

PILLAR 1 OF THE TALENT BOOSTER MECHANISM

Technical Assistance

Helping regions facing a 'talent development trap' to harness talent

ŁÓDZKIE, POLAND — INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT SERVICE
IMPLEMENTATION REPORT



**HARNESSING
TALENT
PLATFORM**

A new boost for EU Regions

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Executive Summary



Pillar 1 of the [Talent Booster Mechanism \(TBM\)](#) supported 11 EU regions facing a 'talent development trap'¹ to more effectively address the consequences of demographic change and brain drain. This [Technical Assistance \(TA\) pilot project](#) provided targeted expertise to help design and implement actionable frameworks to attract, develop and retain talent. Phase I of the TA pursued a [diagnostic review](#) of the region's current capacity to harness talent through a 'needs & gap' assessment. Based on this Diagnostic Phase, Phase II of the TA – the Implementation Phase – provided tailored support to undertake concrete actions to more effectively harness talent.

In **Łódzkie Region, Poland**, the Implementation Phase focused on two key areas:

1. **Intelligence support: collecting evidence on the motivations of young people**, aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the motivations and decision-making processes of young university graduates.
2. **Support the establishment of strategic cooperation with selected research institutions to monitor graduate migration**, enhancing data quality and improving the understanding of migration flows through partnerships with institutions that process relevant data.

The support aimed to **address gaps in understanding the extent, specificity and causes of the brain drain phenomenon**. Existing research and public statistics provide a very limited picture in this regard, making policy design challenging. Given resource constraints, identifying key influencing factors is crucial. A comprehensive **study of university students** was designed, conducted and analysed, involving close to 2,000 students across five universities. As a result, key factors for enhancing **regional attractiveness** to mitigate **brain drain** were identified in the areas of the **labour market, transport and spatial planning, and regional image and branding**. Recognising the need for a deeper and continual understanding of young graduates' motivations, this exercise will be **periodically repeated** to **track evolving aspirations** and trends among the region's youth.

Additionally, a **partnership** with two **research institutes** was established to **enhance the monitoring of talent migration**, providing **quantitative evidence** currently unavailable to regional policymakers. The established relationships with these institutes will ensure the systematic tracking of talent migration in the Łódzkie Region.

The following **Implementation Report** provides a comprehensive summary of the targeted actions of the TA in Łódzkie Region, describing what was implemented and, crucially, what insights were gained.² Moreover, it discusses the added value of this pilot project and distils key takeaways for other regions facing similar challenges.

¹ As defined by the [Communication on Harnessing talent in Europe's Regions](#).

² The Implementation Report provides an overview of the various outputs developed for the region and distills key insights gained throughout the process. The individual outputs have been delivered to the region and, if relevant to a broader audience, may be published on this platform at a later date.

I. Main challenges & needs

Phase I of the Technical Assistance (TA) provided via Pillar 1 of the Talent Booster Mechanism pursued a diagnostic review of the main challenges and needs of Łódzkie in its effort to more effectively harness talent. The full Diagnostic Report, including a more comprehensive analysis of key challenges, is published and [available online](#). In what follows, we describe selected challenges that were of particular focus during Phase II of the TA – the Implementation Phase.

Demographic change

Since the late 1980s, the Łódzkie Region³ has experienced a substantial decline in population, with a loss of nearly 250 thousand residents (9.4%) between 2000 and 2021. Projections indicate a continuation of this trend, with further losses of up to 250 thousand by 2040, 600 thousand by 2060⁴, and potentially 1 million by 2100⁵. Alongside this decline, **the region is experiencing an ageing population**, with a decrease of 9.8 per 1000 inhabitants between 2015 and 2020 in the working-age population. The region has one of the country's lowest shares of pre-working-age residents (17% in 2019) and the highest share of post-working-age residents (24.3%), resulting in the highest demographic burden in Poland⁶. These trends are driven by an ageing population and negative net migration of younger cohorts (-1.5 per 1000 inhabitants between 2015 and 2019). **Migration accounts for 15% of the population decline**, with the remainder due to natural demographic changes (a higher number of deaths than births).

Brain Drain

Emigration from the Łódzkie Region is primarily concentrated among younger individuals, contributing to the phenomenon of brain drain. Although the region's population with higher education is near the EU average (30.2% in 2020), the proportion of those aged 24–34 has significantly declined—the fastest rate in Poland—from 44.6% in 2018 to 34.3% in 2022⁷, likely due to migration. The majority of migrations are interregional, with fewer residents moving abroad⁸. Key destinations include the Mazowieckie (34%), Dolnośląskie (14%), Małopolskie (11%), and Śląskie (9%) regions. Migration to the Mazowieckie region, particularly Warsaw, is driven by better job opportunities, higher salaries, proximity to Łódź (~120 km). On the other hand, lower property prices in the Łódzkie Region foster circular migration⁹. However, the specific motivations of emigrants, their qualifications and

³ The Łódzkie Voivodeship within its present borders was created in 1999.

⁴ Population projection for 2023-2060, Statistics Poland, Warsaw 31.08.2023.

⁵ Eurostat (data code: proj_19rp3).

⁶ Development Strategy of Łódzkie Voivodship 2030. Łódź, 2021.

⁷ Eurostat (data code: edat_lfse_04).

⁸ For example, in 2022, 484 people from the Łódzkie Region decided to migrate abroad (for permanent residence), while at the same time almost 6,000 people (12 times more) were registered to move to another region in Poland (Statistics Poland data - Local Data Bank: Internal and foreign migrations).

⁹ In 2021, 27,000 employees living in Łódź travelled to work, 36.3% of them outside their own region. The largest group of these people worked in Warsaw. Source: Commuting to work in the light of the results of the National Population and Housing Census 2021. Statistics Poland, 2024

specialisations, remain undiagnosed. To address this knowledge gap, it is essential to gain a deeper insight into these migration drivers.

Regional Economy

The demographic situation in the Łódzkie Region appears to be influenced by the region's economy, which is showing signs of mixed progress. In 2022, GDP per capita reached 73.0% of the EU average (Poland 79%) representing a 14.8 percentage point increase since 2010. The region has also seen improvements in employment and activity rates, with employment rising from 51.8% to 57.1% and activity from 56.2% to 59.1% between 2015 and 2022. However, the economy remains heavily reliant on industry, with trade as the second-largest sector¹⁰. There are ongoing shortages of professionals in areas such as electricians, mechanics, healthcare workers, psychologists, and accountants¹¹. A key challenge is **the scarcity of well-remunerated employment opportunities**, with the region's average gross monthly salary in 2022 standing at PLN 6.3 thousand, significantly lower than those observed in Mazowieckie (PLN 7.9 thousand), Dolnośląskie (PLN 7.0 thousand), and Małopolskie (PLN 6.9 thousand). The issue is further compounded by significant salary disparities across sectors, with the information and communication sector offering an average wage of PLN 10.7 thousand in 2021, compared to PLN 4.2 thousand in the hotel and catering industry.

Youth migration

Regional stakeholders identified a wide range of possible reasons for the emigration of young talents. One of the most frequently cited was the **limited availability of attractive job opportunities**, particularly for those with higher education and specialised skills. Despite growth in innovative sectors, the region struggles to compete with others in terms of employment conditions. Many young people seek employment in larger cities, especially Warsaw, taking advantage of Lodz's strategic proximity. Another challenge identified during the Diagnostic Phase was the **mismatch between education and labour market needs**. Educational programmes are often not aligned with industry requirements, resulting in a lack of practical experience for students. Discussants also pointed out that the region suffers from a **negative reputation** based on outdated stereotypes and the decline of the textile industry. Despite ongoing revitalisation efforts, **image issues remain a concern**, including the perception of the city as neglected, with high unemployment and substandard living conditions. These factors may hamper efforts to attract investment and skilled professionals, which is particularly important in today's global competition for talent. Moreover, issues such as the poor state of infrastructure, including roads and public transport, as well as the limited availability of quality housing remain pressing challenges.

¹⁰ Living conditions of the population in the Łódzkie Region. Statistical Office in Łódź, Łódź Regional Research Centre, 2023.

¹¹ Occupational Barometer. Forecast of the demand for employees, 2023.

II. Pillar 1 - Implementation Phase

1. Action I – Intelligence support: collecting evidence on the motivations of young people

As described above, the regional authorities highlighted a limited understanding of the factors driving youth migration in the Łódzkie Region. In particular, there is a lack of clarity about why young people choose to leave the region and what (policy) interventions could make the region attractive enough to be a place of choice for a larger group of young talents. To help address this, the Implementation Phase focused on intelligence support activities to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and decision-making processes of young university graduates. Specifically, this involved designing, conducting, and analysing a **large-scale survey of university students across Łódzkie** to bridge the knowledge gap regarding the key drivers of youth migration. The survey results provided valuable insights into the social, economic, and educational factors influencing students' decisions to leave the region. Building on these findings, the TA Team **developed targeted solutions to improve talent retention** in Łódzkie. These solutions focused on three key areas: strengthening the labour market, enhancing transport policies, and improving the region's overall image to make it a more attractive place for young professionals.

I. Operational Review

To gain deeper insights into the factors influencing young people's decisions to stay in or leave the Łódzkie Region, an online survey (CAWI¹²) was conducted between 28 October and 26 November 2024. The **survey targeted students from five regional universities**: the University of Łódź, the Technical University of Łódź, the Medical University of Łódź, the Piotrków Trybunalski Academy, and the Stefan Batory Academy of Applied Sciences in Skierniewice. Its success was largely due to the support of pre-established contact points at these universities, who facilitated the process by sending invitations to targeted individuals, promoting the survey on social media, and displaying posters. This comprehensive outreach strategy attracted a diverse range of participants, significantly enriching the data collected.

The technical aspects of the survey and the design of the research tool were developed in consultation with the Marshall's Office and representatives from local universities. This phase also included a pilot test of both the Polish and English versions of the survey, conducted with volunteer students to ensure clarity, user-friendliness, and compatibility across different devices, including computers, phones, and tablets. The final survey consisted of 21 questions (some open-ended) organised into five sections: academic background, post-graduation plans, decision-making factors, suggestions for improving the Łódzkie Region, and personal information. It was made available in both Polish and English to all students, except those participating in the Erasmus+ programme. **A total of 1,818 responses were collected, demonstrating a high level of engagement.** Based on the survey results and other data

¹² Computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) is a method of collecting data through online surveys or interviews which are displayed on a website for respondents to fill out.

sources, an expert proposal for action was developed, focusing on three key areas: the labour market, transport policies, and the region's image. At this stage, additional subject-matter experts were brought into the team to provide further insights and recommendations.

II. Outputs

The primary output of this action was the **survey on talent migration decisions and motivations**, providing insight into key factors driving young people to leave or stay in the Łódzkie Region. The survey, as well as its structured analysis, identified social, economic, and educational influences shaping migration patterns, offering valuable insights for regional policymakers. The research tools developed as part of this study can be reused in future assessments, with regional authorities expressing a commitment to conduct similar surveys to track trends over time. Building on these findings, an **expert proposal for action** was developed, outlining tailored policy recommendations to enhance the region's attractiveness to young talent in both the short and long term.

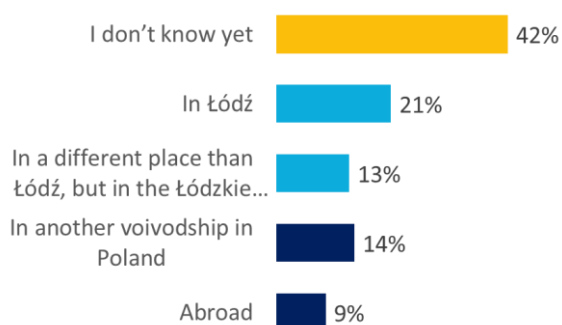
III. Key Insights

a. Assessment of results of survey on talent migration decisions and motivations

As previously indicated, a total of 1,818 responses were received. In terms of their place of residence prior to their studies, the majority of survey respondents were from the Łódzkie Region, accounting for 68% of the survey participants. The primary factors that influenced the decision to pursue studies in the region were: proximity to home (64%), the availability of an appealing faculty of study (49%), as well as the low cost of living (31%) and the reputation of the university (30%). Conversely, the least significant factors were attractive career prospects in the region after graduation (9%) and the possibility of obtaining a scholarship or other forms of financial support (6%).

When considering post-graduation plans, nearly half of the surveyed students (42%) remain undecided about their future living arrangements, highlighting a significant group of uncertainty. Meanwhile, 34% plan to stay within the Łódzkie Region, including 21% intending to settle specifically in Łódź. Conversely, about 23% expressed plans to relocate elsewhere, with 14% favouring other regions in Poland and 9% contemplating a move abroad. Among those considering other regions in Poland, the Mazowieckie region (in which Warsaw, the capital, is located) emerged as the most popular choice, with 33% of respondents identifying it as their intended post-graduation destination.

Figure 1. Post-graduation living plans: where do you plan to live/reside after graduation?



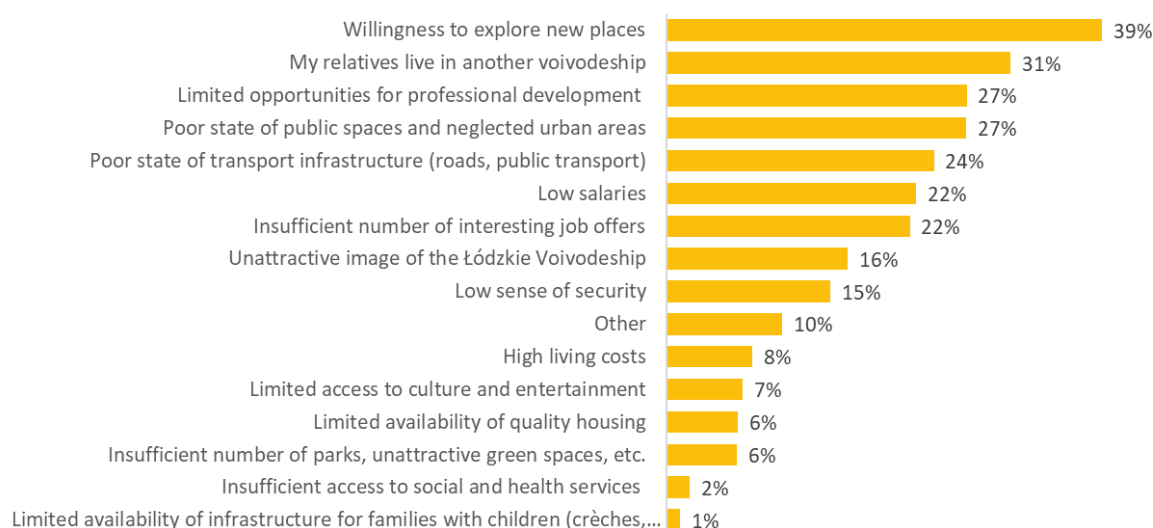
Source: CAWI student survey, n=1818.

Future migration plans

The survey results among students in the Łódzkie Region provided valuable insights into the diverse motivations shaping their future migration plans. Respondents fell into three main categories: those planning to stay in the region, those intending to leave, and those who remained undecided.

- **Planning to remain:** Among students planning to stay, the most influential factor was **proximity to family and friends** (79%), underscoring the importance of strong social ties. Other notable but less frequently cited reasons included the **low cost of living** (26%) and **career opportunities** (26%).
- **Planning to leave:** Conversely, students intending to leave most commonly cited a **desire to explore new places** (39%) and the **presence of relatives in other regions** (31%) as key motivations. While personal factors such as family circumstances or a natural curiosity for new experiences fall outside the direct influence of public policy, the survey identified three key areas where regional and local authorities can play a role: **the labour market and the availability of quality employment (27%), the quality of public spaces (27%) and transport infrastructure (24%), and the region's overall image (16%)**. The latter factor was also frequently raised in responses to the survey's open-ended questions, a theme that emerged strongly in the in-depth diagnostic interviews that preceded the survey.

Figure 2. Factors influencing the decision to leave the Łódzkie Region after graduation

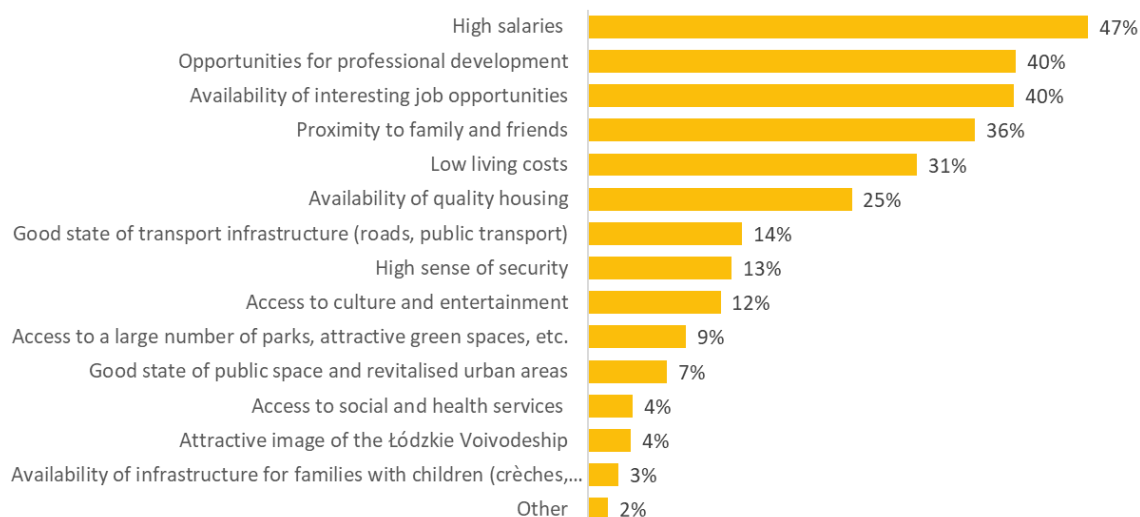


Source: CAWI student survey, n=415.

- **Undecided:** As the survey findings demonstrate, the key group for intervention purposes may in fact be identified amongst the undecided. This group constituted 42% of the total and highlighted employment-linked factors that could motivate them to stay in the region, namely high salaries (47%), career opportunities for professional development (40%) and interesting

job offers (40%). This is particularly interesting when compared to the other two groups of respondents, who cited familial proximity as a key concern. A notable finding is that for this group, the low cost of living (31%) was more frequently indicated as a factor in the decision to remain in the region, and access to quality housing (25%) was also highly valued by students.

Figure 3. Factors influencing the decision to stay in the Łódzkie Region after studies among the undecided



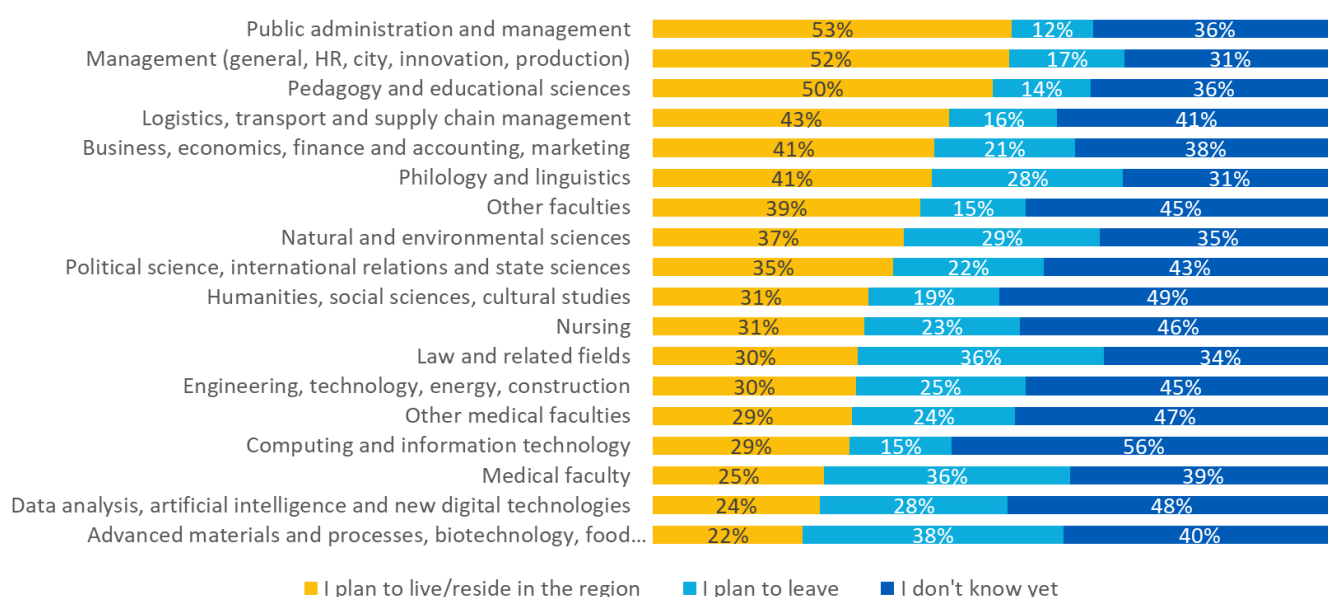
Source: CAWI student survey, n=774.

Key insight: The survey revealed that employment opportunities, salaries, and career growth are key factors influencing students' decisions to stay in the Łódzkie Region, while regional image, public spaces, and transport infrastructure also impact retention. Notably, for those already committed to staying, proximity to family is the most significant factor, underscoring the importance of strong social ties in regional retention strategies.

Specialisation of study

An analysis of the survey responses by field of study revealed significant variations in students' intentions to remain in the Łódzkie Region. The lowest percentage of students planning to stay was found among those specialising in **innovative engineering and technology disciplines**, such as **advanced materials and processes, biotechnology, food engineering (22%)**, as well as **data analysis, AI, and new digital technologies (24%)**. Similarly, a high proportion of **medical faculty students (36%)** expressed intentions to leave. In contrast, students in fields such as **public administration (53%)**, **management (52%)**, **pedagogy (50%)**, and **logistics (43%)** showed the strongest willingness to remain in the region. These differences reflect both the structure of local labour markets and the perceived availability of career opportunities within the region.

Figure 4. Respondents' post-graduation plans by the faculty of study



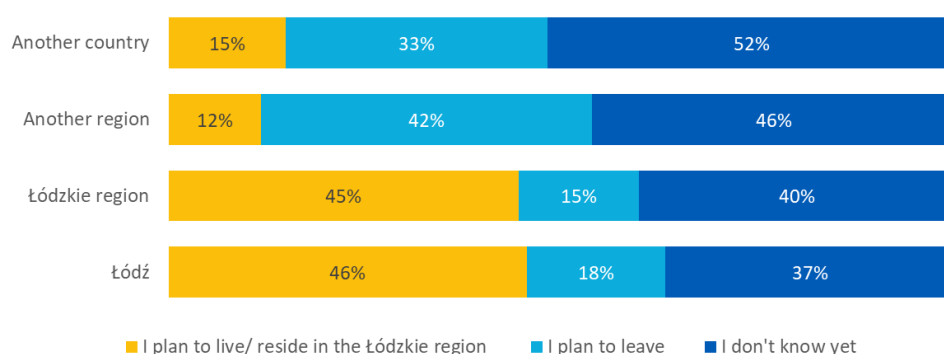
Source: CAWI student survey, n=1818.

Key insight: Students' post-graduation plans vary significantly by field of study, with those in engineering, technology, and medical fields showing a higher inclination to leave due to broader job market opportunities. In contrast, students in public administration, management, and pedagogy are more likely to stay, reflecting the alignment between local job availability and career prospects.

Previous place of residence

The previous place of residence was also found to be equally important in terms of the decision to stay in the region. A mere 15% of respondents who had previously resided in another country expressed an intention to stay in Łódzkie, a figure that dropped even further, to 10%, among those who had previously lived in another region before commencing their studies. Conversely, **when analysing the responses of students from the Łódzkie Region or the City of Łódź itself, a significantly higher intention to remain in the region was observed (45%).**

Figure 5. Respondents' post-graduation plans according to the previous place of residence



Source: CAWI student survey, n=1818.

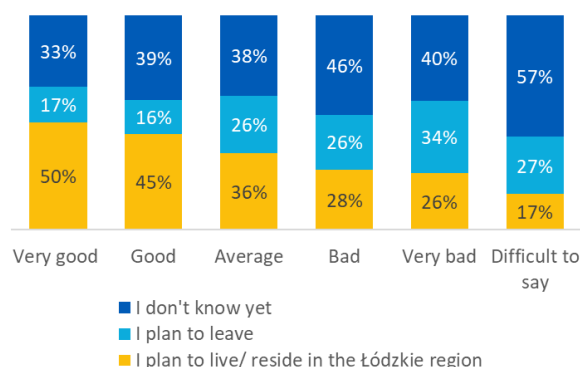
Key insight: Students' previous place of residence strongly influences their likelihood of staying in the Łódzkie Region, with locals of the region significantly more inclined to remain compared to those from outside. This is a notable finding, underscoring a natural inclination to stay among those with regional ties. In turn, this inclination must be accompanied by appropriate framework conditions and opportunities to enable long-term retention.

Financial expectations and perception of job prospects

There is also a demonstrable correlation between students' post-graduation plans and their financial expectations. It is an observable phenomenon that students whose financial expectations align closely with the national minimum wage are more likely to remain in the region. Nevertheless, as financial expectations rise, the willingness to remain diminishes. It is notable that students aspiring to earn over PLN 10,000 per month are more inclined to consider relocation. This trend aligns with earlier findings, where engineering and technology students — whose skills are highly valued in the job market — expressed a stronger intention to leave. This suggests that higher financial aspirations among these graduates could drive migration to regions offering better salaries and employment opportunities if their expectations are unmet.

Furthermore, students' perceptions of their chances of finding a job in their field underscore the importance of labour market factors. Those with a positive outlook on employment prospects in their profession are more likely to remain in the Łódzkie Region.

Figure 6. Respondents' post-graduation plans depending on their assessment of the possibility of finding a job in their profession in the Łódzkie Region



Source: CAWI student survey, n=1818.

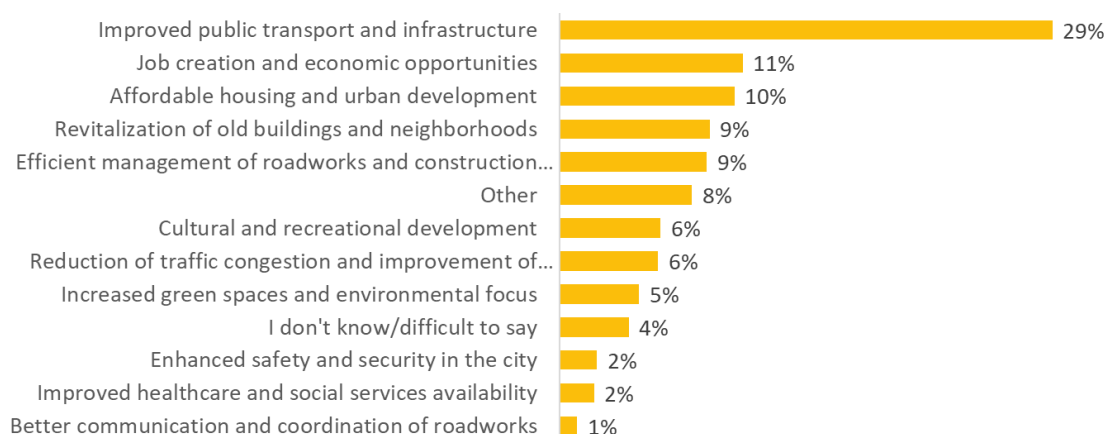
An important factor influencing students' decisions to stay or leave the Łódzkie Region was their subjective assessment of its quality of life, with **those perceiving it as low being significantly more likely to express intentions to leave**. While students acknowledged numerous positive changes in the city, they also highlighted **persistent stereotypes as a major barrier to establishing a favourable image of both the city and the wider region**. Individual interviews conducted during the survey pilot stage further revealed that these negative perceptions, particularly among individuals from outside the region, often fail to align with the actual improvements observed in Łódź.

Key insight: Financial expectations and job prospects significantly influence students' decisions to stay or leave, with higher salary aspirations driving migration, particularly among engineering and technology graduates. Additionally, perceptions of job availability and quality of life play a crucial role, highlighting the need to enhance employment opportunities and reshape the region's image to improve graduate retention.

Factors that would make Łódzkie Region more attractive to live in

One noteworthy aspect of the survey concerned the open-ended questions about potential factors that might make the Łódzkie Region more attractive to live in. The most frequently identified need was for **enhancements to public transportation and road infrastructure, along with the creation of new employment opportunities**.

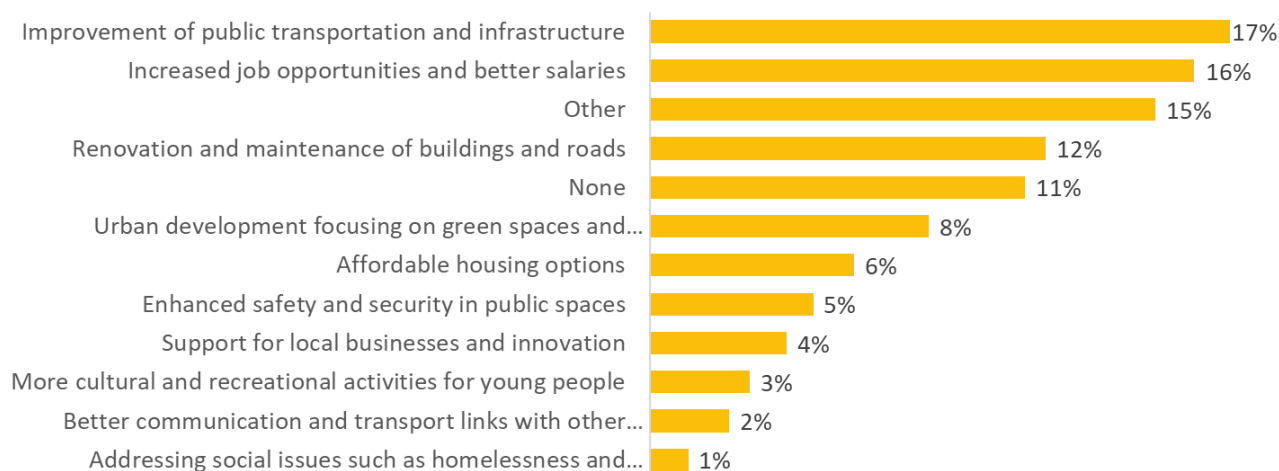
Figure 7. Potential changes in the Łódzkie Region that could make it a more attractive place to live - respondents planning to stay and those undecided



Source: CAWI student survey, n=779

Other requests included the revitalisation of urban areas, more effective management of infrastructural investments and the provision of affordable housing. Specific concerns regarding transport were also highlighted, including lengthy renovations, inadequate and inconsistent public transportation, and a lack of timely information regarding schedule changes. These issues were identified as significant barriers to daily life by students. In addition, approximately 11% of respondents indicated that no amount of action would be sufficient to convince them to remain in the region.

Figure 8. Potential changes in the Łódzkie Region that could influence decision to stay/live there - respondents planning to leave



Source: CAWI student survey, n=259

Key insight: To make Łódzkie more attractive, students highlighted the need for better public transport, road infrastructure, new job opportunities, and urban revitalisation, while concerns over long construction times and inconsistent transport services were seen as daily life barriers.

Additionally, affordable housing and more effective infrastructure management could play a key role in retention.

Suggested conclusions

A **logistic regression analysis** was administered to the survey data to assess the factors influencing students' decisions to stay in Łódzkie after graduation. This method allowed for a **detailed estimation of how various characteristics and opinions** – such as regional ties, age, employment experience, and perceptions of job prospects and living conditions – either increased or decreased the likelihood of staying. The findings highlight several key trends:

- **Previous residence is the strongest predictor of staying:** Students who lived in Łódzkie before their studies are six times more likely to remain in the region. Social ties are a major factor, with 79% of those planning to stay citing proximity to family and friends as a key reason.
- **Age increases the likelihood of staying:** The probability of remaining in the region rises by approximately 9% per additional year of age, suggesting that as students mature, their attachment to the region strengthens.
- **Employment experience plays a key role:** Students who are employed, interning, or self-employed are 33% more likely to stay, indicating that early work exposure helps anchor graduates to their place of study.
- **Perceptions of job prospects and living conditions matter:** A negative perception of employment opportunities and local living conditions reduces the likelihood of staying by 45%, highlighting the importance of improving career prospects, infrastructure, and quality of life.
- **Institutional differences influence migration intentions:** Students from Łódź University of Technology and the Medical University of Łódź are significantly less likely to stay (50% and 35% lower likelihood, respectively), likely due to greater job mobility and higher salary expectations in their fields.

b. Tailored policy recommendations to enhance the retention of talent in the Łódzkie Region

The complete survey results provide a robust foundation for developing tailored policy recommendations. These recommendations address key factors influencing young people's migration decisions, including **the labour market, public transport, spatial planning, and the region's overall image**. Below, we present a summary of these key areas of intervention, along with general proposals for their integration into the **planned public policies of the Łódzkie Region**.

1. Labour market – creating new jobs aligned with talent expectations

High-quality employment emerged as one of the most significant factors influencing students' decisions to stay in or leave the region. Additionally, the analysis revealed that students who are already employed

or engaged in internships are more likely to remain in the Łódzkie Region. Based on expert assessments of the survey findings, the following actions are recommended:

- **Create or enhance incentives for hiring final-year students** and providing stronger support for startup creation, particularly in fields identified as high-risk for talent outflow and those aligned with national and regional specialisations.
- **Supporting job creation within existing companies**, with a particular focus on professions most vulnerable to talent loss. These measures must be highly targeted, prioritising students from disciplines that are critical to the regional economy, especially those aligned with regional smart specialisation strategies. Moreover, the study indicates that individuals with advanced qualifications are more likely to leave the region. Addressing this issue requires strategic interventions to retain highly skilled graduates in key sectors.

2. Improving public transport and adopting new approaches to spatial planning

Students who perceive the region's quality of life as low are significantly less likely to remain. A key concern is the **functioning of public transport**, particularly within the **Łódź metropolitan area**. The main challenges reported include **delays, long journey times, and low service frequency**. To improve public transport efficiency, policy recommendations include:

- **Speeding up public transport** by introducing more dedicated bus lanes and priority at traffic lights.
- **Optimising timetables** through computerised travel time adjustments, ensuring schedules reflect real-world conditions.
- **Minimising disruption** from transport delays by developing a real-time travel app that provides instant updates on route changes and departure times.
- Improving coordination of roadworks and infrastructure investments to reduce congestion and disruptions.

In terms of **spatial planning**, improving the **quality of life and access to essential services** is crucial. A lack of local amenities leads to **car dependency**, making alternative mobility options less viable. To address this, two key strategies are proposed:

- Implementing **mobility microplans** based on the 15-minute city concept, ensuring essential services are available within walking or cycling distance of residential areas.
- Developing **Transit-Oriented (Re)Development (TOD) strategies**, focusing on creating well-connected local centres. This includes integrating housing, jobs, and essential services around public transport hubs, improving accessibility while balancing transport needs with spatial development.

These measures aim to **enhance mobility, reduce car dependency, and create a more attractive urban environment**, ultimately increasing the region's appeal for young professionals.

3. Enhancing the region's image

While students recognised many positive developments in the region, they also identified **persistent stereotypes** as a key barrier to building a strong and positive image of both **Łódź and the wider region**. Workshops and individual interviews conducted during the pilot phase of the survey revealed that **negative perceptions** – particularly among individuals from outside the region – **often fail to reflect the actual progress and improvements taking place in Łódzkie**.

To address this issue, the recommendations include:

- Conducting an in-depth image diagnosis and needs assessment to identify the **key factors influencing perceptions** of the region.
- Developing and implementing a **strategic communication programme** for the Łódzkie brand, specifically designed to retain and attract talent.

This initiative should focus on **highlighting the region's strengths, promoting success stories, and actively countering outdated stereotypes**, ultimately making Łódzkie a more attractive destination for young professionals.

2. Action II – Support for establishing strategic cooperation with selected research institutions to monitor migration of graduates

Beyond the limited understanding of young people's motivations, another key challenge identified was the **lack of comprehensive data quantifying the scale of emigration**. To address this, Action 2 focuses on improving data quality through partnerships with research institutions, complementing Action 1, which examined the motivating factors behind migration decisions. Existing public statistics lack the granularity needed to track migration flows effectively. However, **two newly launched monitoring initiatives** – leveraging administrative data sources – aim to bridge this gap and provide more accurate, data-driven insights into graduate migration trends:

- **The National Information Processing Institute (OPI PIB)**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, developed the *Economic Fate of University Graduates* (ELA)¹³ monitoring system. This system, based on registry data, provides insights into the employment and economic outcomes of graduates from individual universities. However, the reports generated so far do not include data on the migration of school leavers from specific regions.
- **The Educational Research Institute (IBE PIB)**, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education, has developed a system for *monitoring the careers of secondary school graduates*¹⁴. Using registry data, this system tracks the educational and professional pathways of graduates, offering insights into their career progression. However, like the OPI PIB system, its analyses do not yet include data on the regional migration of school leavers.

¹³ <https://ela.nauka.gov.pl/en>

¹⁴ <https://losyabsolwentow.ibe.edu.pl/>

I. Operational Review

As part of the second action, a partnership was initiated between the Marshal's Office of the Łódzkie Region and two research institutes to support **long-term talent migration monitoring**. The Technical Assistance (TA) initiative had two key objectives: **establishing cooperation** and defining the **framework conditions** for continued collaboration between **regional authorities and research institutions** in the coming years. The activities carried out included:

- **Clarification of information needs:** This was based on the initial regional diagnosis and previous analyses conducted by the two research institutes. A preliminary proposal for monitoring indicators was developed to be incorporated into both systems.
- **Engagement with research institutions:** Two independent meetings were held with the research institutes, where both organisations recognised the importance of talent migration analysis and confirmed the technical feasibility of integrating migration monitoring into their systems. They also committed to continuing cooperation in 2025, with the potential to present initial results later that year.

II. Outputs

This initiative will provide the region **with regular insights into** key indicators shaping the **migration decisions of secondary school and university graduates**. These indicators, initially proposed within the TA framework, will be further refined in collaboration with two research institutes. Both institutes, with access to registry data, have committed to ongoing cooperation, enabling the implementation of additional regional-level analyses to enhance the monitoring of talent migration trends within their systems.

III. Key Insights

The following is a **proposal for indicators** to be included in a **system for monitoring migration processes of secondary school and university graduates**, integrated within the **systems administered by OPI PIB and IBE PIB**. While initially designed for the **Łódzkie Region**, the methodology has been developed with the **potential for transfer** to other **Polish regions**, as per initial agreements with both institutions. These organisations have emphasised the **need for universal solutions**, ensuring adaptability across **different regional contexts**.

The **proposed indicators** (Table 1) serve as a **starting point for work in 2025** and may be **subject to modification and expansion** based on further analysis. The **final decision** on their scope and application will be made by the **collaborating research institutes**, ensuring that the system remains **flexible and data-driven**.

Table 1. List of proposed indicators

Secondary school graduates	Tertiary education graduates
% of secondary school graduates from Łódzkie Region who live in Łódzkie Region.	Place of residence (region) of university graduates from Łódzkie Region.
% of secondary school graduates from the Łódzkie Region who continue their education at university studies in the Łódzkie Region.	Place of residence (region) of graduates of U university (to be selected), from Łódzkie Region.
Place of residence of students from the Łódzkie Region, before entering higher education.	Place of residence (region) of graduates of the F faculty at university U, from Łódzkie Region.
Place of residence of students from the Łódzkie Region of University U (to be selected), before entering higher education.	Average earnings of university graduates from Łódzkie Region
Place of residence of students from the Łódzkie Region of University U and Faculty F (to be selected) before entering higher education.	

III. Impact of Pillar 1

1. Added Value

The TA support provided under the Talent Booster Mechanism (TBM) has helped the Łódzkie Region conduct a comprehensive analysis of migration challenges among university students, leading to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing graduate mobility. Specifically, the TA process has allowed stakeholders to:

Understand the drivers of talent migration

The Technical Assistance (TA) initiative addressed the lack of insight into why young residents, particularly university graduates, choose to stay in or leave the region. This knowledge gap had previously hindered the development of targeted strategies for talent retention and attraction. The TA successfully identified key graduate groups at risk of migration and uncovered the main factors influencing their decisions. The survey results also highlighted the need for further research, prompting the City of Łódź to launch an additional study on the life preferences of local high school graduates and first-year university students.

Developing Tailored Solutions to Balance Talent Migration in the Łódzkie Region

Drawing on survey findings and insights from workshops, stakeholder interviews, and document analysis, experts developed a targeted action plan to address key migration challenges. The proposal focuses on three critical areas: labour market development, transport policies, and regional image enhancement, aiming to create a more attractive environment for retaining and attracting talent.

Establishing partnerships for long-term talent migration monitoring

Beyond research, TA efforts focused on creating a long-term, regionally focused monitoring system to track graduate migration trends more effectively. This was achieved through strategic partnerships with research institutions, ensuring that regional strategies remain adaptive and evidence-based, guided by real-time data on talent mobility.

Involve regional authorities in a wider cooperation network

The TA support facilitated consultations with key regional stakeholders, including universities and businesses, fostering a shared commitment to enhancing the region's attractiveness and establishing a platform for ongoing dialogue. Extensive networking efforts have strengthened collaborations with national research institutions, such as the National Information Processing Institute and the Educational Research Institute, as well as government ministries, including the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Family Affairs, Labour and Social Policy, within a national project addressing youth migration from depopulated areas.

2. Key Takeaways for Other Regions

While the TA process was designed specifically for the Łódzkie Region, where the key challenge was to understand the factors influencing young people's migration decisions, its findings are highly relevant to other EU regions experiencing talent drain. Many of these regions face a similar lack of data and insights on graduate mobility, making the Łódzkie experience a valuable reference point for developing evidence-based strategies to address migration challenges elsewhere.

A strong evidence base is key to designing effective policies

Talent exodus is a complex and multifaceted challenge, influenced by a combination of economic, social, and infrastructural factors. Without a reliable and up-to-date evidence base, regions struggle to design effective, targeted policies that address the root causes of migration. It is essential to gather detailed insights into who is leaving, who is inclined to stay or settle, and what factors shape these decisions. This enables policymakers to develop tailor-made strategies that not only mitigate brain drain but also enhance regional attractiveness, ensuring that both young graduates and skilled professionals see long-term opportunities within the region.

Ask talents what they need

Young talents face unique challenges that may not always align with assumptions made by policymakers and stakeholders. Directly engaging them through surveys, open-ended questions, and consultations is crucial to understanding their real needs and priorities. For instance, without the student survey, the poor quality of public transport - one of the top two factors driving students to leave - would not have been identified as a critical issue, as initial stakeholder discussions viewed it as just one of many concerns. This highlights the importance of listening to young people to design targeted, effective policies that truly address the barriers to regional retention.

Monitoring talent migration requires a long-term approach

The study conducted during the TA was only the first step toward establishing a comprehensive talent migration monitoring system in Łódzkie. To develop effective, evidence-based policies, it is essential to systematically track changes in migration patterns and talent motivations over time. Regular data collection and analysis will not only help refine future interventions but also ensure that policies remain responsive and effective in addressing regional retention challenges.

Leveraging public registers for cost-effective talent migration monitoring

Poland has institutions with access to public registers containing valuable data on talent migration, but these datasets have so far been used primarily for education system purposes rather than migration analysis. Expanding the use of such existing data sources could provide a cost-effective solution for tracking migration trends without requiring extensive new research. However, challenges such as data

accessibility and privacy regulations must be addressed. Other regions facing brain drain should also explore similar administrative data sources to enhance their talent monitoring efforts efficiently.

Multi-level cooperation between different actors is crucial

Effective talent retention strategies require strong collaboration between local governments, universities, the private sector, and community organisations. The TA process demonstrated the value of this multi-level approach, with close cooperation between regional authorities and five universities playing a key role in conducting the study. Such cross-sector collaboration will be even more essential in the design and implementation of future policies, ensuring coordinated, impactful responses to the challenges identified. Additionally, close collaboration between regional authorities and research institutions is key, as existing quantitative insights and research projects can be leveraged by policymakers to gain a deeper understanding of migration dynamics and develop more data-driven strategies.

Strategic documents reviewed

Strategies, plans and programmes

- [The Development Strategy of the Łódzkie Region 2030. Łódź, 2021.](#)
- [Strategy of Łódzkie Metropolitan Area 2021-2027](#)
- [Regional programme: European Funds for Łódzkie 2021-27](#)
- [Regional Employment Action Plan 2023 for the Łódzkie Voivodeship.](#)
- [Social Policy Strategy for the Łódzkie Voivodeship until 2030.](#)
- [Plan for Counteracting Depopulation in the Łódzkie Voivodeship 2020.](#)
- [Regional Innovation Strategy for the Łódzkie Region LORIS 2030.](#)
- [Łódź Demographic Policy, 2017.](#)
- [Mazowieckie Voivodeship Brand Strategy 2022–2025.](#)
- [Eindhoven City Marketing 2022-2030. Together, we own the future](#)

Articles and other analyses

- [Demographic situation of Poland 2021-2022, Government Population Council, 2023.](#)
- [Powiat government in Poland - APC report, 2013](#)
- [Kisielewski P., Ulman B., City transit scheduling in the aspect of punctuality and synchronization of trips, 2016.](#)
- [Living conditions of the population in the Łódzkie Voivodship. Edition 2023](#)
- [Łódzkie Region: Demographic Challenges Within an Ideal Location, OECD 2013.](#)
- [Population projection 2023–2060, Statistics Poland, 2023.](#)
- [Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Regional profiles Poland](#)
- [Report on the state of the voivodship, 2023.](#)
- [Report on the socio-economic situation of Łódzkie Voivodeship, Statistical Office in Łódź, 2023.](#)
- [Szukalski P., The future of Łódź Province and Łódź in the light of the Population Projection for 2023-2060 issued by the Central Statistical Office \(GUS\), 2023, University of Łódź.](#)
- [Szukalski P., The demographic future of Poland's large cities, 2023, University of Łódź.](#)
- [Women on the labour market in the Bełchatów powiat. Current state of affairs, prospects and conditions, Yes for Bełchatow Association, 2023.](#)
- [We attract talent and leaders programme 2021-2025, Warsaw City Hall, 2021.](#)
- [International Talent Map 2023](#)
- [Brand concept of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie region](#)

