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CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION? A CASE STUDY OF POLISH MIGRANT WOMEN MOVING BETWEEN POLAND AND THE UK

ABSTRACT

Migration from the new European Union (EU) Member States to the United Kingdom (UK) has been identified as one of the most significant social phenomena of recent times and Accession 8 (A8) migration to the UK has been studied extensively particularly since 2004. Even though gendered studies of migration are now attaining recognition, there is limited literature in relation to Polish migrant women. What is more, there is now much evidence to support the view that migrant women constitute a large proportion of international migrants. In fact, when considering migration within the European context, migrant women now outnumber their male counterparts.

Drawing on a review of secondary literature and preliminary findings from new fieldwork research undertaken in Poland and the UK in 2012, this paper explores how Polish migrant women exercise their rights as EU citizens to better their own and their families' wellbeing. As the consequence of their newly acquired rights as EU citizens, Polish migrant women appear to be active agents who make use of the resources and opportunities that migration offers. It is concluded that migration within the EU presents positive opportunities for Polish migrant women to actively engage with and exercise national and EU citizenship rights.

Key words:

citizenship, EU, migrant women, Poland, UK, welfare

1. Theoretical background

The notion of citizenship is a much disputed concept which still can, despite its ancient roots, generate much political controversy¹. The concept of citizenship is also contextualised and its definition and understanding varies depending on the historical, social, political, and cultural context. Given that the term citizenship is used in various different contexts, a unanimously accepted definition is perhaps impossible. However, many commentators emphasise the conceptual differences between citizenship as a “status” and citizenship as a “practice”². The former highlights the legal status which carries with it civil, political, and social rights that citizens are able to enjoy. The latter implies not only rights but also duties that are a necessary prerequisite for enjoyment of one’s citizenship rights. This citizenship status versus citizenship practice debate has its roots in two different traditions of thought: liberalism and civic republicanism/communitarianism. Civic republican tradition sees citizenship as obligation. It has its roots in the ancient Greece where political participation was considered civic duty of citizens as political beings. The notion of citizenship originates in the ancient city states of Athens and Sparta and the period between the 6th and the 4th centuries BC³. At the time of Aristotle, citizens were characterised by their readiness to actively engage with public duties within the polis, the city⁴. Liberalism stresses the importance of the individual and his⁵ rights and therefore may be linked to citizenship as a status. Here, more emphasis is put on the rights, thus citizenship is viewed as an entitlement. This rights approach emerged in the 17th century with civil and political rights as “the means by which the limited state guarantees the freedom and formal equality of the individual who is sovereign”⁶. Civic republicanism/communitarianism points to the obligations to the wider community by active participation; hence it can be linked to citizenship as a practice. The latter tradition regards an individual rational human being as a natural condition in passive possession of certain rights tied to their status as a member of some kind of community whilst civic republicanism and communitarianism tradition puts more emphasis on the significance of commu-

¹ R. Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*, New York 2003.

² P. Dwyer, *Welfare Rights and Responsibilities: Contesting Social Citizenship*, Bristol 2000.

³ P. Dwyer, *Understanding Social Citizenship. Themes and Perspectives for Policy and Practice*, Bristol 2010.

⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, Oxford 1948.

⁵ Women were not considered citizens at the time (nor were all men of course – only free men).

⁶ R. Lister, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

nity and duties shared by its members. Here, loyalty to other members is of great importance.

In fact, the discussion around whether citizenship as a form of membership is primarily concerned with the rights it ensures or the obligations it expects fulfilled and the nature and balance between both elements have become increasingly salient. It can be argued that the concept of citizenship can provide a point of reference against which people's status may be compared and assessed. This opens up the discussion of inclusion and exclusion as membership of a certain community suggests that some are its members, and thus are included, while others must be excluded in order for such a concept to hold value (e.g. the EU: the EU Member States' nationals – included; third country nationals – excluded). Citizenship is inextricably linked to notions of rights and responsibilities which depend on the extent of the citizen's involvement with society in any of the following capacities: civil, political, economic, and/or social⁷.

For the purpose of this paper, citizenship shall be loosely defined as follows: "citizenship refers to an individual's status as a full member of a particular political community"⁸. For comparison, other definitions⁹ emphasise three different features of citizenship. The first claims that citizenship connects the state with the individual. The second highlights the fact that citizenship involves membership of some kind of community. The third refers to citizenship as a social status that enables individuals to make claims in regard to state-organised welfare services. Arguably, all three claims are applicable when considering the EU, all one has to do, is replace the word "the state" with "a community". Although citizenship traditionally has been linked to membership of a nation state, the EU challenges this to some extent.

This paper aims to shed some light on the concept of gendered citizenship by looking at Polish migrant women's experiences as they move between two countries: Poland and the UK. The following section provides historical background to the European Union and the EU citizenship. Then Poland as part of the "new" Europe is discussed. After that the idea of active European citizens is explained in relation to recent Polish migrants to the UK. The section that follows provides an account of the methods used for data collection. The paper is then concluded with discussion of the initial findings that emerge from early analysis.

⁷ L. Ackers, H. Stalford, *A Community for Children? Children, Citizenship and Internal Migration in the EU*, Hampshire 2004.

⁸ U. Vogel, *Is Citizenship Gender-Specific?* [in:] *The Frontiers of Citizenship*, U. Vogel, M. Moran (eds.), London 1991, p. 62.

⁹ G. Lewis, *Citizenship* [in:] *Imagining Welfare Futures*, G. Hughes (ed.), Oxon 1998, p. 104.

2. EU citizenship – historical background

The substantial growth of the European Union (EU) which at present incorporates 28 countries (with a total population of over 500 million people) challenges the idea of citizenship as attached to one independent state. Citizenship based on belonging to a certain nation state on which traditional debates are based may no longer be relevant to the contemporary world which is characterised by increasing interconnectedness between different nations. The processes of globalisation are highly visible and the existence of supranational institutions questions the validity of national citizenship¹⁰. The European Union and its relatively recent enlargement is particularly relevant to this research. When the so-called Accession 8 (A8) countries were admitted to the EU, many migrants from those Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries exercised their newly acquired rights to free movement and migrated to the United Kingdom.

Arguably, from the beginning of the EU in 1957 (which was then named the European Economic Community) we have been observing its gradual enlargement when it comes to its territories and its role as the safeguard of its members' rights. As the EU was primarily concerned with free movement of workers and economic and trade ties, it aimed to protect their rights to live and work in any of the EU countries. Therefore, Member States approved certain social security provisions for migrant workers which mainly dealt with employment and economic policy. Throughout the years, EU social policy continued to be established and protected by the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers (1989), the Maastricht Treaty (1992) and the Lisbon Agenda (2000), to name just a few¹¹.

When the status of citizenship is considered, it is presumed that many would link it to a nation state that offers and ensures the rights attached to being a citizen. As demonstrated earlier, the notion of citizenship evidently points to the concepts of inclusion and exclusion. Those two are central to citizenship as they ensure that the citizenship status, which is often seen as prestigious, is given to the "right" ("deserving") people. It can, however, be asserted that the citizenship of a nation state is in crisis. This is mainly the result of the European community gradually growing in strength. As the European Union expands further to incorporate more countries¹², its influence and power grow. Moreover, the EU puts in place various policies (e.g. the Maastricht Treaty which sets out the EU citizens' rights) to protect

¹⁰ A. Geddes, *Immigration and European Integration. Beyond Fortress Europe?*, Manchester 2008.

¹¹ P. Dwyer, *Understanding Social Citizenship...*, op.cit.

¹² Croatia joined the European Union on the 1st July 2013.

its members' rights. Those members are predominantly seen as workers since the EU's primary aim has been stimulating the economic growth of the European community by free movement of migrant workers. Therefore, it seems as though the EU plays a similar role to a nation state in the sense that it protects its members' rights and it is clear who is included and who is excluded from the benefits of being a citizen¹³. It is also evident that the existence of such supranational bodies as the EU makes national citizenship problematic¹⁴.

3. The new Europe

On the 1st May 2004 ten new countries joined the EU. Among those were: The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Malta. The first eight of those countries are referred to as the Accession 8 (A8, they are also referred to as EU8) countries¹⁵. In 2004 the UK was one of only three countries¹⁶ to open its labour market to the A8 nationals. The UK, as opposed to the other Member States, fully opened its labour market to the new A8 which was based on the need for workers rather than altruism. Besides, the predictions were that only a small number of migrant workers would arrive in the UK; however, the actual numbers were greatly beyond statisticians' predictions¹⁷.

The presence of supranational bodies and particularly the EU expansion in 2004 is pertinent to this research. As the new states from Central and Eastern Europe joined the EU, many of their nationals almost immediately decided to exercise their newly won rights to free movement which resulted in large numbers of people moving to the UK. As mobile citizens many migrants thought they could improve their lives and remit money home as a result of wage disparities and relatively low unemployment rate in the UK. This phenomenon was then named one of the most significant social phenomena of current times¹⁸. Arguably, it is the EU

¹³ S. Currie, *Migration, Work and Citizenship in the Enlarged European Union*, Surrey 2008.

¹⁴ L. Morris, *Legitimate Membership of the Welfare Community* [in:] *Welfare: Needs, Rights and Risks*, M. Langan (ed.), London 1998.

¹⁵ The other two: Cyprus and Malta are beyond the focus of this research project; however, there were no restrictions imposed on the nationals of those countries.

¹⁶ The other two were Ireland and Sweden; both permitted immediate and unrestricted free movement of labour from the EU8.

¹⁷ S. Currie, *op.cit.*

¹⁸ N. Pollard, M. Latorre, D. Sriskandarajah, *Floodgates or Turnstiles? Post-EU Enlargement Migration Flows to (and from) the UK*, London 2008.

membership that enabled people to migrate, therefore in this particular case it is not citizenship of the nation state but EU citizenship associated with an enlarged EU that mattered.

In the run-up to the signing of the Treaty of Accession in 2003, there were many debates around granting the right to free movement of persons to the “less-privileged” EU citizens; that is the new EU8. The original Member States (i.e. EU15) feared the consequences this may have on their economies and the general wellbeing of their citizens. They feared increased immigration from the poorer new Member States, which could potentially impact on the wages and un/employment rate of their nationals. Therefore, transitional arrangements were agreed as a compromise and resulted in the denial of full access to the EU law for Central and Eastern European nationals (EU8/A8 and EU2/A2¹⁹). The UK, for example, by opening up its labour market post 2004 enlargement may appear to have acted altruistically, but it did so in order to fill job positions that were proving unpopular with the national workforce²⁰.

The temporary mobility restrictions were imposed to safeguard the original Member States’ economies but could be in place for a maximum of seven years after the accession of the new Member States. With regard to the EU8, these restrictions were lifted on the 1st May 2011. The EU15 were not allowed to monitor migration from the new Member States, but they were entitled to determine the conditions which the EU8 had to fulfil in order to access employment. However, those migrants from the new Member States who did find employment had the right to be treated equally with nationals in regard to the work conditions, access to housing, and social and tax advantages. The restrictions were addressed predominantly to workers, migrant workers to be precise, and a distinction was made between workers and self-employed persons. The latter category is excluded from the restrictions imposed on workers. What is more, those who lived and worked in the EU15 countries prior to the 2004 EU enlargement were not subjected to the transitional provisions, given that they did so for a continuous period of 12 months²¹.

In regard to the national implementation of transitional restrictions, there were considerable differences between the EU15 states as the decisions were made independently by each Member State whether and what restrictions to implement. The UK opted for labour market access given that migrants registered on the Work-

¹⁹ EU2 or A2 refers to Bulgaria and Romania which joined the EU on the 1st January 2007, but is outside the scope of this research.

²⁰ S. Currie, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

er Registration Scheme (WRS)²². This type of restriction may be seen as reasonable, but it is in fact misleading. The UK did not allow the EU8 workers full access to the rights and benefits of migrant workers, instead the authorities decided to take advantage of the national insurance and tax contributions of the EU8 workers giving them no welfare entitlements in return²³. This could be seen as problematic, especially since many of the EU8 workers were and often still are incorporated in the so-called “3D jobs” – dirty, dull and dangerous²⁴.

4. Active European citizens

In the last two decades, the essence of diversity in the UK has changed considerably. We have observed a rise in net immigration with a greater variety of countries of origin. There have been new immigration laws designed (e.g. Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009). There was also a rapid increase of different immigration statuses and migration channels which indicates “diversification of diversity”²⁵. The UK remained an attractive destination for migrants for most of this time due to relatively low unemployment, labour shortages, and generally high economic performance, especially when compared to Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, there have been increasing inequalities in the developing world, growing multilingualism, religious diversity, and a vast variety of different categories of immigrants (i.e. migrant workers, international students, asylum seekers, etc.). The type of migratory movement determines immigrants’ legal status and what comes with it, their eligibility to make use of public services which then impacts on their likelihood to stay or re-emigrate. Those processes signal, what Vertovec²⁶ named – superdiversity. Moreover, the “migration-asylum nexus” suggests that it is currently difficult to differentiate between migrants and asylum seekers²⁷. However,

²² Among the restrictions the UK imposed on the A8 nationals in 2004 was registration under the government Worker Registration Scheme and the requirement to complete twelve months of continuous employment before being eligible to access certain welfare rights.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ A. Favell, *The New Face of East-West Migration in Europe*, “Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies” 2008, No. 34, p. 704.

²⁵ S. Vertovec, *Superdiversity and Its Implications*, “Ethnic and Racial Studies” 2007, No. 30, p. 1025.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ S. Castles, N. Van Hear, *Developing DfID’s Policy Approach to Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*, COMPAS, <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/publications/reports-and-other-publications/dfid-approach-to-refugees/> [Access date: 08.08.13].

this concept could also be applied to the fluidity between immigrants and citizens, particularly in Britain. The fact that the national citizenship status is often accompanied by the European Union membership makes the concept of citizenship increasingly tricky.

It has recently been highlighted that A8 migration is linked to “the proactive and defensive engagement of social citizenship”²⁸. This refers to A8 migrants as active agents when it comes to seeking ways of minimising costs and energy. It can be asserted that they perfected the way they combine the two ways of engaging with their national and transnational rights and responsibilities that are linked to their national and EU citizenship status (e.g. Polish and EU citizenship). Therefore, we can observe many of the recent migrants travelling to their country of origin to access certain services (e.g. a dentist, undergo prenatal tests, etc.) and/or purchase goods (e.g. cigarettes, alcohol, meats, etc.) that are less costly or they perceive them to be of better quality than in their country of residence. This is how they demonstrate their proactive engagement with the opportunities they were granted when the eight Eastern Bloc countries joined the EU in May 2004.

At the same time, A8 migrants’ engagement with members of local host communities is often minimal. The established communities seem to share this feeling and are mutually wary in regard to the new arrivals. It has been suggested to name this phenomenon “defensive engagement”²⁹ as the host country nationals often view migrant workers as competitors for scarce resources, jobs and housing in particular. This may be true, particularly in the current economic climate. Moreover, A8 nationals in the UK are known for their tendency of “ghettoisation”³⁰. This refers to many A8 migrant workers living in one specific area which has previously experienced A8 workers’ inflows. They mostly visit their local shops that sell products from their home countries and interact among each other almost exclusively. This translates to minimising their contact with the native population and/or other existing communities and engaging with them only when it is unavoidable.

Furthermore, “the concept of citizenship implies a notion of equality in that citizens are said to share a common status in respect to the rights and duties that they hold”³¹. This poses the question of a possibility of citizens of the world (or Europe perhaps), who decided to make the UK their home, being equal in terms of their rights and responsibilities. Among those, there are the eight new accession

²⁸ J. Cook, P. Dwyer, L. Waite, *Accession 8 Migration and the Proactive and Defensive Engagement of Social Citizenship*, “Journal of Social Policy” 2012, No. 41, p. 329.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 338.

³⁰ L. Hunt, A. Steele, J. Condie, *Migrant Workers in Rochdale and Oldham*, Salford 2008.

³¹ P. Dwyer, *Understanding Social Citizenship...*, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

countries (A8). It can be argued that the EU citizenship is based on the A8 nationals' attachment to their nation states. The two are intertwined and closely linked to each other. Hence, "the precise nature of the social rights on offer to a Community migrant will therefore depend upon the country of immigration"³². Polish nationals, as citizens of the Republic of Poland, are in consequence citizens of the EU. Polish nationality comes first though, given that a Polish national would not be a citizen of the EU if s/he had not first been born in Poland. Arguably, the EU citizenship is complementary to national citizenship³³.

5. Active migrant women citizens?

It has been widely accepted that migration is gendered³⁴. Although women play a crucial role in contemporary migrations, previously they have been "sociologically invisible, although numerically and socially present"³⁵ and the presence of women has been finally acknowledged when they entered waged labour market. For many women, the change from unpaid work in the home to paid work in the labour market came about through migration. The contrast between women's migrations in the 19th and 21st centuries lies in the reasoning of their travels and the way it is recorded; "in fact, gender (i.e. perceived roles, responsibilities and obligations – or the lack thereof) may be the single most important factor influencing the decision to migrate"³⁶.

Whilst gender is one of the most significant characteristics of human world and has a major impact on people's lives, it has been regularly sidelined from scholarly research³⁷. Nonetheless, we can now observe a "feminisation of migration"³⁸. There is currently much evidence to support the view that migrant women constitute

³² L. Ackers, *Shifting Spaces. Women, citizenship and migration within the European Union*, Bristol 1998, p. 4.

³³ G. Lewis, op.cit.

³⁴ E. Kofman, *Gendered Global Migrations: Diversity and Stratification*, "International Feminist Journal of Politics" 2004, No. 6.

³⁵ M. Morokvasic, *Women in Migration: Beyond the Reductionist Outlook* [in:] *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour*, A. Phizacklea (ed.), London 1983, p. 13.

³⁶ L.B. Engle, *The World in Motion. Short Essays on Migration and Gender*, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Switzerland 2004, p. 6.

³⁷ R. Pessar, S.J. Mahler, *Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender in*, "International Migration Review" 2003, No. 37.

³⁸ S. Castes, M. Miller, *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Basingstoke 2009.

a large proportion of international migrants who have entered the UK. In fact, when considering migration within the European context, migrant women already outnumber their male counterparts³⁹. In terms of A8 migrants' arrivals to the UK, the WRS statistics show that the male/female ratio was 50:50 at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. Even though this highlights an even split, it is assumed that there is a proportion of women who did not register as they were stay-at-home mothers and full-time homemakers⁴⁰. Arguably, women are likely to be under-represented in the WRS figures.

In order to begin to understand women's experiences as citizens, a consideration of interrelated dependencies and interdependencies is required. Many feminists argue that the public-private dichotomy is the primary cause of women's limited access to the full and equal citizenship status⁴¹. Traditionally and stereotypically, women were assigned a place in the private sphere and therefore it is difficult for them to be active in the public arena on an equal basis with men. Certain social citizenship rights are dependent on women being in full-time employment (e.g. pensions), which is difficult to achieve if they have caring responsibilities in the home. The value assigned to women's caring responsibilities makes them unable to exercise full citizenship status. It has been suggested that informal, familial care should be incorporated into citizenship and both men and women should be given the opportunity to combine paid work and familial caring.

6. Methods

This paper presents preliminary analysis in regard to the impact of the migratory process on the gendered lives of migrant women. It draws on recently completed fieldwork (Oct 2012–Feb 2013) conducted with 32 Polish migrant women resident in both Poland and England. In this article, the researcher would like to present preliminary findings in regard to the impact of the migratory process on gendered lives of migrant women. This qualitative study focuses on gendered experiences of Polish migrant women in regard to work (paid versus unpaid) and welfare (formal versus informal). Migration has, for a long time, been androcentric, with women

³⁹ H. Zlotnik, *The Global Dimensions of Female Migration*, Migration Information Source, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=109> [Access date: 09.11.11].

⁴⁰ *Accession Monitoring: Report May 2004–March 2009*, United Kingdom Border Agency (UK-BA), http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100422120657/http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/reports/accession_monitoring_report/ [Access date: 19.08.13].

⁴¹ Cf. R. Lister, *op.cit.*

essentially being invisible; hence this approach is suitable for examining gender roles and migrant women⁴². It is noteworthy that feminist researchers for instance, argue that research should be based on women's experiences and that "the cultural background of the researcher is part of the evidence"⁴³. This is significant as the researcher is also a Polish migrant woman who, in 2008, decided to move to the UK. The project is underpinned by the view that knowledge in social sciences has a male bias and balance is needed⁴⁴.

Qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews were the chosen research tools. Each interview, on average, lasted 45 minutes. The sample consisted of two groups of Polish migrant women: migrants who at the time of the interview were based in the UK (16 interviews); and returnees⁴⁵ who were based in Poland as they migrated to the UK post-2004, but have subsequently relocated back to Poland (16 interviews). First, interviews with Polish migrant women in the North West of England were conducted. This part of England was chosen as the area with the second highest population density in England⁴⁶. What is more, this area was selected due to the established links with the migrant community. This was followed by interviews in Poland with returnees. The empirical research focused on the migratory movements of women moving between Poland and the UK and the way in which these movements may shape their perception of gendered responsibilities.

Strategic purposive sampling was adopted⁴⁷. Snowballing was also used to identify suitable individuals who fit the selection criteria⁴⁸. Snowball sampling was found particularly useful for accessing participants based in Poland. The sample included individuals aged between 20 and 57 years of age and have been (in case of migrants) or were (return migrants) in the UK for a period of between six months and nine years.

⁴² M. Morokvasic, 'Settled in Mobility': Engendering Post-Wall Migration in Europe, "Feminist Review" 2004, No. 77.

⁴³ N. Blaikie, *Approaches to Social Enquiry*, Cambridge 2007, p. 166.

⁴⁴ J. Finch, *Feminist Research and Social Policy* [in:] *Women's Issues in Social Policy*, M. Maclean, D. Groves (eds.), London 1991.

⁴⁵ In this paper return migrants are not dealt with separately.

⁴⁶ *Regional Profiles – Population and Migration – North West*, Office for National Statistics (ONS), <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/regional-trends/region-and-country-profiles/population-and-migration/population-and-migration--north-west.html> [Access date: 25.07.12].

⁴⁷ J. Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, London 2002.

⁴⁸ J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, G. Elam, *Designing and Selecting Samples* [in:] *Qualitative Research Practice*, J. Ritchie, J. Lewis (eds.), London 2003.

Thematic analysis of the data generated in the fieldwork is currently being conducted. This type of analysis is particularly well suited as it is an interpretive process. It can be asserted that it is the most accessible type of analysis, therefore especially useful for early career researchers⁴⁹.

7. Reporting preliminary findings

The presence of supranational bodies and particularly the EU expansion in 2004 is relevant to this research. As the new states from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) joined the EU, some of their nationals practically immediately decided to exercise their newly won rights to free movement which resulted in what was often reported as masses of people moving to the UK. It is the membership of the EU that enabled this, therefore in this particular case, it is not the citizenship of the nation state, but the citizenship associated with the enlarged Europe that mattered.

It can be argued that Polish migrants exercising their newly acquired rights to free movement act as active EU citizens⁵⁰. Many of them, by moving between Poland and the UK ensure their own and their families' wellbeing. Their mobility patterns are often circular, which may prove to be even more beneficial to the migrants. They actively engage with the opportunities that lie before them and take advantage of what has been offered. They make use of the resources available in both countries. Polish migrants moving between the UK and Poland could be seen as active agents making the most of their newly-granted EU citizenship. The quotations below illustrate this process by showing how complex migrants' thinking about their prospects for the future proved to be. Maja (29, Poland-based):

When I finish university and I can find [work], (...) if I am able to find a job and my husband also comes back [still in the UK] and finds work and it's good enough for us to be able to live here, then we would definitely stay in Poland 100%, but if it turned out that it'd be difficult, because you know, here, there are no opportunities and, what's more, moving to a city costs so much that I don't know if we'd manage, but we'll see, so if everything works out then we'll stay and if not, then we'll probably go back [to the UK].

⁴⁹ V. Braun, V. Clarke, *Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology*, "Qualitative Research in Psychology" 2006, No. 3.

⁵⁰ Cf. J. Cook, P. Dwyer, L. Waite, *op.cit.*

It is clear that the migrants rationalise their decisions, actively engage with the options they have and choose the one that suits them best. They consider a variety of factors that may have an impact and “pick and mix” on the basis of what they know about the places in question. It is noteworthy that this activity can be most effectively undertaken by those who have previously migrated and lived in both countries. The longer they spent in the UK, the better informed they have become about the available opportunities. Only then they are equipped with the necessary knowledge to make their choices and “pick and mix” between the two countries. It is intentional that the reference is made to the popular type of sweets, the “pick and mix” (pick ‘n’ mix), which is widely available across the UK, especially in cinemas. Arguably, it is a particularly useful term when applied to the Polish migrants in the UK. By using this term, it can be highlighted that just like in cinemas where a person is offered a wide variety of different sweets that can probably satisfy every taste, s/he picks those s/he is interested in and pays for what s/he managed to “mix” together. Similarly, a migrant is faced with a wide variety of choices that lie before him/her. It has, for instance, been previously stressed that Polish migrants frequently decide to go back to Poland to receive a dentist treatment. By making this decision, they choose their “mix”, they “pick” the things they favor in the host country and “mix” that with what they appreciate in the home country. It is noteworthy that similar findings have previously been reported in regard to older EU migrants and health care⁵¹ and how they use public and private systems and their EU and national citizenship to sort out their “best deal” over time and space. Maja (29, Poland based):

Even today when I go to the UK to make some money, I go to places like Primark⁵² and I normally stock up on basic things that I need, I dunno, like knickers, tights, socks or some T-shirts (...), I’ll go from Poland and shop in the UK, my sister often came to stay with me and brought money from Poland, she paid it into our account and we’d take it out for her so she didn’t lose money on the exchange rate, and she’d also go shopping in the UK for her child because everything was better value for her. Here [Poland], a stupid pair of children’s tights costs 20PLN. There [in the UK] for 20PLN, well for £4 really, Jesus, for £1 over there you could maybe [buy] two pairs of tights so how many can you get for £4?

⁵¹ P. Dwyer, *Understanding Social Citizenship...*, op.cit.

⁵² A low-cost clothes shop.

Maja's "pick and mix" involves living (with her young son) and studying in Poland, occasionally making some extra money in the UK, whilst her husband continues to live and work in the UK. As she explained, she wanted to re-qualify and studies in Poland seemed more logical as her mother could look after the child while she was at the university. At the same time her husband has a permanent, well paid job in the UK. Maja clarified that they would struggle financially if he quit his job in the UK and found another in Poland, as one Polish wage would not be sufficient. For Polish nationals it was more beneficial to migrate and work in the UK in 2004, when one pound sterling was valued at 7PLN, in comparison to 4PLN in 2008⁵³. Wage differentials between Poland and England remain and can be seen as direct advantages of migration that basically came about via the EU citizenship. This, however, could reflect the fact that Maja became accustomed to a higher standard of living which she was able to attain in the UK or that "individuals strategically choose to secure the best deal for themselves"⁵⁴. Marta (28, UK based):

I didn't get unemployment benefit [in Poland], as justification they wrote to me saying that when I was in the UK, I didn't send money to Poland, and that's true, my parents don't need my money and I kept the money for myself. They wrote – 'my affairs were not in Poland but in the UK' because I didn't come back to Poland when I was there and so I thought sarcastically, did they want me to fly back every weekend because I missed my mum's pierogi [stuffed dumplings], come on. So basically it was complete rubbish because I thought about coming back to Poland with my partner and when we were in the UK we bought a flat in Poland. We didn't think about whether to spend the savings we were able to put together over the years we were in the UK on a flat here or a holiday abroad or on Prada shoes, and our hard-earned money was put aside for a mortgage and a deposit on a flat in Poland; so my affairs were of course in this country [Poland], but well it was taken away from me, they took away any opportunity for me to get any kind of support while I was looking for work, even though I came back alone and with a child and if it weren't for my parents I wouldn't have anything to eat, that was my welcome home from the state.

Marta's example is particularly interesting. Having lived in the UK for a considerable amount of time and given birth to her first child, Marta and her partner

⁵³ Index Mundi, Złoty to Pound Sterling exchange rate. <http://www.indexmundi.com/xrates/graph.aspx?c1=PLN&c2=GBP&days=2826&lastday=20080929> [Access date: 07.05.12].

⁵⁴ P. Dwyer, *Understanding Social Citizenship*..., op.cit., p. 325.

decided to relocate back to Poland to be able to raise their son in a more familiar cultural setting with extended family close-by. A few years back they bought a flat in Poland which was being rented. Unfortunately, they were far from being positively surprised. They could not get along with Marta's family. Perhaps more importantly, Marta was refused any financial assistance from the Polish authorities (she applied for the British equivalent of Jobseeker's Allowance – *zasiłek dla bezrobotnych*), even though she is technically a single mother, as she explained, with a young child and wanted to go back and settle in her home country. As a result, they were considerably worse off financially and decided to return back to the UK. Marta (28, UK based):

If you compare the income from a basic job and your basic expenditure, for a basic flat, basic food, simply having a basic job doing normal hours, you can afford to live a basic life [in the UK], in Poland, if you have a basic job and do normal hours you can't afford to live a basic life and that's the difference.

Another interviewee, Amelia, appears to be very conscious of the choices she makes. She regularly travels to Poland to spend the summer holiday there where her children can be close to her family and enjoy the countryside. It is evident that Amelia makes informed choices based on the knowledge she acquired while she lived in Poland and compares that to what she has learned in the UK. Arguably, it is a matter of choosing the lesser of two evils, e.g. the healthcare in the UK is seen by her as inadequate when compared to the Polish healthcare, the latter however, is perceived to be expensive (i.e. the private healthcare which seems to be more commonly accessed). She recognises the benefits of the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK, but she is unhappy with the cultural differences regarding antibiotics. Amelia has been living in the UK for a considerable amount of time (8.5 years), although she is still drawn to Poland. After the birth of her two children, Amelia has been less satisfied with her life in the UK which, she explained, is related to the shift from working to looking after the family. It can be asserted that Amelia's caring responsibilities and the assumption they are her duties, impacted on her career development and overall sense of happiness. Amelia (29, UK based):

Well pills for the children, generally medicine, we get everything for free [in the UK], if you have a child aged up to 16 you also get their pills for free and contraception is also free and children's medicine and glasses, braces, that's the only good thing in this country, except I'm not happy with my doctor because you go to the doctor, your child's ears are inflamed and you get paracetamol, and if you were in

Poland you'd definitely get antibiotics right away, and here not so much, and you have to wait a long time for every appointment yeah, but the only good thing is that you don't have to pay for it.

EDM: What about Poland, what is it like in there?

Amelia: I went to Poland on holiday and I had to pay 100PLN to the allergy specialist for my child, I had to pay for a cream that cost 260PLN in one pharmacy, we went to another town and paid 160PLN. Well, in Poland that's very expensive, so if you just go to see the doctor you need at least £200–300 with you, the laryngologist is 100PLN for one child; the gynaecologist is 50PLN for an appointment.

Olga, on the other hand, also acted on the opportunity she was faced with. However, her circumstances are different to others quoted above. Olga is single and is yet to start family; thus, her choices were not informed by the necessity to provide for the family, but rather by her curiosity and willingness to gather new experiences. She also acted as an active agent but chose to move to the UK “just to try it” and was not burdened by her family until fairly recently when she needed to return to Poland as her late grandfather required care. It was assumed and expected of her to voluntarily give up her time in order to provide care as the youngest in the family. Olga, like many other migrants, intended to stay in the UK for a relatively short period of time. On the one hand, she was unsure of her prospects in Poland; on the other hand, she enjoyed her stay in the UK. Perhaps Olga became accustomed to a comfortable life in the UK. Nevertheless, she was needed in Poland to look after her elderly relative. Arguably, migration gives some women the space to reinvent themselves in the new setting and challenge gender roles⁵⁵. However, it is not that simple as Olga felt bound to return. The data confirms previous research⁵⁶ on how women are pulled back due to gendered expectations about them doing the caring. Olga (28, Poland based):

Well, I'm telling you there was an opportunity and I thought ok, I'll improve my English, ... so I looked at the map and we [with friends] thought about where they speak English as we thought it would be easier, but honestly I never thought I'd go abroad and live abroad, but there was the option err, why not try it and it was just to try, it was for two years and I was supposed to go back after two years and do my master's in Poland and so on.

EDM: Why did you come back to Poland then?

⁵⁵ J. Cook, P. Dwyer, L. Waite, op.cit.

⁵⁶ Cf. L. Ackers, *Citizenship, Migration and...*, op.cit.

Olga: well, it was a lot of things, some things piled up and I thought 'ok, let's try it, I haven't burned all the bridges', err I gave myself a year and thought that if during this year I won't like it here [Poland] and I won't sort myself out, then I'm going back [to the UK]... and so well work was one of the reasons [I went back], another err it was that many of my friends were going back... and another reason was that my grandfather was very ill and err my grandma couldn't handle it any more, my parents were working and you could tell that it's grandpa's last year you know. And I got back at the end of January and in October he died, and so this whole thing also mattered.

8. Conclusions

The preliminary findings presented here demonstrate that the respondents often act as active agents choosing as they see fit from the opportunities they were offered post 2004. When Poland joined the EU, this resulted in a broader range of opportunities. In the age of migration⁵⁷ and superdiversity⁵⁸, many chose to take advantage of this situation and decided to move to another country, often a western country perceived by many as superior, wealthier, and more developed. Frequently, this country proved to be the UK as English is widely taught in Polish schools and colleges, which, in theory, should enable relatively easy job search, for instance. Geographical proximity made the move even easier. A number of those who migrated benefited greatly from their move; others came back with nothing or remained in the UK living on the streets as destitute people. What is more, this research shows that women are often greatly intertwined with familial responsibilities which shape their decisions to migrate, return or re-emigrate. Hence, gendered expectations and citizenship rights may not always be compatible because familial care responsibilities may seriously impede women's citizenship status. It is noteworthy that women throughout their lives are often entangled in "three interrelated aspects of dependence: the labour market, male breadwinners, and the state"⁵⁹. Even though they may have perfected the way they proactively engage with their national and transnational rights and responsibilities that are linked to their citizenship status, the ghost of the past – gendered patterns of dependence are still being reproduced today.

⁵⁷ S. Castles, M. Miller, op.cit.

⁵⁸ S. Vertovec, op.cit.

⁵⁹ L. Ackers, *Citizenship, Gender and Dependence in the European Union: Women and Internal Migration*, "Social Politics" 1996, No. 3, p. 318.

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