



## **WP 6 Working Paper, TRANSFAM**

# **Settlement choices in Norway**

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## Abstract

*People with Polish origin constitute not only the largest group of immigrants in Norway, but also the largest group of immigrants in many Norwegian municipalities. This Working Paper shows different patterns of settlement choices of Polish migrants and their families in Norway. On the basis of the analysed material, gathered within the framework of TRANSFAM project, it can be concluded that we are witnessing a process of settlement of Polish migrants in Norway. Regardless of the initial plans, currently they see their future in Norway, not in Poland. Their activities in Norway do not limit to work exclusively, they establish their families there or gather family members, who used to live in Poland.*

# Introduction

The research project TRANSFAM “Doing family in transnational context. Demographic choices, welfare adaptations, school integration and every-day life of Polish families living in Polish-Norwegian transnationality” is a collaboration between Jagiellonian University, Centre for International Relations, Agder Research and Norwegian Social Research NOVA, financed by a Norwegian grant within the Core 2012 Call of the Polish Norwegian Research Cooperation with awards made by the National Centre for Research and Development.

One of the objectives of the TRANSFAM project was to analyse the patterns of settlement of Polish migrants and their families in Norway. Therefore, the main emphasis was put on the choice of Norway as a destination place of settlement. The analysis deliberately included factors that draw Poles to settle in this country (*pull factors*) and omitted factors which are driving them out of Poland (*push factors*).

Official statistics along with the TRANSFAM’s project qualitative and quantitative data were used in WP6 TRANSFAM (see the frame below).

**The WP 2 - Migrant families in Norway/structure of power relations and negotiating values and norms in transnational families** (leader: Dr. Magdalena Ślusarczyk) collected 30 biographical interviews from which 10 interviews (including four with both spouses) were made available for the WP6. They were conducted in winter and spring of 2014 in Oslo and towns not further away from the capital of Norway than two and a half hours by car. In addition, eight interviews with 10 Polish immigrants living in towns and villages belonging to the counties Vest-Agder and Aust-Agder were used for the purposes of the analysis in the WP6. Interviews were conducted in the summer of 2014 as part of **WP3 - Social capital among Polish immigrant families in Norway** (leader: Dr. Eugene Guribye). The online survey, which was conducted in May and June 2015 was filled by 648 people. It was part of the **WP4 - Parenthood in a migrant life course perspective** (leader: Lihong Huang, senior researcher).

## Description of qualitative and quantitative samples

With regards to qualitative material used in this Working Paper, the interviewees have at least six years' experience of their stay in Norway, although the longest stay has taken almost 25 years. In short, the vast majority of interviewees can be labelled as a 'post-EU accession migration' to Norway. Only 6 out of 24 interviewees have arrived to Norway, at least for the first time, with the aim to work or to accompany his/her spouse before May, 2004. Of course, in the time-span the form of their residence has evolved. The change refers to some elements, e.g.: length of periods spent in Poland and Norway, type and status of undertaken jobs (registered, unregistered, temporal or permanent, full-time, part-time, etc.), staying abroad alone or accompanied by family (spouse and children, parents and siblings) and more distant relatives or friends. The interviewees are also diverse with regard to their educational level (achieved in Poland and Norway), previous migration experience (beside Norway), their professional career in both countries, including type of current (during the research) employment, and level of religiosity. Although all of them are Poles, even those living in the same city, town or region are differentiated by the region of origin and circumstances of migration. It is not an exaggeration to say that the sample responds to the idea of 'super-diversity' of contemporary migration (Vertovec 2007).

Regarding web survey, female respondents constitute 60% of the sample. It should be stressed that the gender distribution of respondents does not reflect the one that is observed in population of Poles residing in Norway (more on sex and age structure on page 5). A similar comment can be made on educational level. 47% of respondents have tertiary education, 40% secondary, while in 2014 the percentage of Polish immigrants (16 years and over) with higher education was 31% and secondary – 53% (calculations based on Norway Statistics data). Respondents, who take part in the TRANSFAM web survey in their vast majority arrived to Norway in 2004 or later (585 out of 607 valid answers). It is also remarkable that for one third of respondents (210 out of 648) and for 27% of their partners Norway is not the first country in which they have resided for a period longer than three months. The same experience is shared by some of interviewees (and their partners), who worked earlier in different countries.

# Sex and age structure of Poles residing in Norway

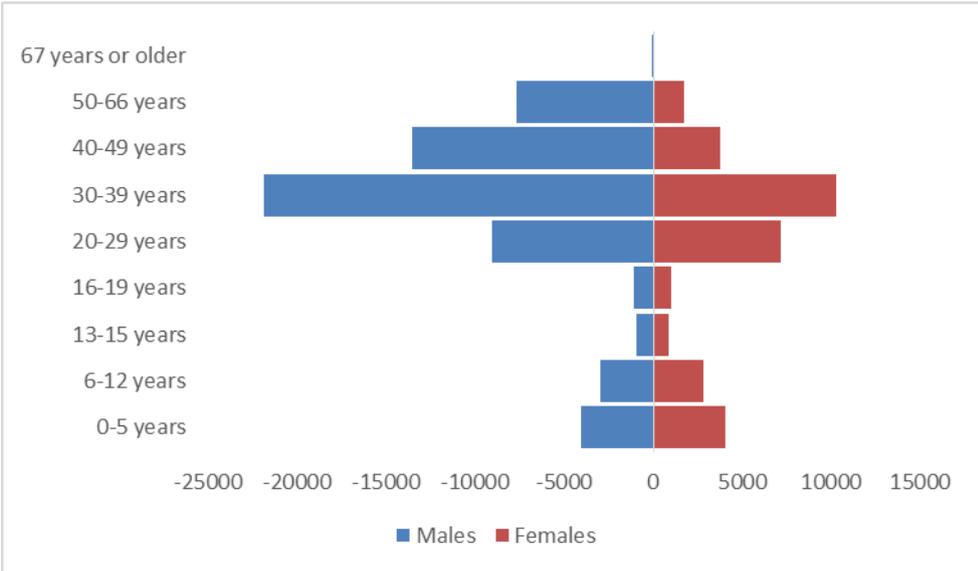
Aside from the total size of a population, the most important characteristic is its sex and age structure. One should note that the proportion of people at each age by sex determines potential for future growth of specific age groups and the total population. As it is shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, males significantly outnumber females among Poles residing in Norway. In 2015 women constituted only 36% of the Polish population in Norway.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1. Polish Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents, by sex**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Males</b>	2718	3711	5 995	11 442	21 583	29 971	33 949	38 792	46 790	53 778	58 883	63 627
<b>Females</b>	4872	5222	5 869	7392	10 486	14 511	18 176	21 818	25 313	28 823	32 296	35 797

Source: Statistics Norway.

**Figure 1. Population pyramid - Polish Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents 2015**



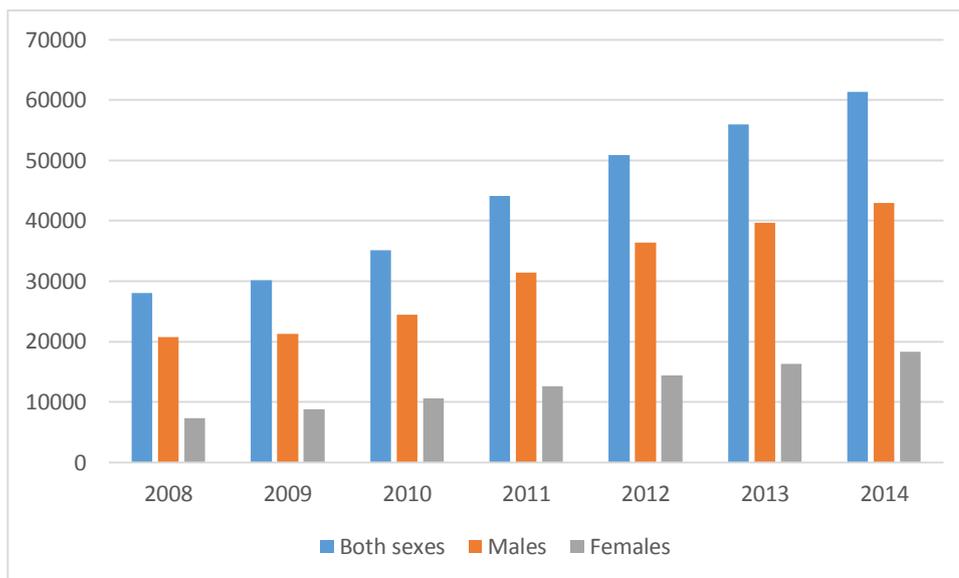
Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Norway data.

Such a structure is partially a result of labour market demand, or more precisely, social and structural changes observed within the Norwegian labour market. Restructuring of labour intensive sectors such as construction, and increasing informalisation and casualisation of labour relations, and their relation to international migration has been elaborated in literature

<sup>1</sup> The lack of balance between sexes is even more evident, when non-resident wage earners are taken into consideration, e.g. in 2014 there were less than four thousand women and almost 31 thousand men. Similar proportions between sexes were observed in previous years.

(e.g. Sassen 2005). Another pull-factor is the boom in the Norwegian economy that has produced demand for labour in construction and manufacturing. This also explains the high share of male migrants. Furthermore, transitional restrictions for labour migrants originating from the new EU member states (valid till 2009), requiring full time work at Norwegian wage in order to obtain residence permit, could discourage women since in female dominated labour sectors these requirements were more difficult to fulfil (Friberg et al. 2012). Nevertheless, even after the restriction phased out and despite the fact that more women are registered as residents, the discrepancy in the gender ratios continues (see Figure 2.). It seems that the labour demand is the best explanation for this situation. Although migrant networks increases accessibility of jobs to Polish women (Friberg 2012a), the need for labourers undertaking the so called ‘male’ jobs is higher. In case of Polish residents in Norway, as well as, non-resident wage earners the same sectors prevail: 1. Construction, electricity, water supply, sewerage, waste management, 2. manufacture and 3. labour recruitment and provision of personnel (Statistics Norway).

**Figure 2. Employed Polish immigrants 15-74 years, by sex**



Source: Own elaboration based on Statistics Norway data.

## Geographical distribution of Poles residing in Norway

It cannot escape one's attention that people with Polish origin constitute not only the largest group of immigrants in Norway, but also the largest group of immigrants in many Norwegian municipalities and they can be found even in distant villages (see Table 2 and 3).

**Table 2. Polish Immigrants and Norwegian-born to Polish, Distribution across Counties 2015**

Counties	Number of Poles
Østfold	6 062
Akershus	14 179
Oslo	15 862
Hedmark	1 952
Oppland	2 298
Buskerud	7 351
Vestfold	4 296
Telemark	2 056
Aust-Agder	2 034
Vest-Agder	2 364
Rogaland	12 559
Hordaland	10 938
Sogn og Fjordane	2 138
Møre og Romsdal	5 606
Sør-Trøndelag	4 135
Nord-Trøndelag	1 372
Nordland	2 009
Troms Romsa	1 455
Finnmark Finnmárku	758

Source: Statistics Norway

**Table 3. Highest number of Polish immigrants and Norwegian-born to Polish parents in 13 Norwegian municipalities, 2015**

Municipality	Number of Poles	Position among immigrants
Oslo	15 862	2
Bergen	6 232	1
Bærum	3 744	1
Stavanger	3 263	1
Sandes	2710	1
Trondheim	2 199	1
Drammen	1 926	2
Asker	1811	1
Sarpsborg	1 316	1
Fredrikstad	1 298	2
Haugesund	1 246	1
Kristiansand	1 156	1
Ålesund	998	1

Source: Statistics Norway

## Settlement Patterns

For the purposes of studying the growth of Polish population in Norway and its settlement choices, *migrant networks* should be mentioned. As migration scholars noted, with the time passing, migration flows develop and the number of potential migrants increases. Migrant networks offer support in finding employment and accommodation, in short, they reduce the economic and psychological costs and risks of international migration (Faist 2000; Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec and Cohen 1999).

The concept of social network, in particular the one in Norway, especially in the context of *place utility* or *location-specific capital*<sup>2</sup> (DaVanzo 1981, Haug 2006) has proven its usefulness. The TRANSFAM project confirmed the role of *migrants' network* in the case of Polish migration to Norway, which was pointed in previous studies (Napierała, Trevena 2010, Friberg et al. 2012). Polish migrants, who had been already working in Norway (both in registered and unregistered way) invited other Poles to join them in order to work together. Polish migrants also actively searched for jobs for their relatives and friends in order to escape their economic hardships in Poland. These labour migrants at certain point brought their relatives (family reunion), siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc. This description suits the framework of the *chain migration*, which is an old concept pointing that migration process is constituted by stages of pioneer migration, labour migration and family migration (MacDonald and Macdonald 1964). It seems that although in some localities Poles are found in higher numbers, they do not constitute segregated communities there and they are rather spread. Location specific social capital plays an important role at least at the initial stage of migration although interviewees do not point presence of other Poles as a factor considered by them when they select particular place of residence. Migrants use their social capital – their relatives and friends living in Norway and their broader Polish network – especially in order to find a flat or a house for rent.

WP6 traced different patterns of settlement choices and spatial experiences of Polish migrants and their families in Norway. Planned settlement migration seems to be rather an exception. However, ‘an accidental settlement’ seems to be quite a popular trajectory. It may be illustrated

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<sup>2</sup> Place utility focuses on the territorial limitation of the utility of resources accessible by individuals. Despite the development of communication channels - as cheap calls, internet, social media – and means of transport, people are still attached to certain territories. Human and social capital is not easily transferred from one place to another destination, therefore location-specific capital is important in the evaluation of a potential place of destination.

by the following typical pattern. One of spouses receives a short-term contract in Norway. Its members prefer to live together so the whole family moves to Norway till the end of a contract. After finalising the contract they move back to Poland. However, in many cases an initial contract turns into a contract extension or a stable employment. So, they move back to Norway, and with the time passing, children are born in Norway and/or they reach a sufficient age to start a preschool or school. A bit similar trajectory is taken by families that have got reunited because separation was a too harsh experience. They have not planned a settlement but as time goes by they continue their stay in Norway and even assist other relatives moving to Norway. This applies to circular migrants, who left their families in Poland while they worked in Norway, but also to those who had planned to come back to Poland to their families after reaching a specific financial aim. Likewise, it applies to individual migrants, who at a certain point got involved in a relationship and established their families in Norway. The choice of a particular locality or an area depends mainly on the employment opportunities. Asked about the concrete localization of place of residence interviewees recalled price, transport options (regarding schools and working place, including public transport or own cars) and airport location (visiting Poland). One can also observe a relationship between family formation and cycle, and mobility within the borders of the city or region.

Interestingly, the pattern drawn after analysing qualitative material shows a tendency to buy one's own property, using a home loan, instead of renting rooms, apartments or houses, as soon as working place starts to be stable and predictable. Some estates require renovation and more distant locations are accepted. In both cases a lower price is decisive. Due to good transport infrastructure (roads, railways) Poles can get to work, school or places for additional children activities by car or by public transport even from detached sites. For some interviewees a house or a flat is the final one, some have already sold it in order to buy one responding to growing family needs, some plan to change it when children finish school.

Reasons for settling in Norway pointed by TRANSFAM interviewees can be listed as follows:

- an opportunity to undertake a gainful employment;
- location-specific capital and social network;
- a predictable life;
- all family members may live together with no need to delegate someone to work abroad;
- in Norway people have time for work and for family.

The above shown reasons are not separate and can overlap each other. What seems to be the key issue for the presence of Poles in Norway is the economic factor. Norway has a sense of security to offer to Polish families, because the salary is adequate to the cost of living. Based on the results of qualitative research it can be stated that in Norway it is easier to achieve a balance between family life and work, which is also a factor which is encouraging to remain in this country. Among the arguments for staying in Norway there is also the conviction of more opportunities for children there than in Poland. There is a similarity between the Polish immigrants in Norway and the UK - similar motives are indicated by Polish parents in the UK (Galasińska, Kozłowska 2009).

Recalling the results of TRANSFAM web survey – respondents were asked about their settlement plans<sup>3</sup>. Half of respondents plan permanent settlement in Norway and 35% have not decided yet. It turned out that there is no relationship between the respondent's gender and decision on settlement. Regarding relationship between the age of respondents and their plans, it has turned out that relationship exists, however, it is very weak. Therefore, one can assume that the age of respondents does not affect their settlement plans too much. Similar conclusion refer to the length of stay in Norway - it can be assumed the year of initial stay in Norway rather does not affect respondents' plans. Interestingly, relationship between being currently a parent or not and settlement intentions is not observed. The same is true in case of migrants educational level. Concluding, neither parenthood nor education affect plans that respondents have with regards to permanent settlement in Norway.

Regarding reasons for planning permanent settlement in Norway, respondents' answers are presented in Table 4. As one can learn from it, better working conditions in Norway, meaning, higher income, stable contract, etc. are indicated as a reason for planning permanent settlement in Norway by 67 % of respondents. This argument is the most frequently pointed among all other reasons (28%). Higher living standard in Norway is pointed by 50 % of respondents (and it constitutes about 21% of all given answers). For every fourth respondent starting education by children in Norway is an argument in favour of a decision to plan a permanent settlement. TRANSFAM web survey confirm that Polish migrants appreciate living standards in Norway and that they rely mainly on their own labour as a base for their well-being. Only 14 % of

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<sup>3</sup> Tables presenting data from TRANSFAM web survey have been computed by Ewa Krzaklewska.

respondents indicate better access to welfare state's assistance (social and family benefits). This reason constitutes merely 6% of all indicated answers.

**Table 4. Reasons for planning permanent settlement in Norway**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency of a specific answer</b>	<b>Percentage of a specific answer among all indicated answers</b>	<b>Percentage of respondents who selected a specific answer</b>
<b>1. I like the cultural/religious/social climate in Norway</b>	123	8	19
<b>2. Relationships with family in Poland did not persist (I have nobody to go back to)</b>	11	1	2
<b>3. My children started school in Norway</b>	158	10	24
<b>4. Better working conditions in Norway: higher income, stable contract, etc.</b>	438	28	67
<b>5. No perspectives in Poland</b>	328	21	51
<b>6. Higher living standard in Norway</b>	326	21	50
<b>7. Better access to welfare state's assistance in Norway (social and family benefits)</b>	92	6	14
<b>8. My family members (e.g. partner, children) want to live in Norway</b>	73	5	11
<b>Total</b>	1545	100	-

Source: TRANSFAM web survey

Where do Polish immigrants feel at home? Responses given in the TRANSFAM web survey are distributed as follows: in Norway 38%, in Poland 27%; both in Poland and in Norway 33%, somewhere else 2%. Analysing qualitative material one can see that through an involvement in one's everyday activities, some migrants, steadily, start to treat Norway as a home. Others keep related to Poland, even after years spend in Norway. As it was described by one of interviewees they 'feel like guests'. The third category of attachment deserves a special attention since it describes a type of 'dual orientation' that is characteristic for transnational migrants. Sometimes with the time passing affection to the place of residence in Norway has developed in a way that migrants feel deep attachment both to the past Polish and current place. 'Migrants adapt themselves while maintain strong ties of sentiment, if not material exchange, with their place of origin' (Vertovec 2008, p.156).

## Summary

On the basis of the analysed material, it can be concluded that we are witnessing a process of settlement of Polish migrants in Norway. A dominant pattern of primary male migration at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has undergone a transformation as early as in the second half of said decade and was accompanied by the stable family migration pattern. Regardless of the initial plans a part of Polish immigrants currently see their future in Norway, not in Poland. Their activities in Norway do not limit to work exclusively, they establish their families there or gather family members, who used to live in Poland.

One of indicators confirming the tendency for permanent settlement is also the number of Poles indicating family reasons for their first entry to Norway. After 2009, a year that was especially harsh for Polish families in Norway due to the economic crisis that affected Scandinavian countries (a decrease in statistics on family reunification from 4 423 in 2008 to 2773 in 2009), a strong determination in reunification strategies has been visible again for Polish group (4 612 in 2010). Members of Polish families constitute the largest group entering Norway for family reasons since 2006 (Thorud et al. 2014: 16) (see Table 5). Growing number of Poles belonging to the category of children (15 years and younger) and those residing in Norway for more than five years also indicate tendency for permanent settlement (see Table 6 and 7).

**Table 5. Family immigration from Poland to Norway. New resident permits and EEA-registrations, 2004 – 2013**

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Poland	390	748	1 702	3 292	4 423	2 773	4 612	4 376	4 516	4 687

Source: UDI after Thorud et al. (2014: 16).

**Table 6. Number of children (Polish immigrants and Norwegian-born to Polish parents, 15 years and younger)**

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No of children	7 137	8 992	10 738	12 560	14 420	16 078

Source: Statistics Norway.

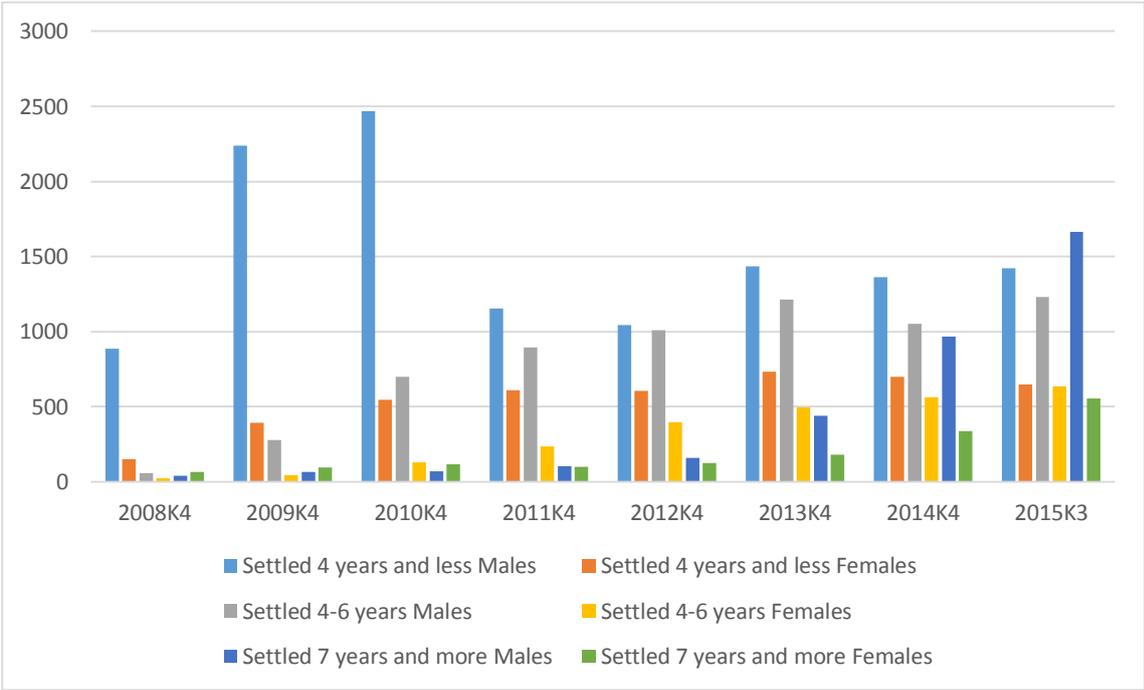
**Table 7. Poles residing in Norway for more than 5 years**

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No of Poles	6 262	7 435	9 993	15 547	25 639	35 516

Source: Statistics Norway.

Even though Polish immigrants, due to their engagement into labour intensive sectors, are more exposed to the risk of unemployment than the total population<sup>4</sup> we can assume that migrants experiencing temporary unemployment wait for next job offers in Norway instead of coming back to Poland. This statement is justified by data on registered unemployment among Polish immigrants. It is evident that in case of those ‘settled for the period 4-6 years’ and ‘for 7 years and more’, the numbers grow each year. This is true for both sexes (see Figure 3.). The Norwegian government is increasingly concerned about future dynamics of a situation in which employers have access to a permanent flexible labour force consisting of workers, who accept short term employment conditions. Simultaneously, the costs of availability of such labour force, in times of declined demand, are to be met by the welfare state through the system of benefits (Friberg 2012b).

**Figure 3. Registered unemployed Polish immigrants 15-74 years, by years of residence and sex, in thousands, 4 quarter 2008-2014 and 3 quarter 2015**



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of Statistics Norway data.

<sup>4</sup> Poles were affected more by the economic crisis than natives. The registered unemployment rate for the whole population sustained below 3 per cent while among Polish workers was much higher reaching 10,2 in 2010. Similarly in the third quarter of 2015 the rate for the total population was 3,1 while for Poles 9,2, which is three times higher

In short, the results of TRANSFAM study at least partially undermine the earlier expectation of the temporary nature of Polish migration to Norway. Analysis of materials collected in the project indicates the similarity of the patterns observed since 2004 in the UK and Ireland (Iglicka 2010, White 2011, Romejko 2015).

## Dissemination

More results from WP6 will be published in:

Biuletyn Migracyjny [Migration Bulletin]: K. Gmaj, *Wybrane spostrzeżenia na temat strategii osiedleńczych Polaków w Norwegii* (forthcoming)

*Transnational Polish Families in Norway. Social Capital, Integration, Institutions and Care* (eds. K. Slany, P. Pustułka, E. Guribye, M. Ślusarczyk), K. Iglicka, K. Gmaj, A. Wierzejski, *Contextualizing Polish Migration to Norway in the light of theory, statistical data and research findings* (forthcoming)

Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna [The Economic and Political Thought], 2016, Vol.2: K. Gmaj: *Settling in Norway? The Case of Polish Migrants and Their Families* (forthcoming)

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