

An Analysis of Migration Policy: The Effects of India-Poland Bilateral Agreements on Human Mobility

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Abstract

Migration has emerged as a critical dimension of contemporary bilateral relations, particularly in the context of evolving labour markets and global mobility regimes. This paper examines the impact of India–Poland bilateral agreements on human mobility, with a focus on migration policy, institutional frameworks, and governance gaps. Using qualitative analysis of official agreements, memoranda of understanding, policy documents, and diplomatic exchanges, the study evaluates existing mechanisms regulating labour, educational, and skilled migration between the two countries. The findings reveal that India and Poland lack a comprehensive bilateral migration framework. Instead, migration governance is shaped by fragmented sector-specific arrangements and broader European Union regulations, limiting policy coherence and institutional coordination. Key challenges include the absence of structured labour migration pathways, inconsistencies in qualification recognition, and weak migrant protection mechanisms. These gaps increase reliance on private intermediaries and create vulnerabilities for migrants. Despite these limitations, the paper identifies significant opportunities for enhanced cooperation. Poland's labour shortages and demographic transition, combined with India's skilled workforce and expanding global mobility initiatives, create strong potential for mutually beneficial migration partnerships. The study argues for a formal, transparent, and rights-based bilateral migration framework that integrates labour mobility, education, and social protection. Such cooperation would strengthen safe and legal migration channels and contribute to sustainable India–Poland relations.

Keywords: Migration Policy, Bilateral Agreements, India–Poland Relations, Labour Mobility, Human Migration.

Introduction

India and Poland have a long history of friendship that is characterized by strong political ties, active economic exchanges, and human mobility. In the year 1954, the first diplomatic ties were established with Poland, and very soon an Indian embassy was opened in Warsaw in 1957. Poland and India have similar ideological views because they oppose racism, colonialism, and imperialism. Prime Minister Nehru's visit in 1955 marked the beginning of a close and friendly bilateral relationship between Poland and India, when Poland was under communist rule until 1989. Following Poland's democratic transition in 1989, these friendly contacts evolved into hard currency trading agreements, which were maintained by the expansion of both nations' economies and trade. In the year 2004, Poland joined the European Union, and this partnership grew much stronger when Poland became one of India's most important Central European markets. The 70th anniversary of the founding of diplomatic relations

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between India and Poland was commemorated by PM Modi's most recent visit to Poland, which took place on August 21–22, 2024 (*PIB, 2024*). The fact that an Indian prime minister visited Poland after 45 years is considered a historic development. Given the decision to advance the bilateral relationship between Poland and India to the level of a strategic partnership, this visit is regarded as successful. During this visit, a joint declaration was released on the bilateral action plan (2024-2028) to carry out future strategic cooperation. In addition, PM Modi announced the start of a youth exchange program when speaking to the Indian community in Poland. An estimated 25,000 Indians live in Poland, where they are traders of textiles, clothing, electronics, and other goods who arrived after the fall of Communism in Poland. Software and IT enterprises, as well as multinational corporations, employ Indian professionals. As of right now, about 100 Indian eateries are open in Poland, and about 5000 Indian students are enrolled in Polish universities.

Indian community in Poland

Although it is a relatively recent phenomenon, Indian immigration to Poland has been rapidly increasing, particularly after 2004. Poland is thought to have the 16th largest Indian community in the EU and the 20th largest in Europe. Before 1989, Poland had its first Indian settlers. The majority of them were Indian students, but there were also mostly diplomats, a few specialists, and farming students at the Polish University. The 1990s saw a new era in state-led cooperation as well as in business, tourism, academia, and interpersonal relationships with the fall of communism, the start of economic reform, and the rise of new business prospects. The majority of Sindhi and Gujarati textile traders and small business owners are part of the first significant wave of Indian migrants in Poland. (*KUGIEL & PEŁDZIWIATR, 2014*).

Poland's entry into the European Union in 2004 marked a notable shift in human mobility. Between 2000 and 2004, the number of Indian immigrants in Poland increased by 37%, from 4,430 to 6,092, and then doubled over the next four years, reaching 12,184 by 2007. The number of Indian visitors visiting Poland fell sharply from over 15,500 annually to less than 8,000 in 2008 and less than 6000 in 2009 as a result of Poland's entry into the Schengen area in late 2007 and new visa laws. By 2013, about 10,000 Indian tourists were visiting Poland, although this trend quickly reversed. Approximately one-third of Indians in Poland intend to settle there at least temporarily, and the bulk of them have short-term residency permits. Nearly half of the Indian population lives close to Warsaw, the country's capital, according to the Office of Foreigners. 'Little India' is even the moniker given to the Warsaw neighbouring settlements of Raszyn and Wolka Kosowska. (*Kugiel, 2012*).

Education as an Unrealized Potential

Due to both domestic and international demands, higher education in Poland and India is changing significantly. With over 600 million people under 25, India is facing enormous pressure to strengthen the sustainability of higher education, and Poland is changing its policies to draw in foreign students to keep its universities afloat in the face of growing demographic issues. Young people in India have a strong desire to learn, and as the middle class grows, millions of people can now afford to do so. Polish state universities are struggling to secure funding with fewer students, while private universities are struggling to survive. In addition to having the world's largest territorial age population, India is predicted to have the second-largest graduating talent pipeline by 2030, surpassing both China and the United States. (*Kumar, 2017*).

Research Objectives

The expected research objectives of this research proposal are mentioned below.

- To analyse the existing bilateral agreements, MoUs, and diplomatic exchanges between India and Poland related to migration, labour, and education.
- To identify gaps, challenges, and future opportunities for cooperation between India and Poland in the field of migration.

Research Questions

- What formal agreements currently exist between India and Poland to regulate migration?
- Are there policy gaps or inconsistencies that hinder safe and legal migration?

Literature Review

Poland must be receptive to the ideas offered by other EU nations when establishing its immigration strategy. The country's border location, the Belarusian regime's proximity, which uses illegal migration to destabilize eastern EU countries, and its function as a transit nation on migration routes that primarily lead to Germany mean that other European nations' actions must be considered in the planned

migration policy (Polko, 2025). Poland had to conform its immigration laws to EU norms to become a member of the EU, which led the government to take a more accommodating approach to immigration. However, following the 2015 European refugee crisis, Poland's immigration policies declined. The Polish government imposed restrictions on immigration and voiced opposition to allowing refugees to enter the country. Poland is now openly resisting the EU's plans for refugee distribution and is doubting its commitment to the EU's collective migration policies as a result of this situation (Yilmaz, 2025). In Poland and India, the educational industry is extremely small, and methods are inadequate; there is a lack of knowledge exchange and comprehension of the potential market for education. Through raising awareness in both the corporate and societal areas, this sector can play a far larger role in developing India-Poland relations. Insufficient measures have been put in place for inclusive growth in the education sector, even though both economies are expanding and are willing to establish new trade relations. Significant adjustments using multifaceted strategies are still needed to make Poland and India compatible and complementary to one another (Kumar, 2017). It was clear that Poland and India might have some sort of "enhanced partnership" and that both nations should improve their cross-sector cooperation. It might be too soon to discuss a "strategic partnership" at this time, given the lack of present connection and the obvious disparities in viewpoints on several global issues. Rather, there is a need for more coordination and meetings across the three levels of government, industry, and people (Kugiel, 2012). A shift in perspective and a determination to view India as one of Poland's most significant allies and a global force with a significant impact on global security and the economy is crucial for the success of the new plan. Because developing an alluring and mutually advantageous offer of cooperation requires the involvement of numerous government departments and organizations, as well as a substantial budget, such a move can only be successful if it originates from Poland's highest levels of government. The 70th anniversary of Polish Indian diplomatic relations, which falls in 2024, offers a chance to begin a new stage of strategic bilateral ties (KUGIEL, 2024). The main source of trade between India and Poland was the export of mineral resources, machinery, and mechanical appliances. Trade in the film and agricultural industries has bright future potential. With its huge economic potential, India's economy is one of the world's most important. In comparison to the same time in 2019, imports fell by 12.77%, and exports fell by 22.73% between January and May 2020. Since there is still a lengthy waiting period, the consular processes for issuing Polish visas to Indian investors should be streamlined. The primary areas of collaboration between Poland and India should be energy, mining, international trade, and defence (Dygas, 2021). Strong migration pressures in India, Poland's promising economic future, and improved ties between Poland and India are all likely to support the growth of the Indian population in Poland. In addition, the Indians who have already settled in Poland will facilitate future migratory patterns and the assimilation of Indians into Polish society. The economy's expansion and the ultimate form of Poland's migration policy, which is currently being reviewed, will ultimately determine the true magnitude and vibrancy of these migratory flows. All of this indicates that the Indian community in Poland will continue to expand and may eventually take on a more prominent role (KUGIEL & PEŹZIWIATR, 2014).

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design to examine the role of bilateral agreements in shaping migration between India and Poland. The methodology is primarily based on policy and document analysis, complemented by a review of secondary academic literature.

Data Sources

The research draws on multiple secondary sources, including:

- Official bilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding (MoUs), and joint statements issued by the Governments of India and Poland
- Policy documents and migration-related frameworks of the European Union relevant to Poland
- Reports from international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and OECD
- Scholarly articles, books, and working papers on migration governance, labour mobility, and bilateral migration agreements

Analytical Framework

A **thematic content analysis** approach is employed to examine the collected documents. Key themes include labour mobility, educational migration, institutional coordination, migrant protection, and skills recognition. The analysis focuses on identifying:

- The scope and nature of existing formal agreements
- Policy gaps and regulatory inconsistencies affecting safe and legal migration
- Opportunities for future bilateral cooperation

Scope and Limitations

The study is limited to formal policy instruments and does not include primary fieldwork or migrant interviews. While this may restrict empirical depth, the approach allows for a focused institutional and policy-level assessment suitable for comparative migration studies.

Overall, this methodology enables a systematic evaluation of India–Poland migration governance within a broader international and regional context.

Results and Discussion

Existing India–Poland Bilateral Framework on Migration

The analysis of official documents, policy statements, and diplomatic exchanges reveals that **India and Poland do not have a comprehensive, standalone bilateral migration agreement**. Instead, migration governance between the two countries is shaped by a **fragmented set of instruments**, including:

- **Labour mobility–related MoUs** under broader economic cooperation frameworks
- **Educational exchange agreements** facilitating student mobility
- **EU-level regulations**, which Poland follows as an EU member state, indirectly shape Indian migration flows

While India has actively pursued labour mobility partnerships with several EU states, Poland's engagement remains **sector-specific and largely demand-driven**, particularly in construction, manufacturing, IT, and healthcare. Educational mobility—especially Indian students enrolling in Polish universities—has increased, but policy coordination remains minimal.

These findings address **Research Question 1**, indicating that existing agreements are **partial, indirect, and insufficiently institutionalized** for managing contemporary migration flows

Policy Gaps and Institutional Limitations

The study identifies several **structural and policy gaps** that hinder safe, legal, and sustainable migration:

- **Absence of a structured labour migration framework**, leading to ad hoc recruitment practices
- **Limited coordination between Indian sending institutions and Polish employers**, increasing the risk of contract mismatches
- **Recognition of qualifications** remains inconsistent, especially in regulated professions
- **Weak migrant protection mechanisms**, particularly regarding social security portability and dispute resolution

These gaps are compounded by the lack of **joint monitoring mechanisms** and limited data-sharing on migrant flows. As a result, migrants often rely on private intermediaries, increasing vulnerability to exploitation.

This directly answers **Research Question 2**, confirming that **policy inconsistencies and regulatory silos** significantly constrain the effectiveness of India–Poland migration governance.

Emerging Opportunities and Strategic Potential

Despite these challenges, the research identifies **significant future opportunities**:

- Poland's **aging population and labour shortages** create demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers
- India's **demographic dividend** and skilled workforce position it as a strategic partner
- Growing diplomatic engagement between India and Central and Eastern Europe offers scope for **migration to be mainstreamed into bilateral relations**

A structured bilateral agreement could facilitate:

- Ethical recruitment standards
- Skills matching and certification frameworks
- Temporary and circular migration pathways

Such cooperation would align with broader **EU–India mobility dialogues**, enhancing policy coherence.

Conclusion

This study concludes that while **India–Poland migration relations are expanding in practice**, they remain **under-institutionalized at the policy level**. Existing agreements are fragmented and insufficient to address the complexities of contemporary human mobility. The absence of a comprehensive bilateral migration framework has resulted in policy gaps that affect migrant protection, skills recognition, and long-term cooperation.

To maximize mutual benefits, both countries should move toward a **formal, transparent, and rights-based migration partnership**, integrating labour mobility, education, and social security considerations. Strengthening bilateral mechanisms would not only ensure safer and more legal migration pathways but also contribute to sustainable economic and diplomatic relations between India and Poland.

Overall, the research underscores the need to treat migration not merely as a labour supply issue but as a **strategic dimension of bilateral cooperation** in an evolving global mobility landscape.

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