

POPULATION AGEING, MIGRATION AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A TRIAD OF TENSIONS IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Abstract: *This article explores the interrelations between population ageing, migration, and the quality of work-life balance in the context of regional development in Poland. The analysis highlights how tensions between these three domains can lead to persistent regional disparities, particularly in peripheral areas affected by the outflow of young and economically active populations. The study is based on statistical data (GUS, BDL, Eurostat) and a review of regional strategic documents. Its primary aim is to identify mechanisms through which demographic factors and quality of life influence regional competitiveness and attractiveness. The author proposes incorporating work-life balance indicators into the evaluation framework for regional development potential, advocating for their inclusion in demographic and regional policy as a strategic tool to counteract negative migration trends and population ageing.*

Key words: *Regional development, demographic change, work-life balance*

JEL codes: *I15, I30, I38, J11, J18*

1. Introduction

The interplay between demographic change, population mobility, and the quality of life is increasingly shaping the trajectory of regional development in Europe. In Poland, these dynamics are particularly pronounced, as many regions – especially peripheral and less urbanised areas – face the combined challenges of population ageing, youth outmigration, and growing disparities in access to quality living and working conditions. Recent studies suggest that these demographic pressures weaken regional cohesion and amplify spatial inequalities (ESPON, 2020; Káposzta, Nagy, & Kiss, 2021). Moreover, there is growing recognition that

social dimensions, including the quality of work–life balance (WLB), play a key role in regional attractiveness and the ability to retain and attract population (Ballas, Dorling, & Shaw, 2017).

This article focuses on the interrelations between three critical processes: population ageing, migration, and work–life balance. Together, they constitute a “triangle of tensions” that significantly influences regional socio-economic resilience and long-term development potential. Although existing literature has addressed these issues separately, few studies have analysed their combined effects within a unified analytical framework – particularly in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. This study aims to fill this gap by proposing a model that integrates demographic, social, and spatial dimensions of regional development.

The primary aim of the study is to identify mechanisms through which demographic processes and quality of life – understood here through the lens of WLB – affect regional competitiveness and attractiveness. The **scope** includes quantitative analysis of demographic and migration data (GUS, BDL, Eurostat), content analysis of regional development strategies, and selected qualitative case studies. The contribution of the study lies in proposing WLB as a strategic indicator for assessing regional development potential and in offering concrete recommendations for its integration into demographic and spatial policy frameworks. This approach supports the development of more holistic, forward-looking policy responses to demographic decline and spatial divergence.

In doing so, the article contributes to the growing body of literature linking demographic transitions, quality of life, and regional policy (Champion and Falkingham, 2016; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). It also responds to the specific research gap in Polish and Central European contexts, where WLB is still rarely examined as a territorial policy concern. The proposed conceptual model offers a basis for future research and practical application in strategic planning at the regional level.

2. An Ageing Society and Regional Development

The discussion on the consequences of population ageing gained prominence in the second half of the 20th century, as advances in medicine and improvements in living conditions significantly extended human life expectancy. In Poland, this issue came to the forefront in the 1990s, in the context of systemic transformation and accompanying demographic shifts. In recent years, the accelerating pace of population ageing has elevated the issue to a priority area in social research and public policy.

Ageing societies represent one of the most profound and enduring socio-economic challenges in Europe, particularly in Poland. The ongoing demographic transformation – characterized by declining fertility, rising life expectancy, and both internal and external migration – has had a significant impact on regional population structures, generating deep territorial inequalities in the dynamics of socio-economic development (Bloom, 2011).

This section of the article presents demographic data that illustrate the spatial dimension of ageing processes, their implications for regional labour markets, public service systems, innovation potential, and the role of regional policy in responding to these changes.

According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland, in 2023 the share of people aged 65 and over reached 19.5%, representing an increase of more than four percentage points compared to 2013 (GUS, 2023). Notably, this process is spatially uneven – regions with lower levels of urbanization, such as Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Lubelskie, and Podlaskie, exhibit particularly high rates of growth in the proportion of older adults. In contrast, metropolitan areas such as Warsaw, Kraków, and the Tri-City report lower levels of demographic ageing, attributable to positive net migration and a higher share of working-age residents.

At the regional level, disparities in population structure are evident. In 2022, the proportion of the post-working-age population in the Świętokrzyskie region reached 24.3%, compared to 18.6% in the Mazowieckie region (GUS, 2023). Such differences place increased pressure on local and regional systems, particularly in the areas of social security, healthcare, public transport, and adult education.

An ageing population also exerts a direct impact on regional labour markets. The shrinking pool of working-age individuals leads to labour shortages, especially in low-skilled sectors. In some regions, such as Eastern Poland, the old-age dependency ratio (the number of people above working age per 100 working-age individuals) already exceeds 40, which constrains the productive capacity of local economies (Eurostat, 2023). The decline in labour supply is a persistent phenomenon, and its effects will become increasingly apparent in the coming decades, despite the influx of foreign workers.

Another consequence of population ageing is the rising cost of social and healthcare expenditures. Between 2013 and 2022, public spending on healthcare and pensions in Poland increased from 10.4% to 13.2% of GDP (OECD, 2023). Fiscal pressures are particularly pronounced in regions with a high proportion of elderly residents—local governments are

compelled to allocate more resources to the development of care and medical infrastructure, while simultaneously contending with declining own-source revenues.

Population ageing also poses a risk to the innovation potential of regions. Research shows a strong correlation between population age and the propensity for entrepreneurship and the adoption of new technologies (Bloom, 2010). Regions with ageing populations tend to be less competitive in attracting high-tech investment, which may result in long-term economic marginalization.

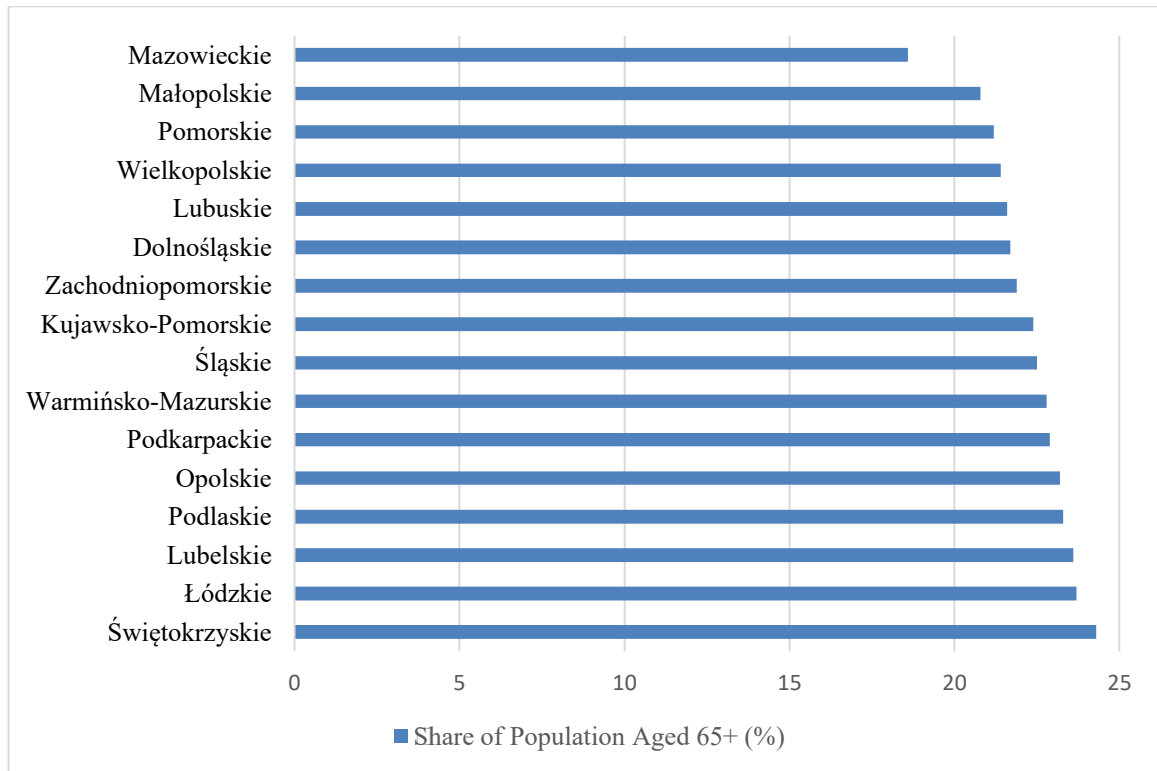
Recent European research highlights that healthcare and long-term care expenditures are projected to rise significantly due to ageing populations. For example, the 2024 *Ageing Report* (European Commission, 2024) forecasts that aggregate ageing-related public spending (covering pensions, healthcare, and long-term care) in the euro area will increase from 25.1% of GDP in 2022 to 26.5% by 2070, with pension costs being the main driver, along with a marked rise in long-term care expenditure. Similarly, *Health at a Glance: Europe 2024* (OECD, 2024) warns that the share of persons over 65 in the EU is expected to grow from 21% in 2023 to 29% by 2050, with more than half of the additional elderly years lived in poor health – placing further strain on healthcare systems.

These findings underline the dual fiscal and service delivery challenges regional authorities face, supporting calls for integrating demographic risk management into place-based policy frameworks.

Regional policy should play a proactive role in addressing demographic change. Essential measures include the development of senior care infrastructure, support for long-term care services, and the promotion of labour force participation among older adults – for example, through flexible employment arrangements and reskilling initiatives. Equally important are investments aimed at improving the quality of life and public services in smaller towns and rural areas, which can help counteract depopulation. Notable examples include EU Cohesion Policy instruments, such as Regional Operational Programmes, which support the development of local healthcare systems and urban revitalization.

In the long term, demographic policy must be integrated with other pillars of regional development, particularly migration and labour market policy. Only through such a comprehensive and coordinated approach will it be possible to sustain territorial cohesion in the face of advancing population ageing.

Fig. 1 Share of Population Aged 65+ by Volvodeship in 2022



Source: own elaboration based on data from Statistics Poland GUS (2023), Bank Danych Lokalnych, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl>

3. Internal and external migration – dynamics and spatial impacts

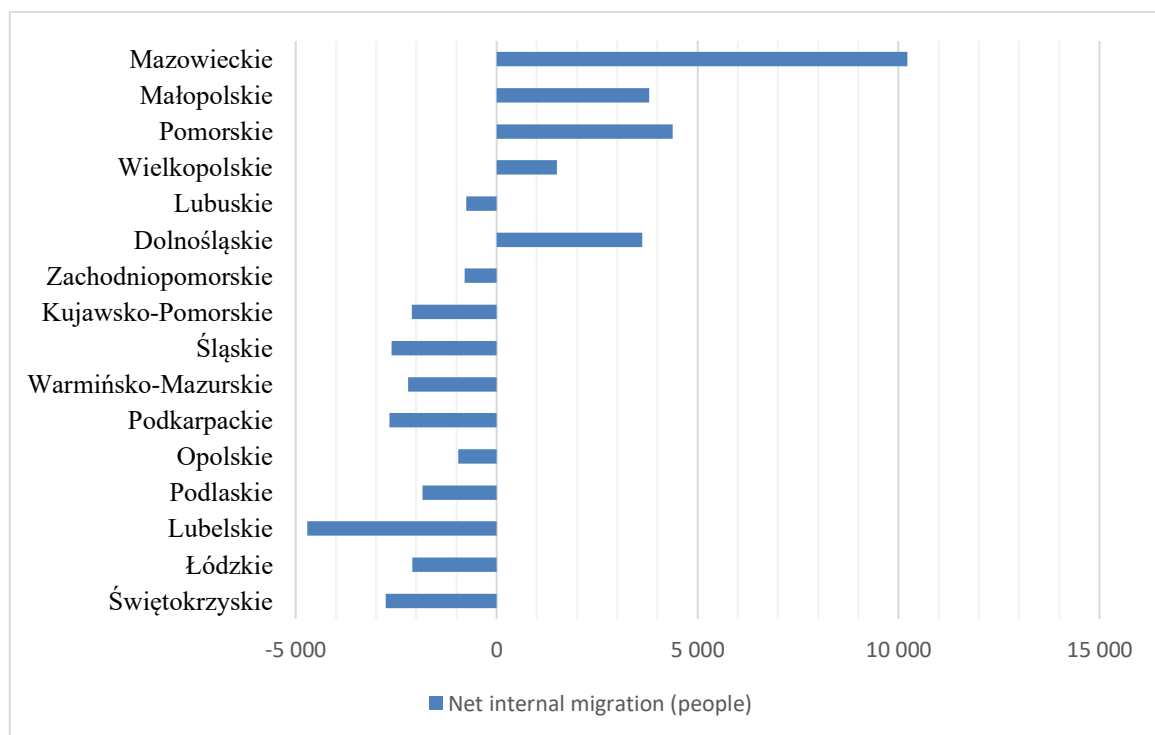
Contemporary internal migration in Poland exhibits complex patterns of population movement.

The traditional rural-to-urban migration model is undergoing significant modification, with processes of suburbanization and de-urbanization becoming increasingly prominent. According to data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland, the period between 2010 and 2020 saw a growing number of individuals relocating from major cities to suburban areas, indicating the rising attractiveness of these locations as residential environments. At the same time, many smaller towns and rural areas are experiencing population outflows, leading to depopulation and the ageing of local communities.

These trends are not unique to Poland and reflect broader post-transition dynamics observed across Central and Eastern Europe, where spatial mobility is increasingly shaped by both economic opportunity and lifestyle-related quality-of-life considerations (Káposzta, 2021). The reconfiguration of migration flows within national borders is thus closely tied to regional disparities in development, infrastructure, and access to public services.

The figure below illustrates regional differences in internal migration balance across Poland's voivodeships in 2020. A positive migration balance was recorded in voivodeships such as Mazowieckie, Małopolskie, and Pomorskie, suggesting that these regions remain attractive to internal migrants. In contrast, a negative migration balance was observed in voivodeships including Świętokrzyskie, Lubelskie, and Podlaskie, which may indicate a continued outflow of residents from these areas. These figures confirm ongoing trends of urbanization as well as the demographic decline of rural regions and smaller urban centres.

Fig. 2 Net internal migration in Poland by Voivodeship in 2023



Source: Statistics Poland (2023). Internal migration of the population for permanent residence by voivodeship in the years 1974–2023. Warsaw: Statistics Poland. Available at: <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/migracje-wewnetrzne-ludnosci/>

Like many other European countries, Poland is facing significant demographic challenges, including population ageing and a shrinking working-age population. In response to these challenges, immigration has become an increasingly important component of demographic policy. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the number of immigrants, particularly from Ukraine, Belarus, and other Eastern European countries, who are entering the Polish labour market and helping to address workforce shortages. According to the Central Statistical Office, the number of foreign nationals working in Poland exceeded 1.5 million in 2023, marking a significant increase compared to previous years (GUS, 2023).

International migration is playing an increasingly important role in ensuring the demographic and economic sustainability of Poland. In the face of a declining working-age population and a growing share of elderly individuals, immigration has become a key compensatory mechanism for both the labour market and the social security system.

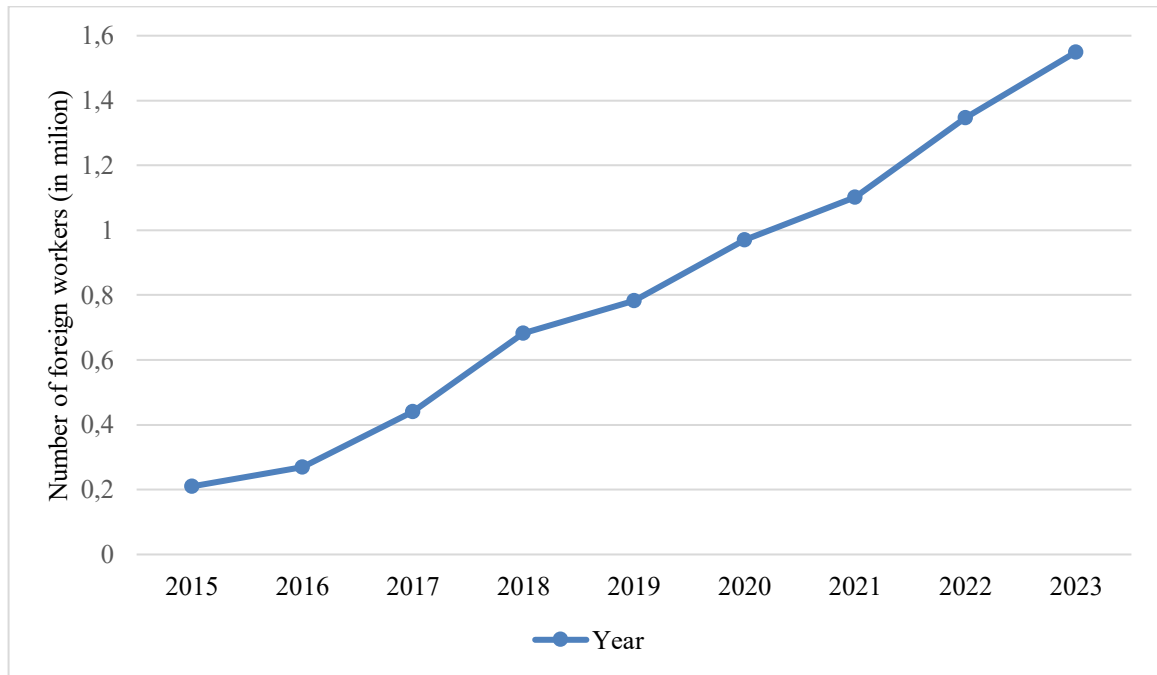
In recent years, Poland has undergone a marked transformation – from a country of emigration to a major destination for labour migrants. This shift has become particularly evident since 2014, following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, which triggered a sharp increase in the number of migrants arriving in Poland for employment purposes. Data from the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) indicate that in December 2015, the number of foreign nationals registered in the social insurance system stood at just over 210,000, whereas by 2023 it had exceeded 1.55 million (ZUS, 2023; GUS, 2023). This dynamic shift has positioned Poland as one of the primary destinations for labour migration in Central and Eastern Europe (Kaczmarczyk, 2022).

The structure of immigration inflows is heavily concentrated among several national groups, with citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, India, and Nepal comprising the majority. These populations are primarily located in regions with high labour demand in sectors such as services, construction, logistics, and agriculture – notably in the Mazowieckie, Wielkopolskie, and Dolnośląskie voivodeships. At the same time, the spatial distribution of foreign nationals is becoming increasingly diverse, giving rise to new challenges for local social and integration policies (Szulecka, 2020).

From a regional policy perspective, the inflow of immigrants has the potential to mitigate the effects of demographic deficits by improving employment rates and stimulating local consumption and demand for services. However, the scale of this phenomenon necessitates adequate institutional support – particularly in the areas of language education, access to public services, and labour market integration. A failure to provide sufficient support may lead to social tensions and the deepening of integration barriers.

The observed trend indicates that Poland has become an active participant in the European migration market, and immigration – despite its largely short-term nature – is increasingly functioning as a strategic instrument for managing demographic change.

Fig. 3 Number of Foreign Workers in Poland (2015-2023)



Source: Statistics Poland (2023); Social Insurance Institution (2023).

The influx of immigrants into specific regions of Poland brings with it both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, migrants contribute to economic growth and help meet the demands of the labour market. On the other, their presence can lead to social tensions, particularly in communities that have not previously been exposed to significant levels of foreign immigration. Integration challenges include the need to ensure adequate public services, provide intercultural education, and foster social cohesion.

As the number of immigrants in Poland continues to rise, so too do the associated social and institutional challenges. While international migration helps to fill critical gaps in the labour force and supports the functioning of key economic sectors, it also generates a range of tensions in regions experiencing the highest levels of inflow. The uneven development of social infrastructure and the absence of a long-term integration strategy may contribute to growing conflicts of interest between host communities and migrant populations.

This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in voivodeships that have consistently recorded the highest levels of foreign in-migration – namely, Mazowieckie, Dolnośląskie, Małopolskie, and Wielkopolskie (Duszczyk and Matuszczyk, 2021). Local communities, especially in smaller towns and municipalities, may experience a sense of losing control over

demographic change. This can manifest as the resistance to migrants or fears regarding competition for jobs, housing, and educational resources (Szulecka, 2020).

One of the key challenges is ensuring equal access to public services. Immigrants often face a range of barriers – including linguistic, procedural, and cultural – that hinder their ability to access healthcare, education, and social support. In many cases, there is a lack of coherent solutions in the areas of intercultural education, the integration of migrant children into the school system, and the provision of affordable housing for low-income populations (OECD, 2023).

Labour market segmentation remains a persistent problem, often resulting in the overrepresentation of migrants in low-paid and precarious jobs, which reinforces their social marginalization. Limited opportunities for career advancement, lack of recognition of professional qualifications, and restricted access to long-term residence permits negatively affect both the integration process and employment stability.

In response to these challenges, some local governments have begun implementing targeted integration initiatives. Notable examples include programmes in cities such as Warsaw and Wrocław, which offer language training, advisory centres, and partnerships with non-governmental organizations. However, on a national scale, these efforts remain fragmented, often temporary, and insufficiently funded.

Tab 1. Selected Areas of Integration Challenges in Migrant-Receiving Regions

Integration Challenge	Illustrative Manifestation in Host Regions
Access to public services	Difficulties registering with general practitioners or enrolling children in schools
Language and cultural barriers	Lack of translation support, frequent social misunderstandings
Limited housing policy	High rental costs, shortage of affordable social housing
Insufficient institutional support	Low availability of integration programmes and advisory points
Labour market segmentation	Predominance of employment in low-paid and low-skilled sectors

Source: Author's own elaboration based on data from Duszczyk and Matuszczyk (2021), Szulecka (2020), and OECD (2023)

Because of the foregoing data, integration policy should be considered a fundamental element of regional development strategy. This entails not only the adaptation of public institutions but also the active engagement of local communities in fostering intercultural dialogue and cooperation. Only through such an approach will it be possible to prevent potential tensions and to maximize the socio-economic benefits associated with the presence of migrants.

Migration – both internal and international – has a significant impact on social structures and labour markets in Poland. Population mobility leads to shifts in the demographic composition of regions, affects the availability of the workforce, and contributes to the shaping of local identity. In regions experiencing high levels of immigration, greater cultural diversity is observed, which may prompt a redefinition of local norms and values. At the same time, when appropriately managed, migration processes can contribute to socio-economic revitalization and the cultural enrichment of local communities.

Firstly, migration influences the demographic structure in spatial terms. Regions with a positive migration balance – particularly metropolitan areas and their functional zones – tend to exhibit relatively younger populations and higher generational replacement ratios. In contrast, peripheral areas losing residents to more economically dynamic urban centres are undergoing continued population ageing and depopulation. These trends, in turn, weaken local communities, erode social networks, and diminish the capacity of local governments to deliver public services (GUS, 2023).

Secondly, migration reshapes the structure and functioning of local labour markets. Outflow regions face labour shortages, particularly in public services, healthcare, education, and agriculture. Conversely, regions attracting migrants – both domestic and foreign – experience a more diversified labour market, increased private sector employment, and intensified competition for jobs, especially in low-wage segments. In cities such as Warsaw, Wrocław, and Kraków, the substantial presence of foreign workers in certain sectors has become a persistent phenomenon (OECD, 2023).

This development can produce dual effects: on the one hand, economic revitalization and increased productivity; on the other, potential social tensions and the risk of dual labour markets, where migrants are employed under less favourable conditions than native workers (Kaczmarczyk, 2022).

Thirdly, the presence of migrants – particularly in smaller communities – affects local cultural identity. Multiculturalism gains prominence, while questions emerge regarding the

boundaries of integration and assimilation. Some local communities actively engage in integration efforts, while others adopt defensive attitudes, perceiving the influx of migrants as a threat to local social cohesion and cultural norms (Szulecka, 2020).

Tab. 2 The Impact of Migration on Selected Dimensions of Regional Functioning

Area of Impact	Positive Effect of Migration	Negative Effect of Migration
Demography	Rejuvenation of the population structure	Depopulation and ageing of peripheral regions
Labour Market	Occupational diversification, increased mobility	Wage pressure, labour market segmentation
Local Culture	Multiculturalism, increased tolerance	Identity-based conflicts, hostility toward outsiders
Public Services	Development of infrastructure in receiving regions	Inadequacy of services in depopulating areas

Source: Author's own elaboration based on GUS (2023), OECD (2023), Kaczmarczyk (2022), and Szulecka (2020)

In the face of deepening territorial disparities and growing demographic pressure, it is essential to integrate migration policy with regional development strategies. Only a comprehensive approach—one that addresses the needs of both migrants and host communities—can foster long-term social and economic cohesion within the spatial structure of the country.

4. Work-life balance in the territorial context

Work-life balance (WLB) is today considered one of the key indicators of quality of life and socially sustainable development. The concept refers to the ability to reconcile professional activity with family responsibilities and personal needs, as well as time allocated for rest and personal development. The literature emphasizes that conditions conducive to WLB are not only the result of individual choices and preferences, but also the outcome of structural determinants, including those of a spatial nature (OECD, 2020; Eurofound, 2022).

In Poland, there is a clear territorial differentiation in the factors affecting the ability to maintain a work-life balance. In metropolitan regions such as Warsaw, Kraków, or Wrocław, residents enjoy significantly better access to the labour market, social services, and infrastructure supporting daily functioning – including preschool education, healthcare

facilities, and public transport. At the same time, however, these areas are also more frequently affected by work overload, performance pressure, and long commuting times (Sikora-Gaca and Słaby, 2021).

A different situation is observed in peripheral and provincial regions. Although the pace of life there may be slower and environmental conditions more conducive to health, shortcomings in the availability of public services, a limited labour market, and weak spatial mobility significantly constrain the real possibilities of choosing between employment and family life. The absence of childcare facilities, afternoon care options, or accessible transportation connections often prevents women from taking up employment or engaging in full-time professional activity (CBOS, 2021).

From the perspective of regional policy, it is essential to promote conditions that support work–life balance (WLB) in a manner adapted to the local context. These actions should be reinforced by local-level programmes, such as municipal family policy strategies, as well as by EU funds implemented under regional development programmes (EU Cohesion Policy, 2021–2027).

Tab. 3 Selected Factors Influencing Work–Life Balance in the Spatial Context

Type of Region	Access to nurseries and kindergartens	Transport Mobility	Labour Market and Employment Flexibility
Metropolis	High	High	Diverse, competitive
County Town	Medium	Moderate	Limited sectoral opportunities
Rural Area	Low	Low	Low flexibility, frequent shortages of job offers

Source: own elaboration based on data from Statistics Poland (GUS, 2023), CBOS (2021), Eurofound (2022)

Spatial disparities in quality of life – and consequently, in the potential to achieve WLB – have become one of the most visible symptoms of socio-economic polarisation across the country.

For this reason, it is proposed that the dimension of worklife balance (WLB) be incorporated into regional development indicators as well as into broader spatial and social planning frameworks. Current tools for assessing regional development – such as GDP per capita, unemployment rates, or levels of investment – do not fully reflect the quality of life of

local populations. As highlighted by research from Eurostat and the OECD (2020), factors related to the balance between professional and private life are increasingly recognised as key to sustainable social development, territorial attractiveness, and the ability to attract human capital.

Integrating WLB as a component of territorial policies implies the need to develop and implement comprehensive indicators that would measure, among others: the availability of institutional care for children and dependent people; flexibility of employment forms; accessibility of public services during afternoon hours; remote work opportunities; and time spent on commuting and household responsibilities. For example, the average commuting time to work in the Mazowieckie voivodeship is 43 minutes, while in the eastern regions it rarely exceeds 25 minutes – not necessarily indicating better WLB, but often reflecting a lack of employment opportunities near the place of residence (Statistics Poland, 2023).

From the perspective of spatial planning, this necessitates the promotion of solutions that support localised modes of living – such as the development of micro-services, the decentralisation of public institutions, the enhancement of digital services, and the creation of local coworking hubs. The integration of work-life balance (WLB) considerations into urban and regional planning should become a key priority within revitalisation programmes, land-use plans, and regional strategies for innovation and social development.

Public interventions aimed at reducing territorial disparities should encompass both hard (infrastructural) measures and soft (educational and institutional) actions. In regions with lower infrastructural capacity, it is essential to subsidise the development of care services, implement flexible work arrangements within the public sector, and expand access to digital education that enables peripheral populations to participate in the remote labour market.

Only under such conditions will it be possible to shape regional development policy that truly supports not only economic growth, but also the well-being of local communities.

Incorporating this perspective into regional policy in Poland also aligns with the objectives of the European Union's Cohesion Policy for 2021-2027, which explicitly emphasises the need to promote fair access to services and to combat both spatial and social exclusion.

5. The trangle of tensions and implications for regional policy

The process of population ageing is contributing to growing labour shortages, which in turn increases the need to attract both domestic and international migrants. Regions with a high share of post-working-age populations—particularly those outside metropolitan areas – are unable to maintain employment levels without inward migration. At the same time, depopulation and the limited attractiveness of these areas reduce their capacity to attract newcomers, resulting in a vicious cycle of demographic decline (Szwarc, 2023).

Internal and international migration exerts an ambivalent influence on work-life balance (WLB). On the one hand, it may improve living conditions by providing access to better employment and services in urban centres. On the other hand, it puts pressure on infrastructure in receiving regions while exacerbating service deficits in areas experiencing outmigration. Foreign workers are frequently employed in shift-based or seasonal systems, often without access to institutional childcare or support, which reduces their quality of life and constrains WLB.

Insufficient conditions for reconciling professional and family life – particularly for women – affect reproductive decisions and contribute to declining fertility rates. The lack of flexible employment forms, childcare institutions, or eldercare support within households accelerates population ageing. In this context, investment in WLB emerges as a strategic response to the demographic crisis.

Below is a figure accompanying the final section of the article, “*The Triangle of Tensions and Implications for Regional Policy*”, illustrating the mutual interdependencies among the three core phenomena: **ageing society**, **migration**, and **work–life balance**.

Tab. 4 Relationships Between Ageing, Migration and Work–Life Balance

	Ageing Society	Migration	Work-life balance
Ageing Society	1,0	0,6	-0,4
Migration	0,6	1,0	-0,3
Work-life balance	-0,4	-0,3	1,0

Source: own elaboration based on GUS (2023), Eurostat (2023), OECD (2023)

Table 4 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients illustrating the strength and direction of relationships between three key variables relevant to demographic dynamics and regional development: ageing society, migration, and work–life balance (WLB). The analysis is based

on standardized regional-level data (NUTS-2) for the years 2020–2022, derived from GUS (2023), Eurostat (2023), and OECD (2023).

Each cell in the table indicates the degree to which two variables are statistically related:

- A coefficient of **+1.0** denotes a perfect positive correlation (the variables increase together).
- A coefficient of **−1.0** denotes a perfect negative correlation (as one variable increases, the other decreases).
- A coefficient of **0** suggests no linear correlation.

Key insights from the table:

- The **positive correlation (0.6)** between ageing and migration indicates that regions with more advanced population ageing tend to experience higher outmigration, suggesting that demographic decline is being reinforced by population loss.
- The **negative correlation (−0.4)** between ageing and WLB shows that poor work–life balance is associated with greater ageing, likely due to the outmigration of younger people seeking better living conditions.
- The **negative correlation (−0.3)** between migration and WLB supports this interpretation, suggesting that quality-of-life factors are key drivers of population movement.

These findings empirically support the article’s conceptual model of the **“triangle of tensions”**, demonstrating how demographic structure, population mobility, and quality-of-life conditions are mutually interdependent. This interconnection highlights the need for integrated regional policy responses that go beyond demographic statistics and actively address socio-spatial determinants of attractiveness and retention.

The greatest challenge remains the integration of conflicting objectives: maintaining employment levels, preserving social cohesion, and ensuring demographic balance. Metropolitan development must not come at the expense of the socio-economic degradation of peripheral regions. At the same time, the regional development model should guarantee the possibility of reconciling professional and family life across the entire territorial structure of the country.

6. Conclusions

This article presents a multidimensional analysis of three interrelated phenomena: population ageing, migration, and the quality of work-life balance (WLB), considered within the framework of regional development. The study introduces the concept of a "triangle of tensions" – a dynamic configuration of mutual dependencies, in which each of these processes affects the other two, thereby shaping the trajectories of socio-economic development across different types of regions.

It is argued that an ageing society exerts increasing pressure on local labour markets, public service systems, and the capacity of social security frameworks. Migration – both internal and international – serves an adaptive function by compensating for demographic deficits, yet it simultaneously gives rise to integration-related tensions, particularly in regions with high inflows. At the same time, spatial disparities in access to conditions supporting WLB influence the territorial distribution of life quality and opportunities for personal and professional development.

Based on an analysis of empirical data and case examples from Poland, the article identifies key challenges for regional policy: the need for territorialised development strategies, the advancement of quality-of-life indicators, support for local integration policies, and investment in social infrastructure and flexible employment arrangements. The author advocates for the inclusion of WLB in the regional development assessment framework, treating it as a strategic component in enhancing the socio-demographic resilience of regions. Only an integrated approach can enable effective management of the tensions arising at the intersection of these three domains, thereby promoting territorial cohesion and the well-being of local populations.

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