

## Polish Perceptions on the Immigration Influx: a Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT: The article addresses the issue of Poles' attitude towards the influx of migrants to Poland in the context of the migration crisis, which Europe has to face today. The issues discussed in the present paper are aimed to illustrate the characteristic features specific to Poles' attitudes in favour of or against the process of influx of migrants to EU Member States or Poland. The analysis covers both positive and negative aspects of migration to Poland, which have been most often indicated by Poles with respect to migrants. On the one hand, they include fears with regard to national security, potential conflicts of cultural and religious beliefs, fear of the alleged loss of jobs to migrants and their preying on the country's social security system. All of the above result in anti-migration demonstrations and the language of hatred. On the other hand, positive aspects of the migration influx are believed to consist in cultural enrichment, benefits for the labor market resulting from the inflow of both qualified professionals and laborers with lower pay expectations in comparison to Polish workers and believing that migrants might be a chance to minimize the negative effects of the demographic crisis. Those who support helping migrants also point out the issue of solidarity and sympathy for the victims, and the fact that in the past it was the Poles who received support from other countries in Poland's difficult moments. Thus, extending such help to others may prove beneficial in the future. The present paper is based on academic articles, internet sources and statistical data, which all reveal a division into two camps: supporters and opponents of receiving migrants in Poland, which prevents determining Poland's definitive stance on this issue. All the aspects of the problem discussed in the paper are undoubtedly a basis for further analysis.

KEYWORDS: *Immigration; Migration Crisis; Refugees; Common European Asylum System; Poland.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Immigration phenomenon has existed since the beginning of humanity. Due to diverse reasons, people moved, are moving and will move from one place to another – it is nothing new. However, nowadays the issue of immigration in the European Union is a matter of huge debate. The phenomenon has evolved into one of the biggest mass migrations of people in modern times. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants have already streamed into Europe, which is perceived to be the largest influx of immigrants since World War II. In 2015 more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe, compared to just 280,000 the year before.<sup>1</sup> These days, discussions over the reception of immigrants by European countries are numerous and the decisions made on the European level are shaping the reality of tomorrow of the whole Europe. Despite a high number of proponents of the immigration influx, there are more and more negative attitudes rising in societies based on experiences of some European countries with immigrants. Poland and Polish society have also experienced the impact of the migration crisis. In the case of Poland, the issue of immigration from the East, even though it has clearly fallen by the wayside, is still present.

The purpose of this research is to identify Poles' attitudes towards the immigration influx in Poland with regard to the European Migration Crisis. The paper outlines Poles' perceptions about immigrants in relation to a variety of determinants. The main focus is put on the issue of immigration from beyond the eastern border on the one hand, and the intensified wave of immigration from the Middle East and Africa on the other. The research investigates major issues related to the determinants of Poles' perception shaping process and their reactions to the reception of immigrants by Poland. This analysis involves discovering how complex the factors influencing attitudes towards immigrants are, with regard to aspects of national, cultural,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Why is EU struggling with migrants and asylum?*, BBC (Mar. 3, 2016), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24583286>.

ethnic and religious identity. Last but not least, the investigation offers insight into and provides responses to the problem of the influence of the discussed perceptions on the Polish reality and society.

## 2. POLAND AS AN IMMIGRATION COUNTRY

### 2.1 POLAND AS AN ETHNICALLY HOMOGENOUS NATION

Despite the emergence of new migratory flows, Poland is still the country from which more people emigrate than immigrate to. In comparison to other EU countries, Poland is almost completely monoethnic. The registered number of foreigners, in relation to the Western European countries, is much lower. Indeed, Poland has never been as ethnically homogenous as nowadays. This is proven by the results of the Polish Census of 2011. According to the collected data, Polish citizenship was declared by as many as 99,7% of the surveyed, while only 0,2% acknowledged to be foreign nationals. What is more, the Polish descent was pointed out by 93,8% of the surveyed, other than Polish by 3,8% and 2,4% of the respondents gave no answers.<sup>2</sup> However, despite a widespread opinion that the country is monocultural and homogenous, the existence of ethnographic regions such as Silesia, Masovia, Pomerania, Malopolska cannot be ignored. These areas are diverse with regard to many aspects – culture, cuisine and even language, with the greatest distinctiveness manifested by the Silesians, Kashubians and Lemkos. It is also crucial at this point to relate to the existence of national minorities in Poland, especially those coming from the neighbouring countries, as they are not abstract or unknown to Poles. It is due to the fact that national minorities have resided in Poland for many years.<sup>3</sup>

However, the knowledge of at least some history of the country is needed to understand that this kind of trend was not always the case. Tomasz Teluk emphasizes the fact that over the centuries Poland was ethnically and culturally diverse, offering refuge and hospitality to representatives of many

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<sup>2</sup> See GUS, *Wyniki Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2011 [Results of the Polish census of 2011]*, Warsaw 2012, <http://www.stat.gov.pl/>.

<sup>3</sup> See *Cudzoziemcy w Polsce [Foreigners in Poland]*, (Mar.17,2015 / Last visit: 13/03/2016), <https://roznorodnosc.wordpress.com/category/obszary-diversity/pochodzenie-etniczne>.

nations. Since the beginning of its existence, the country's geographical location facilitated the intersection of paths of many tribes, cultures and religions. The position of openness of the country towards foreigners was especially adopted at the time of Casimir the Great's reign in the 16th century, which encouraged representatives of different nations to come to Poland. As a matter of fact, numerous wars with invading neighbours over the years, border instabilities and consequently, acquisitions and losses of territories by Poland, together with the inhabitants residing there, were the factors leading to the coexistence of a mixture of nations, cultures and religions.<sup>4</sup> The national feeling among Poles was strengthened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the aftermath of Poland's disappearance from the world map. National awareness was being continually shaped in the whole society and the effect of that became transparent at the time of the second independent Polish Republic. Dariusz Czaja points out that after 1945 Poland became a homogenous country in terms of ethnicity, which was enhanced by several factors: shifts of the borders to the West, forced resettlements of Germans from the western parts of the Polish territory and the arrival of new inhabitants, Polish settlers from pre-war Eastern borderlands, to replace the Germans. Simultaneously, a huge group of the Mazurs and Silesians emigrated to Germany, which altogether only encouraged ethnic homogenizing trends.<sup>5</sup>

The sense of otherness of newcomers still constitutes a great challenge for many Poles who are not used to the presence of racially and ethnically differing representatives of other nations in Poland.

## 2.2 POLAND'S MIGRATION PROFILE

### *Legal Framework*

Poland has been a member of the EU since 2004 and a member of the Schengen Area since 2007. Thus, Poland has fully implemented the provisions of asylum directives and complies with the legal obligations concerning its membership in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice imposed by the

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<sup>4</sup> See Tomasz Teluk, *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła!!! [Poland has not perished yet!!!]*, FRONDA (Feb. 14, 2016), <http://www.fronda.pl/a/jeszcze-polska-nie-zginela,65866.html>.

<sup>5</sup> See DARIUSZ A. CZAJA, *Wielonarodowość Polski na przestrzeni wieków [Multinationalism of Poland over the centuries]*, (Date not found / Last visit: 16/05/2016), <http://peku.pl/414/wielonarodowosc-polski-na-przestrzeni-wiekow>.

Treaties. Poland is also a Party to the Geneva Convention with regard to the refugee status, whereas the legislative instruments governing the functioning of migration policy at the national level include the Act of 12 December 2013 on foreigners<sup>6</sup> and the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth remembering that the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice came into existence through the Treaty of Amsterdam and the EU has started building the Common European Asylum System since 1999. At present, the CEAS includes the following directives: asylum,<sup>8</sup> reception,<sup>9</sup> qualification,<sup>10</sup> the Dublin III Regulation<sup>11</sup> and the Eurodac Regulation.<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with the decision of the Council of 22 September 2015 on accepting by Member States (as part of the so-called relocation from Greece and Italy) migrants seeking international protection,<sup>13</sup> Poland was obliged to accept 1201 migrants from Italy and 3881 from Greece.

The fundamental law with regard to the functioning of the asylum system in Poland is the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland, which implemented

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<sup>6</sup> Ustawa z dnia 12 grudnia 2013 r. o cudzoziemcach [Act of 12 December 2013 on foreigners] (as amended in Dz. U. of 2013, item 1650).

<sup>7</sup> Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2003 r. o udzielaniu cudzoziemcom ochrony na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej [Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland] (consolidated version in Dz. U. of 2012, item 680).

<sup>8</sup> Directive 2013/32, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on Common Procedures for Granting and Withdrawing International Protection, 2013 O.J. (L180) 60.

<sup>9</sup> Directive 2013/33, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Laying Down Standards for the Reception of Applicants for International Protection, 2013 O.J. (L 180) 96.

<sup>10</sup> Directive 2011/95, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on Standards for the Qualification of Third-Country Nationals or Stateless Persons as Beneficiaries of International Protection, for a Uniform Status for Refugees or for Persons Eligible for Subsidiary Protection, and for the Content of the Protection Granted, 2011 O.J. (L 337) 9.

<sup>11</sup> Regulation 604/2013, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Establishing the Criteria and Mechanisms for Determining the Member State Responsible for Examining an Application for International Protection Lodged in one of the Member States by a Third-Country National or a Stateless Person, 2013 O.J. (L 180) 31.

<sup>12</sup> Regulation 603/2013, of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on the Establishment of 'Eurodac' for the Comparison of Fingerprints for the Effective Application of Regulation (EU) No. 604/2013 Establishing the Criteria and Mechanisms for Determining the Member State Responsible for Examining an Application for International Protection Lodged in One of the Member States by a Third-Country National or a Stateless Person and on Requests for the Comparison with Eurodac Data by Member States' Law Enforcement Authorities and Europol for Law Enforcement Purposes, and Amending Regulation (EU) No. 1077/2011 Establishing a European Agency for the Operational Management of Large-scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (recast), 2013 O.J. (L 180) 1.

<sup>13</sup> Council Decision 2015/1523 Establishing Provisional Measures in the Area of International Protection for the Benefit of Italy and Greece, 2015 O.J. (L 239) 146.

the so-called asylum package. Issues related to the submission of applications for protection and for granting tolerated stay were regulated in the Act of 12 December 2013 on foreigners.

In Poland, there are two types of international protection that can be granted: refugee status and subsidiary protection. Apart from that, in accordance with the Act on foreigners, in cases provided for in the Act, the protection against expulsion may be granted, that is, tolerated stay or stay for humanitarian reasons. The procedure which is applied in Poland is the unified asylum procedure, which entails that in the course of the proceedings for granting international protection, it is not only examined whether the foreigner meets the conditions for being granted refugee status, but also other circumstances which might effectively protect the foreigner from expulsion are taken into account.

In accordance with the Act on granting protection, the competent authority for accepting the application for granting international protection is the Border Guard authority – the application may be submitted at the border inspection post or on the territory of the Republic of Poland. The authority responsible for examining the applications is the Head of the Office for Foreigners (“OFF”). The persons under the procedure are directed to centres for foreigners – in 2015, according to the data from the OFF, there were 11 such centres in operation. Persons applying for international protection are also entitled to receive social assistance and medical care. Apart from that, foreigners under the procedure are offered re-integration support.

Administrative procedure terminates with the decision of the Head of the OFF – if a foreigner has received a negative decision, he may appeal against it to the Council on Refugees. In the event of a further negative decision, the foreigner may appeal against it to the administrative court.

The problem of implementing regulations and their practical application is presented in the annual report of the Head of the OFF, available on the OFF website. As emphasized in the report for 2015, in November 2015 a significant amendment to the Act on granting protection was passed, which introduced several changes, among others, differentiation between the foreigner’s declaration of intent of applying for international protection and an application for granting international protection on the form, the

possibility of extending the 6-month period for examining the application for granting international protection to 15 months, assuming that an applicant is a minor in cases when it is impossible to determine whether the examined person is an adult and in cases of unaccompanied minors, the limitation on a manifestly unfounded application (an accelerated procedure) only to situations when the applicant poses a danger to the national security or public order, or has already been expelled from the territory of the Republic of Poland for that reason.<sup>14</sup> However, the key provision seems to be the introduction of the system of free legal assistance financed from the State's budget and administered in the first instance by the workers of the OFF and in the case of appellations by lawyers, legal advisers or representatives of non-governmental organizations.

It is worth emphasizing that non-governmental organizations (The Halina Nieć Legal Aid Centre, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Rule of Law Institute, the Association for Legal Intervention, to mention just a few) play a special role in the Polish asylum system, as legal regulations facilitate their participation in the asylum procedure practically on its every stage. The functioning of the Polish asylum system was also evaluated by the Supreme Chamber of Control in the report of 2016 covering the years 2012-2014 on granting protection to foreigners by competent authorities of the Republic of Poland.<sup>15</sup> The report presents the activities of the Border Guard and the OFF in generally good light – the main objection to the Border Guard was the lack of documents confirming the execution of other tasks provided for under the programme with regard to accepting applications; neither was there evidence on activities performed at the time of accepting applications. At the same time, the OFF completed 34% of cases in the time exceeding the 6-month time frame provided for in the Act for issuing the decision on granting protection.

At the executive level, the legally binding political document is the Migration policy of Poland: current state and proposed action adopted by the

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<sup>14</sup> See URZĄD DO SPRAW CUDZOZIEMCÓW, SPRAWOZDANIE Z WYKONYWANIA USTAWY O OCHRONIE MIĘDZYNARODOWEJ ZA 2015 ROK (2016).

<sup>15</sup> See (Mar. 15, 2016), <https://www.nik.gov.pl/kontrola/I/14/007/KPB/>.

Council of Ministers on 31 July 2012.<sup>16</sup> Currently, the government has been working on adopting a new document and defining new migration priorities for Poland.

#### *Statistic data*

The number of foreigners in Poland is still relatively small, but it is worth pointing out that about 1 million Ukrainians reside permanently and temporarily on the territory of the country. However, migration to Poland is rather of a regional nature (that is, it concerns migration from neighboring countries, especially the former Soviet Union and the Caucasus) and of a transit nature – the basic aim of the majority of migrants is to enter the EU through the Polish border and thus get to richer Western countries. It is well illustrated by the statistical data of the Head of the OFF with regard to the Dublin proceedings, i.e. returning migrants to the Member State responsible for examining an asylum claim within the EU.<sup>17</sup> In accordance with the Dublin III Regulation, it is, as a rule, the country of the first entry into the territory of the EU. In 2015, Polish authorities received a total of 6 395 applications for re-admission of foreigners who had filed for asylum in Poland before and then left for Germany (3 775 applications), for France (901 applications), for Austria (438 applications) and for Sweden (272 applications).<sup>18</sup>

In accordance with the data of the Head of the OFF (it is the authority responsible for examining applications for granting international protection in the first instance) 12 325 (M 6237, F 6088) applications for granting international protection were filed in Poland in 2015. It was a significant increase in comparison with the year 2014, when the figure concerned 6 625 persons. The asylum decisions which resulted in positive outcomes included 348 grants of refugee status, 167 grants of subsidiary protection and 122 of tolerated stay. The majority of nationalities applying for protection included nationals of the Russian Federation (65%), Ukraine (19%), Tajikistan, Georgia, Syria, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan. Refugee status was granted to 348 persons,

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<sup>16</sup> See (Jul. 31, 2012), <https://bip.mswia.gov.pl/bip/polityka-migracyjna-po/19529,Polityka-migracyjna-Polski.html>.

<sup>17</sup> See (Date not found / Last visit: 20/10/2016), <http://udsc.gov.pl/statystyki/raporty-okresowe/>.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*



including 203 Syrians, 24 foreigners from Iraq, 21 nationals of the Russian Federation, 20 stateless persons, 15 foreigners from Egypt, 14 nationals of Belarus and 12 persons from Turkmenistan.<sup>19</sup>

Polish eastern border is the external border of the EU at the section of the border with Ukraine, Belarus and the Kaliningrad District of the Russian Federation. However, in comparison with the EU southern borders (especially those at sea), the eastern borders are not particularly exposed to the influx of irregular migrants. In accordance with the statistical data gathered by the Border Guard Headquarters, 3 365 persons were stopped at the external borders for crossing or attempted crossing of the border in 2015, in breach of border regulations. Generally, 14 836 012 foreigners crossed the borders of Poland in 2015.<sup>20</sup>

A significant role in the movement of persons is played by the local border traffic, especially at the border with Ukraine – the agreement entered into force in 2009. The number of Poland-Ukrainian crossings on this basis totaled 10 734 959 in 2015.<sup>21</sup> NGOs also play a significant role in the Polish reception policy, especially in the area of legal counseling and reintegration measures. Among the leading NGOs it is worth mentioning the Helsinki Human Rights Foundation, the Association for Legal Intervention, the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Centre, the Rule of Law Institute or the Centre for Volunteers.

### 2.3 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S INFLUENCE ON THE POLE'S IMMIGRATION AWARENESS

The Catholic Church retains a strong political influence on the Polish population, and thus plays a significant role in influencing Polish attitudes to immigration. Indeed, Poland is an exceptional example in terms of religiosity. In the context of the current situation of the EU, Poles are one of the most religiously homogenous nations, where the majority of citizens officially declare their affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church.

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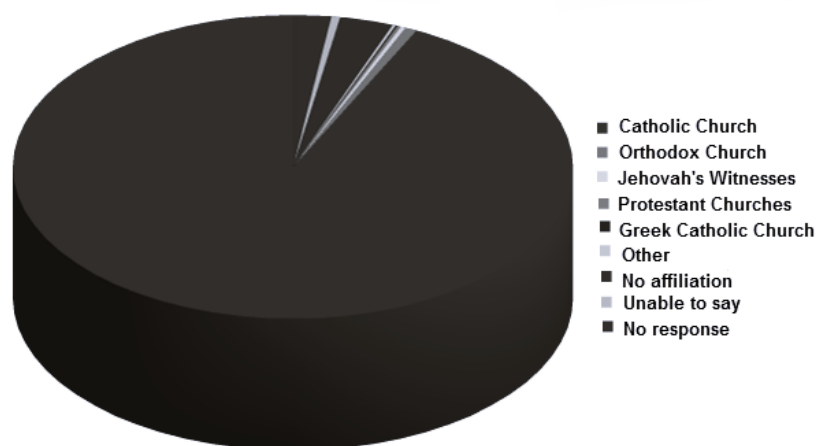
<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> See (Jan. 22,2013/ Last visit: 20/05/2016), <https://www.strazgraniczna.pl/pl/granica/statystyki-sg/2206,Statystyki-SG.html>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

Indeed, there are not many conflicts on religious grounds in Poland. However, the question of inviting Muslim immigrants into the country is extremely controversial for many Poles, especially in religious terms. This is intensified by common fears related to Muslim extremists, on account of terrorist attacks being more likely to take place due to their presence in Poland. In fact, the number of Muslims in Poland is marginal at present. The graph below presents the results of the Polish Census of 2011 in relation to the question of religious affiliation.<sup>22</sup>

**Religious affiliation in Poland (percentage data)**



Picture no. 1: Percentage illustration of religious affiliation in Poland.

Source: Badania Statystyczne (translated by Kinga Hodór)

Undoubtedly, religion is one of the strongest cultural influences, while the influence of Catholicism on Western European culture has been especially important. Apart from the fact that Poland has strong roots in Western European tradition, the Polish culture has characteristics which make it distinct among other nations. When trying to find features which determine the uniqueness of the Polish culture, the importance of Catholicism, which has been extremely crucial in the national consciousness of Poles, must be noted. Over the ages, the Catholic Church was the most significant patron in many aspects of life, as well as the focal point in the case of fights for preserving

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<sup>22</sup> See GUS, *supra* note 2.

national identity during partition times or wars. What is more, during the troubled times for Poland, the honour given to the Virgin Mary became a distinctive feature of Poles, especially praising the mother of Jesus and believing in her special intercession to God.<sup>23</sup> Despite Poland's rising societal secularization in the last decades, the still strong presence of the Church cannot be ignored in the debate on immigrants in Poland.

Approaching the topic of the Migration Crisis from a religious standpoint creates an opportunity to relate the experience of being a refugee to the person of Jesus who was also a refugee. Indeed, Biblical teachings call for compassion for fellow men in need, which is usually emphasized by Polish Church representatives in their preaching. Poles expressing their will to help victims of the crisis point out that Poland shall only welcome Christian refugees, emphasizing the fact that this kind of solution would be best for future integration of newcomers with the Polish society.

#### 2.4 PROFILE OF POLES HOLDING PARTICULAR PERCEPTIONS

Perceptions towards immigrants are conditioned by many factors specific to the surroundings in which Poles live. They differ in relation to age, financial circumstances, education level, place of residence, knowledge about immigrants and their countries of origin, worldviews and many others. As a result, certain trends can be identified with regard to the perception shaping processes. For the purpose of the current article, some conditions are discussed below.

When it comes to the question of age, Małgorzata Omyła-Rudzka puts emphasis on the fact that Poles aged 25-44 express their sympathy to the idea of welcoming refugees into Poland the most frequently. A bit less positive emotions are held by people over 55 years old, while the elderly, over 65 years of age, rarely declare positions of hostility towards foreigners or have no precise opinions on the matter. Nevertheless, the surveyed 55-64 year-olds, are often negative towards nationals of other countries.<sup>24</sup> As for the Polish

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<sup>23</sup> ANNA M. KOSIŃSKA, KULTURALNE PRAWA CZŁOWIEKA: REGULACJE NORMATYWNE I ICH REALIZACJA [CULTURAL HUMAN RIGHTS: NORMATIVE REGULATIONS AND THEIR REALIZATION] 60 (2014).

<sup>24</sup> MAŁGORZATA OMYŁA-RUDZKA, CENTRUM BADANIA OPINII SPOŁECZNEJ, STOSUNEK DO INNYCH NARODÓW [ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHER NATIONS] 14 (2015).

youth, they usually understand the need for solidarity in the contemporary world and they are much more likely to put themselves in the immigrants' shoes. Małgorzata Omyła-Rudzka notices that Poles with higher education are much less likely to express their dislike towards immigrants. Hence, the more educated the less negative about immigrants Poles are.<sup>25</sup> Knowledge about different cultures and religions is of a huge importance in shaping perceptions about representatives of other nations as it gives a chance to leave stereotypes or prejudices aside. The level of acceptance is higher among those who know foreign nationals themselves. International projects, trips, studying or working abroad for some time, taking part in events which bring immigrants' cultures closer are just some examples which may contribute to greater understanding between people of different origins. In fact, personal experiences make perceptions the most valuable. They create space to get to know representatives of other nations which results in opening minds and shaping attitudes. This kind of approach is usually followed by an increase in tolerance and ability to appreciate differences between cultures.

Another factor, partially related to the level of education and significant in conditioning attitudes towards other nations, is connected to financial circumstances of Poles. Citizens with lower incomes tend to have more negative attitudes than those who are satisfied with their earnings. The higher the evaluation of their own situation is, the more favourable approach towards immigrants and refugees can be observed.<sup>26</sup> There also exists a relationship between age and the level of education of Poles and their influence on their perception of immigrants in the face the Migration Crisis. Finally, the place of residence also influences people's perceptions to some extent. Inhabitants of villages and small towns declare their sympathy towards other nations much less frequently than others. However, Poles living in villages are the most hostile towards immigrants.<sup>27</sup> Having fewer chances for personal contact with foreigners than Poles living in cities, they usually form their attitudes on the information that reaches them through the media or by contact with friends,

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<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

family members or neighbours who have already met other foreign nationals. Even so, such knowledge is of a limited nature.

### 3. IMMIGRANTS AS A CHALLENGE FOR POLAND

#### 3.1 CONCERN OVER NATIONAL SECURITY

The question of national security for Poland in relation to the immigration influx is a sensitive topic. The Migration Crisis has caused chaos throughout Europe. At the same time, it is a victory for ISIS trying to send the message to Europeans that they cannot feel secure anymore in their countries, cities and streets.<sup>28</sup> Terrorist attacks taking place in the world are more and more common and result in growing fears in the whole of Europe, including Poland. Increasing numbers of non-European immigrants in European countries together with acts of violence caused by immigrants are the source of uncertainty and scepticism. The examples of criminal acts and aggression caused by the presence of Muslim immigrants within the EU live strong in people's memory, which is why immigration continues to face such strong opposition in Poland. Another controversial topic is the treatment of women by some Muslim immigrants. Examples of Swedish, German or French women, beaten up, slapped in the face, kicked, molested, harassed or raped are multiple and this is another factor enhancing negative perceptions about Muslim immigrants within Polish society.<sup>29</sup> From the point of view of many Poles, the experience of Western Europe will be the lesson to learn in order not to repeat the mistakes made by some European countries.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, Poland's geographical location invites other types of problems that other European countries do not necessarily experience. The role of Poland, whose eastern border is at the same time the EU's external

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<sup>28</sup> See Nathan Giannini, *ISIS Threatens Attacks on Major European Cities*, AOL (Apr. 5, 2016), <https://www.aol.com/article/2016/04/05/isis-threatens-attacks-on-major-european-cities/21338480/>.

<sup>29</sup> See Aldona Zaorska, *Zgwałcona Europa. Przekonaj się na Jaką Skalę Niemcy Sparaliżowała Fala Gwałtów* [Raped Europe. Find Out to What Extent Germany Paralyzed by a Wave of Violence] (Feb. 2, 2016), <http://warszawskagazeta.pl/kraj/item/3253-zgwalcona-europa-przekonaj-sie-na-jaka-skale-niemcy-sparalizowala-fala-gwaltow%20>.

<sup>30</sup> See CAB, *Muzułmańscy imigranci to paliwo dla ekstremistów i radykałów* [Muslim immigrants are the fuel for extremists and radicals], BINASE.PL (Sept. 14, 2015), <http://binase.pl/?p=914>.

border, poses numerous challenges for the security of Poland and the EU in the context of the Migration Crisis. Jacek Czaputowicz highlights the fact that, with regard to Poland, challenges and threats come from the East. The Russian aggression on Ukraine and an unstable situation in the eastern part of the country have led to an intensified immigration from the region. The war in the Eastern Ukraine is one of the major reasons of Ukrainians' mass migrations to Poland, perceived as an escape to a safe place, which is not distant and which offers a chance to live a normal life. In principle, Poles do not oppose the trend and rather support Ukrainians' integration into Polish society. Indeed, the stability of Ukraine is of great importance in case of a potential military conflict in this region.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.2 CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES AS A SOURCE OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS

People of different cultures are often unable to understand each other which is the source of conflicts on different levels. History provides many examples of clashes between Christian and Muslim cultures, which had long lasting consequences. Europe, once strong in its position, gradually started to lose the fundamental values on which it was built. Christian values have been replaced to some extent by atheist ethics negating the sense of God's existence. What is more, numerous ideologies have replaced religion, i.e. the fundament of European values and traditions. In the face of the Migration Crisis, fears of Islamization of Europe or terrorist threats are considered to be more possible.

Hanna Bojar points out that one of the most important factors influencing mutual relations is the degree of similarity or difference between an immigrant's culture of origin and the receiving culture, which in this case means Poland.<sup>32</sup> When asked, Poles often point out the provision that Poland should accept only Christian refugees. Since Muslim immigrants are mostly people with a strong value system, rooted in their religion and culture in accordance with which they have lived back in their countries, Poles are afraid

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<sup>31</sup> See Jacek Czaputowicz, *Polityka bezpieczeństwa Polski – między samodzielnością a europeizacją* [Security Policy of Poland – Between Independence and Europeanization], KWARTALNIK NAUKOWY OAP UW "E-POLITIKON", no. 6, 2013, at 24, 24-25.

<sup>32</sup> See Hanna Bojar, *To Be an Immigrant in Poland An Analysis of the Experiences of Immigrants from Non-EU Countries*, 160 POLISH SOC. REV. 401, 403 (2007).

of conflicts on religious grounds. Many Polish citizens do not want immigrants from the Middle East and Africa in Poland, as they are sceptical and afraid of Islamization of the country, maybe not instantaneous but over time. At this point it is noteworthy to mention the Battle of Vienna of September 1683, when Poland and the Holy Roman Empire joined forces as allies against the invading Muslim Ottoman Empire, which is often seen as a turning point in history, after which "the Ottoman Turks ceased to be a menace to the Christian world".<sup>33</sup> Many Polish people, proud of this fact, relate the current influx of Muslim immigrants to Europe to that event and believe that the role of Poland is to stay firm and repeat the 'victory' from the past. In the case of immigrants from beyond the eastern border, there are not many cultural and religious differences which might exacerbate the mutual relations. However, there exist other factors which are of a huge importance. With regard to Poles' attitude to eastern immigrants, the legacy of communism left in people's minds is of major importance in their perception of the world, which is especially true for elder generations of Poles. Certainly, the region's history in regards to Russia makes relations even more complex.<sup>34</sup> The common history marked by the influence of the Soviet Union and its communist approach cannot be omitted while discussing the issue of communication between Poles and immigrants from beyond the Polish eastern border.

Here also comes the question of a stereotypical approach towards Eastern immigrants and Poles looking down on them. Poorer, less developed and backward in many respects – that is what is somehow rooted in many Poles' way of thinking about nationals of such countries as Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova or Azerbaijan. The reasons for this kind of approach vary but they are mostly connected with the fact that Poland, being the member of the European Union, has developed in many areas throughout the last years and the barriers between the countries have deepened as a result of that. This fact happens to be a major communication obstacle which Poles

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Leitsch, *1683: The Siege of Vienna*, HIST. TODAY (Jul. 7, 1983), <http://www.historytoday.com/walter-leitsch/1683-siege-vienna>.

<sup>34</sup> See ZWIĄZEK PRZEDSIĘBIORCÓW I PRACODAWCÓW (ZPP) [ASSOCIATION OF ENTREPRENEURS AND EMPLOYERS], RAPORT IMIGRANCI Z UKRAINY RATUNKIEM DLA POLSKIEJ DEMOGRAFII [REPORT IMMIGRANTS FROM UKRAINE AS A RESCUE TO THE POLISH DEMOGRAPHY] 8 (2016).

and immigrants meet in building relations, as it makes mutual understanding more difficult, based on past events.”

### 3.3 DETRIMENTAL IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON THE POLISH LABOUR MARKET

Poland is basically a country with high negative migration. The number of people who leave the homeland in search of better living conditions, education opportunities or career development is still higher than the number of those who come to Poland with the same aims. Konrad Pędziwiatr points out dynamic political and economic changes and modernization of the country's economy as factors enhancing attractiveness of Poland among different groups of immigrants.<sup>35</sup> An important characteristic of today's migration is geographical proximity – the most numerous groups of foreigners staying in Poland come from the neighbouring countries. The fact that has spurred some negative reactions is that for some immigrants, Poland is only a transit country on the way to eventually reach other better prospering European countries. However, one of the most common arguments Poles use against immigrants is that instead of staying in their own countries they come to Poland to steal jobs from Polish citizens. As cultural closeness is an important factor influencing the functioning in the workplace, Polish employers often point out their preference to hire foreigners who are culturally closer.<sup>36</sup>

Opponents also point out high rates of unemployment in Poland and claim that many immigrants work illegally and send money to their countries of origin, siphoning money off Poland.<sup>37</sup> This belief is intensified by the fact that it is difficult to find a job in Poland and many Polish citizens go abroad in order to find well-paid jobs. From this standpoint, immigrants who come to Poland to work are perceived as invaders. These issues sometimes lead to the intensification of hate speech and discrimination towards immigrants. These

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<sup>35</sup> See Konrad Pędziwiatr, *Imigranci w Polsce i wyzwania integracyjne [Immigrants and Integration Challenges in Poland]*, 4 *STUDIA BIURO ANALIZ SEJMOWYCH*, no. 40, 2014, at 135, 136.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>37</sup> See Michał Wąsowski, *Imigranci zapełniają polski rynek pracy. Czy potrzebujemy ich więcej niż teraz? [Immigrants Fill in the Polish Labour Market. Do We Need Them More Than Now?]*, NA *TEMAT* (Mar. 14, 2012), <http://natemat.pl/5377,imigranci-zapelniaja-polski-rynek-pracy-czy-potrzebujemy-ich-wiecej-niz-teraz>



examples, mostly encountered on Internet forums, even though extreme, are not rare. According to the results of the study carried out by the Work Service, 38% of Poles are concerned about the possibility of a higher competition on the labour market. The main reason for such anxieties is the fear of losing jobs to immigrants. These kinds of concerns are even higher than those related to cultural or ethnic differences and are mostly expressed by the youth and persons with basic education as well as inhabitants of villages – groups of people whose situation on the labour market is the least stable.<sup>38</sup>

### 3.4 BURDEN TO THE POLISH SOCIAL SYSTEM

Some of the popular arguments behind the above idea include a high rate of homelessness, low social assistance benefits, repatriation issues and the general view that refugees would live at the expense of the Polish state. The opinion is strengthened by the argument that Poland cannot afford to receive refugees as it is not even able to ensure proper support to its own citizens.

The issue of homelessness of Poles, strongly connected to the problem of poverty which they face, is one of the arguments used by opponents of immigration influx to Poland to show that homeless people in Poland should be given priority in access to housing. Although no institution is able to present the exact figures concerning the number of homeless individuals living in Poland, surveys conducted every few years show specific trends in relation to the problem of homelessness. The results of the survey commissioned by MPiPS, presented in the chart below, indicate that over 36,1 thousand homeless people lived in Poland at the beginning of 2015.<sup>39</sup> Janusz Kowalski compares the outcomes of the two consecutive studies (from 2013 and 2015) emphasizing the fact that within two years the number of homeless people in Poland increased by 5,5 thousand persons, which constitutes 17,6%

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<sup>38</sup> See Work Service, *Polacy obawiają się imigrantów na rynku pracy [Poles are Concerned About Immigrants on the Polish Labour Market]*, INTERIA PRACA (Oct. 19, 2015), <http://praca.interia.pl/news-polacy-obawiaja-sie-imigrantow-na-ryнку-pracy,nId,1906218>

<sup>39</sup> MINISTERSTWO PRACY I POLITYKI SPOŁECZNEJ [THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY], *SPRAWOZDANIE Z REALIZACJI DZIAŁAŃ NA RZECZ LUDZI BEZDOMNYCH W WOJEWÓDZTWACH W ROKU 2014 ORAZ WYNIKI OGÓLNOPOLSKIEGO BADANIA LICZBY OSÓB BEZDOMNYCH* (Jan. 21, 2015), <https://www.mpips.gov.pl/pomoc-spoleczna/bezdomnosc/materialy-informacyjne-na-temat-bezdomnosci/>.

increase in comparison to the situation from 2013.<sup>40</sup> When these statistics are interpreted in the anti-immigration setting they create space for the view that giving priority to refugees in the case of housing facilities at Poles' expense is not what the government should do.

**Chart** Number of the homeless diagnosed at night 21/22 January 2015 in Poland  
 - with a division into particular voivodeships

No.	Voivodeship	Number of the homeless in institutional centres	Number of the homeless outside institutional centres	IN TOTAL: Number of the homeless in a particular voivodeship
1	dolnośląskie	2 400	816	3 216
2	kujawsko-pomorskie	1 462	2 475	3 937
3	lubelskie	822	136	958
4	lubuskie	661	352	1 013
5	łódzkie	1 606	476	2 082
6	małopolskie	1 589	353	1 942
7	mazowieckie	3 434	1 192	4 626
8	opolskie	779	301	1 080
9	podkarpackie	870	261	1 131
10	podlaskie	610	112	722
11	pomorskie	2 329	880	3 209
12	śląskie	3 765	650	4 415
13	świętokrzyskie	604	143	747
14	warmińsko-mazurskie	1 103	347	1 450
15	wielkopolskie	1 913	789	2 702
16	zachodniopomorskie	1 676	1 255	2 931
	<b>In total</b>	<b>25 623</b>	<b>10 538</b>	<b>36 161</b>

Picture no. 2 Chart representing the number of homeless persons estimated on the night of 21/22 January 2015 in Poland – with a division into particular voivodeships.  
 Source: MPiPS (translated by Kinga Hodór)

Another popular notion against refugees in Poland is the one related to the repatriation issue. The majority of Poles support the idea of helping those who want to come back to the homeland rather than welcoming refugees in the country. Aleksandra Grzymała-Kozłowska and Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska notice that the repatriation of people of Polish origin from Kazakhstan continues to be an unsolved problem by the Polish immigration policy. Moreover, existing legal and administrative solutions are not sufficient and effective for the anticipated scale of repatriation nor do they provide

<sup>40</sup> See Janusz K. Kowalski, *Najwięcej bezdomnych w Polsce jest w najbogatszych regionach* [The Highest Number of the Homeless in the Richest Polish Regions], GAZETA PRAWNA (Jan. 2017), <http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/galerie/903503,duze-zdjecie,1,bieda-w-polsce-najwiecej-bezdomnych-jest-w-najbogatszych-regionach.html>.

appropriate support for repatriates in Poland.<sup>41</sup> The results of the study carried out by CBOS in 2012 indicate that the majority of Poles (over 78% of respondents) actually express their support for repatriates to come back and settle in Poland.<sup>42</sup> Those who approve of the idea share the view that streamlining and extension of the repatriation process shall be a major concern of the Polish government as it is the moral obligation of the Polish state to facilitate a return to the homeland for repatriates. The Assignee of the Prime Minister for the International Dialogue, Anna Maria Anders, while presenting premises of the project of a new repatriation act in January 2016, emphasized that ‘Within 10 years all descendants of the victimized Poles will be able to come back to Poland’. The victimized persons, together with their descendants would have priority, while their spouses and children would also be covered by the repatriation act.<sup>43</sup> In the context of the Migration Crisis, repatriation supporters have become even more visible in the Polish public sphere. At any opportunity arising, they manifest their dissatisfaction over the reception of refugees by Poland, usually with banners saying: ‘WE WANT A REPATRIATE, NOT AN IMMIGRANT!’. Especially active in this aspect are members of Młodzież WSzechpolska (All-Polish Youth), the youth organization based on nationalistic grounds.

### 3.5 ANTI-IMMIGRANTS DEMONSTRATIONS AND HATE SPEECH

There have been many tensions in society connected with the decision of the former Prime Minister of Poland, Ewa Kopacz, on the reception of seven thousand refugees in the country. The decision instantaneously met with an immense demur and it is considered by many Poles to be scandalous.<sup>44</sup> They strongly oppose being restricted by EU quotas on immigrants to be accepted by

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<sup>41</sup> See Aleksandra Grzymała-Kazłowska & Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska, *The Anguish of Repatriation: Immigration to Poland and Integration of Polish Descendants from Kazakhstan*, 28 SAGE JOURNAL 593, 609 (2014).

<sup>42</sup> See generally Marcin Herrmann, *Pomoc Polakom Na Wschodzie [Assistance to Poles In The East]*, CENTRUM BADANIA OPINII SPOLECZNEJ, Jan. 11, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Minister Anna Maria Anders: *Będzie nowa ustawa o repatriacji [Minister Anna Maria Anders: There will be a new repatriation act]*, PREMIER.GOV.PL (Jan. 25, 2016), <https://www.premier.gov.pl/wydarzenia/aktualnosci/minister-anna-maria-anders-bedzie-nowa-ustawa-o-repatriacji.html>.

<sup>44</sup> See *Rząd PiS jednak przyjmie 7 tys uchodźców [Law and Justice government will yet receive 7 thousands refugees]*, NEWSWEEK (Jan. 3, 2016), <http://swiat.newsweek.pl/rzad-pis-przyjmie-jednak-7-tys-uchodzcow,artykuly,376667,1.html>.

Poland. Demonstrators share the idea that it is better to learn from the experience of other European countries that have already faced the problem of the influx of immigrants from Islamic countries e.g. Germany, Italy, France or the UK. They believe that it is not the right course to repeat the mistakes made by the West and instead propose to fight against Islamization of their homeland and Europe.<sup>45</sup>

There have already been many manifestations and protests against Muslim immigrants organized on the streets of Polish cities. On 11 November 2015, while celebrating the Independence Day, Polish protesters marched not only to commemorate the day which is so important for the Polish history but they also manifested against the 'Muslim invasion of Europe' in what was one of the biggest demonstrations in the history of Poland.<sup>46</sup> There was not a single report in the mainstream European media mentioning that event. Poles taking part in manifestations are resistant and hostile to the influx of Muslim immigrants to Poland and Europe. They unite under anti-immigration slogans like 'Poland for the Polish', 'Great Catholic Poland', 'Stop Islamization', 'Yesterday Moscow, today Brussels, taking our freedom away'.<sup>47</sup> Such demonstrations are expressions of the voice of Poles trying to influence the government's decisions on the issue of immigrants in Poland. Attachment to their country and national pride are often emphasized by protestors of the marches. In fact, it is more and more visible that the spirit of a shared concern among Poles is in the process of strengthening and that nationalist and xenophobic moods are coming onto the stage as well.

The Polish are open in expressing their extreme views on the problem of immigration and they do not hide that. There are many comments under articles on Polish websites relating to the Migration Crisis which abundantly criticize the idea of receiving immigrants from the countries concerned by

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<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., M. Rola, *POLACY PRZECIWKO "IMIGRANTOM". TEGO NIE ZOBACZYSZ W TELEWIZJI! [POLES AGAINST 'IMMIGRANTS'. YOU WILL NOT SEE THIS ON TV!]*, (Sep. 12, 2015), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbSHr87kkgM&list=PLq2O0\\_3e9fZ3bmBdM5\\_TXO-zxb27qB6Us&index=23](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbSHr87kkgM&list=PLq2O0_3e9fZ3bmBdM5_TXO-zxb27qB6Us&index=23).

<sup>46</sup> See *70,000 March in Poland against Immigration* (Date not found /Last visit: 26/04/2016), <https://anongalactic.com/50000-march-in-poland-against-immigration/>.

<sup>47</sup> *Refugees Arabs Muslims - Not Welcome in Poland* (Dec. 19, 2015), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwbklh6UgOg&list=PLq2O0\\_3e9fZ3bmBdM5\\_TXO-zxb27qB6Us&index=17](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwbklh6UgOg&list=PLq2O0_3e9fZ3bmBdM5_TXO-zxb27qB6Us&index=17).

Poland and Europe. Generally, opponents aim to send the message to Muslims immigrants:

*'In Poland, there will be NO sharia law. NO headbanging or shouting Allahu Akbar in the streets. NO insulting of our religion and our culture. NO burning cars like in France. NO burning down of police stations. NO imposing your ways on us. NO calling us the sons of apes and pigs. If you do, we will be the ones waging jihad...on YOU!'*<sup>48</sup>

The Internet is full of hate speech examples against immigrants. There are more and more groups and communities on Facebook being created e.g. 'No to Islamization of Europe' or 'No to Muslim immigrants from Africa and the Middle East' which are joined by new followers every day.<sup>49</sup> The same applies to YouTube, Twitter and other social media channels. There is also an interesting trend worth mentioning here which has appeared recently – Polish rap against Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and Africa. Several music videos addressed at immigrants are available on YouTube.<sup>50</sup> The videos are the reaction to the massive influx of immigrants to Europe and express anxieties against such situation taking place in Poland. Although full of hate speech, they are considered by their creators to be expressions of patriotism combined with concern for the future of the country.

#### **4. POSITIVE ATTITUDES OF IMMIGRATION FOR POLAND**

##### **4.1 SOLIDARITY AND COMPASSION OVER HUMAN MISERY**

Pictures of boats overloaded with refugees desperately approaching the European continent and increasing numbers of deaths in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea are presented by the media on a regular basis and for many Poles, they are already a part of today's reality. Indeed, these are tragedies of many people trying to escape from the terror of war and searching for chances to survive, with each family and each person having a traumatic story of

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<sup>48</sup> See Polish Def. League, Speech to Muslims Around Western Europe (Jul. 5, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=he-ycVqxQPM>.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., *Nie dla Islamizacji Europy [No to Islamization of Europe]* (Date not found / Last visit: 07/02/2016), <https://www.facebook.com/niedlaimizacjiuropy/?fref=ts>.

<sup>50</sup> See *Rap przeciw Imigrantom.. [Rap against Immigrants..]*, (Sep. 15, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJBOjCamoo4&list=PLXkrRCWcnywURbAYPYCoqkAYHyW9YW5p>.

leaving everything behind. Despite voices of dissatisfaction with refugees' presence in Poland, which are broadly heard in the public sphere, there is still space for those who share pro-immigration views, calling for compassion and solidarity instead of indifference towards human misery. Supporters argue that being part of the EU implies solidarity with other countries struggling with great numbers of immigrants so that the balance in relocation of immigrants in the EU can be ensured. Demonstrations and actions of support are still not as influential and visible as those which aim at hitting immigrants but they still gather Poles willing to help and do exert influence to some extent. Pro-immigration demonstrators unite under expressions of support such as: 'Refugees warmly welcomed', 'Guest coming into house – God coming into house' or 'Refugees, we warmly welcome you'.

Moreover, the existence of many organizations dealing with immigration issues in Poland must be noted, as they gather Poles whose aim is to bring aid to immigrants, both internationally and locally. What they put emphasis on is human dignity. Help takes different forms, including, among other things, humanitarian, material, medical and financial aid but also legal support and actions enhancing integration in the Polish society. Those who are willing to help can engage in voluntary activities.

#### **4.2 CULTURAL ENRICHMENT OF THE COUNTRY AND BENEFITS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Since 1989, the Polish society has been becoming increasingly diverse in terms of politics, religion, ethnicity, culture and worldview. Incoming migrants are still quite a new phenomenon for Poland while the process of shaping socio-cultural images of foreigners is taking place simultaneously. Results of the CBOS survey show that Poles' openness is rising slowly and it is on quite a high level nowadays. Two thirds of Poles believe that the possibility of migration and working in other countries is positive and that foreigners' presence enriches cultural diversity and makes people more open-minded towards others. Contacts with immigrants result in opening minds and as it transpires from the analyzed data from 1999 and 2015, the distrust towards newcomers seems to be declining. In between these years, attitudes have

changed and foreigners are much more accepted in all the roles the respondents were asked for.<sup>51</sup>

One of the pro-immigration arguments from the cultural perspective is that migration inflow is likely to enhance tolerance towards nationals of other countries, exchange of experiences and appreciation of existing differences, at the same time creating space for rejection of existing stereotypes.

A cultural and geographical proximity is the reason why Poles are much more likely to accept immigrants from the eastern neighborhood than those coming from Africa or the Middle East.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the common history and shared Slavic culture create much more space for the dialogue building processes among Poles and immigrants from the East. A similar rule applies to the question of language. Immigrants from beyond the eastern border are generally willing to learn Polish and it is quite easy for them to do so as the languages belong to the family of Slavic languages. The fact that eastern immigrants tend to learn the language quickly, assimilate easily and have cultural symmetry altogether contributes to better mutual relations.

#### 4.3 POORLY AND HIGHLY EDUCATED EMPLOYEES ON THE POLISH LABOUR MARKET

Currently, immigration has a moderate influence on the Polish economy as it is still of a limited scale. Poland is not the most popular immigration destination but it is important to notice that the scale of labor immigration in Poland is growing. As a result, step by step, Poland is becoming an emigration-immigration country. Experts from the Centre of Migration Research Foundation point out an interesting phenomenon, which is a dual structure of immigration to Poland. On the one hand, it concerns highly qualified workers from well-developed countries who contribute to the Polish economic growth with their knowledge and skills or set up their own businesses in Poland thus offering jobs to Poles. This is undoubtedly met with citizens' approval. On the other hand, foreigners often take up low-paid seasonal jobs, mostly in agriculture, construction or household keeping, which

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<sup>51</sup> See KATARZYNA KOWALCZUK, FUNDACJA CENTRUM BADANIA OPINII SPOŁECZNEJ, PRZYBYSZE Z BLISKA I Z DALEKA, CZYLI O IMIGRANTACH W POLSCE [NEWCOMERS FROM THE NEAR AND FAR, ABOUT IMMIGRANTS IN POLAND] (2015).

<sup>52</sup> See KRYSZYNA IGLICKA, POLAND: WAITING FOR IMMIGRANTS. BUT DO WE REALLY WANT THEM? 7 (2008).

is cost-efficient for many Polish employers.<sup>53</sup> Since immigrants often take posts which Poles do not want to occupy, there is quite a high demand for their work. Some of the reasons for this kind of trend are higher earnings expectations of Poles than those of newcomers', lower costs of foreigners' work and their great motivation. However, for many immigrants, Poland is just a short-term destination, a transit country on their way to richer countries of the EU.

An important characteristic of today's migration is geographical proximity. The most numerous groups of foreigners staying in Poland come from neighboring countries. Konrad Pędziwiatr emphasizes the fact that a cultural closeness is an important factor influencing the easiness of immigrants' functioning in the workplace and that Polish employers often point out their preference to hire foreigners who are culturally more similar.<sup>54</sup> According to the Center of Surveys over Migrations, till 2020 Poland will receive over 1 million, and till 2040, 4,5 million of immigrants to balance the lack of workforce. It has even been proposed that all Ukrainians residing currently on the territory of Poland, as culturally and geographically close, should have their stay legalized.<sup>55</sup>

Another important issue to mention is the fact that there are more and more foreigners studying in Poland, which emphasizes Poland's attractiveness in the sphere of education. Positive attitudes of young Poles enhance the assimilation process of their peers from other countries and help them to adjust to the new surroundings. Foreigners' presence at Polish universities is related to the assumption that some of them will stay in Poland for good, contributing to the country's development.

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<sup>53</sup> See Os AGATA GOMY, PAWEŁ KACZMARCZYK, JOANNA NAPIERALA & SABINA TORUNCZYK-RUIZ, OSRODEK BADAN NAD MIGRACJAMI FUNDACJA [THE FOUNDATION CENTER OF MIGRANT RESEARCH], RAPORT Z BADANIA IMIGRANTÓW W POLSCE [REPORT FROM THE SURVEY ON IMMIGRANTS IN POLAND] 9 (2013).

<sup>54</sup> See Konrad Pędziwiatr, *Imigranci W Polsce I Wyzwania Integracyjne* [Immigrants And Integration Challenges In Poland], 40 STUDIA BAS REV. 10 (2014).

<sup>55</sup> See ZPP, RAPORT IMIGRANCI Z UKRAINY RATUNKIEM DLA POLSKIEJ DEMOGRAFII [REPORT IMMIGRANTS FROM UKRAINE AS A RESCUE TO THE POLISH DEMOGRAPHY] 13 (2016).



#### 4.4 SOLUTION TO THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEM

The Migration Crisis is not the only issue Poland is struggling with. Worries about the country's aging of population and declining birthrates have reached a crisis level as well. According to the prognosis of GUS, till 2050, the Polish population will shrink from 38 to 34 million of citizens. What is more, 10,5% of this figure will be persons over 80 years old, and one third, 65 years old and more.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the natural decrease in population and lower birthrates constitute challenges for Poland as they deplete the ranks of the working-age group. In fact, low fertility and, resulting from it, demographic problems have a negative influence on the pension system.

Statements according to which Poland is on the edge of a demographic catastrophe are repeatedly presented by the media. In fact, Poland needs people in a productive or pre-working age and an influx of people from abroad seems to be necessary to tackle the problem. The ideal scenario would include immigrants who work willingly, assimilate easily, function within an analogous, identical or very similar cultural identity, confess a similar value system and have a similar concept of morality. According to experts from Związek Przedsiębiorców i Pracodawców (Entrepreneurs and Employers Union), in order to maintain the economy balanced and ensure the payment of pensions till 2050, Poland should take in 5 million immigrants. In their view, the best solution would be to legalize the stay of Ukrainians already present on the territory of Poland as a massive Ukrainian immigration might help to fill the demographic gap in the country. The feeling of stabilization would most probably motivate immigrants to stay in Poland and start families, both Ukrainian and Polish-Ukrainian which might slightly mitigate the negative demographic trends. A crucial advantage behind this idea is that legalization of stay of Ukrainians would be followed by the additional income for the Polish state budget and ZUS. ZPP estimations point out that the Polish state budget could benefit with 10 billion PLN annually.<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, a visible presence of Ukrainians in Poland constitutes an additional argument in negotiations with the EU on relocation of immigrants

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<sup>56</sup> See *Population projection 2014-2050*, STAT.GOV.PL (Date not found / Last visit: 25/04/2016), <http://www.stat.gov.pl/>.

<sup>57</sup> See ZPP, *supra* note 55, at 3.

from the Middle East and Africa. It is a proof that Poland implements a clearly specified immigration policy whose basic assumption is a friendly attitude towards reception of certain groups of immigrants. The survey conducted in January 2016 by Dom Badawczy Maison shows that 52% of Poles are positive about granting permanent stay to Ukrainians, while 28% are against. Ukrainians also hold the first place on the list of nations to be received. They are perceived as economically attractive, unproblematic and costless for Polish taxpayers.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.5 HELPING HAND GIVEN TO POLES IN THE PAST: OBLIGATION TO DO THE SAME

The question of opening the Polish borders for refugees from Syria and Eritrea induces some Poles to think about the times of WWII when thousands of compatriots tragically affected by war found refuge in other countries and continents, e.g. Iran, India, the USA, South Africa and others. Help was offered there in different ways; refugee camps were built, medical care and access to education and culture were provided. The actions of the government in-exile were invaluable, but it was the support and good will of the receiving societies which played the most important role.<sup>59</sup>

Polish history, however, is much richer in examples related to emigration of Poles. Opening of borders in 1989, accession to the EU and benefits of the Schengen zone are only several aspects which boosted the movement of Poles to other states. This fact is often raised by people who feel compassion to refugees and express concern about their fate.

There is an interesting statement prepared by the Refugee Foundation and presented below, which places emphasis on the fact that 7 thousand refugees to be relocated into different parts of Poland should actually not be alarming, provided that they are Christians. This approach, together with elimination of indifference and egoism are crucial factors in breaking barriers in the perceptions towards refugees.

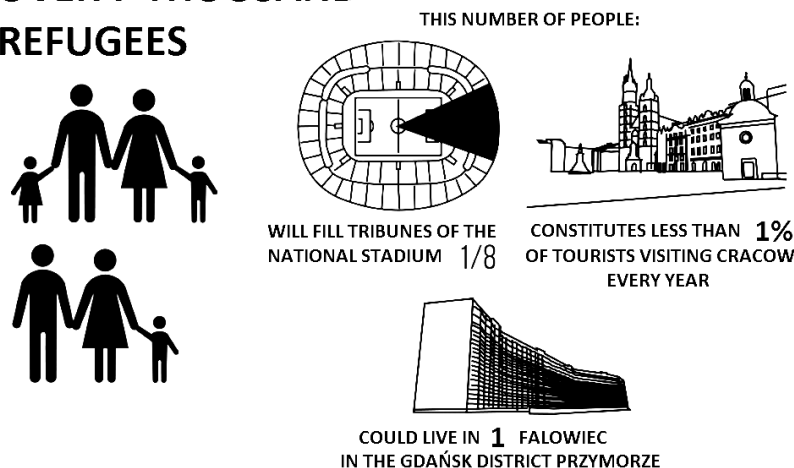
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<sup>58</sup> See Dom Badawczy Maison dla ZPP – badanie dot. Imigrantów [Dom Badawczy Maison for ZPP – survey concerning Immigrants] (Date not found / Last visit: 25/04/2016), <http://zpp.net.pl/video/run,dom-badawczy-maison-dla-zpp-badanie-dot-imigrantow,video,V-KhGFwkT5o.html>.

<sup>59</sup> See Waldemar Kowalski, *My też byliśmy uchodźcami. W czasie II wojny światowej przyjmowali nas na całym świecie* [We were refugees too. During the WWII we were helped around the world], NA TEMAT (Jul., 13, 2015), <http://natemat.pl/148383,my-tez-bylysmys-uchodzcamy-w-czasie-ii-wojny-swiatowej-przyjmowali-nas-na-caly-m-swiecie>.

## POLAND WILL RECEIVE OVER 7 THOUSAND REFUGEES

FUNDACJA  
REFUGEE.PL  
im. Marii Skłodowej Curie



Picture no. 3: Infographic on the impact of receiving 7 thousand refugees by Poland.  
Source: refugee.pl (translated by Kinga Hodór)

### 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Upon examination of the issues in the work 'A critical analysis of Poles' perceptions on the immigration influx into the country', it becomes clear that Poles' attitudes towards immigrants and refugees range from positive to negative ones and they are influenced by a wide spectrum of factors. In fact, one unequivocal position of Polish people towards immigrants cannot be easily singled out. It is especially difficult due to the fact that the motives of immigrants' coming to Poland and their countries of origin differ, which meets with various reactions from Poles.

On the one hand, Poles are concerned about potential problems on cultural or religious grounds, which are likely to appear due to growing numbers of foreigners living in the country. Frequently raised are also anxieties about possible threats to the national security, fears related to terrorist attacks and, generally, concerns about the safety of Polish citizens. Some people express their dislike because they think that they would have to lose their jobs at the expense of immigrants or it would be more difficult for Poles to find employment. Another worry is related to the Polish social

services system and the belief that it would suffer because of newcomers' presence in the country. In the reality of the Migration Crisis and growing dissatisfaction regarding mass immigration in other European Union countries, the issue of hate speech directed at immigrants and, especially, refugees from the Middle East and Africa, is a common problem in the Polish reality these days. Numerous demonstrations are expressions of disapproval towards the reception of immigrants by Poland and aim at turning the government's attention the many views present among Polish citizens. Voices in favour of helping repatriated Poles to come back to their homeland instead of welcoming Muslim immigrants are heard as well in the debate.

On the other hand, those who support the immigration influx to Poland believe that it would contribute to a cultural enrichment of the country, creating new opportunities and opening of the Polish society to other nations. Those in favour also emphasize the benefits for the labour market: the presence of qualified experts with their specific skills and unskilled workers with lower earnings demands than Polish labourers, both groups contributing to Poland's economic development. Another advantage for the country is related to a potential decrease in negative aspects of the demographic crisis with which Poland has been struggling. What is more, supporters of extending help to refugees emphasize the need to show solidarity and compassion towards the victims. At the same time, they accentuate the fact that Poles were also offered help in Poland's troubled history and that the Polish may also find themselves in need of support in the future.

Poles are less welcoming towards Islamic immigrants and refugees, mostly due to the belief that their presence may cause conflicts on cultural or religious grounds and be a threat to national security. It is mostly related to the cultural and geographic closeness as well as shared historical experiences, which create more space for dialogue building.

With regard to immigrants from well-developed countries, since they are not numerous, there is usually little attention in the debates paid to their coming to Poland and their presence is perceived to be rather beneficial for Poland. However, it must be stated that, step by step, Poles are getting used to the presence of immigrants in Poland as well as in the public discourse. This is

especially the consequence of the fact of the opening of the country towards the world as a result of the fall of communism and accession to the EU.

Therefore, the idea that it is better to learn from the mistakes of other European countries, which have already experienced problems with great numbers of immigrants, is increasingly attracting more followers, especially in the face of the Migration Crisis. Obviously, immigrants' integration into Polish reality is the source of many challenges for the present as well as for the future of the country and its citizens. Hence the issues analyzed in the current paper are undoubtedly worth being discussed more broadly.