

# **FREE MOVEMENT OF WORKERS AND THE EU INTEGRATION PROCESSES, EXPERIENCE OF THE POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCE**

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## **Abstract**

Free Movement of Workers is the fundamental right of EU citizens and one of the key principles of the European Single Market. Economic and migration crises however revealed that the immigrant workers' issue raises high-tension debates in Member States. The focus of this paper is on the Polish blue-collar immigrant workers in France. Their situation in the host country and their interactions with the French society are analysed through their experience at the workplace. First, the working conditions of Polish immigrants in the French labour market after 2008 are examined. The paper then discusses the cultural differences at the workplace, as well as the French employers' and clients' attitudes towards Polish workers. Finally, the impact of Free Movement of Workers on immigrant's adaptation and integration processes is studied.

**Key words:** *European Union, Free Movement of Workers, Stereotypes, Immigrant Worker, Integration at the Workplace*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The European Union integration process is founded on economic measures that break down barriers in the internal Single Market. Free Movement of Workers is considered one of the key principles of European integration [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 45]. This fundamental right of workers applies to European Union, Island, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland citizens seeking job opportunities in the European Economic Area [European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 45]. The principle of Free Movement of Workers

guaranties European Union nationals and their family members the right to work and to reside in another Member State [Regulation (EU) No 492/2011]. Those immigrant workers ought to be treated on an equal footing with local citizens regarding access to employment, remuneration and working conditions [Directive 2004/38/EC]. Free Movement of Workers principle also involves the coordination of social security schemes, health insurance and healthcare to facilitate the labour mobility [Regulation (EC) No 883/2004].

Though European strategies conducive to geographical movement of workers, the integration processes does not occur without objections. Current economic and migration crises clearly show that the issue of immigrant workers triggers controversy and public debates in all European Union's Member States. The highly publicized stereotype of a "Polish plumber" is a clear illustration of this phenomenon. This symbol of social dumping was coined in France on the eve of the referendum on the Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe in 2005. The depiction represented the Central and Eastern European immigrants requesting easy access to jobs to improve their life situation [Patok 2017]. This stereotype was an expression of fears about economic migrants flooding Europe's Old labour markets.

This paper relates to the experience of Polish blue-collar workers in France, the subject of high-tension debates, following the French labour market opening for Poles in 2008. It is important to stress that current Polish community in France is different from the three previous migration waves: the Great Emigration following the November and January Uprisings [Pezda 2001: 167-177], a large economic migration during the interwar period [Paczkowski 1979: 17] and political migration from Polish state during communism [Śladkowski 1980: 15]. Today an economic migration is a choice that does not exclude the possibility of a return to or of being in daily contact with relatives living in the state of origin. France is not the main destination for Polish immigrant workers [Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2018]. Poles constitute a rather small group compared to other communities of immigrants in France. Unlike the previous Polish migrations, the majority of the current wave are women [Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques 2014].

In the context of economic and migration debates there arises a question of the impact of the Single Market freedoms on the immigrant workers' adaptation and integration into the host society. This paper's focus is on the Polish immigrants employed in blue-collar occupations in France and their integration into the French labour market. Their situation in the host country and their relations with their French colleges, employers or customers are examined through the variety of their experiences at the workplace.

In the first part of this paper I will present the research methodology, as well as the group studied. The next part will discuss the research results. First, I will examine the working conditions of Polish immigrants in the French labour market after 2008. The study will continue with the analysis of the cultural differences at the workplace. Finally, I will focus on the French employers' and clients' attitudes towards Polish workers. In conclusion, I will try to understand the effect that the principle of Free Movement of Workers has on immigrant's adaptation and integration into the host society.

## 1. METHODOLOGY AND THE STUDY SAMPLE

The study was conducted in a Paris metropolitan area between 2011 and 2016 in a qualitative approach of Grounded Theory method [Glaser and Strauss 2006]. The research is based on 60 semi-structured interviews with Polish blue-collar immigrant workers, the participant observation and dozens of informal conversations at their workplaces or homes. I have also carried out the observations in a public space frequented by Polish immigrants in Paris, such as Polish shops and parishes, public transport and Polish or French offices of public administration. I used non-probability sampling [Babbie 2007] in order to construct the analysed group of the population of Polish blue-collar immigrants working in France (Table 1 and Table 2). It is important to notice that Polish immigrants are also employed in highly qualified and managerial roles, but these would require a different analysis, which is not the purpose of this paper. First, I have randomly selected six unrelated Polish blue-collar workers. Then, each of them indicated two or three persons from his or her labour environment who met the criteria of my target group. The following respondents were selected according to the same rule. Finally, the group studied consisted of 28 men and 32 women in working age.

My aim was to create a diverse group of Polish immigrants who varied in the length of their residence and arrival moment whether it was before or after the Polish accession to European Union in 2004. I also considered the immigrant worker's age, the declared level of French proficiency, as well as their marital status.

The variety of these factors allowed me to compare different experiences of Polish immigrants working as blue-collar workers in France. My main purpose was to understand the processes of their adaptation and integration into the host state's labour market, and not to represent entirety of Polish blue-collar workers in Paris or all Polish immigrants in France.

In this study, in order to understand the adaptation and integration processes, I crossed two theoretical frameworks. Firstly, in order to analyse the relations between Polish immigrant workers and their French employers, colleagues or customers I referred to symbolic interactionism: Howard Becker's labelling theory [Becker 2009] and Erving Goffman's notion of stigma [Goffman 1996]. Secondly, I examined the choices made by immigrant workers in their professional lives. For this purpose, I applied the concepts from methodological individualism, more accurately Raymond Boudon's theory of rational actions [Boudon 1983] and Michel Crozier's strategic analysis [Crozier and Friedberg 1977].

**Table 1: Study population: Women by age, occupation, residence period in France, level of French proficiency and marital status**

N°	First name	Age	Occupation	Residency in France	Level of French proficiency (self declaration)	Marital State
1	Magdalena	20	Babysitter	10 months	Does not speak any French	Single
2	Monika	20	Intern	4 months	Advanced	Single
3	Dorota	21	Cleaner (Self-employed)	6 months	Basic	Married, Polish husband living in France

4	Monika	22	Shop assistant	3 years	Advanced	Single
5	Weronika	23	Ice cream seller	3 years	Advanced	Single, French partner
6	Aleksandra	24	Secretary	3 years	Advanced	Single, French partner
7	Agata	25	Babysitter	10 months	Basic	Single, Polish partner living in France
8	Aleksandra	25	Waitress	3 years	Advanced	Single, French partner
9	Sabina	26	Babysitter	10 months	Intermediate	Single
10	Iga	27	Dancer (Showgirl)	5 years	Basic	Single, Polish partner living in Germany
11	Maja	27	Dancer (Showgirl)	1 year	Basic	Single
12	Magdalena	28	Secretary	7 years	Advanced	Single, French partner
13	Magdalena	28	Barmaid	3 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish husband living in France
14	Paulina	28	Cleaner (Self-employed)	4 years	Basic	Married, Polish husband living in France
15	Agnieszka	29	Barmaid	1 year	Intermediate	Single
16	Agnieszka	30	Dancer (Showgirl)	5 years	Advanced	Married, French husband, one child
17	Magdalena	30	Cleaner (Self-employed)	7 years	Basic	Married, Polish husband living in France
18	Dagmara	34	Amusement park employee	6 years	Intermediate	Single, Polish partner living in France
19	Edyta	34	Cleaner (Self-employed)	2 years	Basic	Married, Polish husband living in France, one child
20	Katarzyna	35	Concierge	10 years	Advanced	Married, French husband
21	Joanna	36	Dancer (Showgirl)	5 years	Advanced	Married, Cuban husband living in France, two children
22	Aneta	37	Babysitter (Self-employed)	10 years	Advanced	Married, French husband
23	Lucyna	37	Concierge	16 years	Advanced	Married, French husband, one child
24	Magdalena	37	Stewardess, former Cleaner	11 years	Advanced	Married, French husband, two children
25	Violetta	37	Cleaning lady (Self-employed)	6 years	Basic	Married, Polish husband living in France, three children
26	Marta	38	Cleaning lady (Self-employed)	11 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish husband living in France, two children
27	Wioleta	38	Waitress, cleaning lady	6 years	Intermediate	Divorced with Polish man, French partner, two children

28	Iwona	49	Grocery store owner	21 years	Advanced	Divorced with Polish man, Australian partner living in France, two children
29	Malgorzata	51	Secretary	21 years	Advanced	Married, Polish husband living in France, one child
30	Barbara	56	Shop assistant	30 years	Advanced	Married, Polish husband living in France, two children
31	Jolanta	56	Hostess, cleaning lady (Self-employed)	30 years	Advanced	Married, French husband, one child
32	Aleksandra	60	Bar owner	20 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish husband living in France, three children

Source: Author's findings based on her research

**Table 2: Study population: Men by age, occupation, residence period in France, level of French proficiency and marital status**

N°	First name	Age	Occupation	Residency in France	Level of French proficiency (self declaration)	Marital State
1	Kamil	21	Construction worker	6 months	Does not speak any French	Married, Polish wife living in France
2	Lukasz	23	Plumber	1 year	Does not speak any French	Single
3	Slawomir	23	Construction worker	5 years	Intermediate	Single
4	Grzegorz	25	Construction worker (Self-employed)	5 years	Intermediate	Single
5	Artur	27	Construction worker	2 years	Basic	Single
6	Grzegorz	27	Construction worker, plumber	6 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish wife living in Poland
7	Pawel	27	Construction worker	2 years	Basic	Married, Polish wife living in France
8	Pawel	27	Shop assistant	6 years	Advanced	Single, Bulgarian partner living in France
9	Tomasz	28	Construction worker (Self-employed)	3 years	Intermediate	Single
10	Waldemar	28	Mason	7 years	Basic	Divorced with Polish woman, two children
11	Konrad	30	Construction company office worker	3 years	Basic	Single, Polish partner
12	Piotr	30	Mason (Self-employed)	5 years	Intermediate	Divorced with Polish woman

13	Lukasz	31	Construction worker	2 years	Basic	Single
14	Szymon	31	Construction worker (Self-employed)	3 years	Basic	Married, Polish wife living in France
15	Piotr	32	Construction worker	2 years	Does not speak any French	Married, Polish wife living in Poland, two children
16	Mariusz	33	Construction worker, construction company owner (Self-employed)	10 years	Advanced	Married, Polish wife living in France, two children
17	Piotr	35	Construction worker (Self-employed)	8 years	Basic	Married, Polish wife living in Poland, two children
18	Piotr	36	Construction worker (Self-employed)	5 years	Basic	Married, Polish wife living in France, one child
19	Dariusz	36	Construction worker (Self-employed)	4 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish wife living in France, two children
20	Mariusz	38	Construction worker, construction company owner (Self-employed)	7 years	Advanced	Married, Polish wife living in France, three children
21	Pawel	38	Construction worker (Self-employed)	3 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish wife living in France, one child
22	Rafal	38	Construction worker, construction company owner (Self-employed)	14 years	Advanced	Married, Polish wife living in France
23	Robert	38	Electrician (Self-employed)	17 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish wife living in France, two children
24	Grzegorz	41	Mechanic, truck driver (Self-employed)	6 years	Intermediate	Married, Polish wife living in France, two children
25	Mariusz	48	Construction worker, plumber, construction company owner (Self-employed)	17 years	Advanced	Married, Polish wife living in France, three children
26	Jaroslaw	48	Construction worker	2 years	Does not speak any French	Married, Polish wife living in Poland, two children
27	Marian	50	Security guard	7 years	Basic	Married, Polish wife living in France
28	Jan	66	Bookstore assistant	23 years	Advanced	Married, Polish wife living in France, one child

Source: Author's findings based on her research

## 2. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

### 2.1. Company type and working conditions in the French labour market

As a result of the opening of the French labour market in 2008, a Polish worker is subjected to similar procedures as French citizens in terms of law and

administration. Consequently, the situation for both a Polish immigrant and her or his French employer has evolved. The focus of this part of the paper is on the Polish blue-collar workers' current working conditions in France. I was interested in Polish immigrants' economic and social situation resulting from new legal aspects of their professional situation. Following the experience of workers from the group studied, I identified three types of companies employing Polish workers in France. The differences result from professional occupation and network, knowledge regarding French labour market and the choices made by the immigrant worker.

French companies, which pay taxes in France, represent the first type of working environment. In this case, the business can be founded and managed either by a French or Polish principal. The Polish immigrant workers are employed in the exactly same way as their French colleagues. Pawel, a 27-year-old construction worker living in France for 2 years, explains this situation: "I've got the same [employment] contract as the French. Yes, as I've got all [the] papers, I had no worries. Everything was done by my boss". Furthermore, the immigrant worker evolves in the international environment where she or he mixes with people from other cultures and courtiers. As a result, the Polish immigrant worker knows and understands her or his rights and obligations as employee. In the group studied, this experience encouraged the immigrants to start their own business in the French labour market. Interviewees stated that a company established in France seems more credible for local customers. All administrative procedures are also easier to achieve. A self-employment is a very popular form of French business activity, especially for men in the construction sector or women working as cleaners and babysitters. The experience of Mariusz, a 33-year-old construction worker and construction company owner living in France for 10 years is an example: "I founded my company here (...) because the French are a bit conservative. Having a Polish insurance can be complicated".

Companies registered in Poland but carrying out their work only in France illustrate the second type of working conditions. The interviews clearly show that in this case the employees are constantly, as they say "in the delegation", even though they have been living in France for years. In the group studied these were men working in a construction sector. They often come from the same town or village in Poland and are provided with housing. This type of company employs seasonal workers without a contract and permanent employees working only in France under the Polish Labour Code. In consequence, they are not covered by the French health and social care systems. Grzegorz, a 27-year-old plumber and construction worker living in France for 6 years describes his experience: "our company is Polish, I mean registered in Poland. (...) We've never worked in Poland. I go on holidays to Poland for two weeks every six months". Following the experience of workers studied, this is usually immigrant's first job opportunity. In the group studied it was a case of blue-collar workers with little knowledge of French labour market and limited contacts with the French society.

Foreign franchises registered in France and employing workers of different origins represent the third and the last type of working conditions. In the group studied, restaurant, clothing sectors and amusement parks illustrated this type of enterprises. They operate under the same legal rules as the French companies, however, the strategies and the culture of management may be different from a typical French company. The interviews show that in this case the managerial positions are held by employees with work experience in other countries. Foreign

franchises in France also tend to employ workers of different origins. All formal and legal aspects are quickly resolved. Workers often take advantage of several benefits, such as training provided or funded by the company in order to improve professional skills. This type of international franchise usually employs the young Polish women from the studied group. The experience of Dagmara, a 34-year-old amusement park employee living in France for 6 years, shows that welfare guaranteed by her employer had a significant impact on her migratory and professional career: “I do not want to leave [this company] because we have good insurance and social protection. This company gives us a lot of opportunities of professional development and eventually a promotion”.

The research results indicate that the opening of the French labour market, as a consequence of Poland’s accession to the European Union structures, had a significant effect on the Polish immigrants’ everyday life. As equals in terms of law to her or his French colleagues, Polish worker has more opportunities to evolve professionally in France. Today the immigrants confront less complex administrative procedures and become more aware of their rights in France. The fact of being employed in a different type of company: French or Polish company or international franchise, affects the living standards, French proficiency and the breadth of interactions with the French society.

## **2.2.Cultural differences at the workplace**

The work organization in particular at the construction site is based on the same principles in both studied countries, in France and in Poland. Nevertheless, the attitudes regarding labour differ between the Polish and French employees. These attitudes are directly related to the work culture of each country. Social depictions are the mechanisms that bring together sentiments, morals and illusions cementing society [Valade 1997: 304-402]. These simplified and descriptive categories are inseparable from social practice and they influence the decisions and opinions of individual [Gresle et al. 1994: 355]. The interviews indicate four major cultural differences between Polish and French workers observed at their workplace in France.

Firstly, the notion of working pace is different. The Polish immigrants from the group studied used to work from Monday to Saturday, while their French colleagues usually have their weekend free. Polish workers are also more prepared to have a longer working day. The temperaments of Polish and French workers are also different. Following the interviews, Polish immigrants appreciate working with the host country colleagues more than with their compatriots. Grzegorz, a 25-year-old construction worker living in France for 5 years explains: “The work with the French is great! We work calmly. We inserted two doors during the day. The Poles fixed ten doors in the same time. The French are laid back and the Poles are always ready to work longer”.

Secondly, the research clearly shows that in the opinion of Polish workers their French colleagues are highly specialized, but only in one domain, for example in masonry. Polish workers are more versatile and ready to be responsible for many fields at the same time like masonry, electricity and plumbing. The illustration is the experience of Waldemar, a 28-year-old mason living in France for 7 years: “in France even quite recently you’re supposed to be very good in your job; (...) I’ve met [French] specialists who were really good. Yet, they had limited skills. On the other hand, Poles are usually very versatile and they are performing more tasks”.



Then, in the group studied the French colleagues are considered to be more polite than the compatriots at the workplace. Also, French superiors are not authoritarian, in contrast to the Polish ones. The immigrant worker appreciates this attitude, however sometimes it may be confusing. For example a kiss on the cheek instead of shaking hands for a greeting was surprising and even embarrassing for Dagmara, a 34-year-old amusement park employee. The immigrant woman explains her difficulties to adapt to the French norms regarding the power relations at the workplace: “they [her French superiors] thought I was arrogant, but I didn’t know how to laugh with them. In Poland, I was not joking with my boss, I mean not in the same way”.

Finally, the interviews indicate that a decision-making process is longer in France owing to more participants being involved, while in Poland it is more centralized. A Polish working day is usually more intensive in activities. The Polish immigrant workers from group studied claim that their French colleagues have more breaks during a working day. These short pauses stimulate the exchange of opinions, as well as the integration of employees. Initially surprised, the Polish workers got used to this new style of work. Magdalena, a 28-year-old secretary in France for 7 years claims: “if you go home too early, even if you finished your tasks, it means you’re not very motivated. It’s a sort of a social pressure”.

The conducted interviews show that Polish immigrants consider their French colleagues as less competitive and more familiar with working only Monday to Friday. The Polish blue-collar workers from the group studied prefer their French superiors and colleagues; however, they claim that the French expect the immigrant to improve her or his skills. Consequently, the Polish worker seems to consider the job position more seriously. A professional occupation is the goal of her or his economic immigration. Unemployment would be considered a failure and a loss of face [Goffman 1993: 10]. This attitude is also linked to strong respect towards the employer. At the same time the Polish immigrant discovers the significance of informal rules at the workplace in France [D’Iribarne 1993]. The differences in two studied cultures of work, French and Polish, constitute the main challenge in the early stages of Polish worker integration into the French labour market.

### **2.3. Attitudes of French Employers and Clients towards the Polish Workers**

The highly publicized stereotype of a “Polish plumber” referred to the image of inexpensive labour force coming from a country suffering from political and economic turbulence. In this part of the paper I examine the cultural expectations attributed to the Polish workers by their French employers or clients. My purpose is to understand the effects that these attitudes have on the immigrants’ professional activity in France. I measure these social depictions by the Polish immigrants’ discourse and experience at the workplace.

According to interviews I distinguished two attitudes of the French employers. In the first case, the employer has a positive opinion about Polish workers and as a consequence she or he readily employs them. Aleksandra, a 25-year-old waitress living in France for 3 years explains: “I was employed on the spot when the boss saw that I was Polish. He told me that he liked to employ Poles because they worked well”. In the second case the employer takes advantage of an immigrant’s lack of language skills or knowledge regarding French labour market. On the one hand, that involves immigrant workers arriving for short periods, dependent of housing offered by an employer and ready to work illegally. On the other hand, the Polish

immigrants legally employed can notice unequal treatment when compared to the treatment their French colleagues receive. An example is the experience of another Aleksandra, a 24-year-old secretary living in France for 3 years: “I had the impression that my [French] colleagues had more rights than me. (...) My boss was convinced that he did me a favour. His attitude towards the Poles was: he employed us, so we should be grateful”.

Following the interviews I identified that the French clients represent six attitudes. Firstly, the cleaners and the construction workers from the group studied claim that their French customers have a great confidence in them. In the Polish immigrants' opinions this is an attribute of French in general. Mariusz, a 33-year-old construction worker and construction company owner gives an illustration: “I get the keys to the flat, where TV and even some money are exposed”.

Secondly, the clients are curious about the immigrant as a foreigner. They ask about the Polish worker's professional experience and even about her or his private life. Waldemar, a 28-year-old mason explains: “clients often ask about my situation. Sometimes, it's too much. They want to know if I stay in France or how much I earn”. In the group studied, cleaning ladies' employers are also very helpful in administrative procedures or in handling formal documents. Marta, a 38 year old cleaner living in France for 11 years, is very grateful to her employers for their support: “I've got the family [Employer's family] who helps me from the beginning. I can't write in French, so I can't write a formal letter. [The employer's family members] always help me in everything I ask them”.

In response to the stereotype of a Polish worker as an alcohol enthusiast, the third case of French clients can propose drinks during lunch breaks. They may also express distrust, mainly in the construction sector where the level of risk is higher. Magda, a 30 year old cleaner living in France for 7 years talks about her husband's construction company: “when they'd finished the renovation the flat owner lady told their boss that they were good employees, because there were no beer cans or bottles. As they were Poles, she'd controlled them every day”.

The fourth attitude highlights that the French customer is satisfied with the services of Polish workers. Her or his satisfaction is expressed by the bonuses and good references. In the construction sectors clients may also congratulate the results of work and recommend the Polish worker and his company to other friends and family members. Grzegorz, a 27-year-old plumber and construction worker in France for 6 years explains: “once a lady had called us and asked about Polish workers to renovate her house. She told us that she'd heard that Poles worked well and quick”. This was the most common case in the group studied.

The French client can be also dissatisfied with the Polish activities in the French labour market. The interviews show that this type of customer supports the French workers and as a result she or he is unwilling to employ an immigrant. Piotr, a 30-year-old mason living in France for 5 years, shares his experience: “the customer had no choice because my team was sent by the insurance company, but he told us that if it was up to him, he would send us home. He would never have taken Poles because we took French workers' jobs”. In the group studied, this attitude can be linked with the perception of Poland as a modest backward country. For example Marta, a 38-year-old cleaner was embarrassed by her employer's attitude: “they [French] think that we do not know what a refrigerator is. I was twice in that situation. When I started a new job the lady had been explaining for 15 minutes how the vacuum cleaner worked. (...) Some people think that we [Polish

immigrants] came from a backward country. They imagine that we wash by hand in the rivers. One lady asked me if we had washing machines in Poland, and then she tried to explain me how to use it”.

The last attitude trait is that of a client being jealous when the immigrant worker's material conditions are “too good”, especially if the immigrant's occupation is placed lower on the social ladder. The cleaner Marta, mentioned in the last paragraph, shares her experience: “once I was fired by a lady when Robert [Marta's husband] came to pick me up and she saw that he had a nice car. Two days later I got a call to tell me I was fired. I was already working! I was legally employed! I asked her if it was about the car and she said yes.”

The research results show that the cultural expectations attributed to the Polish immigrants have an impact on the professional activities of the Polish blue-collar workers in France. Polish origins are an advantage for French employers considering Polish immigrants to be good employees. The workers studied also meet employers taking advantage of lack of knowledge of French labour laws. The immigrant treated unfairly loses her or his motivation. For the French clients, they tend to appreciate the services and trust their employees. The customers are not only curious about a foreigner, but they are also helpful which facilitates the integration processes. The negative examples of the contacts with the clients involve remarks about immigrants' country of nationality or alcohol consumption. The Polish immigrants may feel treated worse than their French colleagues. In response, they try to prove their value by demonstrating their advantages like discipline and commitment.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS: SINGLE MARKET FREEDOMS' IMPACT ON THE IMMIGRANT WORKERS**

The Free Movement of Workers has a significant impact on the Polish immigrant workers employed in blue-collar occupations in France. Following the opening of the French labour market in 2008, these economic immigrants no longer have to follow additional procedures. Employment in the French companies or international franchises, rather than in the Polish structures, is an opportunity to evolve professionally and to improve living standards in a host country. Certainly, the immigrant worker increases her or his contacts with the host society and as a result adapts and integrates into French society. As an equal to the French colleagues, the Polish immigrant becomes more conscious of her or his legal rights. The Polish immigrant is free to choose the duration of staying abroad, the clients or a company. This awareness of freedom is a key consequence of the Free Movement of Workers' rights on the economic immigrant.

The research shows that the cultural expectations attributed to the Polish workers have the effects on their professional activity. The Polish immigrants are rather intentionally employed and considered to be good workers. The success of their migration is defined by their economic activity. At the same time, they may feel inferior in the eyes of their French colleagues or employers. As the economic migrants, they have a strong need for recognition. They also notice that they can be respected in their professional occupation. As a consequence these immigrants try to prove their value by demonstrating their advantages: commitment, efficiency and discipline. This is a very important aspect of their identity as immigrants and includes a sense of dignity [Patok 2015: 160-161]. In order to assimilate and

to integrate into the host society as an equal resident and worker, the Polish blue-collar immigrant doubles her or his efforts at the workplace; as a result she or he paradoxically confirms a stereotype of a hard-working immigrant looking for a job by all means. The Polish worker, in this sense, reflects the image attributed to a Polish blue-collar immigrant by the French society.

The experience of Polish workers proves that the European Union's integration is founded on the Single Market freedoms. The economic activity is changing the mentality of Polish immigrants towards the consciousness of liberty and equality. Nevertheless, this awareness of rights as European Union citizens is not yet established on a political level. The research results clearly show that the social depictions and stereotypes play a significant role in the integration processes. Those images involve the question of identity and, being strongly related with regional customs and Member States' history, they represent one of the key challenges for the analyses of the European Union.

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