

The social security system in Poland consists of five elements, two of which are: social and unemployment assistance. Official policy suggests that non-EU foreigners should be only marginally supported by the state and be self-sufficient both at immigration and after being granted residence, which is controlled at the immigration office. Because of that, the number of immigrants eligible for social assistance is quite small, which in combination with low nominal values of benefits makes the system very restrictive. EU migrants are eligible for all social services based on EU Social Security

Social assistance

Social assistance is described as any aid (financial, in kind or in form of professional consulting), helping persons, who would otherwise not be able to do so using assets in their possession, to overcome difficult life circumstances. Its goal is to support people in fulfilling their basic needs, maintaining dignity and to avert such situations. There are two conditions, determining the eligibility for social assistance: means test (assessment of a person's income and assets) and exposure to one of the fifteen social hazard situations, which include poverty, orphanage, homelessness, unemployment, disability, prolonged or severe sickness, domestic violence and abuse, maternity or large family, alcoholism or drug addiction, but also integration difficulties for refugees. Social assistance has a non-contributory character and is granted to people, whose income does not exceed 120 euro (single person) or 100 euro (person in a household) per month. Non-EU foreigners with the right of residence are eligible for all temporal services on the same basis as polish and EU citizens. Some forms of long-term assistance are granted only to non-EU citizens from countries with bilateral agreements on social security or foreigners with the right of residence, living in Poland with their families. Others have a contributory character and are available only to people with compulsory or voluntary social insurance.

Unemployment assistance

Unemployment assistance is available to persons, who are recognized as unemployed and are registered in the District Employment Office (DEO), consistent with their temporal or permanent address of registration. Non-EU migrants with the right of residence are eligible for all services on the same basis as polish and EU citizens. There are three types of benefits:

1. Unemployment benefits – individuals with unemployment status are eligible for the benefit from the moment of registration in the DEO, if in the past 18 months they have worked for at least 356 days¹ (qualifying period) for a wage exceeding minimal or were in other ways (e.g. commission) remunerated with average contribution basis² exceeding the minimal wage. The level of benefits depends on the length of the person’s qualifying period, ranging from 115 to 220 euro monthly. The duration is either 6 or 12 months but the benefit is lowered after first 3 months.
2. Scholarships – granted to persons in training, professional preparation, postgraduate studies, internships or part-time studies.
3. Acquisition bonus – granted to people who (unaided of by DEO referral) recently took up employment or other paid work.

Immigrants and social services

In 2014, social assistance was provided to 900 families, in total value of approximately 1 076 000 euro. This translates to an average benefit of 1.195 euro annually per family. On average, individual integration programmes were more costly (2.166 euro annually per family). Only 7% of families came from European Economic Area. Table 1 provides the detailed data on social assistance by residence

	Families	Persons	Total (PLN)	Total (EUR)
Individual integration programmes:	302	613	2 929 264 zł	€ 654 259
Refugee status	196	326	1 790 520 zł	€ 399 917
Subsidiary protection	106	287	1 138 744 zł	€ 254 341
Social assistance:	900	2842	4 815 834 zł	€ 1 075 629
Refugee status	100	277	533 570 zł	€ 119 174
Subsidiary protection	227	869	1 481 002 zł	€ 330 786
Tolerated stay	160	573	823 373 zł	€ 183 902
Residence permit due to humanitarian reasons	13	51	77 837 zł	€ 17 385
Third-country nationals	336	901	1 505 245 zł	€ 336 200
European Economic Area	64	171	394 808 zł	€ 88 181

Table 1. Number of families and persons, and total cost of social assistance, by residence status (2014).

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, own calculations

¹ In case of EU migrants the qualifying period includes periods of work in all EU states, but only if the migrant files for the benefit in the state in which he was most recently employed.

² Basis to compulsory social security contributions.

Immigrants and unemployment

At the end of 2015 there were almost 3 600 foreign nationals, registered as unemployed in DEOs, which constituted 0.24% of all registered unemployed. Non-EU citizens made about 80% of that number, mostly immigrants from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. Out of these 3 600 persons, only 234 were entitled to unemployment benefits (as of 2015). Figure 1 presents changes in the registered unemployed foreigners for the years 2010-2015.

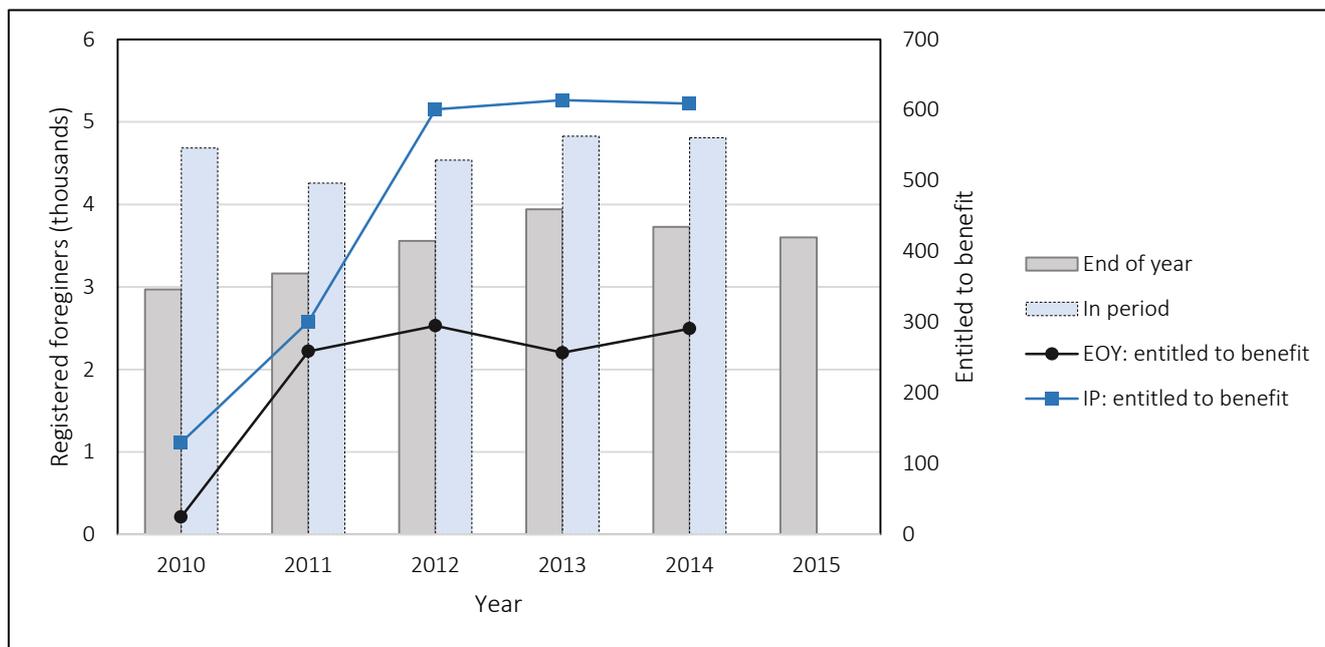


Figure 1. Changes in registered unemployed foreigners in years 2010-2015 and benefit entitlement.

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, own calculations

References

European Commission (2010). *EU Regulations concerning social security* from <http://ec.europa.eu/social>

European Migration Network (2014). *Immigrant access to social security system in Poland* from http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (<http://www.mpips.gov.pl>)



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