

# *Local Perspective on the Practices and Challenges of Migrant Integration: The Case of Warsaw*

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The aim of the paper is to explore the practices and challenges of integration in the context of migration, focusing on the case study of Poland and specifically its capital city – Warsaw. The introductory paragraphs give a brief overview of the background as well as the current perspective on migration to Poland, with a special focus on people arriving from Vietnam, Ukraine, and Chechnya. The paper

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goes on to discuss the difficulties of establishing migration and integration policies both at the national and the local government level in Poland. The role of the capital city in attracting and integrating migrant groups is acknowledged and specific practices are presented which are aimed at fostering integration into Polish society and are undertaken by Warsaw's local government in cooperation with other public institutions and NGOs. In conclusion, some major challenges in this respect are indicated.

*Keywords:* migration, integration, Warsaw, Poland, policy

## 1. Introduction<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

In earlier decades Poland used to be a country of emigration rather than immigration, due to various historical, political, social, and economic determinants. Over the last several years, especially following Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, immigrant numbers have been rising slowly but steadily, although they still remain very low compared to other European countries. Poland has not experienced an increased influx of asylum-seekers over the last several months; nevertheless, social and political attitudes have been significantly affected.

The aim of this paper is to explore the practices and challenges of migrant integration, focusing on the case study of Poland and specifically its capital city – Warsaw. Firstly, we will give a brief overview of the context, as well as the current perspective on migration to Poland (both economic and forced in character) with a special focus on people arriving from Vietnam, Ukraine, and Chechnya. Next we will describe the difficulties of establishing migration and integration policies, both at the national and local government level, taking into account the specific role of the capital city in both attracting and integrating migrant groups.

The central part of our paper will present specific practices aimed at fostering integration into Polish society, undertaken by Warsaw's local government in cooperation with other public institutions and NGOs. We will point out the main challenges of integrative actions, with a view to both migrants and representatives of the host population. There will be

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a particular focus on the cultural context of diversity and changing social attitudes in relation to the “migration crisis” in Europe, where the rise of prejudice, stereotypes, and anxiety appear to be key problems.

## 2. Historical, Political, and Social Context of Migration to Poland

During WWII and the subsequent socialist political regime, Poland, historically a multi-ethnic state, became to a large extent homogenous in terms of nationality, and diversity was not publicly acknowledged. The political transition of 1989 led to the opening of borders and Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 led to an increase in the emigration of Poles, but also to the immigration of foreigners (Górny et al, 2010; Fagasiński, 2014). Although the country adopted integrative policies directed at Polish national and ethnic minorities,<sup>1</sup> these do not apply to foreigners. An important exception may be seen in repatriates and other persons of Polish origin living in the states of the former Soviet Union, who in many aspects are the focus of the attention of political authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Poland does not currently have a migration policy document in force, although various governmental decisions over recent years have indicated the directions of practical action (characterised by researchers as *ad hoc* and *post factum* activities – see: Górny et al., 2010, p. 89). Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 resulted in the adaptation of national policies to EU regulations, which was, however, in many regards characterised as top-down, without sufficient accommodation to the specific Polish context (Pawlak, 2013). Actual migration processes have until recently been mostly temporary or transit in character rather than for the purpose of more or less permanent residence (Górny et al., 2010; Iglicka & Gmaj, 2015) – described as “liquid immigration”, characterised by flexibility, circularity, and transnationality (Górny et al., 2010a, p. 232). This has led to

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<sup>1</sup> In 2005 Poland adopted a law granting special rights and protection to Polish citizens belonging to national and ethnic minorities historically linked to the territory of Poland. These include the following: Belarussian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Jewish, Karaite, Lemko, Roma, and Tatar (Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language). These rights include state support of minority education, sustaining cultural identity and the regional language, as well as supporting civic and social integration and equal treatment.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Act of 9 November 2000 on Repatriation.

the perception of immigration issues as secondary, outside of the central focus of public administration. Experts indicate that, based on existing acts of law, the implicit directions of the Polish migration strategy may be defined as restrictive and reactive, concentrating on the security of national borders and controlling the influx of immigrants (where existing acts specify detailed conditions of entering and residing in the country), encouraging residence in the case of foreigners of Polish origin but preferring seasonal and short-term stays, particularly with regard to non-EU migration, and with a preference for immigrants from Eastern Europe (the former Soviet Union) (Górny et al., 2010a, p. 78, 102, 234; see also: Lesińska, 2016; Fihel, Kaczmarczyk & Stefańska, 2012).

Researchers note, however, that Poland is currently experiencing a distinct transition with regard to migration trends, and the term *integration* in the context of migration has become significant in the public debate (Łodziński & Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2011). Moreover, the situation in Europe since 2015 has attracted extensive media attention to these issues and political discourse has predominantly become focused on security, in which respect the government has proposed changes to the law (Klaus, 2017). Experts stress that since 2015 issues of migration have also become part of the political agenda in Poland, where a deepening of the symbolic and legal divide between “citizens” and “foreigners” is taking place, with increasing surveillance and control. This process of “criminalising migration” is especially visible in the case of refugees, where “the rhetoric of security and terrorist threat on the part of refugees continues to feature prominently in the statements of leading politicians” (Klaus, 2017, p. 524; see also: Klaus, 2017a).

Polish public opinion, previously ambivalent, or even rather open and tolerant of immigrants and refugees compared to other European countries (for instance, according to the European Social Survey data), has experienced a dramatic shift in attitudes since 2015. Traditionally, Poles have held more positive sentiments towards Western European nationalities and more negative ones towards those from the East, the Middle East, and Africa. It is important to stress, however, that both positive and negative attitudes are based to a large extent on the assumptions fuelled by media relations, as 66% of Poles declare that they do not personally know a single foreigner living in their country (CBOS, 2016)<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, in 2015 around half of the respondents declared that it is positive when

<sup>3</sup> CBOS – Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (Public Opinion Research Center). Survey and research reports are available at: <http://www.cbos.pl/PL/publikacje/publikacje.php>

a country is inhabited by people of the same nationality and that foreign inhabitants should adapt to the Polish language, values, and lifestyle as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, many of these people declared at the same time that it is positive to have neighbours of a different culture and tradition (CBOS, 2015).

Negative attitudes have increased visibly over the last two years and this is especially the case with regard to the perception of Muslims and Arabs, where religion is often identified with ethnicity (see e.g. CBOS, 2015a; Stefaniak, 2015). In recent months, both public and political debate have become extremely polarised (for vs against receiving refugees and immigrants from Muslim countries) and it has become very difficult to have a rational discussion concerning various specific aspects of the “crisis” situation (see e.g. Kropiński & Hansen, 2016). While in the first few months of 2015 the majority of Poles (66%) agreed that the presence of foreigners had a positive effect on cultural diversity and openness among people (CBOS, 2015b), only 6 months later the majority (57%) declared that they feared an increase in immigration to Poland would negatively affect their way of life (CBOS, 2015c). In 2016 over half of the Poles were against welcoming refugees to the country (and well over 60% were against welcoming specifically those coming from Middle Eastern and African countries) (CBOS, 2016a), and refugees in general became perceived as a “suspected community” (Górny et al., 2017). There was also a rising acceptance of the use of violence in policy actions towards these people, both physical (such as isolation or deportation) and psychological (such as invigilation) (Świdorska, Winiewski & Hansen, 2016; Bieńkowski & Świdorska, 2017). A clear exception in this case were asylum-seekers coming from territories at war in Ukraine. In 2017 attitudes towards other nationalities seem to be improving slightly, although acts of discriminatory behaviour and especially hate speech are still on the rise.

### 3. Migration to Poland – Current Data and Trends

There are several formal migrant statuses in Poland, defined in existing laws. Legal acts focus not on *immigrants*, however, but on *foreigners*, who are defined as “everyone who does not hold Polish citizenship” (Act of 12 December 2013 on foreigners). This opposition between the legal status of *Polish citizen* and *non-Polish citizen* seems central to many practical dimensions of integration: for instance, work, study, access to social care,

or political participation. In this context, a person who acquires Polish citizenship is no longer a foreigner from the perspective of public administration and their ethnic background is very rarely taken into account in governance processes and policy actions, with the exception, as indicated earlier, of repatriates and representatives of specific national and ethnic minorities (see also: Iglicka & Gmaj, 2015).

From the perspective of existing law, foreigners in Poland can be categorised into three groups:

- EU citizens (and their family members) are subject to the *Act of 14 July 2006 on the Entry into, Residence in and Departure from the Republic of Poland of Nationals of the European Union Member States and Their Family Members*.
- Non-EU citizens are subject to the *Act of 12 December 2013 on Foreigners*. This law (and its implementing legislation) determines various migrant statuses defined by permits issued to foreigners, which legalise their stay in Poland.

By the end of 2016, the number of valid residence documents held by foreigners (non-EU nationals) included<sup>4</sup> over 120,000 temporary residence permits, over 51,000 permanent residence permits, over 10,500 long-term EU residence permits, over 1,800 humanitarian stay permits, and over 300 tolerated stay permits. The largest groups of non-EU citizens living in Poland by the end of 2016 were Ukrainians (with over 100,000 valid residence documents), Belarussians (with over 11,400 valid documents), citizens of the Russian Federation (with over 10,500 valid documents), and Vietnamese (over 10,200 valid documents).

It should be acknowledged that these statistics do not take into account legal residence based on visa documents, which in many situations allow – especially in the case of Ukrainian circular migrants – for extended and repeated periods of work and stay. According to the Polish Consular Report, the overall number of Polish visas issued to foreigners in 2015 amounted to over 1.5 million, whilst the majority of these were issued in Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, the above data does not include irregular migration.

- Foreigners in need of protection are subject to the *Act of 13 June 2003 on Granting Protection to Foreigners Within the Territory of the Republic*

<sup>4</sup> Data of the Office for Foreigners, retrieved from: <https://udsc.gov.pl/statystyki/raporty-okresowe/zestawienia-roczne/>

<sup>5</sup> Data of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, retrieved from: [http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/informacje\\_konsularne/raporty\\_konsularne/raport\\_konsularny\\_2015](http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/informacje_konsularne/raporty_konsularne/raport_konsularny_2015)

of Poland. The two fundamental forms of protection – refugee status and subsidiary protection (along with asylum and temporary protection) – provide foreigners with basic financial support, access to health care, social assistance, education and Polish language courses, as well as access to the labour market.

Over 12,300 international protection applications were filed in Poland in 2016. The largest number of these applications came from citizens of the following countries: the Russian Federation (almost 9,000) – where a vast group of asylum-seekers are of Chechen nationality – Ukraine (over 1,300), Tajikistan (882), Armenia (344), and Georgia (124). In comparison with these figures, the actual number of positive decisions in response to the applications is very low. In 2016 refugee status in Poland was granted to 108 people overall (including 40 from Syria, 16 from Ukraine, and 10 from the Russian Federation) and subsidiary protection was granted to 150 people (including 57 from the Russian Federation, 51 from Ukraine, and 15 from Iraq). The actual number of valid residence documents by the end of 2016 included 1,306 refugee statuses and 1,911 subsidiary protection permits (overall).<sup>6</sup> Here it must be added that Poland has not accepted any refugees to date within the EU relocation and resettlement programmes (Klaus, 2017a).

It is also important to mention an additional and specific category of foreigners, namely ethnic Poles entitled to a Polish Card (*Karta Polaka* – Act of 7 September 2007 on the Polish Card). Polish law explicitly states a “moral obligation” to support those who in the course of historical events were forcibly moved to the territories of former Soviet states and lost their Polish citizenship. To obtain a Polish Card, a person must, amongst other conditions, declare themselves to be a member of the Polish nation and demonstrate their ties to Polish culture (including knowledge of the language), as well as previous Polish origin (or that of their family). The Polish Card entitles its holder, amongst other things, to undertake employment without a work permit or to undertake economic activity and education on similar terms as Polish citizens. It also entitles the holder to various forms of support (including financial support), although it does not automatically entitle them to settle on Polish territory or acquire Polish citizenship (this requires the submission of additional applications).

Looking at recent migration trends to Poland, some important conclusions may be drawn. The country has not experienced a mass influx of

<sup>6</sup> Data of the Office for Foreigners, retrieved from: <https://udsc.gov.pl/statystyki/raporty-okresowe/zestawienia-roczne/>

foreigners from the Middle East and North Africa as a result of the European “migration crisis”. The actual figures referring to foreign nationals arriving from these regions remain very low, but researchers have regardless noted a dramatic change in social attitudes. The overall number of immigrants arriving in Poland is rising steadily; however, this is primarily due to the vast increase in the number of Ukrainians. According to the statistics of the Polish Office for Foreigners, by the end of 2016 foreigners held over 266,200 valid residence documents in all, which accounts for less than 0.7% of the total population of Poland<sup>7</sup>. However, immigrants tend to settle in and around big cities, where their presence is much more noticeable than in other parts of the country. In recent years, the number of valid residence permits has been rising by over 20% a year.<sup>8</sup>

## 4. Focus on Three Distinctive Migrant Groups

In the following paragraphs we will provide a brief overview of three migrant groups, distinctive in terms of migration and integration patterns. Two of these groups are the most numerous in both Poland and Warsaw.

### 4.1. Ukrainian Migrants

Poland is one of the most popular destinations for Ukrainian economic migration, given the close geographical proximity and low cost of travel, accessible visa procedure, similarity of culture and language, and vast existing migrant networks (Brunarska, 2014; Brunarska, Grotte & Lesińska 2012; Klaus, 2012). At the moment, Ukrainians are by far the largest group of foreigners residing more or less temporarily in Poland; however, the actual numbers are very difficult to assess. This is predominantly due to the following reasons:

- Ukrainian migration is to a large extent seasonal in character (especially in the case of men who come to work in the agricultural and

<sup>7</sup> According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland, the population of Poland at the end of 2016 stood at 38,433,000.

<sup>8</sup> Data of the Office for Foreigners, retrieved from: <https://udsc.gov.pl/statystyki/raporty-okresowe/zestawienia-roczne/> There have, however, been slight differences in data collection in different years, which may to some extent cause inconsistencies between years and the actual numbers of documents.



building sectors) and also to a significant extent without formal contracts (Iglićka & Gmaj, 2015; Brunarska, 2014).

- most Ukrainians enter Poland on the basis of visa documents. They are circular or “incomplete” migrants (Okólski, 2001; Kindler, 2011), who spend some time working in Poland (a few months at a time but most of the year overall), then go back home and return again. Such migration patterns often last for years or even decades; however, in recent times Ukrainians have become increasingly willing to settle in Poland.

The mobility patterns of many Ukrainian migrants in Poland may be characterised as “permanent temporariness” (Stola, 1997, as cited in Brunarska, 2014, see also: Górný & Kindler, 2016). Experts estimate that around half of the Ukrainian population in Poland may have irregular status in some aspects (especially when it comes to employment) (Brunarska, 2014, p. 161; see also Klaus, 2012), which makes them vulnerable to various risks (Kindler, 2011), such as employer violations of workers’ rights (e.g. exploitation, low pay, long working hours, lack of access to public healthcare, and unstable work conditions) and many more (Klaus, 2012; see also Słubik, 2014; Brunarska, Grotte & Lesińska, 2012). In view of this, migration networks play an important role, especially regarding informal channels of finding work, as well as money transfer back home.

By the end of 2016, Ukrainians held over 100,000 valid residence documents in Poland, which accounts for almost 40% of all valid permits held by foreigners. Their number has been rising steadily for years; however, in recent months there has been a very significant and dynamic intensification of immigration to Poland. The number of issued documents increased by almost 60% between 2015 and 2016. Moreover, the majority of Ukrainians arrive and stay in Poland on the basis of visas, with an increase of documents issued for seasonal work purposes in recent years. In 2016 the number of work permits issued to Ukrainians exceeded 100,000 (over 100% more than in 2015), which accounted for over 83% of all permits issued to foreigners.

It must also be said here that Ukrainians, along with citizens of 5 other states (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova) have simplified access to the Polish labour market, compared with other non-EU nationals.<sup>9</sup> They are entitled to work for no longer than 6 months over the sub-

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<sup>9</sup> Act of 20 April 2004 on the Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions (as amended, together with implementing acts). See also: <https://udsc.gov.pl/en/>

sequent 12-month period on the basis of a statement of the intention to delegate work to a foreigner. This statement must be issued by a Polish employer and registered in a district labour office; moreover, the foreigner must then sign a formal contract with the employer. Numerous migrants are granted visas to Poland on the basis of such statements. In 2016 over 1.2 million statements were issued to Ukrainian citizens (with an increase of over 65% compared to 2015) and these accounted for 96% of all registered statements issued to foreigners in Poland. The statements most often concerned low-skilled jobs in the agricultural and building sectors (see also: Brunarska, 2014), usually for a period of 3–6 months. Interestingly, 63% of Poles declared that the work done by foreigners coming from states with simplified access to the Polish labour market is beneficial for the Polish economy, whilst simultaneously 60% of the respondents held the contradictory view that the government should take actions to decrease the number of foreigners from these countries working in Poland (CBOS, 2016).

Labour market data indicate that at present women constitute around 28–35% of the Ukrainian migrant population in Poland<sup>10</sup>. Their main sectors of employment are cleaning and caregiving, along with gastronomy and other service sectors. Men work predominantly in agriculture and building, along with gastronomy. There are also growing numbers of both female and male Ukrainian students in Poland. Specific employment sectors may influence the fact that women more often reside in cities, and that in the capital city of Warsaw their number most probably surpasses the number of men (see also Winiarska, 2017).

Ukrainian immigrants in Poland do not face typical integration difficulties such as the language barrier or cultural differences. Their adaptation strategy is often defined in terms of assimilation due to good integration into the Polish labour market, as well as strong ties with Poles, including frequent inter-marriages (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015; Grzymała-Kazłowska, Stefan´ska & Szulecka, 2008; Grzymała-Kazłowska & Piekut, 2007). A recent theoretical concept takes into account the specific “fluid”,

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*cudzoziemcy/obywatele-panstw-trzecich/chce-pracowac-w-polsce/* It should be noted that the government is reportedly planning to change legislation in this respect and introduce short-term seasonal work permits instead of employer statements.

<sup>10</sup> Data of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, retrieved from: <https://www.mpips.gov.pl/analizy-i-raporty/cudzoziemcy-pracujacy-w-polsce-statystyki/> according to data on issued work permits and registered statements on the intention of delegating work to a foreigner in 2016.

complex, and ambiguous character of Ukrainian migration experiences, describing their adaptation processes as “anchoring” – aimed at security and stability but not necessarily settlement (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2016a; Grzymała-Kazłowska & Brzozowska, 2017). Some of the most important challenges this group faces are irregular employment and discrimination by employers on the labour market and in workplace relations (Brunarska, Grotte & Lesin’ska, 2012). This is also sometimes combined with discrimination on the housing market.

## 4.2. Vietnamese Migrants

Vietnamese citizens have been settling in Poland since the 1960s (and even prior to that), when the first immigrants were students taking part in international educational exchanges between the socialist republics of Poland and Vietnam (Halik & Nowicka, 2002). Since the 1990s economic migration has been developing on a significant scale, and now the Vietnamese are one of the most numerous groups of immigrants living in Poland. At present, they hold over 10,000 valid residence permits, although it is estimated that the actual figures are much higher than official statistics show – by as much as 50% (Szulecka, 2012; Halik, Nowicka & Połec, 2006; Grzymała-Kazłowska, Stefańska & Szulecka, 2008). Experts estimate that the actual size of the Vietnamese diaspora in Poland stands at around 30,000 people (including those who have acquired Polish citizenship, as well as undocumented migrants) (Szymańska-Matusiewicz, 2015a), many of whom live in the capital city of Warsaw and its neighbouring districts (see also Górny et al., 2010). The Vietnamese take up economic activity mostly in the fields of trade and gastronomy, and as far as employment is concerned they cooperate closely within their ethnic group by establishing their own businesses or working in Vietnamese trade centres (Klorek & Szulecka, 2013; Grzymała-Kazłowska, Stefańska & Szulecka, 2008).

The Vietnamese have a highly expanded support network within their ethnic group and are perceived as economically, socially, and culturally isolated from Polish society (Halik 2006; Halik & Nowicka 2002). Research indicates that they have a strong ethnic identity, their family and social networks consist mainly of representatives of their own ethnic group members, and they tend to concentrate spatially with regard to accommodation (Grzymała-Kazłowska & Piekut, 2007; Grzymała-Kazłowska, Stefańska & Szulecka, 2008; Górny et al., 2010; Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015). On the other hand, the Vietnamese are active in forming ethnic

organisations, and community leaders and activists make efforts to introduce Vietnamese culture to the majority Polish society, especially by means of educational and cultural projects (Szyman´ska-Matusiewicz, 2015b). This leads to the “collective integration” of the group as a whole into the host society (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015). It must also be stressed here that the Vietnamese in Poland are very diverse within their group; for instance, with regard to legal status (some are undocumented, short-term, or long-term migrants, whilst others have Polish citizenship); political views; language acquisition; economic status (some are low-skilled workers, whilst others run their own businesses and employ both Poles and foreigners); as well as standard of living (some rent apartments along with numerous other immigrants, whilst others own apartments in gated settlements) (see also Szyman´ska-Matusiewicz, 2015b). As indicated above, experts estimate that there are large numbers of undocumented Vietnamese migrants in Poland and these people are particularly exposed to discrimination, given their lack of Polish language skills and irregular employment status (Szulecka, 2012). Others, however, especially second- and third-generation Vietnamese in Poland, have to a large extent integrated into Polish society and some have acquired Polish citizenship.

### 4.3. Chechen Migrants

Chechen immigrants (formally citizens of the Russian Federation) have been arriving in Poland since the mid-90s as asylum-seekers, due to the war and the ensuing political situation in the Republic of Chechnya. The vast majority of international protection applications filed in Poland originates from the representatives of this group, which makes the Chechen migration flow specific in the aspect of its underlying motivation. In previous years, large numbers of Chechens entered Poland; most of them passed through refugee centres and many left the country after some time in order to settle in other European states. The number of migrants staying in Poland has increased since the Dublin II and Dublin III regulations and is estimated at around a few thousand (Łukasiewicz, 2011). Here it must also be said that in recent months NGOs have pointed out a controversy concerning the actions of Polish border guards, who have been restricting access to the procedure for granting international protection at border crossings with Belarus, where many Chechen migrants attempt to enter Poland (Chrzanowska et al, 2016; Klaus, 2017a).

Chechens are Muslim, which makes them noticeably distinct in Polish society (Stryjewski, 2012). They maintain their culture and traditions and perceive Poles as reluctant to establish social contacts. Research conducted prior to 2015 indicates that Poles used to declare a relative openness towards this group (Olechowski, 2014); however, in the context of the “migration crisis” and the rise of anti-Muslim sentiments in recent years, attitudes have radicalised and many Chechens have increasingly experienced discrimination, hostile attitudes, and even physical assault (Klaus, 2014). Chechens in Poland rely to a large extent on social networks within their own ethnic group and build relationships with other Chechens. With regard to family models, most Chechens reproduce traditional, patriarchal, and extended family patterns (Łukasiewicz, 2011). This is one of the main challenges to integration, along with traditional gender roles that, especially in combination with stress, enhance the tendency to domestic violence in many families, where there is a lack of culturally sensitive support measures for victims of such violence (Klaus, 2014; 2016). Another key problem is unemployment and discrimination on the labour market, along with very poor and unstable housing conditions, where the latter is an important factor contributing to the decision to leave Poland altogether (Chrzanowska & Czerniejewska, 2015). It must be added that it is mainly Chechen women who come into contact with Polish institutions (social support centres and labour offices) and who have proved effective at organising financial support for their families (Łukasiewicz, 2011). The Chechen diaspora is organised to some extent, but mostly in the form of informal groups.

## 5. Migration and Integration Policy in Poland – the Initial Phase

At present, Poland does not have an integrated migration policy document, although issues concerning both emigration and immigration are subject to attention in strategic programmes and development policies adopted in recent years (see also *Polityka migracyjna Polski wobec wyzwań demograficznych*, 2015). Various public institutions are responsible for creating operational plans to address the needs and potentials of foreigners residing in Poland, as well as to ensure their equal treatment. These include especially ministries and public service institutions dedicated to managing issues related to the labour market, economic development, social policy, healthcare, internal and foreign affairs, education, and higher education (*Polska jako kraj migracji*, 2016).

In 2012 the Polish government adopted a strategic document titled “Polish Migration Policy – Current State and Postulated Actions”,<sup>11</sup> developed by the representatives of an inter-ministerial Committee on Migration,<sup>12</sup> where the need for opening Poland up to economic migration and creating a more expanded and systemic approach to integration was emphasized. Experts noted that the document established an implicit dichotomy between those who are linguistically, culturally, and religiously similar to the majority of Polish society and those who are not – with a preference for the first group (Fagasiński, 2014). In 2014 the Polish government adopted an implementation plan for the Polish migration policy document<sup>13</sup> but two years later, in October 2016, a new government revoked the document altogether. The reasoning for this significant shift in policy in official statements was that the migration situation in Poland and Europe had changed dramatically and thus a new strategy was required. Work is, however, at a very early phase and during a meeting of the Committee on Migration in March 2017, the Minister of the Interior and Administration indicated that issues of labour market and public security should be central to the new policy. Representatives of the Ministry stressed that the new policy should distinguish clearly between economic migrants and refugees, and that strategic actions should be implemented concerning economic migration from Ukraine.<sup>14</sup>

Migration researchers indicate that regardless of implementing a consistent migration policy, an effective integration policy is crucial in providing conditions for the independent functioning and equal treatment of foreign residents in the receiving country. Integration is defined ideally as a two-way process between immigrants and representatives of the host society, where the key dimensions include legal status (e.g. a residence permit and political rights), economic status (e.g. access to the labour market), access to institutions (e.g. healthcare and education), culture (e.g. language

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mswia.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/10149,Rada-Ministrow-przyjela-dokument-Polityka-migracyjna-Polski.html>

<sup>12</sup> Prime Minister's Decree: *Zarządzenie nr 12 Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 14 lutego 2007 r. w sprawie utworzenia Zespołu do Spraw Migracji (z późn. zm.)*.

<sup>13</sup> <https://bip.kprm.gov.pl/kpr/form/r1558,Plan-wdrazania-dla-dokumentu-Polityka-migracyjna-Polski-stan-obecny-i-postulowan.html> <https://emn.gov.pl/esm/aktualnosci/11766,Koniec-prac-nad-Planem-wdrazania-do-Polityki-migracyjnej-Polski.html> See also <http://biuletynmigracyjny.uw.edu.pl/50-grudzien-2014/rozwoj-polityki-migracyjnej-polski-otwarciem-granic-regulowanie-imigracji-kontrolowa>

<sup>14</sup> <https://mswia.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/15912,Potrzebne-jest-stworzenie-nowej-polityki-migracyjnej.html>

skills, knowledge of cultural norms and values, cultural identity, and the like), and social relations and spatial relations (e.g. diverse neighbourhood communities vs ethnic enclaves) (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2008; Biernath, 2008). Researchers also acknowledge that the concept of integration has become strongly politically embedded, and in practice integration policies in European states tend to lead to one-way, assimilationist outcomes and aim to preserve the existing social order (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2015).

In 2013 the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy drafted a “Policy on the Integration of Foreigners – Assumptions and Guidelines” document, which has never actually been in force and has not been assigned operational status. Comparative European research conducted within the Migrant Integration Policy Index monitoring shows that integrative actions applied by Polish institutions do not have high efficiency, with the most unfavourable areas for the integration of non-EU immigrants in Poland being political participation, education, health, and labour market mobility. Although there has been some improvement in recent years, “Poland’s integration policies create more obstacles than opportunities for immigrants to fully participate in society, with average policies compared to the rest of Central Europe”.<sup>15</sup> Researchers note that although Poland has in recent years adopted some chief EU recommendations and good practices (due mainly to the implementation of funding for NGOs), integrative actions at the state level have no actual impact on migration flows and migrants’ decisions concerning settlement (Górny et al., 2010).

Research also indicates that integration takes place predominantly at the local level, regardless of existing national regulations (Penninx, 2012, cited in Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2013, p. 85). European cities are thus fundamental arenas in the process of an immigrant’s practical adaptation and should hence play an important role in developing policies, not only implementing those adopted at state level. Due to their actual role, their focus is often more pragmatic than politicised (Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2013). In this context, Polish policy documents are overlooking the fundamental role of local actors – including authorities and organisations – in planning and implementing strategic integrative actions (Fagasiński, 2014).

Several challenges may be acknowledged with regard to immigrant integration at the local level in Poland. First of all, many foreigners face discrimination in various fields (Szulecka, 2013), including the labour market (Wysieńska & Wencel, 2013) and in renting accommodation (Wencel,

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.mipex.eu/poland>

2013). This often coincides with increasingly negative social attitudes towards immigrants. Secondly, foreigners have very limited options of participating in public activity due to their restricted political rights (Kaźmierkiewicz & Seges-Frelak, 2013). They do, however, have the option of establishing social and cultural organisations or organising protests, and Vietnamese immigrants are sometimes active in this respect (Iglicka & Gmaj, 2015). Researchers stress the need for stability and security as a key condition for integration (see e.g. Ager & Strang, 2008, cited in Stefańska & Szulecka, 2013), and in this context the options of acquiring relatively secure legal status are important (Stefańska & Szulecka, 2013).

## 6. Integration Policy at the Local Government Level – the Case of Warsaw

Warsaw as Poland's capital city has been experiencing significant growth in both internal and external immigration in recent years and thus plays a key role in developing and implementing integrative actions. Researchers estimate that around 25% of foreign immigrants arriving in Poland reside in Warsaw (Piekut 2012; Winiarska, 2017) and large numbers reside in neighbouring towns and districts as well. Rough estimates indicate that foreigners accounted for from around 3% to as much as 5% of Warsaw's population by the end of 2015 (Winiarska, 2017). The largest groups of non-EU citizens living in Warsaw are those most numerous in Poland generally: Ukrainians, Belarussians, citizens of the Russian Federation, and the Vietnamese. Warsaw is thus facing questions concerning how the local government can influence the integration process and what the purpose of this process is, as well as its target groups.

### 6.1. Individual Integration Programmes for Refugees

Integration policy does not formally fall within the responsibility of local governments in Poland, so there is a lack of clear legal basis and additional funding for integrative actions. Government assistance in this respect is provided only to one group of foreigners: those granted refugee status and subsidiary protection. This includes an Individual Integration Programme (IIP), which is a government administration programme, but implement-



ed at the local government level – in the case of Warsaw by the Warsaw Family Assistance Centre.

The primary role of the WFAC in this respect is to define the basic needs of foreigners granted refugee status and subsidiary protection, as well as their families, and provide them with appropriate assistance and support as they adapt to life in Poland (but only once they have left the refugee centre). It must be stressed, however, that the local government coordinates social support actions, whilst it is to a large extent NGOs with expertise in this field that are commissioned to provide specialised counselling (see e.g. Frelak, Klaus & Wiśniewski, 2007).

An integration programme may last no more than 12 months.<sup>16</sup> The assistance programme includes, apart from access to the labour market and social care, various other forms of support:<sup>17</sup>

- financial support for basic necessities and Polish language lessons;
- health insurance;
- specialised counselling (psychological, family, and legal);
- information on and assistance in dealing with institutions, including in particular employment agencies, the local community, and non-governmental organisations;
- other support measures, if required by the specific integration needs of the foreigner and his/her family.

The WFAC is also entitled to apply for housing rental agreements on behalf of individuals granted refugee status or subsidiary protection (this applies to dwelling units owned by the Warsaw municipality).<sup>18</sup> Up to five dwelling units a year are rented through this procedure. It must be stressed, however, that foreigners granted refugee status or subsidiary protection are also entitled to apply for the rental of municipal housing under generally applicable public housing rules. Such actions, although very important, are still insufficient and refugee housing conditions remain a major problem in Warsaw. Rental housing is usually of poor quality and discriminatory practices occur in granting foreigners access to municipal housing (Chrzanowska & Czerniejewska 2015; Klaus, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> However, local authorities are undertaking actions to extend this support, for example, via the *Welcome to Warsaw 2016–2017* project.

<sup>17</sup> According to the Act of 12 March 2004 on Social Assistance. See also: *Polska jako kraj migracji.*, luty 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Resolution LVIII/1751/2009 of the Warsaw City Council of 9 July 2009 on the Rules Governing the Rental of Housing Owned by Warsaw (with later changes and amendments).

This difficult housing situation has prompted the city of Warsaw to work towards a greater accessibility of sheltered housing for refugees. The first sheltered-housing units were made available in 2011, followed by more in 2014.

It must be stressed here that Individual Integration Programmes address only a very specific and limited group of foreigners and are ineffective in many aspects, with much of the criticism raised by experts in recent years still valid (see: Frelak, Klaus & Wiśniewski, 2007; Frelak & Klaus, 2007; Wencel, 2008; Chrzanowska & Czerniejewska, 2015; Klaus, 2017a)<sup>19</sup>. In many cases support is insufficient and in the brief period that it is offered does not lead to practical adaptation to Poland and independence regarding language skills, accommodation, and employment (Frelak, Klaus & Wiśniewski, 2007; Górny et. al., 2017). Moreover, the majority of immigrants to Poland have no access to any government support and in this respect local administration should take initiative. We will now provide a brief overview of the types of integrative actions undertaken at the local level – in Warsaw – such as expert groups, institutional cooperation, and cross-sector partnerships, along with anti-discriminatory projects and the role of the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment.

## 6.2. Expert Groups

Warsaw has three dedicated groups in place to handle integration issues. The first of these is “The Foreigners, National Minorities and Ethnic Minorities Coordination Group”, which comprises the Mayor of Warsaw’s Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment as the chairperson and representatives of the City of Warsaw departments and units. The second is “The Coordination Group for Foreigners Granted Refugee Status or Subsidiary Protection”, comprising 15 representatives of municipal authorities and non-governmental organisations. Additionally, the Warsaw Centre for Socio-Educational Innovation and Training has set up a Contact Point and a “Group for the Teaching of Foreign Children and Re-emigrants at Warsaw Schools”. The purpose of the point and the group is to support teachers and headmasters at schools with children of foreign origin, including refugees, immigrants, and Polish repatriates (currently, local government schools in Warsaw teach more than 2,000 children of foreign

<sup>19</sup> See also: *Bystrianin P., Bezdomność i wykluczenie mieszkaniowe uchodźców w Warszawie* (n.d.).

origin). This group comprises 22 representatives of local government and non-governmental organisations.

### 6.3. Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment and Anti-Discrimination Actions

Warsaw's Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment is, among others, in charge of responding to hate speech and discriminatory incidents and acts against culture, beliefs, and religion. In this respect, an important role is played by the Warsaw 19115 City Contact Centre: a citywide system which integrates several channels of communication with the residents of Warsaw, and enables them, for instance, to report offensive graffiti. Training courses in equal treatment as a standard of customer service have been provided for City of Warsaw employees since 2013 and local government officials have attended workshops on how to respond to offensive incidents.

An anti-discriminatory clause is included in contracts which the City of Warsaw concludes with lessees of business premises who provide services to properties owned by the municipality. This clause is designed to protect service users against discriminatory practices, as well as to encourage lessees to provide their personnel with the appropriate training to ensure their familiarity with the notions of discrimination and equal treatment and their adherence to this clause when selling products and providing services (such as, for example, equal access to places of entertainment).

### 6.4. Institutional Cooperation and Cross-Sector Partnerships

The Warsaw municipality cooperates with both public sector institutions and NGOs. One of the entities engaged in this cooperation is the Social Dialogue Committee of the City of Warsaw for Foreigner Issues. Consisting of non-governmental organisations and the City of Warsaw, the Committee has been in place since 2012. It is an advisory body working towards solutions facilitating the support, integration, and inclusion of foreigners living in Warsaw. However, opinions about the effectiveness of this forum are divided (Dudkiewicz & Majewski, 2017).

Nevertheless, non-governmental organisations and civic initiatives are Warsaw's key partners in the implementation of public objectives. The city cooperates with various organisations by providing them with funding

and support for measures aimed at integration and the protection of human rights, among other objectives. One of such key long-term projects is the *Multicultural Centre* in Warsaw (<https://centrumwielokulturowe.waw.pl/en/>). Moreover, NGOs may engage in open competitive calls for proposals to obtain funding from the City of Warsaw for projects involving<sup>20</sup>:

- legal advice and information on applicable institutional and legal regulations;
- psychological counselling, problem identification, and preventive measures;
- educational counselling;
- anti-discriminatory counselling;
- support for vulnerable families;
- intercultural and integration counselling;
- occupational counselling;
- intercultural mediations;
- improvement of Polish language competence;
- integrative and multicultural events.

It must be acknowledged that integrative actions in Warsaw rely to a large extent on the work of NGOs, where mutual cooperation between the local government and organisations has both positive and negative aspects along with various challenges. The financing of projects is not related to a systematic policy based on a detailed diagnosis. Instead, it is to a large extent short-term and reactive in character, focused on multicultural themes rather than social policy (Dudkiewicz & Majewski, 2017).

The City of Warsaw has also been a leader of or partner to a number of externally funded projects developed in cooperation with NGOs. Moreover, it cooperates with other Polish cities in addressing migration issues. On 30 June 2017, 12 city mayors (members of the Polish Metropolis Union) signed a declaration on cooperation concerning internal and external migration. One of the main aims of this cooperation was to develop a positive and accepting culture towards immigrants and exchange good practices between local governments, national institutions, public and non-governmental sectors, as well as businesses and academic and religious organisations and institutions. A working group on migration and integration was set up to achieve this aim.

<sup>20</sup> Information from the City of Warsaw.

## 6.5. Educational Projects

The importance of integration measures is also acknowledged in education. Publications are available on the website of the Education Department of the City of Warsaw to support teachers working with newly arrived refugee and immigrant children, including publications prepared by the Education Department in cooperation with methodological advisers and non-governmental organisations. These materials also include welcome packages for students and parents (in six languages: Polish, English, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Chechen). Moreover, the Warsaw education system has indicated that one of their priorities is to improve the safety of children and young people and to counteract discrimination in schools, which is also relevant in cases of discrimination against immigrant children. Given that the rise in anti-immigrant sentiment is an essential barrier to integration, the Warsaw municipality prioritises educational and awareness-raising measures addressed at children, young people, and adults living in Warsaw, as these play a key role in shaping attitudes towards foreigners.

## 7. Conclusion – Main Potentials and Challenges of Integrative Measures in Warsaw

As migration to Polish cities increases, new challenges and responsibilities are emerging for local communities and organisations. There is a need for integration initiatives, both in the structural (e.g. economic, institutional, educational) and interactional dimension (relations between immigrants and the host society) (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006, cited in Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2016). Despite the absence of legislative solutions and government programmes, Warsaw is formulating bottom-up initiatives to prepare its administration and local communities for an increased presence of foreign residents. Regrettably, these are mostly ad hoc measures, so-called good practices, which in most cases are not sufficient; hence it is necessary to develop systemic solutions. Indeed, without a sound legal framework, local government units will find it difficult to ensure effective integration measures and support for immigrants.

It should be a priority at the national level to define with precision the responsibilities of local governments and set the level of funding availa-

ble to them. In the meantime, whilst there is a lack of national policy in this respect, integrative actions should be done within the competency of Warsaw's local government, which plays a crucial role in implementing the current immigrant integration policy. In order for integration to be successful, it is essential to ensure the coordination of measures taken by public institutions at both the central and local government level. Furthermore, Warsaw should draw more extensively on the integration knowledge and experience of other cities and countries. Important partners should also include local businesses, which could support the local government by providing financial backing, as well as provide immigrants with access to employment.

For now, however, local government actions seem incoherent and inactive, defined by experts as "passive goodwill" (Korcelli-Olejniczak et al, 2014). An analysis of local policy documents addressing diversity in Warsaw has indicated that "the aspect of ethnic and religious diversity is highlighted in various documents which adopt very general and declarative forms. While generic statements in policy documents envisage Warsaw as a hospitable city for visitors and new inhabitants, state their support of "diversity" and openness to "difference" as such and promote tolerance and equal treatment, the actual focus within policy measures is the labour-market driven attraction of in-migrants from other parts of Poland and abroad" (Korcelli-Olejniczak et al., 2014, p. 26). The cited report states that, apart from creating conditions for economy-driven migration, the most compound and expanded part of diversity policy in Warsaw is integration through education (and culture), where most activities focus on awareness-raising, tolerance, and social inclusion of diverse groups (Korcelli-Olejniczak et al., 2014, p. 15, 19). Warsaw needs a coherent strategy for the integration of foreigners, with the underlying assumption that foreigners represent an opportunity, in both economic and social terms, which the city can capitalise on (Dudkiewicz & Majewski, 2017).

Poland is still to a large extent a transit country; for many foreigners it is only a stop-off on their way to other states, where migrant communities are better organised and provide greater support to newcomers. This sense of transience and cultural incompatibility, along with language difficulties, are significant barriers to integration, especially when new migrants do not have social networks that they can rely on. In the case of Ukrainians these barriers seem least valid, due to several reasons described earlier, and some of these reasons are (to some extent) transforming circular migration patterns into a less temporary and more permanent stay. The Polish government's policies, however, are still proving insufficiently sup-

portive for migrants and refugees to decide to settle in Poland. These are aspects that need to be addressed in both strategic and operational policy development, starting from the local level.

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## LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF MIGRANT INTEGRATION: THE CASE OF WARSAW

### *Summary*

*Poland is currently experiencing a transition with regard to migration trends. Foreign immigration, perceived until recently as a secondary issue by public administration, is on the increase. The largest groups of immigrants have traditionally included Ukrainians and the Vietnamese, although the country has not experienced a significant influx of foreigners arriving from Middle East and African countries. At present, Poland has no migration policy document in force and integrative actions are undertaken mostly by local governments, typically on an ad hoc basis. As Poland's capital city, Warsaw plays a key role in governing diversity and implementing integrative actions. Significant challenges to immigrant integration include barriers to settlement and discrimination on the labour and housing market, along with a substantial rise in negative attitudes towards foreigners amongst members of Polish society. It is mainly this last aspect that is addressed by Warsaw's local government, which prioritises educational and awareness-raising measures. It must be acknowledged that this is done in close cooperation with the non-governmental sector, where organisations with expertise in relevant fields are commissioned to perform many tasks. The main challenge of integrative actions at the local level is that these are mostly incoherent measures, which in most cases are not sufficient for the actual needs of immigrants. Hence, it is necessary to develop systemic solutions with sound, long-term financing. Moreover, in order for integration to be successful, it is essential to ensure the coordination of measures taken by public institutions at both central and local government level and to ensure the participation of immigrant communities in the development of public policies.*

*Keywords: migration; integration; Warsaw; Poland; policy*

## IZAZOVI I PRAKSA INTEGRACIJE MIGRANATA IZ LOKALNE PERSPEKTIVE: SLUČAJ VARŠAVE

### Sažetak

Migracijski su trendovi u Poljskoj u prijelaznom razdoblju. Javna je uprava donedavno imigraciju smatrala sporednim pitanjem, no broj useljenika iz drugih država je u porastu. Tradicionalno najbrojnije grupe useljenika uključuju Ukrajince i Vijetnamce, no Poljska nije imala znatniji priljev državljana zemalja s Bliskog istoka ili iz Afrike. Poljska nema službenu migracijsku politiku te se pokušaji integracije uglavnom odvijaju u organizaciji lokalne samouprave, obično na ad hoc razini. Varšava kao glavni grad ima ključnu ulogu u upravljanju različitostima i provedbi integracijskih poteza. Nastojeći se integrirati imigranti se susreću s različitim izazovima kao što su ograničenja mogućnosti trajnog naseljavanja, diskriminacija na tržištu rada i nekretnina te primjetno jačanje negativnih stavova prema strancima u poljskom društvu. Varšava se uglavnom bavi ovim posljednjim izazovom te stavlja naglasak na mjere edukacije i podizanja svijesti o problemu. U provođenju mjera blisko surađuje s nevladinim sektorom i za mnoge aktivnosti angažira organizacije s iskustvom u relevantnim područjima. Glavni izazov integracijskim potezima na lokalnoj razini predstavlja činjenica da se uglavnom radi o nesustavnim mjerama koje u većini slučajeva nisu dovoljne kako bi zadovoljile stvarne potrebe useljenika, stoga je potrebno ponuditi sustavna rješenja s pouzdanim i dugoročnim izvorima financiranja. Za uspješnu je integraciju također potrebno osigurati usklađenost mjera koje provode javne ustanove na središnjoj razini i razini lokalne samouprave te uključiti same zajednice useljenika u razvoj javnih politika.

Ključne riječi: migracija; integracija; Varšava; Poljska; javna politika