



ADVICE & TIPS – POLAND

Poland is a gateway to Eastern Europe, opening up new markets and offering opportunities not only for its citizens, but also for the other EU newcomers.

- *Typical problems encountered:* Unemployment amongst young people is a serious problem in Polish society. Finding a job directly after graduation is not easy. A lot of graduates, even from the best universities, have difficulties in finding a good job. Graduates have to work part-time or temporarily and do not have a strong chance to start a career in finance, banking or accountancy sectors. A lot of Polish graduates come to the UK to work in pubs or restaurants, as they get a better salary.
- *How to improve your chances:* Polish graduates are usually a bit older than those in the UK and are 24 or 25 when they begin to work. Many undertake a Masters after completing an initial degree. To improve your chances of getting a good job, try to improve your qualifications and experience. There is work for people with knowledge of foreign languages, logistics, direct marketing, telecommunications and/or computer science, particularly for specialists able to program networks. The employers in this sector are willing to recruit anyone regardless of nationality. There are opportunities for senior level people with foreign language, equipped with IT skills and an understanding of EU regulations.
- *Language requirements:* Polish is spoken by 98% of the population. English and German are the most commonly spoken foreign languages, although neither language is by any means commonly spoken or understood. English is spoken more among business, professional and academic communities and the younger generation. German is spoken more by the older generation.

The method of finding a job in Poland is very much connected with the type of work you are looking for, recruitment takes place all year round. There are more than 400 local employment offices that offer services for both foreign and Polish job seekers. If you decide to use one, make sure you pick a reliable office. The most popular way of looking for a job by Polish graduates is the internet, then advertisements in the daily press subsequently followed by more targeted press. Newspapers are of major importance for finding a job.

You do not need to be in Poland to apply for a job; however you need to come to the country for the interviews. No one will employ you without having a face-to-face discussion. Telephone interviews are sufficient only in the first round. You also need to bring a references and copies of diplomas to the application interviews. The work records and references from your previous employer should be translated into Polish.

Career Services play a major role in Poland. Each Polish university has a Career Service aimed at helping students to find a job connected to their field of study, preparing and training their students for the recruitment process and the job market.

The Application Letter

In general a letter of application should create enough interest to make the potential employer want to look at your application in more detail and hopefully invite you for an interview. Your application letter, however, should not provide too much information about experience and qualifications; this will be provided in your CV.

A Polish cover letter is an integral part of your job application. Refer to the job advertisement in case you respond to an advertisement. The application letter is short (maximum one page) and usually typed. The style is formal without being too persistent. If possible, write in Polish to Polish companies and in English to international companies. The cover letter should refer to your present and future plans, showing your ambitions. At the top left corner you start with your name, address and telephone number. At the top right corner, you write the city and current date. Try to address your cover letter to a single person, and place the name of this person with company name and address below. Application forms are used more often, especially by foreign and international companies which recruit internationally.

If you apply for a job at an international company, they might ask for an application in English or German. You can add references, but don't need to add copies of certificates or qualifications unless explicitly asked to do so.

The Curriculum Vitae

The key focus of your CV should be to persuade the employer to invite you for an interview. Therefore, your CV is a marketing tool, which should be adapted to the market in which you intend to use it. The Polish CV should be in reverse chronological order and have a clear layout, preferably typed on a maximum of two pages. You can also choose to write a functional CV. You should describe your level of verbal and written knowledge of languages. Mention your computer skills as well. Use headings like "education", "work experience", "qualifications", "positions of responsibility" and "interests and hobbies". You can decide to include the names of two referees as well.

It's becoming more popular to apply for a job via the internet. Be aware of the fact that an electronic CV does not always look the same as the standard one.

The Application Procedure

The recruitment process at bigger companies often takes place in several steps. After an initial selection of the CVs, candidates get an invitation for a written test (either online or on-site). Candidates that pass this test are invited to an assessment-centre, to present themselves and solve tasks in one-to-one interviews and group discussions. Successful applicants are then invited for individual interviews. At this stage, discussions get specific about the position and salary.

If you have applied for a job at a smaller company, it is more likely that you will receive a phone call and/or invitation to an interview. In many cases, you be speaking with your potential boss. Expect a lot of questions about your strengths and be prepared for questions regarding your salary expectations. In most cases, you will not have to provide your diplomas or certificates at the job interview.

In Poland, bring references and copies of diplomas to the application interview. Try to establish your social and transferable skills in the interview. Always look interested and ask questions. Try to provide examples to prove your achievements. You can ask for clarification if you don't understand the question you have been asked. Never sit until invited at a job interview. Avoid criticising former employers, and do not go over the top. The Poles like you to stay calm and expect you to stick to the facts.

Employment contracts in Poland

Fixed-term employment contracts (*na czas okreslony*) in Poland are only valid for a predefined work period. After two fixed-term employment contracts with the same employer, the employment has to be transferred to a permanent contract (*na czas nieokreslony/na stale*). At this point in time, your employer may request copies of certificate of educational and other qualification, or other documentation.

Where I can work?

- Major industries: beverages, food processing, chemicals, banking, construction and telecommunication services.
- Recent growth areas: IT, finance, business services, management, transportation services, education, banking and tourism.
- Industries in decline: agriculture, mining, textiles and metalwork.
- Shortage occupations: native English speakers, sales representatives and skilled workers.
- Major companies: Opel Polska, Poznan Volkswagen, GlaxoSmithKline Poland, Toyota Polska, CitiGroup Polska, Novartis, ING Bank Slaski, Nordea Bank Polska and Fiat Poland.
- Major cities: Warsaw (capital and largest), Krakow (second largest), Lodz, Wrocław Gdansk and Poznan.

What is it like working in Poland?

- Average working hours: Working hours should not exceed eight hours per day, or an average of 40 hours per five-day working week. Official working hours are from 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, however many international companies that employ foreign staff work 9am to 5pm.
- Average graduate starting salary: The graduate starting salary is PLN 33,360 (about £7,000)
- Tax rates: Poland's taxation of an individual's income is progressive. The 2008 personal income tax (PIT) rate is between 19-40%. Personal income tax is paid both by Poland's citizens and by foreigners. A foreign resident who is employed in Poland pays tax only on income earned in Poland.
- Working practices and customs: Punctuality is vital for establishing your reliability. Women are strongly represented in the labour market. It is customary for a Western businessman to kiss the hand of a female Polish colleague. Maintain direct eye contact during conversation. Periods of silence during conversations are not unusual. Do not try to fill the silence with unnecessary talk. Avoid conversations of politics and money. In most Polish companies (excluding banks and consulting firms), executives wear casual and conservative clothes. If you work in an international company, you will need to wear a business suit.

Holidays in Poland

To calculate your entitlement to holidays, it is necessary to prove your work experience in years (*staz pracy*). Your education qualifications count towards your *staz pracy*; a university-entrance-degree counts for three years, finished studies at a university count as five years.

If the total amount of years is under ten, you will normally have a statutory entitlement to 20 days of holiday. If your total work experience exceeds ten years, you will get 25 paid vacation days. It is possible that a private employer will make an individual agreement with you about your amount of annual leave. As an expatriate, take into account that you will probably want to travel home from time-to-time.