

# **Employing Polish Workers**

**Useful Information for Employers**

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## **Work Permits are not required**

Since the 1st of May 2004 work permits are not required by workers from any of the A8 countries (Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia). Residents of the A8 countries may be employed without any prior permission or requirement.

## **Worker Registration Scheme**

Once employed, the worker must register with the Home Office under the Worker Registration Scheme within one month of starting employment. Full details can be found on the [Worker Registration Scheme website](#)

Once they are employed by you, you will have to ensure that they are registered. Every time they change their employment they need to register with that employer. Once the person has completed 12 months of employment in the UK without a break of more than 30 days (excluding paid holiday) the requirement to register ceases, and the person can then apply for resident status.

## **National Insurance Number**

If they do not already have a NI number they should make application for a NI number as soon as possible, however there is no specific time limit for doing this. It is perfectly legal to employ workers without NI numbers. The worker or someone else on his/her behalf has to telephone 0845 600 0643 between 8.00am and 6.00pm, Monday to Friday to arrange for a National Insurance number (NINo) appointment. The appointment will be usually at the local Job Centre. If you have taken on a number of people at the same time and they all require a NI number you may be able to arrange for the interviews to take place on your premises.

The purpose of the interview is to check the identity of the person and to confirm his/her right to work in the UK. The worker will be sent a letter giving details of when and where the appointment will be and what documents the worker has to bring to the appointment. Some two or three weeks after the interview the National Insurance number will be sent by post to the applicant.

Meanwhile it is perfectly in order for you to employ the person. You will find that payroll software, such as Sage, will create a temporary NI number. More details can be found on the [Directgov website](#)

## **Checking Candidates**

Whatever the standard procedure is in your company for checking candidates it is essential to use the same procedure with Polish workers, you must not be put off by any difficulties it may entail.

*Proof of Identity* – It is essential to obtain proof of identity to ensure that the person can work here legally. If possible examine two forms of identity from the following: passport, identity card, driving licence and birth certificate. At least one of these must carry a photograph. Do not accept photocopies of any document as proof of identity.

*Employment History / Work Experience / Career Gaps* - Get the worker to supply you a full employment history to you for, say, the previous five years or since leaving full time education, if less. If the person cannot provide the exact dates then the nearest month will be sufficient. Identify any gaps and ask for the reason why and to provide evidence. Make sure you check every single gap you identify. If your probing makes the candidate uncomfortable then he/she may be concealing something that may make them unsuitable for the job.

Making contact with previous employers and gathering information is a very time consuming process and many employers do not bother checking employment references simply because of the amount of time it takes. For workers coming from Poland there is the additional problem of communicating with their previous employers. If you are going to employ someone in a position of trust then it is essential to make a reference check. A recent report by BDO Stoy Hayward stated that employee fraud has risen by more than 200% since 2003. Many instances of fraud can be avoided simply by taking up references.

*Qualifications* – Ensure that the candidate shows you their original certificates. Do not accept photocopies.

### **Opening a Bank Account**

When workers first arrive in the UK they will need to open a bank account. Provided that they have not been in the country more than a few weeks all the main UK banks will open bank accounts for Polish workers with proof of identity such as a passport or identity card or a driving licence and a recent document such as utility bill or bank statement showing their address in Poland. If they have been in the UK for some time they will proof of address in the UK.

### **Cheap Telephone Calls to Poland**

There are a number of different services available to make cheap phone call to Poland from as little as ½p per minute. Other options are available besides the one mentioned.

#### *Landline to landline*

Dial 0844 200 9898, wait for a recorded message to start, then dial the full number including the country code (0048) and then press the # key. The cost of the call will be ½p per minute. (yes! cheaper than making a call in the UK)

#### *Landline to mobile*

Dial 0871 343 9292, wait for a recorded message to start, then dial the full number including the country code (0048) and then press the # key. The cost of the call will be 9p per minute.

### **CSCS Cards**

Workers who come direct from Poland for the first time will not have CSCS cards. Many of those who have been in the UK for some time will have CSCS cards. Both the training literature and the test is available in Polish so a person with only basic English should have no difficulty in taking the test. The waiting time between booking a test and taking it varies from test centre to test centre. It can be as little as one week or as much as 6 weeks. Different centres have different waiting times.

### **Driving Licences**

Polish driving licence holders can drive in the UK without having to change their licence to a British one. The same rules apply as to GB driving licence holders; they will need to obtain a new licence when they are aged 70. Other rules apply for bus and lorry drivers.

Polish driving licence holders can obtain a GB counterpart licence document by completing DVLA form D9 and sending this with their licence to DVLA in Swansea. There is no charge for this.

To change to a GB driving licence they will need to complete [DVLA form D9](#). There is a charge for this.

### **Foreign languages**

All students in Polish state schools are required to learn one or two foreign languages. The most recent statistics give the following figures for students learning foreign languages in Polish state schools (as a percentage of the student population).

English - 66%

German - 33%

French - 13%

Spanish - 10%

Russian - 6%

Italian - 4%

## Do the workers speak English?

You will need to decide on what will be a realistic acceptable level of English for you. The higher your requirements the more difficult it will be to find that person. Experience has shown that for most jobs the vocabulary required is very limited and can be learnt in a very short space of time. Not so long ago we supplied a highly experienced toolmaker that did not speak a word of English. Despite our reservations the employer found that the engineering drawings he supplied were sufficient for this toolmaker to do his job without any problem.

## The Polish Education System - Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees

The education system in Poland is broadly similar to that in the UK. The qualifications which students can gain at age 16 are equivalent to the British GCSEs and the qualifications that can be gained at age 18 are equivalent to the A Levels in the UK. Currently compulsory education in Poland starts at age 6 and ends at the age of 16. In addition there is a statutory requirement to a year of pre school education. The education system currently is as follows:

- Szkoła Podstawowa - Primary school, starting at age 6 for 6 years
- Gimnazjum - Lower Secondary School, from age 13 for 3 years, certificate awarded: *Świadectwo ukończenia gimnazjum* – **equivalent to the British GCSE.**

Entry to upper secondary schools depends on the satisfactory results in the lower secondary school. Students can then choose from a variety of upper secondary schools:

- Szkoła Zawodowa - Basic vocational school, from age 16 for 2 or 3 years. Education includes school based practical training and periods of placement with employers. Certificate awarded: *Świadectwo ukończenia szkoły zawodowej* – **equivalent to a British NVQ2.**
- Liceum Ogólnokształcące - General secondary school, from age 16 for 3 years, certificate awarded: *Świadectwo ukończenia liceum ogólnokształcącego*. Commonly known as “*Matura*” (Certificate of Maturity) – **equivalent to British A-Levels.**
- Technikum - Technical secondary school, from age 16 for 4 years, certificate awarded: *Świadectwo ukończenia technikum* – **equivalent to British A-Levels + NVQ3.**
- Liceum Profilowane - Vocational secondary school, from age 16 for 3 years, certificate awarded: *Świadectwo ukończenia liceum profilowanego* – **equivalent to British A-Levels + NVQ3.**

The Polish educational system was reformed in 1999. Prior to 1999 it consisted of 8 years in primary school, then 4 years in a general or a vocational schools or 5 years in a technical school or 3 years in a basic vocational school. Graduates of the latter could pursue their education for 3 years in a technical school. All the certificates prior to 1999 are the same as those after 1999. Prior to 1999 compulsory education ended at the age of 18.

Students with satisfactory results from general secondary schools, technical secondary schools or vocational secondary schools can enter University-level education.

University-level education has a numeric system of grades from 2 to 5, with grades every 0.5. Grade 3.0 is the lowest passing grade and grade 5.0 is usually the highest. Grades 5.5 and 6.0 are sometimes given, in some universities, as an “exceeds expectations” grade.

The Polish titles that university students can receive are as follows:

UNDERGRADUATE (3 or 3½ years undergraduate study)

- Licencjat – equivalent to a British Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science degree

- Licencjat Pielęgniarstwa - studies in the field of nursing.
- Licencjat Położnictwa - studies in the field of midwifery.
- Inżynier (3½ to 5 years study) – equivalent to a British Bachelor of Science Engineering degree.
- Inżynier Architekt - studies in the field of architecture and town-planning.
- POST-GRADUATE (2 or more years post-graduate study)
- Magister – equivalent to a British Master of Arts or a Master of Science degree
- Magister Sztuki – studies in the field of fine arts.
- Magister Inżynier - studies in the field of engineering.
- Magister Inżynier Architekt – studies in the field of architecture and town planning.
- Lekarz Medycyny – studies in the field of medicine.
- Lekarz Dentysta (or prior to 30.04.2004 Lekarz Stomatolog) – studies in the field of dentistry.
- Lekarz Weterynarii – studies in the field of veterinary medicine.
- ACADEMIC DEGREES
- Doktor (2 to 4 years of post-graduate study) – equivalent to a British Doctor of Philosophy
- Doktor Habilitowany - is awarded to a person who already holds a doktor's degree, has significant scholarly or artistic achievements and has submitted a thesis that has been reviewed, debated and defended ([\*rozprawa habilitacyjna\*](#)).
- Profesor - the title of professor is conferred only by the President of the Republic of Poland. Equivalent to the British title of professor.

### **Obtaining an official letter of comparability**

If you require an official document, a letter of comparability can be obtained from UK NARIC. UK NARIC is a National Agency managed on behalf of the UK Government. It is the official source of information on international qualifications. The UK NARIC letter of comparability is a nationally recognised document that states the comparability for individuals with overseas' awards to the UK's qualification frameworks. It is used by universities, colleges, employers and Government departments and agencies to enable them to assess the individual's qualifications, skills and competencies. For more information and services of UK NARIC go to their [website](#). A fee is payable for their service.

### **Travel Arrangements to and from Poland**

Making travel arrangements to come to the UK is relatively easy for anyone living in Poland. There are numerous coaches which travel between Poland and the UK, with connection from any part of Poland. From Poland to the UK there are flights from Gdansk, Katowice, Kraków, Poznan, Rzeszów, Szczecin, Warsaw and Wrocław. The airports in the UK where these flights arrive are Birmingham, Bristol, Doncaster/Sheffield, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, London Gatwick, London Heathrow, Luton, Manchester, Newcastle and Stansted.

## Flights to and from Poland

<a href="#">Easyjet</a>	Kraków	Bristol Edinburgh Gatwick Luton Newcastle	<a href="#">www.easyjet.com</a>
<a href="#">Wizz Air</a>	Gdansk	Doncaster/Sheffield Glasgow Prestwick Liverpool Luton	<a href="#">www.wizzair.com</a>
	Katowice	Doncaster/Sheffield Liverpool Luton	
	Poznan	Doncaster/Sheffield Luton	
	Warsawa	Doncaster/Sheffield Glasgow Prestwick Luton	
	Wrocław	Luton (from 19.07.2010) Doncaster/Sheffield (from 19.07.2010)	
<a href="#">Ryan Air</a>	Gdansk	Birmingham Stansted	<a href="#">www.ryanair.com</a>
	Katowice	Birmingham Stansted	
	Kraków	Birmingham East Midlands Edinburgh Liverpool Stansted	
	Poznan	Bristol Edinburgh Liverpool Stansted	
	Rzeszów	Birmingham Bristol Luton Stansted	
	Szczecin	Stansted	
	Wrocław	Bristol East Midlands Edinburgh Glasgow Prestwick Liverpool Stansted	
<a href="#">Aer Lingus</a>	Warsawa	London Gatwick	<a href="#">www.aerlingus.com</a>

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