In 2013, due to the economic meltdown in Greece, the economic and political instability in Italy and the ongoing coverage of the decline of the Eurozone it would be easy to dismiss the European Union (EU) as a failure. While it is true that both the short-term and long-term future of the Eurozone and maybe the EU as a whole are threatened more now than at any other point it would be foolhardy to write the entire European project off as a failure. It is somewhat ironic that currently only the EU’s warts are discussed when in the past it could be argued that too much attention was placed on its successes and not enough on its underlying issues. There appears to be little middle ground when discussing the EU. Its supporters discuss the peace and stability the union provided Europe in the post-war years and how until recently it made the member countries rich while Euroskeptics focus on the threats to national identity and the bureaucracy in Brussels that has helped cause the current economic fiasco. As with almost all things, the truth lies somewhere in the middle when discussing the European Union. While the EU has helped bring peace and stability to a continent that knew nothing but war and conflict and it created the largest economy in the world, it also led to bureaucratic red tape, fiscal limitations and a change to the member states’ understanding of the concept of sovereignty. What the EU has also done is change our perception of what is possible in terms of integration and international organizations. The EU has been a grand experiment in what is possible in political, social and economic cooperation between states. It has changed our understanding of many ideas and concepts and it has led to new

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ways of addressing issues and problems. One area in which the EU has changed our understanding is the concept of migration. The EU, through the development of the freedom of movement has fundamentally changed the memberstate’s ability to control immigration and has created new challenges regarding questions of social cohesion. The migrants who have moved throughout the EU as European citizens have rights not shared by other migrants.² With the expansion of the European Union into Central and Eastern Europe in 2004 we have now seen the movement of large numbers of these intra-EU migrants particularly into Ireland and Great Britain. The largest single group to have moved into these two states have been Poles. The Poles moved west after they gained EU membership with the hopes of financial rewards that were simply not possible in Poland. Many came for the adventure of living in a new place and to enjoy the freedom of movement not possible just over a decade previously when Poland was part of the Soviet bloc. Their excitement was not reciprocated by some in the west who feared that they would overwhelm the local economy and drive wages down while raising local unemployment. Many hoped that the movement west would be temporary and as the Eastern economies grew there would be a return of the migrants to their homelands. While some migrants have indeed returned, thousands have stayed. They have formed communities and have created a life in their adopted lands. Yet they continue to face issues of discrimination, abuse, isolation and mistrust.

This chapter provides an initial examination of the issues facing the Polish migrants who have moved to Ireland, England, and Wales. Much of the attention focuses on the Poles in Britain but the Irish case is also relevant to this discussion and is examined where appropriate. The Polish community was chosen because it is the largest group numerically (even though other groups, such as Latvians migrated in larger numbers per capita) to move. In both Britain and Ireland Poles were the faces of intra-EU migration from the East and therefore were the target of more attention and at times scorn compared to other groups. The chapter argues that it is necessary to accept the permanence of these communities in Ireland and Britain which reinforces why these issues need to be resolved quickly. Simply put, the problem is not going to go away. The chapter is less concerned with rooting an argument within a larger academic literature as it is in putting the Polish migrant reality into context. It is clear that the Polish community in Britain and Ireland represent a departure from the traditional field of migration studies. As mentioned above, these migrants are unlike migrants from elsewhere around the world as they have rights granted them by an international organization. The fact that they share a common European citi-