish applicants often match only unskilled jobs in the construction and tourism industry, as well as in agriculture and during the harvest. Better qualified Polish workers used to go to the western regions of Germany or, what is emerging problem, even farther to the United Kingdom or Scandinavia, where the income situation is much better and where there is a higher number of potential employers.

The phenomenon of synchronic labour markets in the eligible regions might be the emerging problem in the borderland. What is missing in terms of work force and its qualifications in one region, it is usually missing and demanded in the other region of the borderland which impedes mutual exchange of labour force.

Main obstacles on cross-border mobility, also pointed out by the interviewed Polish and German experts and entrepreneurs, relate to a lack of information on cross-border activities and job offers, social insurance and medical care, but also on the taxation systems. Existing Polish and German local labour offices/agencies have scarce resources and their activities are limited to matching jobs mostly for the lower skilled workers. Cross-border collaboration among regional labour offices is limited and hampered by the lack of coordinated system solutions and the language barrier.

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<sup>29</sup> A.Łada, J. Seges Frelak, *Vanishing frontier. New Polish migration to Germany-local perspective main conclusions*, Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw 2012.

## **10. Common challenges**

The most important common challenges are embedded in the imbalance of commuter streams, uneven intra-regional development, demographic problems, labour shortages and labour deficits in certain professions and branches, and the emigration of young and qualified employees.

It is claimed that currently structural unemployment comes into play in West Pomerania and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Those who stay unemployed are either not interested in work and they are not able to work or potential employees do not have sufficient qualifications and motivations. This might be one of the reasons for the high level of long-term unemployment (for 12 months and more) both in West Pomerania (6.27 %) and in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (4.66%).

Both regions exhibit internal social and economic uneven development pattern, to a great extent of a similar nature. The western territories of the regions such as Bad Doberan or Ludwiglust and Güstrow in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Szczecin and Swinoujście with adjacent areas in case of West Pomerania Region record less unemployment and a higher income per inhabitant than the eastern German territories (mainly Pomeranian territories) close to the Polish border and the eastern area of West Pomerania Region. The second divide occurs between the urban areas of the borderland like Rostock, Schwerin, Neubrandenburg, Greifswald, Stralsund, Wismar in Germany and Szczecin, Koszalin and Świnoujście in Poland and the sparsely populated rural areas. The third divide runs between the coastal territories, where most social and economic activities take place, and the hinterland that is again mainly rural. It seems that young people, older-aged employees, low-skilled workers, residents of rural areas have been affected most by the recent economic downturn and the subsequent negative developments on the labour markets of these regions.

Both regions are subject of an ageing population and pressures on pension schemes, with a higher than nationwide rate of unemployment, a large scale of labour emigration, shortages of skilled labour supply as well as the risk of poverty and social exclusion of lower skilled and unemployed workers. In the medium to long term and along with economic recovery also

de-population trends in both regions, the problem of decreasing labour supply might remain the most important bottlenecks of the economic growth and labour markets development<sup>30</sup>. West Pomerania and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern suffer from high emigration of younger, mostly well-educated and qualified workers. Danger of selective youth and brain drain might generate problems in both regions. Most entrepreneurial and skilled workers are likely to move first, the ones with substantial human capital. This may result in a depleted labour market where the best workers have left and where it is uncertain if and when they return to their region of origin. As a result, social capital erosion may arise in the commuter's home communities, for example in terms of social networks, public facilities and social services. Unbalanced streams of labour force may strengthen the region of destination but weaken the region of origin. These aspects reveal that cross-border mobility, especially long-term, has an impact on both the destination and region of origin. This challenge is not only of an economic nature but also involves social, cultural and community issues<sup>31</sup>.

## **11. Findings and recommendations for the future actions and tools**

Having in mind outlined disparities and similarities among relevant regions, the potentials for activating workforce mobility between regions are in the labour intensive industries, such as hotels and restaurants, accommodation and food services as well as other supporting services, agricultural activities which involve both, the primary processing stages of agricultural products and food manufacturing industry, construction industry, computer and telecommunications services, information and technology sector, services to tourism such as recreational, cultural and sporting activities, travel agencies, transport, the hospitality industry, the healthcare sector (medical treatment and nursing) and the social care sector, personal service to elderly people included.

Wage differentials and employment opportunities are the key factors inducing cross-border commuting of Poles to Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The most important branches offering gainful (with the most disparities between feasible level of wages) employment for Polish commuters are the construction industry, followed by hotels and restaurants. Branches of

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<sup>30</sup> Labour markets in the Baltic Sea Region; Comparative study on the economic situation and labour market situation, Recent developments, Wilke, Maack and Partner, November 2011.

<sup>31</sup> P.Ester, H.Krieger, Comparing labour mobility in Europe and the US; facts and pitfalls, *Over-werk Tijdschrift van het steunpunt WSE*, no 3-4, 2008.

health and social work (especially in the area of nursing, elderly people care and medical care) as well as agriculture are of great relevance as commuting branches. Manufacturing, commerce and transport complete the list of possible working places for Polish commuters in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In the forthcoming years, one occupational group seems the most attractive seen from the German employers' perspective: people in healthcare and geriatric care and social care workers. The demand for technical workers and engineers, including those related to the construction sector, may continue to remain relatively high<sup>32</sup>. (see chapter 9, page 25 f.) Particular attention should be paid to designing programmes for systematic actions to develop language skills of commuters supplemented by providing knowledge about the culture of the environment in which these people start work. On the other hand, similar actions bringing the Polish culture and language closer should be addressed to German inhabitants of local communities.

Establishing a professional cross-border partnership based on EURES network through the developing existing informal partnership Odra-Oder and linking it to a network with other labour offices in West Pomerania and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern regions (initiated recently by setting collaboration between Labour Agency in Pasewalk and Labour Office in Szczecin as an example of the right action towards materializing the proposal), this is a main recommendation for fostering work force mobility within Polish-German borderland.

A concept of setting up a net of competence centres in the cross-border area (initiated recently by setting number of Service-Advisory Centres and Help Desks in the borderland) should be developed, which will not only provide advice and guidance on job opportunities in the borderland, but will also serve as an information facility for potential employers and assistance body in recruiting employees. Centres in the network should have the capacity and mandate to provide comprehensive and official information on social security, employment legislation and tax issues both in Polish and German border regions, and they should be able to organize vocational trainings and language courses.

Promoting and supporting Polish investments in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and German investments in West Pomerania Region do not only create jobs in both, the donor and the destination regions but also induce weekly/monthly cross-border mobility mostly of highly skilled workers with significant added value.

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<sup>32</sup> P. Strzelecki, R. Wyszynski, Potential implications of labour market opening in Germany and Austria on emigration from Poland, MPRA paper no 32586, April 2011

Assessing the effects of mobility on the home country and home communities of commuters should be the subject of a systematic and coherent mobility research program. Research should be carried out on the short and long-term social, economic and cultural effects of border commuting on both donor and destination regions.

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