Oups, gprentice is right about the int In U++ you should use int32 or some similar type where the length is guaranteed. In standard c++ there is int32_t defined somewhere.

As for to reason for using certain endianness, I can see at least two First, if you want to store data on one machine and read them on other, which has possible different architecture. Second, there is many standard file formats which have prescribed endianness (it is actually related to the first case), so that you have to obey it, even if you will always run it on the same machine, because otherwise other application wouldn't interpret the file correctly.

Honza