

**Review report on a PhD thesis of Anke Lasek entitled „The impact of return migration on entrepreneurial propensity and sustainability of related entrepreneurial activity in Poland (2007-2015)”,**

**prepared under the supervision of dr hab. Jana Brzozowskiego, Prof. UJ,  
an auxiliary supervision of dr Magdaleny Zajączkowskiej,  
Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Krakowie, Kraków, 2024**

## **1. Legal basis for the review**

The basis for reviewing Anke Lasek's doctoral dissertation entitled " The impact of return migration on entrepreneurial propensity and sustainability of related entrepreneurial activity in Poland (2007-2015)", prepared under the scientific supervision of the supervisor prof. Ph.D. Jan Brzozowski and the auxiliary supervisor Dr. Magdalena Zajączkowska, is a letter marked with the reference number RDC.600.35P.1.2024 of May 22, 2024, signed by Prof. dr hab. Stanisław Popek, Director of the Doctoral School of the Krakow University of Economics.

By the resolution of the Council for Academic Discipline of Economics and Finance of May 20, 2024, I was appointed as a reviewer of the doctoral dissertation.

The review report was prepared based on the Act of July 20, 2018 on academic degrees and titles and on degrees and titles in the field of art (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 742) and the Law on Higher Education and science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 742). pos. 1669).

## **2. Evaluation of the relevance of the thesis**

In her doctoral dissertation, Anke Lasek addressed the issue of the impact of voluntary return migration on the propensity for entrepreneurship and its sustainability based on the example of Poland. The choice of this topic is justified by the growing scale of global migration and its

impact on the economies of host countries and countries of origin. Entrepreneurship among migrants is a growing research area due to the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon. In the literature, a special role played by returning migrants is attributed to their importance due to the transfer of knowledge from host countries, the most often more developed, to home countries, the most often less developed than host countries, while running own company. Knowledge and experience gained during migration can be beneficial for economies of home countries upon return of migrants and support bottom-up entrepreneurship. Returnee entrepreneurs more often internationalise their ventures due to their overseas experience. The investigation of migrants from Poland is interesting because of the migration patterns experienced, as for decades, Poland was a country of negative migration balance, with the rapid growth of emigration after joining the European Union in 2004, which generate the return migration.

Therefore, I assess the choice of entrepreneurship of return migrants as the research topic in my doctoral dissertation positively. This topic is a relevant issue worth taking up in a doctoral thesis.

### **3. Evaluation of the research assumptions - aim of the work, research hypotheses, research method**

The aim of the PhD thesis is presented in the introduction. Anke Lasek starts with referring to contribution to entrepreneurship research and fulfilment of the research gap, which in fact is an overall aim of all researchers and do not need to be specify. The main aim of the PhD dissertation is to assess (quotation p. 3) "*the economic impact of voluntary return migration on entrepreneurial propensity and the sustainability of entrepreneurial activities upon return to a developed economy*". I appreciate this aim, however, I have some doubts related to the use of sustainability in this sentence. As sustainability is more broad concept, understood mainly in reaching the goals of economic, environment and social pillars of sustainable development, this aim of the PhD thesis is confusing. It would be more clear to refer to the impact on the survival or failure of entrepreneurship, which is in fact investigated.

To achieve this main goal, Ms. Anke Lasek asks three research questions and set a research hypothesis for each of the research questions. The first research question (RQ1) investigate (quotation, p. 3) "*to which extent return migrants enter into entrepreneurial*

*activities upon remigration?"* is linked to the H1 first hypothesis (quotation, p.4) which assumes that „*return migrants exhibit higher entrepreneurial propensity than individuals without migration experience.*” The second research question (RQ2) intents to verify (quotation, p.3) „*in what way do survival rates of enterprises founded by returnees differ from the firms started by non-migrants?*”, and it is reflected in the H2 second hypothesis (quotation, p.4) „*Enterprises started by return migrants have higher survival rates than enterprises started by individuals without migration experience.*”. The last research question (RQ3) (quotation, p.3: „*To which extend do these entrepreneurial activities generate a sustained economic growth?*”) is hypothesised as follows (H3): „*Return migrant entrepreneurs attain higher income than entrepreneurs without migration experience.*”

Reading both the theoretical chapters and the research objectives and hypotheses clearly indicates that in her doctoral dissertation, Ms. Anke Lasek demonstrates knowledge of theories and previous research related to entrepreneurship, migration, and in particular the return migrant entrepreneurship. At the same time, the PhD candidate is able to translate her theoretical knowledge into the formulation of research assumptions, including research questions and hypotheses. The way of formulating the research questions and the hypotheses is correct, reflecting the scientific nature of the tested compounds and in accordance with the adopted rules. My only doubt is to not always clear logical connections between research questions and hypotheses. As H1 assumes differences between propensity towards entrepreneurship between return migrants and others, the RQ1 should add this comparative aspect. The essence of RQ2 is properly reflected in the H2. In light of the H3, RQ3 should refer to the entrepreneurial income, not to economic growth. These are two different concepts, at two different levels.

Just as the hypotheses do not raise any objections to me, they are well formulated and logical, but as a reader I feel somewhat dissatisfied. Ms. Anke Lasek discussed the literature review in the initial chapters, but left the hypotheses themselves without their location in the literature and their theoretical justification, only indicating them in the introduction. In my opinion, it would be beneficial for the thesis to keep the list of hypotheses in the introduction as they are now, but to justify them in detail based on the state of the art in the field of entrepreneurship and return migrant entrepreneurship after the literature review. An additional value would be if the PhD candidate presented her research assumptions, questions

and hypotheses in the form of a graphic conceptual model that would clearly indicate the adopted logic. Adding these elements, while shortening some slightly peripheral fragments (more in the following points), would increase the clarity of the work.

In order to answer the research questions posed in the doctoral dissertation and verify the research hypotheses, a study was designed and conducted using secondary data from Social Diagnosis carried out in 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015. The PhD candidate proposed the operationalization of economic concepts by identifying variables corresponding to these categories. Then, the secondary data were subjected to econometric procedures. The Author determined descriptive statistics of the adopted variables, and then estimated the regression functions. The research method adopted in this thesis corresponds to the research rigors and is the correct way of conducting research, leading to the verification of the hypotheses. I positively assess the selection of the research method and the way it is used; it certainly meets the standards of doctoral theses.

The PhD candidate approached the analysis of the results in a somewhat mechanical way, reporting the obtained results. This reporting formula is necessary, although it is worth relating the obtained results to already discussed the state of the art in migrant entrepreneurship, which Ms. Anke Lasek carefully presented in the theoretical chapters. In the current version, the theoretical and empirical parts seem to be independent fragments, and the doctoral thesis should be a whole. Subchapter 5.6, presenting the research results, is almost devoid of confrontation of the PhD student's results with the literature, section 5.6.2, which already announces the discussion in the title, is short and devoid of references, the summary of the results in section 5.6.3 contains references to only 2 references. The lack of reference of the results of own research to the literature is incomprehensible due to the very extensive part of the literature review and the rejection of two of the three adopted hypotheses, which should prompt deep reflection. Therefore, I would like to know the answer to my first question which of the entrepreneurship theories is supported by the research results presented in the PhD thesis?

To sum up, the way Ms. Anke Lasek conducts her research is logical and supported by an appropriate course of analytical procedure. The doctoral student first presented the theoretical basis of the studied phenomenon, then planned and conducted her own research to finally be able to draw conclusions. I positively assess the methodological element of the

doctoral dissertation (research questions, hypotheses, research method). My doubts only point to areas that could be strengthened, without negating the value of the entire dissertation.

#### **4. Evaluation of the structure of the PhD thesis**

The PhD thesis of Anke Lasek is well presented and carefully developed logically, detailing the knowledge derived from the theories of migration and entrepreneurship it was intended to cover. There is a careful presentation of claims, propositions, and considerations by supporting them with academic rigor and scientific practices to emphasize the fluidity of the concepts studied. A systematic literature review provides good references and support for the use of commonly accepted approaches as contributions to the field under consideration.

Ms. Anke Lasek's doctoral thesis consists of a total of six parts, including four chapters, an introduction and conclusion, a list of references, lists of figures, tables and appendices, and an appendix, covering a total of 252 pages.

Logically, the doctoral thesis includes two parts: theoretical and empirical. The first theoretical chapter (chapter two according to the table of content) discusses theoretical aspects of migration, with particular emphasis on return migration. The second theoretical chapter (third chapter according to the table of content) presents the state of knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship, migrant entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship of returning migrants. Next two chapters reflect the empirical part of the thesis. The first of them (chapter four according to the table of contents) presents the history of migration from Poland from the 18th century until after Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 and the history of the development of the business environment in Poland since the 1920s. The last chapter (chapter five according to the table of content) discusses the methodological assumptions and results of empirical research on the impact of return migration on entrepreneurship in Poland in 2007-2015.

When assessing the quantitative structure of the work and considering each chapter separately, a certain disproportion in their volume can be noticed. The longest chapter (chapter three) covers 77 pages, while the shortest (chapter two) only 32 pages, with a similar number of pages in the remaining chapters (chapter four - 41 pages, chapter five - 37 pages). At the same time, the internal structure of each chapter, understood as division into

subchapters and sections, is slightly different. The second and fourth chapters are similar in their structure, as they are divided into two subchapters each, 2 - 4 sections in each subchapter. Meanwhile, the shortest fifth chapter divides 37 pages of content into 6 subchapters, of which 4 subchapters have no sections and two have them. However, the structure of the third chapter is even different, because it is divided into three subchapters, each of them has 5 or 6 sections, and one of the points (3.1.2) is additionally divided into eight subsections.

The above list is intended to support the assessment of the extent to which the author has managed the text of the doctoral dissertation. Doctoral dissertations are relatively long manuscripts, on average about 200 pages, which should be evenly structured. While assessing this aspect of Ms. Anke Lasek's doctoral dissertation, I see some disproportions and possibilities for a more coherent division of the text of the dissertation.

The PhD thesis is based on international literature on the subject published in English and German, and the list of literature indicates the use of approximately 750 bibliographic items, supported by reports and dictionaries. This number of references is highly satisfactory, three times exceeding the accepted standards, the PhD candidate demonstrated a high level of knowledge of the literature. In her dissertation, Anke Lasek referred to the work of the vast majority of scientists researching the phenomena of entrepreneurship and migration.

However, some of the references seem to have been added only to increase their total number (so called name-dropping). To give some examples, some references are included only in the list of references, not in the text (i.e. *Wickramaekara, P. (2019). Effective return and reintegration of migrant workers, with special focus on ASEAN Member States, ILO, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_733917.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_733917.pdf), 19.5. 2021, pp. 1 – 37;* *Tassinopoulos, A., Werner, H., Kristensen, S. (1998). Mobility and migration of labour in the European Union and their specific implications for young people. CEDEFOP – European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/1710\\_en.pdf](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/1710_en.pdf), 20.5.2021, pp. 1 – 127.*), while some others are mentioned just once in the text as one of the many other references (i.e. p. 43 of dissertation, let me quote: „*Connectedly, there are four theorizing mainstreams (Gedeon, 2010; Cherukara and Manalel, 2011; Wach, 2015b; Teran Yepez, 2018)*”, was the only place when Anke Lasek referred to Teran Yepez, E. F. (2018). State-of-the-

Art Entrepreneurship Theories: A Critical Review of the Literature, Proceedings of International Academic Conferences IIES, DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2018.035.043.; pp. 48-63 of dissertation, let me quote: „(...) *acknowledges persisting economic and social links between home and host communities (Schiller, 1995; Portes et al., 1999; Cassarino, 2004)*”, was the only one place of referring to Schiller, N. G., Basch, L., Blanc, C. S. (1995). From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. Anthropological Quarterly, 68 (1), pp. 48 – 63). While I appreciate the effort done by PhD candidate, however, the manuscript would benefit for reducing the number of references to ensure clear link to the most important sources of knowledge and to indicate the research stream in which the work is embedded.

The first chapter of a theoretical nature (formally chapter 2 in the table of content) is titled „Theoretical aspects on international and return migration”. The PhD candidate begins the discussion by presenting the essence and typology of international migration, and against this background, she presents the essence of returnee migration and their typology. Then, the PhD candidate moves on to the theory of return migration, presenting its theoretical framework, determinants and economic effects.

In the next theoretical chapter (formally chapter 3 in the table of content, entitled "Theoretical aspects to entrepreneurship in context of return migration", the PhD candidate presents issues related to the theory of entrepreneurship, moving from the general theory of entrepreneurship, through immigrant entrepreneurship, to specific issues related to the entrepreneurship of return migrants. It is also the longest chapter of the doctoral dissertation, on average twice as long as the other chapters. The content of this chapter does not raise any doubts in my mind.

To sum up my assessment of the theoretical part, I appreciate this aspect of the reviewed PhD dissertation. Ms. Anke Lasek confirmed her knowledge and expertise in the discussed issues. The PhD candidate knows the literature well, moves freely in the discussed issues, thus proving her erudition in the field of research.

My main concern is related to the next chapter, entitled “*Developments of international migration from and return migration to Poland*”. After two theoretical chapters, I would expect the research objectives and hypotheses development to be presented along with a justification for the choice of method of their verification, and if it is to be based on data about Poles, an explanation of reasons of choosing Poland as a country for hypotheses

verification. Instead, Ms. Anke Lasek goes straight to the history of migration from Poland, dating back to 1772, creating a logical leap between the parts of the dissertation and depriving herself of the justification of the research area. In my opinion, showing in detail the history of Polish migration since 1770 is not justified. At the same time, the return migration itself is discussed relatively briefly, 1 page per pp. 132-133 and 2 pages on pp. 139--140. In the rest of this chapter, the doctoral student presents the history of entrepreneurship in Poland, again reaching deep into history and starting from the 1920s. The PhD candidate demonstrates her knowledge in the areas of history of Polish migration and entrepreneurship, but these historical discussion is outside the main stream of the work and it would be beneficial for the structure to shorten it while developing deriving research hypotheses.

In the next chapter, the PhD candidate moves on to the empirical part of her work. Again, in my opinion, there are a few sentences missing that connect individual chapters in order to achieve greater fluency. However, Mgr Anke Lasek begins the chapter with a discussion on the availability of Polish return migration data, or actually on problems with its availability and challenges with panel data. In my opinion, such discussion is not needed, because it would be more beneficial to justify the choice of data collection and analysis. Reading subchapter 5.1 raises my second question of what other methods of collecting and analyzing data could have been used to answer the research questions.

In the subsequent parts of this chapter, Ms. Anke Lasek presents the data adopted for the analysis, the operationalization of variables, the assumed regression equations and the results of the estimation of the regression function. I highly appreciate the way the PhD candidate conducted this part of the research, including the procedure and research method used. The PhD candidate demonstrated methodological knowledge and proficiency in making estimations, confirming her research competences.

Looking at the model estimation results, in addition to the previously commented lack of discussion your results back to the literature, I would like to ask a third question. To what extent can the results of estimating the parameters of the regression function be biased by the very small share of return migrants in the research sample of Polish individuals (0.6-1.53% of the sample, depending on the year)?

To sum up this element of the review, in my opinion, the PhD dissertation prepared by Ms. Anke Lasek has a well-formed structure, constituting a coherent whole, which consists of

theoretical and empirical chapters. The PhD candidate adopted the logical argument from general to specific, starting with the broadest issues and then moving on to issues increasingly focused around the main research problem. This approach is widely used and considered correct. Based on the literature review, the PhD student designed and conducted research based on econometric analysis of secondary data, the results of which constituted the basis for drawing conclusions about research hypotheses.

## **5. Formal comments and editing of the work**

The reviewed doctoral dissertation by Ms. Anke Lasek has been prepared with great editorial care. The editing of the text itself is correct, the way of formulating the thoughts is correct, the course of the argument is logical, and the argumentation is convincing. Theoretical considerations are supported by properly prepared ones. The way in which tables, figures and charts are edited is unobjectionable, they are correctly titled, numbered and sourced.

## **6. Final conclusion**

The discussion and detailed comments quoted above are polemical in nature and do not diminish the values of the reviewed PhD dissertation and my positive assessment. Ms. Anke Lasek demonstrated good knowledge of entrepreneurship theories, in particular the entrepreneurship of return migrants, which was the subject of research in her PhD thesis. The PhD candidate demonstrated erudition in this area, properly selecting and interpreting the literature on the subject. Based on the literature analysis, Ms. Anke Lasek posed research questions and research hypotheses. In addition, the PhD candidate presented her skills in independently designing research based on secondary data and their econometric analysis, interpreting research results and the ability to verify hypotheses. The above elements provide grounds for recognizing the PhD student's maturity and constitute a good forecast for her further scientific development.

Based on the above opinions, I conclude that the dissertation of Ms. Anke Lasek meets the formal and substantive requirements for doctoral theses and justifies awarding Ms. Anke Lasek with a doctoral degree in the field of social sciences in the discipline of economics and finance. Therefore, I request that the doctoral dissertation be accepted and that the PhD

candidate be allowed to proceed to the next stages of the doctoral thesis and to publicly defend the dissertation.

Poznań, 04.07.2024

Aleksandra Gaweł

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gaweł", is positioned above the name "Aleksandra Gaweł".