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Integration Policies, Practices and Experiences

Poland Country Report

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List of Abbreviations

AIDA - Asylum Information Database

AMIF – Asylum Migration and Integration Fund

CDS – Branch Commission of the Social Dialogue at the Warsaw City Hall

BKDS – Industry Social Dialogue Commission for Foreigners (Branżowa Komisja Dialogu Społecznego ds. Cudzoziemców)

Dz.U. - Dziennik Ustaw (in Polish); Journal of Laws (in English)

EU - European Union

FISE - The Foundation for Social and Economic Initiatives

GUS – Statistics Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny)

IIP – Individual Integration Program

IOM - International Organization for Migration

MNE – Ministry of National Education (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej MEN)

MGN – Migration Governance Network

NGOs - Non-governmental Organisations

NIP - VAT identification number

NLI - National Labour Inspectorate

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Par. - Paragraph

PES - Public employment services, in Poland Poviát Labour Office

PESEL - Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population

poz.- pozycja (in Polish); position (in English)

PTSD - Post-traumatic stress disorder

RESPOND – H2020 Project entitled Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond

t.j. - *tekst jednolity* (in Polish); Consolidated text (in English)

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WCIES - Warsaw Centre for Education and Social Innovations and Trainings

WFSC – Warsaw Family Support Centre

ZUS - The Social Insurance Institution

eWUŚ - Electronic Verification of Beneficiaries' Eligibility (Elektroniczna Weryfikacja Uprawnień Świadczeniobiorców)

z późn. zm. - *z późniejszymi zmianami* (in Polish); with amendments (in English)

About the Project

RESPOND is a Horizon 2020 project which aims at studying the multilevel governance of migration in Europe and beyond. The consortium is formed of **14 partners from 11 source, transit and destination countries and is coordinated by Uppsala University in Sweden.** The main aim of this Europe-wide project is to provide an **in-depth understanding of the governance of recent mass migration** at macro, meso and micro levels through cross-country comparative research and to critically analyse governance practices with the aim of enhancing the migration governance capacity and policy coherence of the EU, its member states and third countries.

RESPOND will study migration governance through a narrative which is constructed along five thematic fields: (1) Border management and security, (2) Refugee protection regimes, (3) Reception policies, (4) Integration policies, and (5) Conflicting Europeanization. Each thematic field is reflecting a juncture in the migration journey of refugees and designed to provide a holistic view of policies, their impacts and responses given by affected actors within.

In order to better focus on these themes, we divided our research question into work packages (WPs). The present report is concerned with the findings related to WP5, which focuses specifically on integration policies and practices.

Executive Summary

This country research report has been prepared within Work Package 5 of the H2020 project RESPOND—Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond. It focuses on integration policies towards beneficiaries of international protection in Poland in the period of 2011-2019. It also sheds light on the experiences of integration of the beneficiaries of such protection.

The findings of our research indicate that the case of Poland is characterised by lack of official integration strategy. Several legal acts deal with different aspects of integration policy (narrowed to those concerning the beneficiaries of international protection) yet to a varying degree and not specifically devoted to it. In general, beneficiaries of international protection are granted equal rights with Polish citizens in the areas of access to labour market, education, healthcare, and housing.

The public institutions responsible for implementation of Law on Social Assistance on national and regional levels are Ministry of Family, Work and Social Assistance and regional family support centres, accordingly. In addition to these bodies, there are also labour offices that focus on labour market, and Ministry of National Education along with local public schools and local self-government authorities that oversee public education for children. Moreover, NGOs also provide various forms of support to foreigners in all areas of integration.

The Individual Integration Programs (IIPs) entitle refugees to cooperate with social workers from family support centres, who assist them in coordinating communication with various institutions. Beneficiaries of international protection who were interviewed for the purpose of this report mostly gave positive feedback regarding support received from social workers.

According to the Polish law, refugees have similar access to labour market as Polish citizens' (with some exceptions), including support for the unemployed. Some of the key problems, however, are insufficient knowledge of Polish by beneficiaries of international protection, modest linguistic skills of the Labour market services and low social capital of refugees, which often act as barriers for them to find a job. Assistance provided by social workers within IIP in most cases consist of support in completing documentation necessary to register at labour office, in searching for job offers and contacting a potential employer as well as informing about the possibility of participating in vocational training in Polish. Additionally, NGOs support refugees in their professional activation. An important finding of the study is that despite early and effective inclusion in the labour market which gives a greater chance for integration of beneficiaries of international protection with Polish society, there is a lack of mechanism in mainstreaming integration of beneficiaries of international protection in labour market. There is also a lack of monitoring system for acquisition of work skills, and recognition of qualifications as well as for labour market inclusion of beneficiaries of international protection. Moreover, data related to trainings and effectiveness of IIP in relation to labour market inclusion are not collected in a systematic way.

With regard to education of refugee adults, the most important challenges appeared to be learning of Polish language and recognition of education and experience obtained in the countries of origin. In relation to education of refugee children, there are instruments such as additional Polish language classes, compensatory classes, and preparatory classes tailored for foreign children together with cross-cultural assistants stipulated by the Law. However, due to insufficient funding, they are often not feasible. It turned out that the biggest shortcoming of

the inclusion of refugee children in the education system is lack of trainings and methodological support for teachers working with them.

Housing is also one of the major issues for both asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Poland. Nevertheless, foreigners who had lived outside the facilities run by the Office for Foreigners during the asylum procedure, seem to be better prepared for the numerous challenges, such as finding adequate housing for a reasonable price, after their applications for protection are positively assessed. Finding adequate and affordable housing is a commonly observed challenge faced not only by persons with refugee status or other type of international protection but also numerous persons of the general public. The shortage of affordable housing makes the situation of persons with international protection particularly difficult. Consequently, inadequate quality of housing results in slowing down the process of adaptation of foreigners to the new socio-cultural conditions of the host country, and may have a negative impact on their physical and mental health.

Beneficiaries of international protection have the same right to access healthcare services as the citizens of Poland. Yet, they may be denied equal access to all types of medical treatments for various reasons, such as insufficient economic, social or cultural capital. One of clear gaps in the medical services identified by our interviewees is lack of specialized treatment for victims of torture or for refugees who have been traumatized.

Integration of refugees in relation to belonging, civic participation and acquisition of citizenship in Poland is not an easy process. It is impeded by the regulations, which exclude their participation in social, cultural and political life in Poland. Refugees have a very limited access to political rights and they are not politically included in Polish society because political rights are granted only after acquisition of Polish citizenship. In addition, lack of political rights (voting rights, right to establish or join political parties) significantly limits their chances of having impact on the political debates in the country.

With respect to establishing bonds with the host country, majority of our micro-level respondents noted that they followed the news in Poland and they were interested in political developments, particularly those concerning policies and attitudes towards migrants. Once they have received the international protection status, they plan to stay and live in Poland. Some of the respondents also hoped for return to their countries of origin. The bond with the latter was kept mostly by maintaining contact with family members.

The NGOs and other non-profit organizations, in spite of numerous problems and limitation, continue their efforts aimed at advancing the integration of migrants in Poland. Although, these actions are not coordinated with national or regional authorities, they are often financed by or carried out in cooperation with local authorities.

1. Introduction

Geopolitical changes after 1989 brought the ‘opening’ of Poland’s borders, and as a consequence, increased mobility both from and to Poland. For a long time, Poland has been an emigration country and not so much attractive for migrants, including forced ones. Located on the cross border to the Western Europe, it was more of a transit country for both economic migrants and asylum seekers. The situation has significantly changed after 2014 and the outbreak of armed conflict in Ukraine. Although the majority of foreigners come to Poland for work purposes, this change could be seen in all migration data, also those regarding asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. This country research report, prepared within Work Package 5 and delivered under the H2020 project *RESPOND—Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond*, focuses on integration policies and practices in Poland. The core objectives of this report are:

- to evaluate the policies and practices in the field of integration implemented by state and non-state actors;
- to analyse the experiences, actions, perceptions, and opinions of representatives of state and non-state actors and forced migrants with regard to the existing policies and practices of integration.
- to evaluate the national integration policies and practices and to provide policy recommendations.

The analysis covers the years 2011-2017. If and where necessary we refer to years prior to 2011 (e.g., to important political events or legal changes). We also provide an overview of the most recent developments regarding the legal and policy contexts in the field of integration of refugees between 2018 and early 2019.

Approaches and definitions applied in this report were elaborated for the purpose of the project and included in the RESPOND guidelines for WP5 country reports. Therefore, this report is structured around the EU’s principles and its key policy priorities on integration as well as categorizations formulated in recent academic studies on Migrant and Refugee Integration. They are shaped through a) the “Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU” adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2004 and b) “Action Plan on the Integration of Third-country Nationals” adopted in 2016 that sets out policy priorities and tools to support their implementation (CSES, 2013, Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx, 2016).

We interchangeably use terms of refugees and beneficiaries of international protection (those who have already received decision on their asylum application or subsidiary protection or whose decision was reversed) in order to ensure the fluidity of considerations. In general, our analysis applies to the above-mentioned group of respondents, however, in certain cases we included a comparative approach regarding situation of asylum seekers - those who submitted an application for a refugee status and are still waiting for the final decision.

Due to the lack of the overall strategy of migrants (including refugees) integration, it is discussed whether Poland has developed an integration policy. For the purpose of this report we took an approach that Poland’s integration policy exists, although it is fragmented and created separately (independently of each other) by some public institutions, such as the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. By adopting non-formalised approach to the term “policy” we

agree with the stance of Maciej Duszczyk, who claimed 'the absence of a strategic document does not mean the absence of policies as such and is sometimes a policy statement of its own' (Duszczyk et al., 2020b, p. 2).

This report is composed of the introduction, followed by a section discussing the methodology and sources—the strategies used for collecting data (documents, literature reviews, interviews, and other sources) and analysis of the collected material, together with the limitations encountered. The analytical part is made up of seven sections. In the first section we outline the integration policy of Poland by looking at the legal, political and institutional framework including the analysis of the recent developments in the field of integration. In the following five sections we discuss integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the following domains: 1) Labour Market, 2) Education, 3) Housing & Space, 4) Psychosocial health and role of religion, and 5) Citizenship, Belonging and Civic Participation. The report ends with conclusions where the most important findings and policy recommendations are highlighted for each domain.

2. Methodology and Sources¹

This section discusses the strategies used to collect data (documents, relevant literature, interviews, and other sources) and analysis of the collected material. The encountered limitations, reflections on ethical awareness and principles stemming from the consortium's code of ethics, adjusted for the national context are described in details in previous two reports regarding Refugee Protection (Pachocka and Sobczak Szcl, 2020) and Reception Policies, Practices and Responses (Pachocka et al., 2020).

The methodology applied in this report is compliant with the RESPOND project's guidelines for WP 5 and focuses on the integration of beneficiaries of international and national protection. A mixed method approach (Brannen, 2005) is used in this report. We have carried a legal and policy analysis, which relied on a brief analysis of the legal and policy framework in the field of integration mostly after 2011 but taking into account its development since early 1990s. Considering both macro and meso-levels, reports and works published by international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as academic literature² were used along with official documents and statements. On the other hand, we have used the qualitative research material collected from individual, in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted within the project on the micro- and meso-levels.

In our qualitative research, the selection of meso³- and micro-level⁴ respondents was purposeful. The goal was to obtain opinions on the qualitative aspects of how integration policy and practices function and how refugees respond towards them. Taking into account the methodological limitations of the carried research, it is worth noting, that its findings should not be generalized to all asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Poland .

For the micro-level interviews, we followed two documents: the RESPOND guidelines for micro-level sampling criteria (the inclusion of the top two or three refugee/asylum seekers groups within the time span of 2011-2017 in each country) and the Polish context (the structure of the asylum applicant population, as well as the beneficiaries of international protection; the presence of migrants on the territory of Poland)⁵. In Poland majority of selected migrants were from four countries of origin, namely Russian Federation, Ukraine, Syria and Iraq. Individual responders came from Kazakhstan, Georgia and Yemen. The interviews were carried with interviewees differentiated by: 1), age (keeping in mind that most probably there would not be many asylum seekers and refugees above the age of 50), 2) gender (noting that the inflow from Russia, specifically from Chechnya⁶, and Ukraine is dominated by families, whereas it is

¹ This section was developed, updated and synthesised on the basis of the section 'Methodology and Sources' from two previous country reports (Pachocka and Sobczak Szcl, 2020; Pachocka et al., 2020)

² For further information, see the section 'References and Sources' of this report.

³ Representatives of central public institutions, local governments, NGOs and practitioners.

⁴ Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.

⁵ For further information, see (Szulecka et al., 2018a) and (Szulecka, 2019).

⁶ Chechnya is a 'republic in southwestern Russia, situated on the northern flank of the Greater Caucasus range. Chechnya is bordered by Russia proper on the north, Dagestan Republic on the east and southeast, the country of Georgia on the southwest, and Ingushetiya Republic on the west. In the early 21st century, more than a decade of bitter conflict had devastated the republic, forced the mass exodus of refugees, and brought the economy to a standstill' ("Chechnya | republic, Russia," n.d.).

by men in other national groups) 3) year of arrival (before or after 2015)⁷ and 4) places of residence (cities and small towns or villages) (Szulecka et al., 2018b).

The selection of countries of origin of migrants was justified by asylum statistics for Poland for 2011-2017. According to data on asylum in Poland for those years the biggest share of both applicants for international protection and foreigners who were granted international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) constitute citizens of the Russian Federation originating from Chechnya. Poland has been having an extensive inflow of this group of asylum seekers, for more than two decades now. This has strongly influenced the reception and integration system for asylum seekers and refugees in Poland. Since 2014, Ukrainian citizens have become an important group of asylum seekers in Poland as well. Although the vast majority of decisions on their asylum applications are either negative or discontinued, Ukrainian citizens are considered an important group of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Interestingly, positive decisions were made in their appeal procedures, which necessitated inclusion of this group in the empirical research. Ukrainian citizens are also the most numerous among the foreigners granted residence permits on humanitarian grounds during return procedures. Although Syrian citizens do not constitute a significant share of the asylum seekers in Poland, they are one of the biggest groups who were granted refugee status by the Polish authorities. Unlike other groups' applications for asylum in Poland, the rate of positive decisions for Syrians reached more than 90% in recent years (Szulecka et al., 2018b, 2018a).

According to the criteria applied in the RESPOND project, persons from the age group 27-50 years old made up the majority of the sample. Respondents aged 30 to 39 years old comprised the main group (14 persons). The smallest group consisted of people aged 50 years and over (only three persons). In addition, the majority of the respondents (21 out of 30) belonged to the group of late arrivals to Poland (2015-2017) and only nine people could be assigned to the group of early arrivals (2011-2014) (Appendixes Table 10). Referring to the categories developed by the RESPOND consortium in addition to the information provided during the interviews, the distribution of the sample according to the status and number of respondents was as follows: asylum seeker—13 persons, refugee status—4 persons, under subsidiary protection—11 persons, other—2 persons. Out of 30 respondents, 13 were under the asylum procedure and 15 had already received a positive decision—those granted subsidiary protection prevailed—followed by persons with refugee status in Poland. Two respondents did not declare their legal status in Poland.

Thirty interviews conducted in Poland among micro-level respondents were carried out between July 2018 and August 2019. The details of the micro-level sample are presented in the Appendixes in the Table 10. The interviews were conducted in the following languages: Russian, Arabic, Polish and English. All interviews were translated and transcribed into English.

For the meso-level interviews the RESPOND team chose 'stakeholders', who are understood as actors with a meaningful institutionalised practice (at the social/economic or political level) in relation to migration/integration (including border management, protection,

⁷ In other RESPOND projects, justification of this division is strictly linked to the so-called migration and refugee crisis that affected asylum statistics in many European countries in 2015. In Poland this cut-off point was adjusted to relate to the refugee crisis, but as possible we aimed to reflect the situation in Poland as well, which was influenced by the eruption of military conflict between Ukraine and Russia in 2014.

and reception). The RESPOND team was particularly interested in local-level practices with intention to understand how policies are received and implemented at different localities, how different civic (social) actors fill in the gap where government policies have failed to deliver the needed services and how policymaking is influenced at various levels through diverse governance practices. In general, the following profiles for key informants and stakeholder interviews were deemed possible:

- those who deliver a service in the field of migration/integration (including border management, protection, and reception);
- those within relevant public administration areas (e.g., policy executors/implementers, meso-level administrators such as bureaucrats, and the local chief of staff for policing);
- elected policymakers (only at the local level) and representatives of local governments;
- practitioners (e.g., immigration lawyers, school directors, teachers, medical staff, social workers);
- independent activists: human-rights activists (who deliver a service or produce collective action), cultural-brokers, representatives of NGOs and faith-based NGOs, immigrants and other relevant community organisations (Nagel et al., 2018).

Seventeen interviews conducted among meso-level respondents (all of which were transcribed in Polish and coded with NVivo software) were carried out in Poland between July 2018 and February 2020. The interviews (two of which were double interviews involving two representatives of an institution/organisation) were conducted with experts from public administration at the central and local levels, NGOs, and other practitioners dealing with immigration issues. This sample is presented in Appendix in the Table 11.

In accordance with the policy of personal data protection, anonymisation and code of ethics were adopted by the Polish team. In accordance with the latter, it was decided to not disclose any names, exact age, cities/towns/villages of origin and locations where the interviews were conducted.

As far as the geographical distribution of the micro- and meso-level interviews is concerned, two voivodeships (provinces)⁸ (Mazovian and Lubelskie) were identified as the main locations for our interviews. These voivodships were selected based on the number of beneficiaries of international protection as well as major availability of assistance services and offices of relevant authorities. The Mazovian voivodeship is the biggest among 16 voivodeships in Poland, and the capital city of Warsaw is located within its administrative boundaries. Warsaw has the largest number of migrant residents of different categories and statuses in Poland.

The team also used the data based on two roundtable discussions of the RESPOND Migration Governance Network (MGN) in Poland that were held at the Centre of Migration Research of the University of Warsaw on 10th of December 2018 and 16th of January 2020. Both roundtable discussions were attended by about 20 experts representing different institutions and organisations, including the Office of the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office for Foreigners, the Border Guard, governmental and local institutions

⁸ According to the Central Statistical Office, on 1 January 2019, Poland was administratively divided into 16 voivodships (*województwo*), 380 poviats (*powiat*), and 2.477 communes (*gmina*). The largest voivodship was Mazovian, where the capital city, Warsaw, is located (Central Statistical Office, n.d.)..

involved in integration programmes for persons granted refugee status or subsidiary protection, non-governmental and international organisations, local authorities, and academia. Both meetings were transcribed and coded manually (material codes: MGN1, MGN2, MGN3 – for the first MGN, and codes from MGN2R1 to MGN2R18 where ‘R’ means ‘Respondent’ and it is followed by his/her ordinal number – for the second MGN).

In addition, the Polish team, including the authors of this report, participated as speakers, experts, or audience members in several thematic events (conferences, workshops, seminars, and debates) in Poland and abroad. This allowed for numerous interactions and discussions with other experts in the field, as well as observations and access to additional materials.

The analysis conducted for the purpose of this report bears a qualitative character. It was carried out with the assistance of the NVivo software. The material was coded according to the common-coding scheme adapted for WP5, with some country-specific revisions and additions.

All research activities were conducted with full awareness of the ethical guidelines common to the RESPOND consortium and were implemented in line with the project’s ethical principles. This is also reflected in the efforts to anonymise personal and sensitive data, along with other decisions. Following the consortium requirements, an ethical application was submitted by the Polish team to the institutional ethical board at the Centre of Migration Research of the University of Warsaw and ethical clearance was granted for all components of fieldwork.

The limitations pertaining to micro- and meso-level interviews and the MGN meetings that were identified by the RESPOND team are described in detail in previous two reports regarding Refugee Protection (Pachocka and Sobczak Szelc, 2020) and Reception Policies, Practices and Responses (Pachocka et al., 2020). The following significant challenges for the fieldwork were identified⁹:

- a) Unfavourable political climate in Poland for studying forced migration in the European context, especially since the Law and Justice (PiS) party took power in 2015; as a result, the government’s approach to the issue of migration through the prism of national security and socio-economic interests (important for meso-level interviews);
- b) Relatively small number of non-governmental (social) organisations working for migrants and refugees, the majority of which operate in Warsaw or in a few other big cities and towns in the vicinity of the reception and stay (residence) centres for foreigners. This sparked the fear of being easily identifiable among the NGOs (important for meso-level interviews).
- c) The gender of the interviewer was relevant in case of male migrants from Chechnya. They were more reluctant to talk to female interviewers (important for micro-level interviews). It was not the case with Arab women speaking to a male interviewer;
- d) Finding respondents living outside the centres for foreigners (either asylum seekers or refugees) was particularly difficult. Without hiring gatekeepers (employees of Foundation Ocalenie, an NGO helping asylum seekers and refugees, and Warsaw Family Support Centre), it probably would not have been possible to find respondents from particular groups like Syrian refugees (speaking Arabic) or Chechen male refugees (who usually are not willing to talk openly about their private experiences). It needs to be mentioned that two interviews were conducted in two parts with more than a one-month intermission due to the interviewees’ time constraints. This could have disturbed the atmosphere of the

⁹ It has to be noted that this list is not exhaustive.

interviews and the comfort of the respondents, although it did not seem to impact their answers (important for micro-level interviews).

- e) Regarding the over-exploitation of some micro- and meso-level respondents, it should be noted that for a majority of them, it was not the first interview they'd given for research purposes. They had talked about their experiences for the purposes of academic studies, NGOs' research, and/or journalists' investigations. Re-telling the stories of forced migrants might bring back sad and often traumatic memories about their journey and reasons for why they fled their countries. Understandably, some cried at the reminder of their traumatic experiences, which made it difficult to move on with subsequent questions (important for micro- and meso-level interviews). Apart from empathy expressed by the researchers trained to be ready to deal with difficult moments during interviews, the respondents were given leaflets with contacts to professional psychological assistance provided for free in different languages by Ocalenie Foundation.

3. Political, Legal, and Institutional Framework¹⁰

This section of the report provides an overview of the political, legal, and institutional framework regarding the integration of foreigners in Poland, with a special focus on the beneficiaries of international protection.

Poland's integration policy is strongly connected with the area of asylum and reception policies because under the national law, the only legally defined integration activities concern forced migrants with refugee status and subsidiary protection. This means that, in this part of the report, information about integration will primarily refer to this particular group of foreigners, excluding migrants coming to Poland for economic reasons, education, or research. In addition, issues related to applicants for international protection will not be discussed, as they are subject to separate regulations and policies within the reception system, which was presented in detail in the previous country research report (Pachocka et al., 2020).

Depending on the state and its approach, integration policy can be treated as a component of migration or immigration policy, as a separate policy, or under areas other than migration-related policy (mostly social policies). In this context, a new trend in migration studies has been observed recently, assuming mainstreaming migrant integration, which is conceptualised as a shift in policy focus from specific to generic and in governance from state-centric to poly-centric (Scholten et al., 2017; Scholten and van Breugel, 2018). There is also a discussion about whether it is better to talk about integration, inclusion, or accommodation. In Poland's case, what can be observed since 1989 in migration studies and official and policy documents is that integration has been rather perceived as one of the specific policies of migration policy, but now it is often separated from immigration policy. Initially, the literature on the subject treated it as a complementary policy of immigration policy in basic terms, but the latest research results postulate treating them as equal policies, and even give priority to integration policy as one that should influence activities in immigration policy. This shift is reflected, among others, in the works of Maciej Duszczczyk. In his book *Polish immigration policy and the labour market*, he treats integration policy as a complementary policy included in immigration policy (Duszczczyk, 2012, p. 41). However, his understanding of immigration policy was rather focused on voluntary migrants, mostly economic ones, which can contribute to the Polish labour market and socio-economic development of the country (Duszczczyk, 2012, pp. 32–33). It can be easily explained by the fact that forced migration and asylum policy were not the main theme of this book, rather immigration policy in the context of the domestic labour market. It is important to stress that the author concluded that Poland needs to create integration policy almost from scratch because the country has neither legal basis for it, nor practical experience in implementing instruments of integration policy towards foreigners, except for beneficiaries of international protection. This policy should refer not only to economic migration but also to family reunification, and moreover, it should be addressed not only to first-generation migrants but also to any people with a migration background exposed to the risk of social exclusion in the receiving society (Duszczczyk, 2012, pp. 314–315).

¹⁰ This section was developed and updated where necessary based on 'Section 1. Background of the National Legal and Institutional Framework' from the report dedicated to the Refugee protection in Poland (Pachocka and Sobczak Szalc, 2020) and 'Section 1. Legal Regulations and Policies of Reception: A Multi-level Perspective' from the report dedicated to the Polish reception conditions (Pachocka et al., 2020).

Early 2020 has seen the publication of a multi-author monograph (Duszczyk et al., 2020a) where immigration and integration policies were defined in the following way: 'Immigration policy—focused on admissions—is understood here as the state's activities aimed at controlling the rules of entry and stay on its territory of people who are not citizens of the country, in order to obtain the optimum scale and structure of the inflow of foreigners. Integration policy is defined as the state's actions aimed at achieving a dynamic and bi-directional process of mutual adaptation (adjustment) of immigrants and the receiving society, so that the potential of foreigners in the economy and society can be utilised optimally for both parties' (Duszczyk et al., 2020b, p. 2). The assumption was made that the two policies are separate but related, and integration policy can be as important as the immigration one or even take precedence over it. It was also assumed that: 'Both policies may be formalised as strategic documents, but the absence of a strategic document does not mean the absence of policies as such and is sometimes a policy statement of its own' (Duszczyk et al., 2020b, p. 2). This approach to both policies is broadening in relation to that proposed by Duszczyk in 2012 and seems to cover all foreigners, whether voluntary or forced migrants in Poland. In principle, this can be seen in the everyday practice of integration in Poland in recent years, where integration activities are becoming increasingly apparent.

Politics and Policy in the Field of Integration

As of 2019, 30 years have passed since the beginning of Poland's systemic transformation that affected all dimensions of the state's functioning—political, social, and economic. That same year marked the 15th anniversary of Poland's membership in the EU and 12th anniversary of joining Schengen. Undoubtedly, these three decades have had a major impact on Polish asylum policy and the context of European integration progress in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) particularly. The beginning of the 1990s meant the opening of Poland to intensified international migration and international cooperation.

Since late 1980s, Poland has experienced major turning points in the formulation and development of its migration-related policies, including the transition from a communist state in the Soviet bloc to a democratic state with a market economy, preparations for EU accession in 2004, and joining the Schengen zone in 2007, subsequent EU membership, and finally, the migration and refugee crisis in Europe, whose peak coincided with the presidential and parliamentary elections in Poland of 2015¹¹.

The second decade of the 21st century has contributed to growing interest in refugee issues in Poland in public and political discourse and media. However, this did not result from key changes in the forced-migration situation in the country, such as an increase in the number of people applying for international protection or significant reforms of the asylum system. Rather, it was particularly related to the changing migration landscape in Europe and its neighbourhood and the EU's response to these developments (refugees relocation scheme in particular). In addition, since 2014, after the breakout of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine with Russian involvement and Ukraine's unstable political and economic situation, Poland has experienced the increasing inflow of Ukrainians.

¹¹ For further information about the key developments after 1989 in the field of immigration to Poland and Polish migration policy, see 'Section 2.1. A brief history of immigration and migration policy development' in (Szulecka et al., 2018a).

The year of 2015 was marked by an important political shift in Poland. As a result of the presidential and parliamentary elections, the Law and Justice party—considered right-wing, conservative and populist—came to power. The new government favoured (or even intentionally provoked) the politicisation of the issue of refugees in public media and strengthened its anti-immigration, anti-refugee, and even anti-European narrative. This, in turn, translated into the growth of negative public attitudes towards receiving asylum-seekers and refugees in Poland (Górak-Sosnowska et al., 2019; Horolets et al., 2019; Klaus, 2017a; Legut and Pedziwiatr, 2018; Mołęda-Zdziech et al., 2021). As a result of interconnected external and internal factors one could observe a growing interest in issues concerning migration and state security in Poland. According to some opinions, it can be stated that the noticeable presence of the refugee topic in Polish media and political discourse in recent years was only to a small extent due to a real influx of people seeking protection in Poland (Górny et al. 2017, p. 7).

Since the political and socio-economic transformation at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, Poland has not implemented a coherent and comprehensive national integration policy, nor has it had a strategic document (legal or policy) in this regard. By integration policy, we mean one addressed to all foreigners residing in Poland regardless of their legal status (e.g., citizens of other EU countries, registered economic migrants from third countries, or beneficiaries of international protection). As of today, Polish integration policy is fragmented and dispersed, and its specific aspects/components fit into the areas of various policies concerning the labour market, housing, healthcare, education, and social security. A naturalisation policy allowing granting Polish citizenship remains a separate issue.

Returning to the beginnings of integration policy in the country after 1989, Polish researchers point out that (Okólski and Wach, 2020, p. 159): ‘The beginnings of Poland’s integration policy – which could be characterised as an attempt to cope with the new migration situation – were very similar to the first phase of its immigration policy evolution. Huge challenges in almost every aspect of the functioning of the country and the low number of foreigners, especially those who wished to settle in Poland, led to a situation in which integration policy was not seen as a crucial state activity. Legal changes in this field were limited to narrow groups of repatriates, asylum-seekers and foreigners being granted refugee status’.

In this way, the first attempts to implement integration activities concerned primarily forced migrants and were initiated by NGOs, and not by state actors. Changes and some permanent elements for the integration of foreigners came in the first decade of the 2000s and subsequent years. This concerned, among others, such milestones as the creation/establishment of Individual Integration Programs (IIPs) (discussed later) addressed to beneficiaries of international protection, preparation for EU accession and subsequent EU membership (since 2004), enabling the use of EU funds to finance integration projects and activities implemented by different actors (in particular, NGOs and local authorities), or the introduction of a new form of international protection by law within the framework of EU asylum policy—subsidiary protection (Okólski and Wach, 2020, pp. 160–162). From the political point of view, the years of 2012-2013 were important. In 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted the strategic document ‘Polish Migration Policy—Current State of Play and Proposed Actions’ (Zespół do Spraw Migracji, 2011). The project of ‘Polish Foreigners Integration Policy: Assumptions and Guidelines’, announced by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2013, was to complement and develop the previous document in the area of integration activities.

The 'Polish Migration Policy' document discussed integration policy as part of the migration policy framework. It formulated recommendations for (1) the area of integration of foreigners and (2) the institutional migration management (governance) system, which is reflected in the following way (Zespół do Spraw Migracji, 2011 p. 18-19):

- 'adopting comprehensive solutions with regard to the integration of foreigners remaining outside the international protection system (regime), including the possibility of obtaining Polish citizenship',
- 'adopting the principle of determining integration policy at the central level, assuming that integration activities are carried out at the local level', and
- 'enhancing the role of local governments, in particular in the area of integration of foreigners'.

In addition, it is worth paying attention to other selected fragments from this migration policy strategy related to the integration of foreigners in Poland, as they illustrate the direction of future integration policy planned at that time (Zespół do Spraw Migracji, 2011 p. 68-71):

- 'The integration of foreigners is not currently a major political or social problem in Poland, which does not mean that this situation cannot change in the future'.
- 'Due to the above factors, integration activities in Poland are in the early stage of development. A small percentage of foreigners permanently staying and coming to the country has meant that no comprehensive actions at the governmental level have been undertaken so far [other] than activities in the field of integration of persons under international protection'.
- '(...) integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual adaptation of immigrants and the host society'.
- 'The goal of integration is to enable immigrants to live independently, allowing them to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the labour market, education and healthcare systems, as well as participation in social life and the exercise of civil rights, while respecting the cultural and religious needs of those concerned'.

Despite the public consultation, the draft document of integration policy from 2013 was never adopted. It focused on detailed solutions regarding the integration of foreigners granted international protection and other groups of foreigners.

In 2016, the new government of Law and Justice annulled the 2012 'Polish Migration Policy'. The same year, Jakub Skiba, the secretary of state at the Ministry of Interior and Administration, pointed out that a new, current migration programme for Poland would be developed in which the key issue would be to ensure national security and respond to the deep demographic crisis in the country (Skiba, 2016, pp. 2–4). In February 2017, the government adopted the 'Strategy for Responsible Development' (SRD) until 2020 (with a perspective until 2030) (Uchwała nr 8 Rady Ministrów)¹². Attention was paid to the need to develop a new migration policy. While some arguments used can be assessed as justified (e.g., abuses in the functioning of the so-called simplified procedure for accessing foreigners to the labour market),

¹² Uchwała nr 8 Rady Ministrów z dnia 14 lutego 2017 r. w sprawie przyjęcia Strategii na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju do roku 2020 (z perspektywą do 2030 r.), M.P. 2017 poz. 260.

some cannot. The latter applies in particular to the narrative about ensuring state security, which is illustrated as follows: 'As shown by the experience of some European countries, the costs of solving demographic problems and the needs of the labour market by solely immigration of religiously and culturally distinct population groups may in the long run outweigh potential benefits and threaten the cohesion of social structures' (Uchwała nr 8 Rady Ministrów, pp. 114-115). The strategy also refers directly to the use of geographical preferences for some groups of foreigners in recent years, which allowed for an increase in the share of foreigners 'from countries culturally close to Poland, which promotes their social integration and assimilation' (Uchwała nr 8 Rady Ministrów, p. 128). Unfortunately, such a narrative in the country's development strategy confirms the strong politicisation of migration in Poland after 2015.

The 'Strategy for Responsible Development' overall proposes specific actions until 2020 in the area of migration, including the development of the concept of responsible immigration policy focused on the needs of the labour market and Polish businesses and striving to ensure employment standards; creating integration paths for foreigners with qualifications and competences needed from the point of view of the labour market; facilitating business operations for foreigners; and, limiting irregular immigration and abuse related to taking up work by foreigners. The issues of developing integration instruments and support for NGOs seem to be secondary. In a declarative sense, the strategy assumes that Polish migration policy is to be active, comprehensive (emigration, immigration, integration), with the priority to care for national security (Uchwała nr 8 Rady Ministrów, pp. 128-129, 274).

Until mid-2020, the government had not adopted the strategic document on Polish migration policy, although it was planned for 2019. In June 2019, a draft of 'Poland's Migration Policy' was made public, though not by the government, on a ministry website. The goal of the new policy was stated as: 'A consistent, knowledge-based migration-management system ensuring security and public order, conducive to economic development and social cohesion' (MSWiA, 2019a). This document was heavily criticised by representatives of various communities, including academia (commented on in public by both individual researchers and bodies such as the Committee on Migration Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, KBnM PAN) (Konrad Pędziwiatr, 2019a, 2019b) and NGOs (e.g., the Association for Legal Intervention, SIP, and the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, HFHR). In its position, KBnM PAN recommended that the draft be rejected altogether and works started from scratch, pointing out that the published version of the document had not been subjected to open and transparent public consultations with key stakeholders and experts on migration, scientists, or representatives of NGOs and local governments, and that its content had not been based on scientific evidence, thus leading to numerous errors and the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudices. The document is focused on the prospect of Poland being endangered by migration and the need to shift future migration policy towards broadly understood security, with migrants being instrumentally regarded as a foreign labour force. In the opinion of the HFHR, some passages of the document raised concerns as to their compliance with EU and international law. What is more, the proposed approach, which the foundation found to have a xenophobic tone, may result in the violation of fundamental freedoms and human rights (Pachocka and Szczerba-Zawada, 2019, p. 81, Zespół do Spraw Migracji, 2019 p. 38).

In the draft 'Poland's Migration Policy', integration policy is treated as a component of migration policy. With reference to integration policy, the document rejected the multicultural model and supported assimilation. The new postulated model was to be shifted from integration, 'understood as bringing the foreigner to the greatest possible independence in life

in the Polish society', to assimilation, 'to achieve a state in which an integrated foreigner understands and recognizes the values in force in Poland, including ideological and religious ones, accepts them and treats them as their own and rejects values that would pose a threat to social cohesion and universal security in Poland' (Zespół do Spraw Migracji, 2019, p. 38).

After reviewing legal and political documents on integration, it is worth paying attention to the practice of integration activities and their periodization. As Dominik Wach (2018) emphasizes, the development of integration policy in Poland after 1989 was largely conditioned by the availability of various financial resources that stimulated undertaking integration activities. It was a process in which first there were financial resources (mainly EU funds) and later a framework created for the utilization of those resources. Wach (2018) proposes his own periodization of Polish integration policy taking into account key developments in this field:

- 1989-2000—the state did not implement long-term integration activities towards foreigners and the initiatives were rather sporadic, ad hoc and reactive, with the key role of NGOs;
- 2000-2008—the first legal framework for integration activities for refugees was adopted in the form of IIPs and the main actors involved from public administration were also identified, and finally, EU funds (EQUAL and ERF) began to be used to finance different integration projects;
- 2008-2015—the use of EU funds continued, mainly SOLID funds, allowing for integration support not only for forced migrants, but also for other groups of migrants in Poland; the list of potential beneficiaries of IIPs was expanded to include persons with subsidiary protection and family members of foreigners granted international protection; and,
- 2015-2018¹³—mostly marked by the refugee crisis in the EU and the political consequences of the parliamentary elections in Poland in late 2015, won by the Law and Justice; since 2015/2016 the Ministry of the Interior and Administration significantly changed the rules for financing projects from EU money through AMIF, which resulted in limiting the activities and integration offer of many NGOs.

As already said, Poland does not have an official integration policy understood as a public policy at the central level dedicated to foreigners and migrants. There is also no strategic document in this field. The only integration activities offered by the state are targeted at forced migrants who benefit from international protection in Poland. They are implemented under the IIPs—addressed to the beneficiaries of international protection (persons with refugee status and subsidiary protection), financed from the central budget but implemented by local governments—which can be considered the only nationwide element of this policy. Although this integration offer is too specific and limited to be considered a comprehensive and coherent integration policy, it provides a good basis for a future broadly defined integration policy. In fact, political will and adequate funding (this applies primarily to the need for regular domestic funds and open access to EU funds not conditioned by the political circumstances in the country) would allow for its rapid development and inclusion of other groups of migrants.

¹³ Wach published his paper in 2018 and therefore this year was agreed as the cut-off year for periodization.

Legal Basis of Integration Policy: IIPs as Core Integration Assistance

Several legal acts in Poland deal with different aspects of integration policy (narrowed to those concerning the beneficiaries of international protection) but to a varying degree and not specifically devoted to it. This differentiates integration policy from asylum and reception policies, for which the list of legal documents is quite precise. In this part, we briefly indicate only the main legal acts and then focus mostly on the IIPs as special integration tools. Other specific issues regarding legal and policy aspects are discussed in the sections corresponding to the labour market and employment, education, housing, healthcare, and citizenship.

The key legal acts at the central level (without the specific local authorities' legislation) regarding different aspects of integration of foreigners (with a focus on the beneficiaries of international protection) in Poland are presented in Appendix in Table 12). A more detailed discussion on the legal basis of each aspect of integration covered in this report is contained in thematic sections below.

The Law of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1666 with amendments), called the Law on Protection¹⁴, that regulates the asylum and reception regime in Poland, as well as indicates the rights and obligations of asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, informs in Art. 89e that: 'A foreigner who has refugee status or enjoys subsidiary protection is provided with assistance to support his/her integration process into the society in the manner and on the terms set out in the Law of 12 March 2004 on social assistance'. In Poland, the assistance (support) resulting from the provisions of the Law of 12 March 2004 on social assistance (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1507 with amendments), called the Law on Social Assistance¹⁵, for beneficiaries of international protection (refugee status, subsidiary protection, temporary residence permit for family members) can be perceived as the most important component of official state actions for the integration of refugees, and its flagship core are Individual Integration Programs (IIPs). The need to create such programmes was already noticeable from the beginning of the 1990s with the appearance of the first asylum-seekers in Poland and the start of granting international protection under the emerging national refugee system.

The first attempts to launch what are referred to as adaptation and integration programmes towards asylum-seekers and refugees were initiated by government institutions in 1991. An example was the so-called Lublin programme, which was assessed as a failure because of a lack of interest in it among the target group. Integration support was also financed by UNHCR in Poland. In the years of 1992-1993, it was a system of one-off integration packages, and in the years of 1994-1995, two programmes connected with the appearance of refugees from the former Yugoslavia: an adaptive programme for refugees who would like to return to their country of origin when possible and an integration programme for those interested in living in Poland. It wasn't until 1990 that the Individual Adaptation Programme (IAP) was launched for the so-called recognised refugees at the refugee centre in Dębak. It was an integration programme facilitating the beginnings of life in Poland for foreigners, and did not provide social assistance for people in a difficult financial situation. Its implementation period was up to 15 months. The main difficulties concerned access to limited housing and entering the labour

¹⁴ Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2003 r. o udzielaniu cudzoziemcom ochrony na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 1666 z późn. zm.).

¹⁵ Ustawa o pomocy społecznej z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 1507 z późn. zm.).

market. In 1996-1998, a total of 272 people participated in IAP, including those from Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iraq. From the very beginning of the implementation of various forms of integration support for refugees, these activities were co-initiated and co-conducted by the government and NGOs with the support of UNHCR. The year 1996 brought an amendment to the Law on Social Assistance of 1990 by including foreigners with refugee status in the group of persons entitled to benefit from the national system of social assistance. Voivodes¹⁶ became the administrative body responsible for the coordination of integration, and the institution of integration of refugees was finally regulated by Polish law. In 1998, the Ministry of Interior transferred supervision over integration issues to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The next amendment to the Law on Social Assistance in 2000 introduced new provisions on providing assistance to refugees in order to support their integration within the IIPs (Florczak, 2003, pp. 248–254).

Currently, the most important legal act regulating IIP is the Law on Social Assistance, already mentioned, which has been amended many times since then. Art. 2 of the law concerns the functions and organisation of social assistance in Poland:

- 1) '1. Social assistance is an institution of the state's social policy, aimed at enabling individuals and families to overcome difficult life situations that they cannot overcome using their own rights, resources and opportunities.
- 2) 2. Social assistance is organised by central and local government administration bodies, cooperating in this respect, on the basis of partnership, with social and non-governmental organisations, the Catholic Church, other churches, religious associations and natural and legal persons'.

General provisions regarding social assistance tasks result from Art. 3:

- 1) '1. Social assistance supports individuals and families in their efforts to meet the necessary needs and enables them to live in conditions that are compatible with human dignity.
- 2) 2. The task of social assistance is to prevent situations referred to in Art. 2(1) [mentioned above], by taking actions aimed at the life independence of individuals and families and their integration with the environment.
- 3) 3. The type, form and extent of the benefit should be appropriate to the circumstances justifying the provision of assistance.
- 4) 4. The needs of persons and families benefiting from assistance should be taken into account if they correspond to the objectives and fall within the possibilities of social assistance'.

Pursuant to Art. 5(2), persons entitled to social assistance benefits include foreigners residing and staying on the territory of the Republic of Poland on the basis of a permanent residence permit, long-term EU residence permit, temporary residence permit in certain circumstances (e.g., a family member of a foreigner residing in Poland in connection with

¹⁶ That time, and still today, Poland is administratively divided into voivodships, corresponding to regions or provinces in other countries (in Polish: *województwo*), then into administrative units/districts called *poviats* (*powiat*), and finally into communes (*gmina*). A voivode is the governor of a voivodship in Poland.

granting him/her refugee status or subsidiary protection), or in connection with obtaining refugee status or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Poland.

Art. 7(11) states that among the reasons for providing social assistance are difficulties in integrating foreigners who have obtained refugee status or subsidiary protection in Poland or their family members having temporary residence permit.

Chapter 5 of the Law on Social Assistance is fully dedicated to the issues of integration of foreigners who have received refugee status or subsidiary protection in Poland. Art. 91 of the law mentions the so-called 'assistance for a foreigner', which aims to support his/her integration process. To receive this integration assistance, a foreigner must submit an application to the *starosta*, the head of a *powiat* (district), through the *powiat* family support centre¹⁷, within 60 days from the day the foreigner obtained refugee or subsidiary protection status in the Republic of Poland or obtained a temporary residence permit (as a member of the family of a refugee or person with subsidiary protection). The application covers the minor children of the foreigner and his/her spouse, if they obtained refugee status or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Poland or they obtained a temporary residence permit granted in connection with being a family member. Help for a foreigner does not apply to a foreigner who is a spouse of a Polish citizen.

A geographical/territorial criterion applies when granting aid. The foreigner must live in a given voivodeship (region), submit an application only in one region and confirm in writing that he is ready to participate in the integration programme. Detailed issues regarding the place of residence within a given voivodeship (in a given *powiat* and *gmina*) and in connection with the implementation of the IIP are governed by Art. 94 of the Law on Social Assistance.

Assistance for a foreigner must be paid from the calendar month in which the foreigner submitted the application; however, if he/she was accommodated in a centre for foreigners during the refugee procedure (Pachocka et al., 2020, pp. 36–46), assistance begins from the calendar month in which the foreigner left the centre.

Art. 92 discusses the scope and duration of integration assistance granted for a period not longer than 12 months and includes (Art. 92 (1)):

- 1) 'cash benefits in the amount of PLN 446 to PLN 1,175¹⁸ per month per person for:
 - maintenance, in particular to cover expenses for food, clothing, footwear, personal hygiene products and housing fees,
 - covering expenses related to learning the Polish language;
- 2) paying health insurance as specified in the Law on Healthcare Benefits¹⁹;
- 3) social work;

¹⁷ Units of social assistance are divided into communes (including municipalities)—social assistance centres; in *poviats* (districts)—*powiat* family support centres; in voivodships—regional social policy centres.

¹⁸ It is worth adding that these amounts can be modified taking into account the living costs and socio-economic situation in Poland.

¹⁹ Law of 27 August 2004 on healthcare benefits financed from public funds (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1373 with amendments) (Ustawa z dnia 27 sierpnia 2004 r. o świadczeniach opieki zdrowotnej finansowanych ze środków publicznych (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz.1373 z późn. zm.)).

- 4) specialist counselling, including legal, psychological and family counselling;
- 5) providing information and support in contacts with other institutions, in particular with labour market institutions, the local environment and non-governmental organisations;
- 6) other activities supporting the foreigner's integration process'.

Art. 93 states that assistance for a foreigner is implemented as part of an IIP, agreed between the *poviat* family support centre and the foreigner, specifying the amount, scope and forms of assistance, depending on the individual life situation of the foreigner and his family, and the obligations of both parties. The *poviat* family support centre is obliged to (Art. 93(1)(1)):

- 1) provide the foreigner with information on assistance specified in the programme and the conditions of its suspension or refusal to grant it,
- 2) cooperate with the foreigner and support him/her in contacts with the local environment, including establishing contact with the social support centre responsible from the point of view of the place of residence of a foreigner,
- 3) provide assistance in obtaining housing²⁰, including in a protected flat if possible,
- 4) conduct social work with the foreigner,
- 5) other activities agreed with the foreigner resulting from the foreigner's individual life situation,
- 6) indicate an employee, hereinafter referred to as the 'programme implementer'²¹, who agrees the programme with the foreigner and supports him/her during its implementation.

The foreigner's obligations include (Art. 93(1)(2)):

- 1) checking in (registering) at the place of residence,
- 2) registering at the *poviat* labour office within the period specified in the programme and actively looking for a job,
- 3) compulsory participation in Polish language courses if necessary,
- 4) cooperating with and contacting the programme implementer on set dates, at least twice a month,
- 5) other activities agreed with the programme implementer resulting from the foreigner's individual life situation,
- 6) compliance with the obligations assumed in the programme.

²⁰ It is difficult to unequivocally define what the expression 'obtaining housing' means. The integration program does not offer housing support in terms of offering housing or its active search by the *poviat* centre, but employees- social workers take measures to inform the refugee about the domestic and local housing market and various housing options (e.g., obtaining social or protected housing in a given municipality, or special programs for refugees such as the WITEK pilot project implemented in 2017-2019 in Warsaw).

²¹ Usually it is a social worker, an employee of the *poviat* family support centre, responsible for the IIP implementation for a given refugee family.

The integration support within IIP can be suspended for certain reasons. These are following (Arts. 95 (1) and (4)):

- 1) persistent, culpable failure by a foreigner to fulfil the obligations assumed in the programme, including unjustified absence from Polish language courses—suspension for up to 30 days;
- 2) the support is used in a manner inconsistent with the purpose for which it was granted—suspension for a period of up to 30 days;
- 3) the foreigner provided false information about his/her life situation—suspension until the circumstances of providing such information are clarified;
- 4) the expiry of 30 days of the foreigner's stay in a healthcare institution—suspension until he/she leaves it;
- 5) instituting criminal proceedings against the foreigner—suspension until the final termination of the proceedings.

Finally, integration assistance may be waived (Art. 95(4)) under some circumstances:

- 1) the foreigner has again committed acts resulting in previous suspension under the IIP such as not fulfilling his/her obligations arising from the programme, using the aid contrary to its purpose, providing false information about his/her situation;
- 2) the foreigner has been convicted by a final court judgment of a crime committed intentionally during the IIP period;
- 3) the foreigner has been deprived of refugee status or his subsidiary protection or temporary residence permit granted in connection with the fact of being a member of the family of the beneficiary of international protection was withdrawn.

The Law on Social Assistance also stipulates that the minister for family, labour, and social policy determines, by proper regulation (Art. 95 (5)):

- 1) 'obligations of the *poviat* family support centre related to the preparation of an individual integration programme,
- 2) the amount of cash benefits for foreigners to support their integration process and payment deadlines,
- 3) types of documents and statements confirming the need for foreigners to change their place of residence during the duration of the individual integration programme,
- 4) methods and ways to monitor the progress of foreigners in their integration, appropriate to achieve the goals of integration

- taking into account the personal situation and needs of the foreigner and his/her family and the number of family members'.

This is reflected in another important national act of law regarding integration assistance for foreigners—the Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy on the provision of

assistance for foreigners of 7 April 2015 (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1946)²², named Regulation on Assistance to Foreigners. Paragraph 3 declares the total amount of cash benefits for a foreigner for maintaining and covering expenses related to learning the Polish language. This amount differs by period (the first six months or the 7th-12th months) and the number of family members. The minimum amount of cash benefits is PLN 647 (about EUR 150) per person per month. For a single-person household, this amount is up to PLN 1,376 per month (EUR 325) in the first six months of the implementation of the integration programme, and up to PLN 1.288.40 per month (EUR 305) in the period from the 7th to 12th month (WCPR, n.d.).

As explained in Paragraph 5 of the Regulation on Assistance to Foreigners, the integration progress of a foreigner under the IIP is monitored by a social worker attached to the *poviat* family support centre (his/her 'programme implementer', mentioned earlier), at least once every three months from the date of commencement of the IIP implementation. Progress is assessed in three areas:

- 1) language education, including the degree of acquisition of a basic Polish vocabulary enabling communication;
- 2) professional functioning (situation) as regards progress in seeking employment and other forms of professional activity enabling the foreigner to become economically independent;
- 3) social functioning (situation), especially in terms of establishing contacts with the local environment and the degree of participation in social, cultural and public life.

The assessment is made based on observation, a direct conversation with the foreigner and his/her family members, as well as the opinions of the employees of other institutions and organisations involved in the integration process of a given person. The assessment takes the form of a written memo.

Data on the number of foreign families (and not individuals) covered by IIPs in the years of 2000-2017 in Poland are presented in Appendix in Table 13. The total number of families covered by IIPs in 2000-2017 was 5.856, most of which were implemented in the Masovian Voivodeship (62%). This voivodship has the highest figure each year because of the number of families covered by IIPs and Warsaw attracting the largest number of migrants in the country as the capital city of Poland. Podlaskie and Lublin voivodships are also distinguished from other voivodships in terms of the number of families covered by the programme (19% and 9% of the total). This is because they cover the eastern border of Poland with non-EU countries, such as Belarus and Ukraine, and are the main land-border crossing points where applications for international protection are submitted. In addition, in previous years, some refugee centres (centres for foreigners under the asylum procedure) were located in these voivodships (e.g., in Lublin) (for more see Pachocka et al., 2020). After receiving international protection in Poland or even before—during the asylum procedure—some refugees decided to live in the region and nearby cities. Having the largest number of families supported under IIPs, the most active centre in this area is the Warsaw Family Support Centre (WFSC). As of early 2020, its

²² Ordinance of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, 2015. In Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Pracy i Polityki Społecznej w sprawie udzielania pomocy cudzoziemcom z dnia 7 kwietnia 2015 r. (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 1946).

Department of Social Integration and Crisis Intervention has four social workers who provide integration assistance to foreigners with international protection (WCPR, n.d.).

It is worth emphasizing that in light of the Law on Social Assistance, IIPs are under the authority of the *powiat*, which is part of the government administration implemented in a given administrative unit. That is why IIPs are approved and financed by the voivode (Art. 93(2-3)). However, IIPs are not the only legally provided form of support for refugees in Poland. Another is the assistance offered within the *powiat's* own liabilities, which include, among others, help for refugees and persons with subsidiary protection and members of their families who encounter difficulties in integration (Law on Social Assistance, Art. 19(1)). For example, WFSC has implemented additional integration activities with *powiat* funds or co-financed from EU funds (Pachocka and Wach, 2019). The main activities included social and specialist support (social work, support on the labour and housing markets, consultations with a vocational counsellor, psychologist, nurse), and Polish language courses.

Overview of Key Actors in Integration Governance

In Poland, there are different actors involved in integration activities and policies by law, financing, or practice, which can be divided into four main groups:

- intergovernmental organisations: e.g. EU, IOM,
- central level public administration: Ministry of the Interior and Administration, Office for Foreigners, Ministry of the Family, Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, voivodship offices,
- local level public administration: *poviats* (mainly the largest cities with *powiat* status) and communes, *powiat* family support centres, social support centres (social welfare centres), *powiat* labour offices, primary and secondary schools,
- NGOs (mainly in large cities), language schools, local communities, religious organisations, etc.

Much has been already said about some of these actors while discussing the evolution of integration policy in Poland after 1989, its legal basis and context of national politics and policies. The issue of the main actors shaping integration policy in Poland is also present in the national literature on the subject (Duszczyk et al., 2018; Klaus et al., n.d.; Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2014; Matyja et al., 2015, Mikulska-Jolles, n.d.; Mołęda-Zdziech et al., 2021; Okólski and Wach, 2020; Pawlak, 2013; Pawlak and Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2015; Wach, 2018). As of today, it is the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, which is officially responsible for integration activities towards foreigners, in practice mostly in the field of social policy and the labour market. An important role is played by the Ministry of National Education in terms of access to foreign children to public education system at primary and secondary level. The President and Voivodes are competent in the area of granting Polish citizenship. An important role in the creation and implementation of integration policies (activities) in Poland is played by local actors (local governments, NGOs, local communities). This is due to regulations (e.g., on social assistance or education), historical conditions after 1989 and the nature of the integration process that takes place locally, in the immediate vicinity of migrants. The big cities where foreigners usually settle serve as the main actors of proactive activities for the integration of migrants (IIPs, own initiatives, and projects) such as Warsaw, Gdańsk, Wrocław,

Lublin, Cracow, or Poznań. NGOs also play an important role, as they substitute for key actions of the state instead of just supplementing or strengthening them (cultural events, language courses, legal support, psychological assistance, and housing support).

Although the EU does not have a common integration policy, as it is the Member States that have their own competence in this regard, it supports the EU countries by financing numerous projects through Union funds (e.g., AMIF or European Social Fund) (Gońda et al., 2020). The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund has been in force since 2014. Unfortunately, in Poland, in 2016-2019, access to AMIF-funded projects for NGOs was limited because of the policies of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration that significantly changed the rules for financing projects and cancelled some calls for projects (Pachocka and Sobczak Szalc, 2020; Szałańska, 2019). The AMIF co-financed the project 'Building structures for the integration of foreigners in Poland' conducted by the Department of Social Assistance and Integration at the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy from a pool of funds for the implementation of activities in which a given institution has a *de jure* or *de facto* monopoly. The aim of the project was to create the basis for building structures for the integration of foreigners in Poland based on the expertise and lessons learnt from other countries with a similar administrative and organisational structure to Poland, which have many years of experience in the integration of foreigners (MRPiPS, n.d.). IOM also implements some activities supporting the situation of migrants in Poland, and not limited to refugees only. For example, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior IOM initiated the National Platform of Cooperation for Integration to exchange information and experiences between various integration stakeholders, such as government representatives, trade unions, employers' organisations, media, NGOs, and migrant associations (European Commission, 2016a). IOM also annually organises the Golden Fans competition, which aims to identify the best practices in the field of migration management. The awards are granted to people and institutions that particularly contributed to stimulating socio-economic development through migration, building good practices in the field of migration management and supporting the integration of migrants in Poland (IOM, 2019).

The international project 'National Integration Evaluation Mechanism: Measuring and improving integration of beneficiaries of international protection' (NIEM) also deserves attention. It covers the implementation period of 2015-2021 and aims 'to prepare key actors in the integration field in 15 EU Member States to better face the current challenges and improve the integration outcomes of beneficiaries of international protection' (NIEM, n.d.). One of the important project results is the national baseline reports on the integration of beneficiaries of international protection. The Polish report from 2018 presents an overview of the functioning of various areas of integration policy towards forced migrants in Poland (Górska et al., 2019).

Finally, when discussing integration governance, it is important to stress the involvement of cities. Usually cities treat integration as a whole, without distinguishing strategies for forced migrants (like refugees) and voluntary migrants (coming to Poland usually for work, study or family reunification). A number of authors have already paid attention to the growing role of cities in carrying out integration activities in many European cities, including Poland (see e.g. Matusz-Protasiewicz and Kwieciński, 2018; Penninx et al., 2014). The example of Gdańsk and its Immigrant Integration Model (IIM) are frequently mentioned. The aim of this model is 'to develop a migration management system in public institutions and social purpose organisations in Gdansk, and to enhance the integration of immigrants in the following areas: education, culture, social assistance, housing, counteracting violence and discrimination, local communities, employment, and health', and the plan should be adopted by 2023 (Gdansk City

Hal, 2016, pp. 44–45). The Gdańsk strategy is dedicated to immigrants living in the city in general, as refugees comprise a very small group, and after completing their IIPs some of the refugee families left Poland for other EU countries of Western Europe (Gdansk City Hal, 2016, pp. 15, 17, Pędziwiatr, 2019).

Warsaw, being a city with the largest population of foreigners and implementing many integration activities directly as either the local government or in cooperation with NGOs, has not yet developed a local, comprehensive strategy for the integration of foreigners. Despite this, its activities are numerous and diversified, including:

- activities of the Warsaw Family Support Centre (IIPs and additional integration activities as powiat's own tasks),
- the pilot project titled 'Warsaw test project of integration of foreigners with regard to the needs of the labour market' (WITEK),
- housing support (social/communal housing, protected housing),
- work of the Branch Social Dialogue Committee for Foreigners in the Capital City of Warsaw,
- functioning of the Multicultural Centre in Warsaw,
- organisation of city competitions (to commission specific tasks to NGOs).

The activities of the Warsaw Family Support Centre have already been broadly discussed in this section. Among other above-mentioned activities, the project WITEK seems to be particularly interesting. The project 'Warsaw test project of integration of foreigners with regard to the needs of the labour market' was initiated and coordinated by the Office of Assistance and Social Projects of the Capital City of Warsaw in 2017-2019, while its implementation was in fact delegated to the Warsaw Family Support Centre. The assumption of the project was to implement a pilot programme for the quick integration of foreigners who received refugee status or subsidiary protection in Poland through their vocational activation on the local labour market. The goals of the project were to test the integration model focused on the inclusion into the labour market targeted at the beneficiaries of international protection in Poland, taking into account their strategic needs to enable them to function independently in socio-economic terms, as well as analysing and assessing the possibilities of multiplication of this model. Ten beneficiaries of international protection participated in the project. They had to live in Warsaw and implement the IIPs. An important component of the project was its cross-sector and multi-actor nature. As a result, the project's partners (implementers) included different actors (Gać and Pachocka, 2019):

- public administration sector (local government level): Office of Assistance and Social Projects of the Capital City of Warsaw (CCW), Warsaw Family Support Centre (WFSC), Labour Office of the Capital City of Warsaw (LOCCW),
- NGO and private sector: Human Capital Assessment Foundation (HCAF), Ocalenie Foundation (FO), Sustinae Foundation (SF), Foreign Education Centre (FES),
- Higher-education sector—experts-researchers from the Warsaw School of Economics (SGH).

Project activities directed at participants with the assignment of actors implementing them were as follows (Gać and Pachocka, 2019):

- Diagnosis of language proficiency (FES),
- Socio-occupational diagnosis/professional (vocational) potential diagnosis (HCAF),
- Polish language courses (FES, WFSC, LOCCW),
- Social work and assistance (WFSC),
- Specialist support (e.g., psychological, psychiatric, medical, etc.) (WFSC),
- Housing support (FO),
- Support in the field of social functioning (FO, WFSC),
- Strengthening professional competences/Vocational activation (FS, LOCCW, WFSC).

The key component of the project was the socio-economic integration of foreigners, more precisely preparing them for quick and permanent entry into the local labour market in a direction that was as close as possible to an assessment of professional (vocational) potential and the planned individual path to achieving employment, allowing the foreigner to operate independently socially and economically in Warsaw. Within the housing support, migrants could use the allocated housing free of charge (individual/family flats) for the duration of the project, which distinguishes this project from IIPs. This gave foreigners a sense of stability, calm, and security, allowing them to focus on looking for a job, developing qualifications, education or learning Polish (Gać and Pachocka, 2019).

4. Labour Market

This section of the report examines access to the labour market of beneficiaries of international protection (those who have already received positive decision on their asylum application). The data related to employment of beneficiaries of international protection both in formal and informal labour market are very limited. There is neither data, nor official reports describing the process and its scale. Regarding data collected within RESOND project, due to employment experience, the basis for the micro-level analysis were 17 interviews conducted with those, who already became beneficiaries of international protection (16 interviews with those who have been already granted protection and one, whose the positive decision was reversed, however, due to employment experience he/she was included in the sample). In some areas, this analysis includes a comparative approach regarding situation of asylum seekers - those who submitted an application for a refugee status and are still waiting for the final decision. More information regarding this group is available in the report dedicated to the Polish reception conditions (Pachocka et al., 2020).

The most crucial interviews among all meso level in-depth interviews related to the issue of early access to labour market were conducted with representatives from the Office for Foreigners, NGOs, as well as practitioners.

Employment in the Formal Labour Market

Poland's economy is regarded as the eighth largest economy in EU, in addition to its 38-million sales market being one of the largest among EU member states. Since EU accession in 2004, Poland has experienced a steady economic growth resulting in a gradual rise in the number of employed persons and, simultaneously a decline in unemployment rate in the country. Despite many positive changes, the Polish labour market is still facing some challenges. Most significant one is different level of development between and within poviats²³. In some of the poviats unemployment rate significantly exceeds the national average. Such poviats can be found even in provinces that include large agglomerations, such as the Mazovian Voivoidship. For instance, the unemployment rate in Szydłowiecki Powiat exceeded 24.3% in March 2019, which is 19-fold higher than in the city of Poznań (1.3) and 16-fold higher than in Warsaw (1.5) (EURES, 2019).

The economic activity rate of the population aged 15-64 was 56.4% in 2018 (annual average). The employment rate of the population aged 15-64 was 54.2% in 2018 (annual average) and increased by 0.5 pp compared to 2017. The unemployment rate in Poland for people aged 15 and above was 3.9% in 2018 compared to 4.9% a year earlier (Table 1). The unemployment rate decreased from 10% in 2011 to 4% in 2019 (Table 1). This change is an effect of multiple factors such as good economic situation, improvement of transport infrastructure, internal and external migration as well as the generational change that occurred on the Polish labour market (Górny et al., 2018, p. 15).

²³ According to the Central Statistical Office, on 1 January 2019, Poland was administratively divided into 16 voivodships (*województwo*), 380 poviats (*powiat*), and 2.477 communes (*gmina*). The largest voivoidship was Mazovian, where the capital city, Warsaw, is located (Central Statistical Office, n.d.).

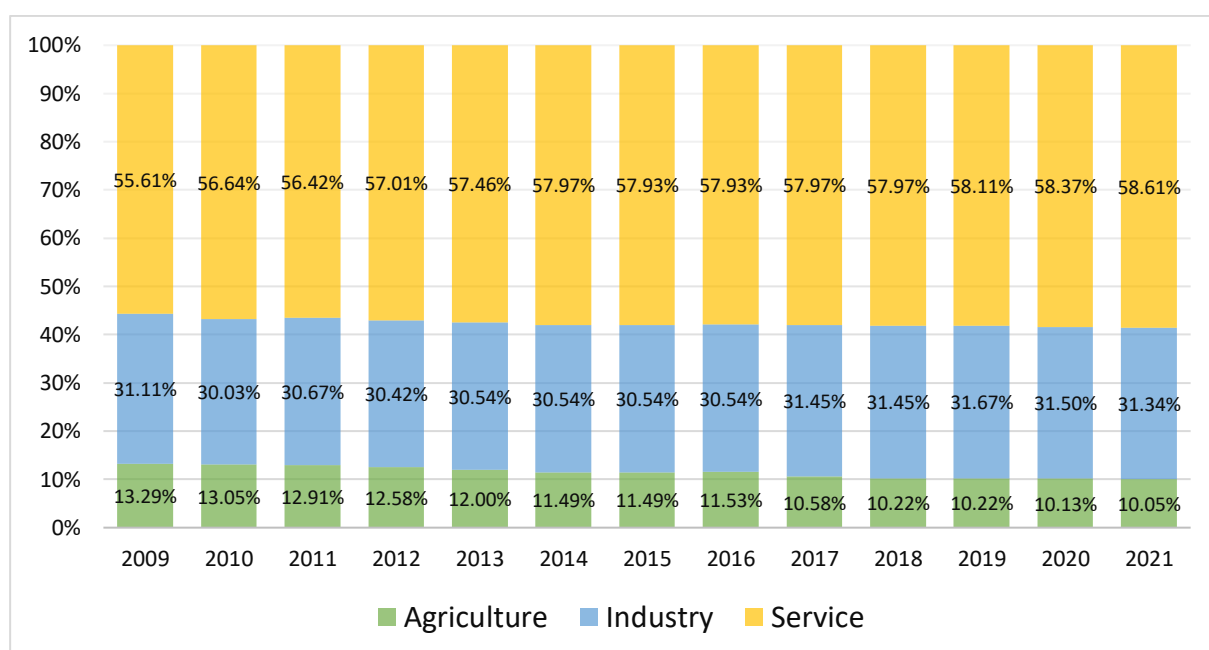
Table 1 Economic activity of population aged 15-64

Year	Economically active population (in %)	Employment rate of population aged 15—64 years (in %)	Unemployment rate (in %)
2011	55,50	50,2	9,6
2012	55,90	50,2	10,1
2013	56,00	50,2	10,3
2014	56,20	51,2	9
2015	56,10	51,9	7,5
2016	56,30	52,8	6,1
2017	56,40	53,7	4,9
2018	56,40	54,2	3,9
2019 ²⁴	56,30	54,3	3,6

(Source: Own elaboration based on GUS (2019, 2017, 2015, 2012))

Additionally, the structure of the Polish economy has changed. One can observe significant decrease in employment in the agriculture (from 13,29% in 2009 to 10,05% in 2019) and increase in employment in different forms of services. At the same time, the employment in industry sector remains on the same level (World Bank, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

Figure 1 Distribution of employment by economic sector from 2009-2019



Source: Plecher (2020) and World Bank (2020a, 2020b, 2020c)

For a long time, Poland has been an emigration country and not so much attractive for migrants. The situation has significantly changed after 2014 and the outbreak of armed conflict in Ukraine. Nonetheless, the majority of foreigners arrive to Poland for working purposes. Most of them come from Eastern Europe, mainly from Ukraine. The desire of Ukrainians to migrate

²⁴ Only the first and second quarter.

to Poland coincide with the growing demand for workers, a small geographic distance and previously developed networks. This change could be seen in all migration data about foreigners employed in Poland. Although the data of statistical office (GUS) significantly undervalue the number of working foreigners in Poland, this trend is quite evident in the data. The number of foreigners employed under civil law contracts in Poland increased from 16.3 thousand in 2011 to 26 thousand in 2014, to 40 thousand in 2015 and to 141 thousand in 2018. Majority of immigrants were employed in private sectors, mostly in agriculture (Table 2) (GUS, 2019, 2017, 2015, 2012).

Table 2 Number of selected categories employed person

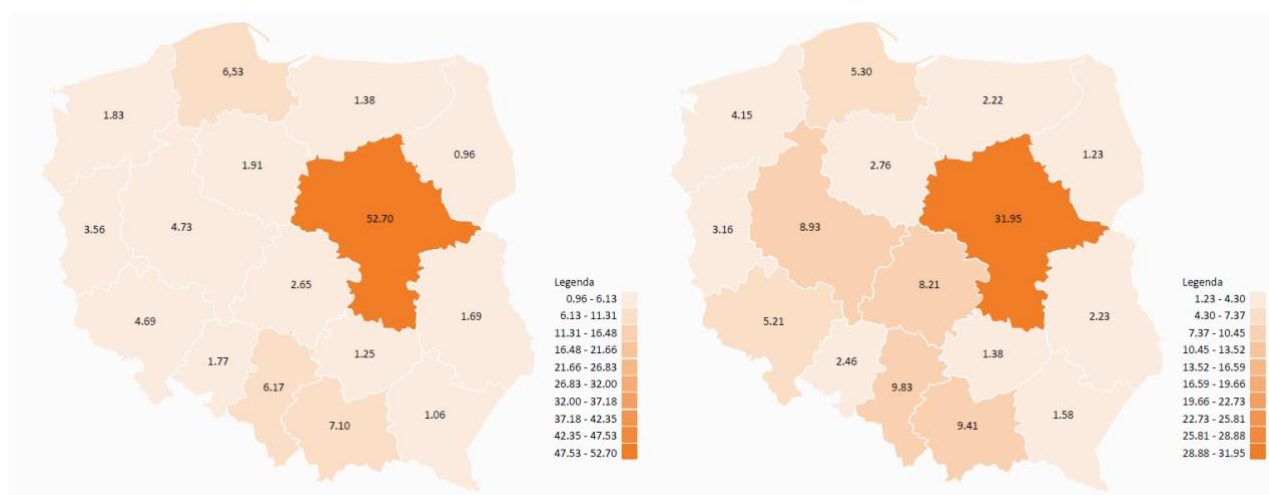
Selected categories of employed persons	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total (in thous.)	14 232,6	nd	14 244,3	14 563,4	14 829,8	15 293,3	15 710,8	15 949,7
public sector (in thous.)	3 486,5	nd	3 375,0	3 377,1	3 343,6	3 356,3	3 371,3	3 403,7
private sector (in thous.)	10 746,1	nd	10 869,3	11 186,3	11 486,2	11 937,0	12 339,5	12 546,0
Foreigners (in thous.)	16,3	nd	20,8	26,0	40,0	72,7	106,2	141,0
public sector (in thous.)	3,0	nd	2,8	2,9	3,1	3,8	3,7	4,2
private sector (in thous.)	13,3	nd	17,9	23,1	36,9	68,9	102,5	136,8
Work permits²⁵	40 808,0	39 144,0	39 078,0	43 663,0	65 786,0	127 394,0	235 626,0	328 768,0

Source: Own elaboration based on GUS, (2019, 2017, 2015, 2012)

This change was also observed in regional perspective. It is not only an increase seen in the number of work permits issued in particular Provinces, but also in the evolution of the importance of migration at regional level. While until recently migration was concentrated mainly in the Mazowieckie Voivodship, particularly in Warsaw, after 2014 the changes in migration patterns can be seen also in other voivodships (Górny et al., 2018). This is also reflected in the data on issued work permits (Figure 2).

²⁵ Granted to foreigners in Poland by voivodships.

Figure 2 Regional structure of issued work permits in 2010 and 2017 (in %)



Source: Górny et al., 2018; MRPiPS, 2018

Access of Asylum Seekers and Refugees to the Labour Market

The employment of third-country nationals in Poland is regulated by the Law of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1482 with amendments) (in short: Law on Employment)²⁶. Generally, in order to hire a foreigner from the outside of the EU/EEA and Switzerland, first of all the employer needs to obtain an appropriate document entitling the foreigner to work in Poland. Either one of the following: 1) work permit, 2) seasonal work permit²⁷, or 3) entry in the register of statements on entrusting work to a foreigner. The third type of document entitling the foreigner to work in Poland is dedicated only to those who come from the following six countries: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, The Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine. It is so called “simplified system” as the procedure is faster and cheaper. The statement is applicable to almost all sectors of economy, however, it only enables to work in Poland for six months in a year (till 2017 there were no limitations, since 2018 entrusting work in agriculture requires application for seasonal work permit). Statements enable work in Poland for six months in a year. Prolongation of employment entrusted on the basis of a statement requires application for a work permit. Work performed by foreigners is considered lawful if employers sign the appropriate contract with foreigners, report a foreigner to a social insurance (if adequate), fulfil information obligations (MRPiPS, 2020c).

Foreigners can be hired provided that they stay on the territory of Poland legally. Foreigners with long-term and permanent residence permits as well as holders of the Polish Chart have unlimited access to the labour market in Poland. In other cases foreigners may work in Poland provided that they possess required documents entitling them to work and stay in Poland based on one of the following documents : 1) national or Schengen visa (with some exceptions), or 2) another residence document issued by another Schengen area member

²⁶ Ustawa z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r. o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 1482 z późn. zm.).

²⁷ Seasonal work permit is available for all groups of foreigners and enables them to work for nine months in a year, however only in selected sectors - agriculture and seasonal food and accommodation services.

state, 3) a temporary residence permit (with some exceptions), 4) submitted application for a temporary or permanent residence permit or received stamp placed in the travel document, which confirms the submission of the application for a long-term resident's European Union residence permit (if they were entitled to work based on the previous documents), 5) visa-free travel, if the provisions of an agreement concerning visa-free travel foresee the performance of work by foreigners (MRPiPS, 2020c).

Those regulations do not apply to asylum seekers and persons with granted protection. Asylum seekers cannot work for the first six months from the date of submission of an application. After that time, they may request a certificate (statement) in case a decision of granting protection has not been issued within that period of time, and the proceedings extended for a reason beyond applicant's control. This statement accompanied by the temporary certificate of identity of a foreigner, entitles person to work within the territory of the Republic of Poland according to the Law on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Law on Employment, Article 35(1)). The certificate is valid until the date by which the decision on granting international protection becomes final, that is, until the moment when the decision is upheld or overturned by the Refugee Board (second-instance decision) (based on the Law on Protection) or earlier, if the asylum seeker decides not to appeal to Refugee Board. Foreigners who apply for international protection are exempt from the obligation to have a work permit, by providing the abovementioned certificate (Pachocka et al., 2020).

The access of beneficiaries of international protection (refugees and those under subsidiary protection) as well as members of their families to the labour market and different vocational activation instruments (with some exceptions) is held equal to citizens of Poland as defined by the abovementioned Law on Employment²⁸. The beneficiaries of international protection have access to jobs in public sector such as work in education or health services, unless there are specific regulations requiring Polish citizenship, for instance in so called "core of public sector" as civil servants or police (Pawlak, 2019a; Sienkiewicz, 2016). Contrary to asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection may take up and pursue economic activities, and particularly self-employment (Law on freedom of economic activity, Art. 13 ust. 1)²⁹. Since beneficiaries of international protection have rights close to Polish citizens on the labour market, the rules of the labour law, job protection mechanism and other legal regulations, such as right to minimum wages and safe and healthy conditions also apply to them. The differences in access to the labour market between asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection (those who received one of following status: refugee, subsidiary-protection or temporary protection) and other migrants are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 The differences in access to labour market between asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection and other migrants

	Third Country Nationals	Asylum Seekers	Beneficiaries of International Protection
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²⁸ See: Art. 1 pkt. 3 ust. 2 lit. d, j, k, l and Art 87 pkt. 1, ust. 2, 4a, 5, 6, 6a.

²⁹ Law of 3 December 2010 on the implementation of certain European Union provisions in the field of equal treatment (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2016, item 1219 with amendments) (Ustawa z dnia 3 grudnia 2010 r. o wdrożeniu niektórych przepisów Unii Europejskiej w zakresie równego traktowania (t.j. Dz.U. z 2016 r. poz. 1219 z późn. zm.)).

Is the PES ³⁰ involved in the labour market integration of following categories of foreigners?	Yes*	No****	Yes*
Do following categories of foreigners have access to:	---	---	---
Hiring subsidies	Yes*	No****	Yes*
Start-up (self-employment) support	Yes*	No****	Yes*
On-the-job training	Yes*	No****	Yes*
Other labour market integration support?	Yes*	No****	Yes*
Is there a systematic mentorship scheme in place for following categories of foreigners?	No	No	No
Are following categories of foreigners eligible to receive unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance?	Yes*	No****	Yes**
Are benefits that are generally received by following categories of foreigners, conditional on job search requirements/ activation?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Does the support provided to following categories of foreigners end as soon as they get a job?	Yes (from Labour Office) No (from social support)***	Yes (from Labour Office) No (from social support)***	Yes (from Labour Office) No (from social support)***

Source: Own elaboration based on Sienkiewicz (2016)

* if registered as unemployed with the local labour office

** if registered as unemployed with the district labour office and having paid contributions to the Labour Fund for 12 months within the last 18 months

*** Dependent on income-based criteria.

**** Unless the procedure of granting status is prolonged over the period of six months, in which case the asylum seekers are granted access to the labour market (including labour market instruments)

There are no regulations on national level aiming to link the placement of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection with employment opportunities. Further, there are no special programs, additional incentives or benefits aimed at encouraging employers to employ beneficiaries of international protection, other than those concerning employment of Polish citizens.

Vulnerable beneficiaries of international protection³¹ on the labour market are not treated as a group requiring special treatment as long as they do not belong to one of the following groups: 1) unemployed up to 30 years old, 2) unemployed for a long term, 3) unemployed over 50 years old, 4) unemployed (while) using social assistance benefits, 5) unemployed with at least one child up to 6 years old or at least one disabled child up to 18 years old, 6) unemployed

³⁰ Public employment services, in Poland the district labour office.

³¹ In legal terms, vulnerable people that may require special treatment take into account the following groups of migrants: minors, the disabled, the elderly, pregnant women, single parents, victims of human trafficking, the seriously ill, mentally disordered people, victims of torture, victims of psychological, physical and sexual violence, as well as violence due to gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

disabled, 7) job seeking carer of a disabled person, excluding carers of disabled persons who receive a care benefit or a special care allowance based on the provisions of family benefits, or a benefit for the caretakers based on the provisions on the determination and payment of benefits for caretakers. Those people have priority in taking part in special programs (Law on Employment, Art. 49). The status of disabled person (if the disability is assigned before 16 years old) provides access to social assistance pension with permission to work. Additionally, hiring of a person with disabilities gives additional profits for employers, as employers' costs of employment become lower.

Validation of Skills and Recognition of Qualifications and Prior Experience

A diploma of completion of studies abroad may be recognized as equivalent to the relevant Polish diploma and professional title on the basis of an international agreement determining equivalence, and in the absence of it - by recognition procedure which is regulated by the law - Ordinance on the recognition of diplomas and Law on Higher Education³² (Ordinance on the recognition of diplomas, 2015; Ordinance on the recognition of diplomas, 2018; Law on Higher Education, 2018). Since 9 October 2015, a foreigner who wants to confirm his/her education obtained abroad in Poland should verify whether a foreign education document was recognized in Poland on the basis of international agreements. In case the country where he/she received the diploma is not indicated in the list, he/she has to certify the diploma, i.e. apply for recognition as equivalent to Polish one³³.

Those with no education or no documents to confirm their qualifications, yet willing to get education and gain some new skills, may participate in trainings to improve their job qualifications organised either by local bodies or NGOs.

Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy is responsible for labour market policy on macro level. Implementation of this policy is a competency of poviats labour offices, which among others, are responsible for: 1) development and implementation of an employment promotion program and activation of the local labour market, 2) providing assistance to the unemployed and jobseekers in finding work through job placement and vocational counseling, examining and analyzing the situation on the local labour market in connection with the proceedings of issuing a work permit or temporary residence permit, including the implementation of tasks related to taking up work by foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Poland, 3) implementation of projects in the field of employment promotion, including counteracting unemployment, mitigating the effects of unemployment and vocational activation of the unemployed, resulting from operational programs co-financed from the European Social Fund and Labour Fund ("Tasks of the Poviats Labour Office," 2018).

Beneficiaries of international protection are treated equally with Polish citizens in access to entrepreneurship hubs, apprenticeships and traineeships (Law on Employment, Art. 1(3) d) i) j) l)). This treatment should adopt the principle of equality regardless of gender, age, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, political beliefs and religious denomination or trade union membership (Law on Employment, Art. 40 (6)). Therefore, beneficiaries of international protection theoretically have access to a wide selection of courses

³² Law of 20 July 2018 - Law on Higher Education and Science (consolidated text, Journal of Laws of 2020, item 85 with amendments) (Ustawa z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. - Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 85 z późn. zm.)).

³³ For further information see the Education Section of this report.

improving professional qualifications and to vocational education conducted in Poland. Asylum seekers may participate in the same options of entrepreneurship hubs, apprenticeships and traineeships not sooner than six months from the date of submission of an asylum application, if a decision has not been issued within this time limit, and the proceedings extended for a reason beyond the applicant's control (Law on Employment, Art. 1 (3) k)³⁴.

Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection integrate into the labor market in a much more difficult way than other migrants, even if their skills and education are comparable. This difference occurs regardless of the age group and knowledge of the host country's language (Peromingo, 2014 p. 76-77). It takes six years for refugees to achieve a level of employment and income similar to those migrating due to family reunion. Moreover, refugees need even more than 15 years in order to reach the level of the native population in the mentioned area, (OECD 2016, Sobczak-Szelc, 2016). This appears because, in addition to challenges facing by economic migrants such as lack of language proficiency or social and professional networks, they often suffer from psychological distress and disabilities, which lower their ability to integrate into the labour market. This is further strengthened by the period of suspension and uncertainty about their future during asylum procedure. Also their qualifications and work experience often have been gained in a very difficult labour market conditions. Finally, many of them are not able to provide proper documentations to prove their level of education and skills and they arrive with weak, if any, attachment to the host country (OECD 2016). Despite all this, they are not treated in any special way by Labour Offices regarding support in access to labour market, according to the Law on Employment (Art. 49). Meanwhile, there is no coordination between macro (central authorities) and meso (regional and local authorities and NGO's) level of governance aiming at improving competences of beneficiaries of international protection in labour market.

Employment in the Informal Labour Market

None of interviewed beneficiaries of international protection admitted that he/she worked in the informal labour market. This situation, however, was mentioned and justified by mezo-level respondents. They admitted that the group of people working in informal labour market is significant justifying it by two issues:

1. Some employers discriminate foreign employees as they believe that foreigners can be employed informally and work for less money when they are desperate (PLMZSO1).
2. Vast majority of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection from Caucasus and Chechnia is low educated, performing simple, low paid jobs. Even if they work a lot, they may not earn enough to pay all bills, particularly those who rent a flat. 'Therefore, they often prefer, even if they have another option, to work in the "black market", because then they get more on hand and it is easier for them to support themselves comparing with legal employment' (PLMZSO1).

Furthermore, working in informal labour market is related to specificity of work sector in which they perform their work. During asylum procedure significant number of asylum seekers work in agriculture, which can be explained with the location of refugee centres (for more see Pachocka et al., 2020). According to our meso-level experts, the sectors where asylum seekers work does not differ much even after the decision is made on their status. Our experts

³⁴ For further information see Section Political, Legal, and Institutional Framework of this report.

as well as micro-level interviewees mentioned that the sectors such as construction, transportation, gastronomy (simple jobs), domestic work, and car repairment, are where job is performed on undocumented basis. One of NGOs' representatives further added regarding the case of women in particular:

Women clean up and look after children. It is almost never formalized. A king's ransom to whoever who signs contracts with ladies who clean, look after children or the elderly. Although I know minor exceptions (PLMZSO1).³⁵

Nonetheless, National Labour Inspectorate (NLI) has increased the number of inspections among employers to minimize employment irregularities, including the employment of foreigners. According to impression of one of our NGO interviewees (PLMZSO2) the increase of those controls positively affected the number of legally employed foreigners – including beneficiaries of international protection. At the end of 2019 NLI also activated helpline for migrants, where migrants can obtain information on conditions of stay and work in Poland. Information is provided in several languages: Arabic, English, French, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian and Vietnamese (PIP, 2019).

Meso Level (Implementation)

The role of Public Institutions in Integration on the Labour Market

As mentioned before, the main meso level state agencies responsible for implementation of labour market integration are the family support centres and poviats labour offices. The Family Support Centres are responsible for implementation of Individual Integration Program (IIP). Social workers are crucial in integration program and its final effects. Within IIP they assist beneficiaries of international protection to find suitable employment opportunity on labour market, as well as to persist in chosen way of gaining adequate work and language skills (Grzymała-Kozłowska, 2017). The Warsaw Family Support Centre (WFSC) needs to be quite active in the area of supporting of this group. Among other tasks between 2008 and 2018, it carried out three projects financed by EU: 'Integration for autonomy' between 2008-2015 with over 5,600 participants ("Integracja dla Samodzielności," 2019), 'Welcome in Warsaw' between 2016-2017 with 200 foreigners ("Witamy w Warszawie," 2019) and 'Support-Activation-Inclusion' realized between 2017-2018 with 285 participants ("Wsparcie-Aktywizacja-Włączenie (WAW)," 2019). Within those projects WCPR provided several forms of labour market support addressed to refugees: labour law and self-presentation workshops, the help of career counsellor, vocational trainings and self-development workshops for women. All of those projects went through complex evaluation process and had good results (Jończyk, 2016; Okólski and Wach, 2020). The Family Support Centres mostly rely on personal contact with their clients and direct assistance in everyday challenges such as filling in the applications to poviats labour office.

The family support centre usually does not directly help in job search, however, Warsaw City Hall commissioned this task to the FISE (Fundacja Inicjatyw Społeczno-Ekonomicznych). As a result of collaboration, all beneficiaries of IIP looking for a job are referred to FISE by

³⁵ In quotes from interviews, the 'R' is the 'Respondent' and 'I' the 'Interviewer'. Abbreviations made by the authors of this report in quotations are marked with the symbol '(...)'. The information in square brackets '[...]' introduced by the authors means editorial notes intended to facilitate readers' understanding of the respondents' statements.

social workers. Yet, as it was mentioned before, the responsibility of job search assistance belongs to the Poviats Labour Offices, which carry out tasks related to labour market policies on local level. Most important tasks are the following: support the unemployed in finding employment, organisation of training courses and vocational training, granting and paying unemployment allowances, and performing tasks related to taking up employment in Poland by foreigners, which are specified in the Law on Employment. Programs offered by the district labour office are addressed to all beneficiaries of the office and there are no tailored programmes for migrants, including refugees as long as they do not belong to one of privileged groups. Relevant entities may provide training and facilities for specific groups, not included in previously mentioned categories. In general, poviat labour offices are rated quite negatively by those working with beneficiaries of IIP, as described by an interviewee from an NGO:

I do not remember that there were ever actions targeted specifically at refugees at the labour office. I know a few refugees who took advantage of the opportunity to attend a Polish language course or any vocational courses organized by the labour office. (...) As I was looking through it some time ago, I was struck by the fact that there are no refugees or migrants there [among privileged groups]. This is a specific group that requires another type of interaction - due to these linguistic or cultural differences. And I don't think anything has changed in this area. According to my experience, refugees treat the labour office only as a health insurer (...) and as an annoying institution that looks for any job for them. If they do not take the first, second, third job offer, they bear the consequences. But these are often job offers where they have no chance to support themselves (PLMZSO1).

Labour market institutions have taken initiatives to support selected groups of beneficiaries by labour offices to enter labour market. Those who fulfil conditions and find themselves in this special situation on the labour market, similar to young refugees, may apply to be included within the special program in the labour market institutions (PLMZP2). However, they need to be aware of those options, which is rarely the case.

Local government bodies seem to be more active in proposing different integration strategies. Particularly, authorities of the larger Polish cities cooperate with non-governmental organizations in order to improve the situation of foreigners living in a relevant city. Big cities such as Warsaw, Gdansk, Wroclaw, Lublin, Cracow or Poznan serve as the main actors that provide proactive activities for integration purposes including integration in the labor market. Some of local government bodies have set up units dealing with the problems of foreigners living in their area (Dragan, 2017). Others created strategic documents aiming at improvement of the situation of migrants. Meanwhile, some cities try to implement projects targeted to migrants and/or beneficiaries of international protection. This kind of actions is usually implemented by big cities since it is more difficult to be carried out by relatively smaller cities. As one of the local governors described, in small cities, even in those that are in close contact with centres for foreigners, these kinds of actions are limited to those required by legal acts:

As the organizational structure of the office is concerned, we do not anticipate such positions [dedicated towards asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection]. Here, the competences and statutory obligations of the municipal self-government result only from the act on compulsory schooling, the act on the education system. Outside the structure of the office itself, but in our organizational units, i.e. subordinate to the mayor (...) These are heads of the primary schools in which these foreign students fulfil their school duty. (...) the director and head of the social welfare

centre or even units integrating our society, i.e. a cultural centre or city library. (PLMZLG1)

Examples of actions taken in selected big cities are provided below:

WARSAW

Although Warsaw City does not have a written integration strategy, it is active in many other ways. As part of the Warsaw City Council, Commission for Social Dialogue for Foreigners (Branżowa Komisja Dialogu Społecznego ds. Cudzoziemców – BKDS) was established in 2012. It is a platform for the exchange of information between NGOs, social movements and local institutions working in the field of immigration and integration; it is also an advisory body to the City Council on matters related to foreigners (Okólski and Wach, 2020). The Warsaw City has also been active with projects dedicated towards integration of foreigners on the labour market. One of them was the project WITEK - "Warsaw test project of integration of foreigners with regard to the needs of the labour market". It was implemented in collaboration with local administration, NGOs as well as researchers and evaluators. The project aimed to pilot a program for quick labour market integration of foreigners who received refugee status or subsidiary protection in Poland. An important element of the program was to analyse and assess the possibilities of multiplication of the integration model proposed in the project. The project involved ten beneficiaries of international protection who were in IIP program (Wach, 2019). City Hall supports specialist counseling for people without citizenship with competitions, including those with a specific group of people with protection. The counseling includes activities supporting the situation of people on the labour market, including, for example, career counseling and courses.

GDAŃSK

In 2016 the city of Gdańsk adopted a strategic document 'Immigration Integration Plan' where different initiatives aiming at facilitation of integration of migrants, including labour market integration were foreseen (Gdansk City Hall, 2016). In regard to labour market, main areas of support were grouped in three categories: 1) analysis and monitoring of employee demand and development directions of the Gdansk labour market, 2) development of immigrant competences and 3) development of competences of employers and employees of labour market institutions. The most crucial tasks for migrants were grouped within the second category i.e. information point for migrants, career counseling, support in recognition of education obtained abroad, entrepreneurship of immigrants, development of qualifications of migrants' mentoring program on the labour market, development of language competences of immigrants, facilitation of access to job offers for immigrants, Internet platform addressed to immigrants and employers (Gdansk City Hall, 2016, pp. 106–115). Although the strategy in a complex way refers to migrants' challenges and offers many directions to solve them, it is not strongly supported by actions and no implementing documents followed it.

WROCLAW

In Wrocław, the City Hall established Wrocław Integration Centre. Its purpose is professional and social inclusion of people, who have been facing challenges on the labour market, including migrants. Beneficiaries of international protection, however, are not mentioned as a special group in need. The Centre also implemented a wide spectrum of activities aimed at facilitating access to the labour market for foreigners and improving adaptability on the Polish labour market, as well as supporting, including and integrating immigrants with Wrocław community. Wrocław is also a city that has a strategy entitled "Wrocław strategy of intercultural

dialogue”, which is mostly dedicated to labour and educational migrants (*Wroclawska strategia dialogu międzykulturowego*, 2018).

POZNAŃ

Finally, Poznan involved expert teams, consisting of representatives of various institutions that deal with immigrants, including Poznań City Hall (several departments), the Voivoidship Office, the Poviast Labour Office, the Regional Social Assistance Centre, the Municipal Family Support Centre, as well as representatives of state universities.

The Role of NGOs and other Non-Governmental Institutions

Polish NGOs play an invaluable role in helping migrants and refugees and it is not different in the area of integration on the labour market. The vast majority of NGOs targeting this group is located in Warsaw since the capital city hosts the biggest number of migrants. Their role is so important that even some of the interviewed institutional practitioners confirmed that they refer their clients who are in need of specific help with access to labour market to some relevant NGOs (PLMZP1). However, as refugees are scant group among migrants, majority of activities carried out by NGOs is addressed to all migrants, also covering beneficiaries of international protection.

NGOs take different types of actions dedicated towards migrants. Some types of actions will be presented as examples below. First area concerns assistance with bureaucratic issues related to access to labour market. NGOs offer individual consultation and support from experts who can help understand Polish law, find a job in Poland or set up a business. Among others they offer free meetings with lawyers, vocational counsellors, specialists in establishing and developing a company. This type of support in various ways is offered among others by Polish Migration Forum (“Polish Migration Forum,” 2020), Ocalenie Foundation or Foundation for Somalia (Fundacja dla Somalii). For instance, the latest project titled ‘ABC of entrepreneurship’ (ABC Przedsiębiorczości) of Foundation for Somalia is a cyclical training program that address the issue around planning, setting up and running a business (Fundacja dla Somalii, n.d.). Currently, according to the AMIF guidelines and the definition of target groups for the priority asylum and integration/legal migration, it is possible to support people with international protection under the projects of the integration priority only as an additional measure. Therefore, in order to have possibility to participate in this kind of actions and trainings, beneficiaries of international protection need to be mentioned in the proposal to AMIF funds.

The other area of support focuses more on cooperation between employers and migrants. The example is the “Actively+Legally” project, a part of “Immigrants in Action” also carried by Foundation for Somalia. One of the objectives of this project was to promote the cooperation with the employers, who wanted to hire foreigners. In addition, it aimed to motivate migrants to actively search employment and fight against stereotypes. Within this project, organisers presented foreigners as sure-footed employees, who were capable of finding their place on the market in accordance with their qualifications and introduce the employers who were successfully cooperating with foreigners (“Actively Legally,” 2015). This action was in line with results and recommendations from project realised by Institute of Public Affairs in 2012 (Wysieńska and Karpiński, 2012). NGOs also address their offer directly to employers. Similarly to the involvement of labour offices, they try to facilitate participation of beneficiaries of international protection in internships by making preferable conditions for employers (by

offering both payment for an intern and exemptions from social contributions). Both employer and employee are winners in this situation, as an employer has a free employee (PLMZP2).

Significant group of beneficiaries of international protection in Poland comprise of Chechens, with single mothers being the most vulnerable. Majority of them, even if they had received any education, have never worked or have never had experience of stable job. Additionally, in a foreign country they are usually deprived of support of their relatives and friends (Chrzanowska, 2007)). Therefore, particular attention should be paid to projects taking into account special needs of refugee women. One of them is the pilot study resulted in recommendations that can be widely implemented in further actions. The project entitled 'Work, family, home - case management for inactive refugees' ((*"Praca, rodzina, dom - case management dla nieaktywnych zawodowo uchodźczyń*)) was realized by Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej (SIP) and Polish Migration Forum in 2019. It was dedicated to six refugee women living in Warsaw. Each of them received individual support addressed adequately towards their needs and possibilities. Each of participants received legal, psychological as well as coaching support and was assisted during job search and social support (Chrzanowska et al., 2019). This project ended up with detailed description of "case management" approach, which was recommended towards refugee women (Rejmer and Piegat-Kaczmarczyk, 2019).

All those actions, although important, may fail, because of language issue. This is explained by one of the interviewed practitioners:

(...) we have a very nice and interesting project. We have, however, a condition that certain number of people has to take a job after vocational courses. (...) This is very problematic, because it is known that refugees have additional barriers to enter the labour market. It is not enough for them to finish the course. There is a problem with courses in foreign language and an ideological problem. It is not so bad when we do a tiler course in Russian, but in Arabic? Even if someone finishes such a course, anyway, they will not get a job because they do not speak Polish. (PLMZP1)

All projects financed externally need to meet feasibility indicators. For those focused on labour market integration, the most important indicator is a number of people employed, once the activity is finalized. Unfortunately, due to issues other than adequate qualification, such as language barrier, employment rate remains low after these trainings. In 2014, 198 persons participated in IIP program in Mazowieckie Voivoidship. However, merely 13 out of 198 persons participated in any trainings organised on EU funds either by NGOs or local government units. The most popular ones were the trainings on welding and driving licenses. These trainings did not correspond to jobs further taken by foreigners. Only 37 participants of those involved in IIP found a job, usually in gastronomy, as interpreters or as labourers (MUW, 2014). It needs to be mentioned, however, that data regarding trainings and effectiveness of IIP in relation to labour market inclusion are not collected in a systematic way. Additionally, due to changes in distribution of FAMI funds, the situation of many NGOs has changed after 2015, and their possibilities to carry out any trainings dedicated for beneficiaries of international protection became limited (Pachocka and Sobczak Szelc, 2020; Szałańska, 2019). One of NGO interviewees admitted:

Within EU funds, there were a lot of funds for activities related to the labour market. And there were various organizations that had different types of projects related to professional activation implemented both at the stage of asylum procedure in the centres - vocational courses, but also after the procedure. (...) These EU co-financed projects have ended (PLMZSO1).

NGOs also play an important role in fighting discriminatory behaviours by the employer or potential employer. They try to defend migrants in courts, however, it is not always possible as described by the same interviewee:

We implemented various anti-discrimination projects and various people come to us. We run individual cases. People often come and report such problems of employee exploitation, sometimes it is pure discrimination, sometimes discrimination combined with other forms of exploitation. However, hardly anyone decides to go to court and do something about it. There are also various reasons. Sometimes it is because someone works illegally and fears. Or, for example, he works illegally, he knows that he works at the construction by Mr. Krzyś, but he cannot give the name of the place where it was and nothing except that it was Mr. Krzyś. (...) Often it comes out accidentally - someone comes because of other issues and after a while it turns out that he also has some problems with the employer. Sometimes we find out such things in this way. There are those cases that can be led further if the person wishes. And sometimes I don't even offer support because I know that our hands are tied (PLMZSO1).

The cases that are well documented and addressed to NGOs for their support are brought to court. NGOs might have some success in some cases. However, such cases usually take years.

In general, despite all problems and limitations due to financial issues and political climate, NGOs' activities and support for migrants and refugees play significant and invaluable role in their integration, including labour market integration. It is worth to mention that those activities are often feasible due to funding received from cities' budgets.

Profiling of Skills and Recognition of Qualification for Third-Country Nationals

Although refugees are conscious that they need to invest in order to increase their qualifications and raise their chances on the labour market, the procedure of recognition of qualification does not facilitate this process (Wysieńska and Karpiński, 2012). Recognition of qualifications and diploma of beneficiaries of international protection in Poland is still very low. This procedure is perceived as complicated; it is hard to receive any help and it is very expensive. The Family Support Centre may help their clients within IIP program to go through the procedure, however, there is no option that it will pay for it. As one of the interviewed experts mentioned, the procedure is very complicated as each case is individual and is conditioned by the administration procedures at a given university's faculty. Moreover the employment office deals with vocational trainings only, and does not deal with the legalization of documents (PLMZP1).

The case of those who had no opportunity to take their diplomas fleeing their home is even worse, since they cannot ask for their transfer due to fear of persecution by authorities in their home country. In 2014, among 198 participants in IIP, 53 (50%) had secondary education, and 32 (30%) participants declared higher education, while 14 (13%) declared elementary one. 45 foreigners possessed documents confirming professional skills, which constituted 43% of all IIP adult participants. 30 persons declared no profession learned and 31 persons did not have documents confirming their education and/or professional qualifications (29%) (MUW, 2014). In case of the latter group of participants, there is no procedure to recognise their qualifications. Thus, this kind of people is treated as those without diploma of college or high school. The practitioner directly indicated the problem:

It is complicated and most refugees do not have these documents or only have a diploma, and there are no documents confirming the course of study. It is really a very complicated procedure and a few people do it (PLMZP1).

Another expert from NGO added to this explanation:

For some, an issue is that they do not have higher qualifications. In case of others, they are not able to carry out recognition of diploma, or professions acquired by them are not needed here or they have a long way to be able to work in this profession. (...) They are either a doctor or a lawyer and the procedures for diploma recognition in such professions are complicated. If you were a lawyer in Russia, in order to be able to continue your career in Poland, you should study Polish law from the beginning. In their opinion, this is often degradation. They are educated in a given direction, and here instead of working as a doctor they work in a kitchen (PLMZSO1).

Although, as one of NGO experts mentioned:

(...) based on my experience, it is much easier for people who have education and work experience to take up any job - they prefer to take a job and do anything, because they are used to it, that they are independent, that they are active. For someone who had never worked, it is much more difficult - even because of organizational reasons; you need to get up every morning at the same time, arrive on time, spend hours. These are ordinary things (PLMZSO1).

In Poland, those who cannot validate their qualifications work far below their competences. Although it is common among migrants, it is much more frequent and visible among beneficiaries of international protection. In Poland, this challenge does not only affect the process of integration, but also the willingness to stay in the country. Beneficiaries of international protection discouraged by lack of possibility to take a better job leave the country and try their chances abroad, for instance in Germany or Sweden. Even though they work below their qualifications, they receive higher salaries (PLMZP1). This problem is well recognised by interviewed representatives of social organisations, one of whom mentioned this issue as particularly significant with regard to Tajik people:

People have different education. (...) our system is not ready to use their competences and education to involve them into the labour market in their professions. This will be significantly more difficult in the situation of people from Tajikistan (...) as most of them have higher education. (...) They are ambitious, and entrepreneurial people. For sure, if they find it difficult to undertake such work, they will be particularly frustrated with it (PLMZSO2).

The situation of beneficiaries of international protection on Polish labour market is well summarised by one of interviewees from one of the NGOs:

(...) in general, Poland is (...) extremely unattractive even for those people, who would like to, not even integrate but assimilate. It is not attractive simply when it comes to access to the labour market and education. (...) I am talking, for example, about the education of 17, 20, 25-year-old young people who need to enter the labour market well or such education for adults - not even young people, only in middle age, to retrain or acquire any vocational qualifications, especially when we talk about women who come from a culture where their only task was to take care of family and children. And now she must manage in a liberal economy on open labour market (PLMZSO3).

As stressed by Grzymała-Kozłowska (2017): lack of procedures for skill validations and recognitions of qualifications causes significant loss of potential valuable workers, who are willing to integrate into labour market, even if not entirely within their competences, then at least within sector where they had received education and qualifications. Considering that the qualifications of migrants, including beneficiaries of international protection, are their assets as a starting point for integration in Poland, it is a pity that data on this subject are not collected systematically. It was already emphasized by Kosowicz and Maciejko (2007), that an analysis of the foreigner's capabilities and skills should, after all, be a starting point to plan any support in the field of their integration on the labour market.

Informal Barriers to Access Labour Market

Refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection have the same rights to work as Polish citizens. In order to access the labour market, one needs to have PESEL³⁶ number which enables registration in the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) or Electronic Authorization Verification of the Beneficiary in national insurgency system (eWUŚ)³⁷. Although it should be automatic, it may cause some problems. As one of our practitioners mentioned *'This is an administrative system, an accounting system. ZUS expels such a person from the system every month. The same eWUŚ. So many times we enrolled him/her [a foreigner with international protection status] for insurance and his/her family, the system threw them away in a month'* (PLMZP3). Despite those technical problems, generally:

Refugees can work after being granted protection; there are no legal barriers. Although they sometimes appear, they can be explained. Sometimes, someone does not want to accept a foreigner for formal and legal reasons - if there is no fixed residence, you cannot sign a contract, etc. PESEL, NIP, but these are things you can deal with (PLMZSO1).

According to this statement, there are no crucial legal barriers with access to labour market. Any of them can be overcome with little goodwill and effort. However, despite the lack of legal restrictions, beneficiaries of international protection face a lot of informal barriers. For instance officially, there are no obstacles for beneficiaries of international protection to perform liberal professions. In practice, however, they may face some difficulties related to access conditions of some liberal professions. For instance, in order to work as a lawyer, one must have three and a half years of apprenticeship. Therefore, access to this job directly after receiving protection is not possible (Pawlak, 2019a).

Another barrier is related to language difficulties observed already at the stage of job search. For instance, information in the district labour office' web pages as well as on trainings, is available mostly in Polish, therefore foreigners have limited access to the offer of labour offices. Facilitations are available in a few institutions; for instance, in some of the offices some basic information is delivered in Ukrainian, English, Russian or German. Additional source of information is "Zielona Linia" web page (eng. *Green Line*³⁸), where information is delivered in three languages: Polish, English and Russian. Thus, although the access to information

³⁶ Powszechny Elektroniczny System Ewidencji Ludności (eng. Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population) it is the national identification number used in Poland since 1979. It always has 11 digits, identifies just one person and cannot be changed to another one.

³⁷ Elektronicznej Weryfikacji Upoważnień Świadczeniobiorcy - network service provided by the National Healthcare Fund

³⁸ <https://zielonalinia.gov.pl/>

regarding programs carried by a particular district labour office is limited, foreigners may find some necessary information from other sources, in case of being informed about those possibilities.

During previous EU perspective (2007-2013) when all programs were operating, there was opportunity to choose among wide selection of professional courses and internships offered by labour office. There were so many options that sometimes there was no-one to attend. Those activities delivered productive results, according to one of the interviewees' claims; those, who took part in trainings between 2011-2013, in vast majority are still working for the same employer. Despite this, one of practitioners remarked that those traineeships were not fully adapted to labour market needs. According to his/her opinion:

[institutions in Poland] organize manicure, pedicure, hairdressing and gastronomy courses. And everyone goes for it. Even if there is a demand [for this kind of workers], it depends where the demand is, it depends on what [what kind of trainings]. Nobody will accept someone as a hairdresser after a two-week hairdressing course, or even a monthly one. Internships and such things are needed. There is a problem with this (PLMZP1).

Another issue is consciousness of employers. The legal system of employment of foreigners is perceived as complicated and employers are often confused and unaware whether they can or cannot employ a foreigner, even under one of protection forms. There are no or limited trainings for employers regarding possibilities of employment of foreigners, especially those under protection. Some trainings are offered on commercial market so the access to information demands some costs and effort. Therefore, potential employers being confused whether they can or cannot employ a foreigner, choose a regular migrant instead of beneficiaries of international protection since they are aware of a regular migrant hiring procedure. This issue was mentioned by one of interviewed practitioners:

In general, there is a very big problem that employers do not know if they can employ [a foreigner] without additional permits. If they are willing to do it, they are used to hiring employees from Ukraine who require a permit, so they follow the same path. (...) we have to explain that they can be employed on the same terms as Poles, but there are often fears. (...) there are no facilitators or incentives. At least I do not know of any (PLMZP1).

There are barriers met by those willing to start their own company. First challenges are met on the bureaucratic level. Beneficiaries of international protection can profit from the same subsidies and facilitations as Poles. All documents are, however, in Polish. Furthermore, refugees are supposed to deliver different kinds of documents which they do not have or have no knowledge how to get them. Some NGOs such as Polish Migration Forum make an effort to help migrants facing these difficulties³⁹. Nevertheless, there are some opinions that the access of beneficiaries of IIP to own entrepreneurship is too common and too easy as '*they don't know what it means to run a business, how many pitfalls there are, they set up companies, various other forms of business and later they have problems*' (PLMZSO2).

Role of Gender in Access to the Labour Market

In general, women face many challenges when accessing labour market. This is mostly related to their cultural roles as wives and mothers. This issue is even more visible with regard to

³⁹ For more go to section The Role of NGOs and other non-governmental institutions in this chapter

refugee women. Nonetheless, not all refugee women face equal opportunities and challenges regarding access to labour market, due to social, cultural and traditional background of the country of origin they represent. As already mentioned, significant group of beneficiaries of international protection in Poland is from Chechnya. According to tradition of this region, married women do not work, as their main responsibility is to take care of household and children. Men are breadwinners and take care of their family's finances (Chrzanowska, 2007). It is not different when those families come to Poland. Therefore, women who are willing to access labour market in Poland need to overcome not only traditional passive position on labour market but acquire new skills and habits related with everyday job duties. Additionally, they have either no work experience brought from their country of origin or they are educated in jobs, as teachers, that are difficult to be performed in a different country than the country of origin (PLMZP1).

Single mothers are faced with the most difficult situations. First of all, they are not used to work, and secondly, they have lost any social connections that gave a sense of belonging, support and security in the country of origin. The respondent from an NGO explained the double problem of their need to take care of children and lack of relevant competences:

(...) there is often a double problem here - such a woman is lonely and she has never worked before, because she comes from a culture where her responsibility was housework. With no education and previous work experience, suddenly she has to go to work to earn something and do something with her children at that time (PLMZSO1).

This was also mentioned in interviews with beneficiaries of international protection:

My main goal is to raise the children, to support them. When they are 18, I will stop receiving the money for them. Now I am thinking about it. I can't work. I have a disabled daughter and I don't have any education. So, I am worried about that. My children will grow up. They will want to get married and I can't help them. I don't have a husband. I met a man and thought he would be helpful, but he won't, I think now. He has his own problems. He is very nervous (PLMICH01).

The statement of the other practitioner highlights how this situation influences other areas:

This is a group which is the most difficult to work with, as they have difficulties with finding jobs and they need to take care of children. They do not have enough money to rent a house and with no work they have difficulties to keep it for a longer period (PLMZP1).

Another issue is differentiation between men and women in performed jobs, which is mostly related to region of origin of beneficiaries of international protection. As further mentioned, the same informant from NGO described differences between men and women among Chechens and other nationalities:

[about Chechens] Gastronomy – it is mainly women. (...) Chechens [men] will not go to work in gastronomy, because it is not a male type of job. Women will. I think that when it comes to other cultures, it is not necessarily the same. For instance, a Georgian, especially if he is a chef (...) If men are present in gastronomy, then it is more like that he is a chef and higher, and not kitchen help or in a pub. Gastronomy is mostly a matter of washing the dishes, chopping vegetables, less often some waiters, when it comes to refugees, because of a language barrier. (...) Women clean up and finally babysit (PLMZSO1).

Among beneficiaries of international protection from other regions those differences are not as much significant. They mostly depend on the skills of a particular person. One NGO interviewee gave an example of single and childless men and women from African countries based on the 15-20 cases known to him. According to his claims, those who can speak French and/or English can easily find a job in an international corporation even for simple jobs in tele contact with a client, in gastronomy or in hotels. The facilitation, according to the interviewee statement, was a Christian confession, which is less burdened with regulations regarding impure or inappropriate activities (PLMZSO3). However, in this case family status should also be taken into account as an influencing factor to access labour market.

Micro Level (Experience of Refugees)

Experiences of Refugees' Integration in Informal and Formal Labour Market

The ways of how beneficiaries of international protection enter Polish labour market differs based on their qualifications, work experience, determination and family situation. Nonetheless, they rarely perform the same jobs or jobs requiring similar qualifications in their country of origin. Majority of interviewed asylum seekers and beneficiaries of IIP within our sample claimed that they work in sectors requiring less qualification in comparison to their situation in their country of origin, in case of any previous work experience (Table 4). For instance, one of micro level respondents (PLMIUk20) admitted that despite the fact that he has higher education and experience in mechanical engineering, he cannot find a job. In the period of conducting interview, he was willing to find a job in Biedronka (a supermarket).

The majority of interviewed asylum seekers and beneficiaries of IIP in Poland were specialists in the country of origin; doctors, bookkeepers, lecturers, IT specialists, teachers or translators. All of those respondents were men except for two women, one from Ukraine and one student from Syria. The other significant group consisted of interviewees performing less demanding jobs, working in unskilled (five persons) or skilled jobs (four persons). The rest of interviewees used to work as service employees, self-employed (by three persons in each group), office workers or technicians and managers.

The situation significantly changed after arrival in Poland. Only four among thirty interviewees were employed during the asylum procedure, and the situation improved relatively slightly, while considering those who already received protection status. Up to seven persons within this group were unemployed at the moment of the interview (Table 4). Five of them were women, who were facing difficulties while entering labour market, primarily due to family responsibilities. The situation of asylum seekers may be explained by the fact, that they are not allowed to work earlier than six months after submitting an application for protection (Pachocka et al., 2020). However, beneficiaries of IIP, who can work on the same terms as Poles, perceive entering the Polish labour market as a challenge⁴⁰. This is well observed within investigated group, where significant number of interviewees declared deterioration of their situation in comparison with their situation in the region of origin. Most of them became unemployed. Only one among self-employed persons became an unskilled worker. Nine interviewees maintained their previous situation on the labour market (Table 4).

⁴⁰ For further information see this report Section 2 Experienced barriers.

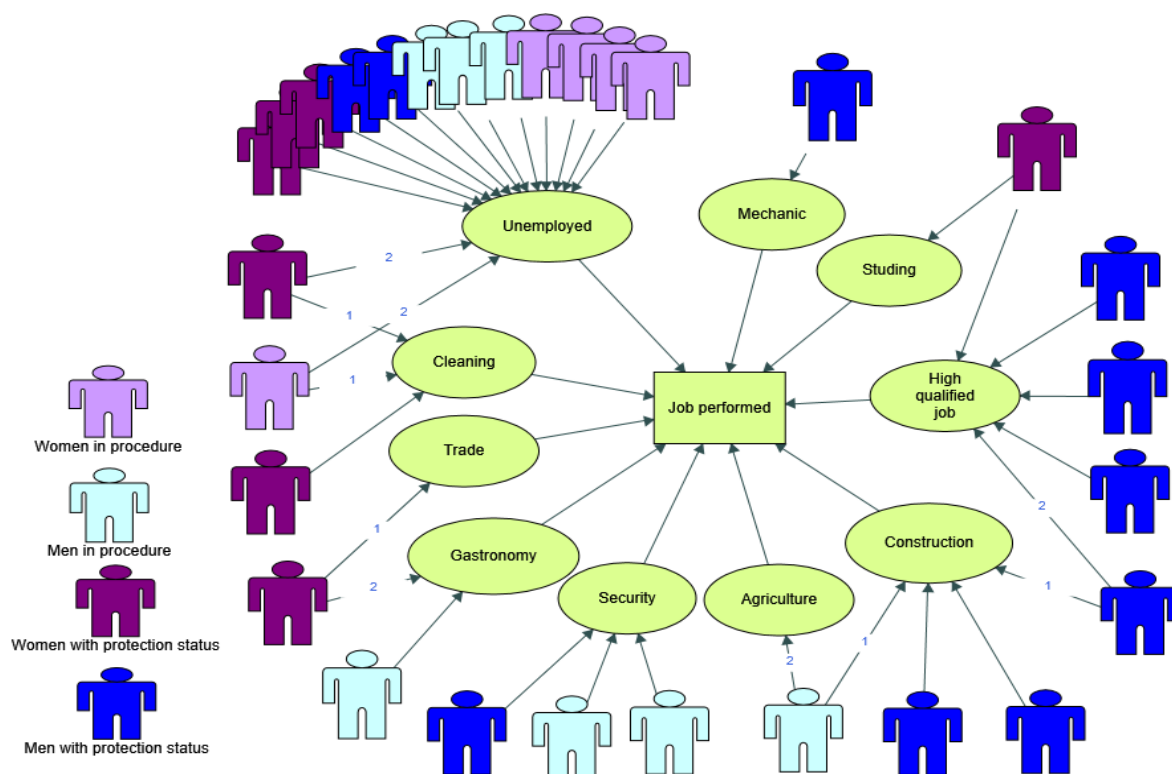
Table 4 Change of type of jobs

var1	Type of last work performed in country of origin	Current type of work	Situation in Poland
PLMIUk19	Self-employed	Unskilled worker	Decreased
PLMICH08	Unskilled worker	Unemployed	Decreased
PLMIUk20	Specialist	Unemployed	Decreased
PLMICH04	Self-employed	Unemployed	Decreased
PLMIJe29	Manager/supervisors/director	Unemployed	Decreased
PLMiIr28	Office worker,	Unemployed	Decreased
PLMICH07	Unskilled worker	Unskilled worker	The same type
PLMICH09	Unskilled worker	Unskilled worker	The same type
PLMICH11	Skilled worker or craftsman	Skilled worker or craftsman	The same type
PIMICH14	Skilled worker or craftsman	Skilled worker or craftsman	The same type
PLMIUk16	Skilled worker or craftsman	Skilled worker or craftsman	The same type
PLMICH10	Specialist	Specialist	The same type
PLMISy23	Specialist	Specialist	The same type
PLMICH01	Unemployed	Unemployed	The same type
PLMISy25	Specialist/student	Unemployed/Student	The same type
PLMiSy21	Service employee or salesperson	Specialist	Improved
PLMISy22	Unemployed	Specialist	Improved

Source: own elaboration

The beneficiaries of IIP who managed to find a job usually perform jobs that do not demand high skills. Being aware of this situation, a foreigner responded with sarcasm when asked about plans for employment: *'I will have to take up a job. (...) [What kind of job?] Cleaning. They won't employ me as a minister, will they? (PLMICH08)'*. This statement corresponds to the reality. Most popular jobs performed by beneficiaries of IIP who are unskilled workers or craftsmen. Chechens and Ukrainians usually work in construction and vehicle mechanics. Chechen men also work in security. It is so called 'a typical Chechen job'. Cleaning as well as jobs in gastronomy are usually performed by women (Fig. 3). Although not represented by our interviewees, another sector where Chechen men are employed is transport, as mentioned by our meso-level experts.

Figure 3 Distribution of interviewed asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection between different sectors



Source: own elaboration

Meanwhile, some of the interviewees managed to maintain their positions of specialists or be promoted to this level of job (Table 6). This, however, was possible only because of their particular skills, self-confidence, strong motivation and relatively young age. A good example gives one Syrian interviewee who described his job trajectory from a kebab to finances:

I was looking, and I found something like kebab, but it was not what I was looking for. It's not about ego. It's about what kind of job I would like to have, because I studied economics in Syria, though I wasn't able to finish it because of the war. So, I wanted a job related to financial stuff. And this is what I found. And it's cool. (PLMISy21)

This interviewee, while being a student in the country of origin, was working as a part-time musician. In Poland he managed to find a job in line with his education. Within his testimony he underlined the role of trainings he received in the host country, hardworking approach and readiness for new challenges:

(...) I worked in a customer service, and then I got experience and after six months I got promoted, and again after six months I got another promotion. I moved to compliance department / sanctions. I was working there for one year, and later I was promoted again. You know, they don't promote everyone, they promote the ones that are really working hard. And again, it's not about ego, I was really working hard, because I like the job. Me and my friends were always enthusiastic, that we want to do something to get this position to get promoted. After you do a lot of work, in a good way. So, we built that up, and it was great, and I started to learn as I was doing a good job. And right now, I'm working with the sanctions for two months. This was my last promotion (PLMISy21).

He referred to the trainings being fully in line with his interests and '(...) they were exactly in the field I was looking for a job, and they were related to the job I was performing after this (PLMISy21).

Another Chechen interviewee (PLMICH10) holding higher education in IT started to work in construction in Poland. However, he managed to overcome initial difficulties and currently he is working in the area closer to his educational qualifications.

Some interviews conducted on meso-level show that slight changes can be observed regarding regularization of work performed by interviewees in Poland, since they have started to work on a legal basis whereas they had informal jobs in their home country. Although it is not a rule, as show interviews on meso-level, slight change can be observed regarding regularization of work as some interviewees while "changing" the country of stay, have also changed their legal status of work. For instance, one Chechen woman was working unofficially as a baby-sitter in her home country, while she found a job of a cleaning lady in a hotel in Poland. In general, although during the asylum procedure foreigners often perform undocumented work, once they receive their status they understand that they work 'for their retirement' and social insurance (PLMZP2) and try to perform documented work, as justified by one interviewee:

I work here legally, pay my taxes and I believe in such way I also support Polish economy (PLMICH09).

Not only skills received in a country of origin, but also age, career position in connection with flexibility and mobility on the labour market play an important role in integration on the labour market. Those who came to Poland for studies are in the best situation. Although quite often they need to repeat some years of studies, they are motivated enough to finish their studies with the help of their relatives and look for a job matching their education. This example can be observed while comparing the trajectory of job search of two men from the Middle East. The first is a husband of interviewee PLMIlr28 who used to work as a manager of an IT company in the region of origin. Despite his English skills, he faced many difficulties in finding a job. He applied to companies however without success. His wife justified his difficulties by his poor knowledge of Polish. This argument, however, does not work in case of a younger Syrian refugee (PLMISy22). Although his language level was low, since he participated in a language training organised by [Poviat] Family Centre for only three months, he managed to find a job according to his education and skills. As he explains, looking for a job is: '(...) *not difficult but it takes a lot of time. Because, interviews you need to wait for, and there is some other candidate, so it needs time...*' (PLMISy22).

Despite all issues mentioned above, one can observe differences in accessing the labour market in Poland related to the type of location. There are differences between big, and small cities and suburbs. Beneficiaries of IIP mentioned that finding job outside big cities is much more difficult and wages are lower. One of interviewees described the differences between Warsaw and Łomża:

Here in Łomża it is hard, you need to have kind of specialization. In Warsaw, I think, it is not hard. It's not hard to find any job in Warsaw. Basically, here you also can find a job. (...) You know, the salary is too small and not enough. That's why many Poles work, for example in Germany, because they pay less here (PLMICH11).

However, costs of living are much higher in the cities than in the suburbs. Therefore, some interviewees live outside centres – in the suburbs and look for jobs in the big cities, such as Warsaw. This, however, increases costs of transportation and limits time for family and rest

since commuting becomes time consuming. Eventually, overall experience of living and working in different locations influences integration possibilities and health conditions of foreigners.

After receiving one of the statuses of protection and adequate documents, beneficiaries of IIP receive financial support within this program during their first year of protection. However, the amount of money granted to them is rarely enough to meet some basic needs. Consequently, they start to look for job opportunities as soon as possible.

In our sample there were both those who experienced long and unsuccessful process of looking for a job, and those who found jobs in relatively short time. Different interviewees perceived the time needed to find a job in a different way. The luckiest ones, who are, however, exceptions, can rely on the contacts they managed to make before their arrival to Poland. For instance, the Syrian refugee, found his job by himself. As he describes: *'I started looking when I first came. But I found this job. I was working in translation already for a long time, and I had a network and acquaintances all around the world, so practically I'm working with the same team that I used to work before. Before coming to Poland'* (PLMISy23). The others cannot find a job for a long time and need to rely on social aid and help from NGOs.

Experienced Barriers – Formal and Informal;

'This is the first and main problem – the language' (PLMICH14), with these words one of the micro level interviewees described most crucial barrier faced in access to labour market. This was the first challenge mentioned by many of our both mezo and micro level interviewees, by experts of Migration Governance Network as well as by experts in meetings and conferences. The issue appears on both sides – employers and employees.

The first situation was mentioned by one of the micro-interviewees who remarked: *'Poles for example say, "No Polish language, no job"'* (PLMICH14). Also, in the testimony of other Ukrainian interviewee similar issue was mentioned:

Yes. I came to the first workshop and they asked me for my number; it was hard time for me, because I could name car parts in Russian and Georgian, I didn't know Polish names! So, it happened two times that they asked me for my number [and they did not respond] (PLMIUK16).

Different issues may justify this kind of approach of employers. The most obvious one seems to be a lack of willingness to spend time for explanations of tasks or procedures. One of the meso level interviewees gives an example of this in the context of work in a shop:

Sometimes it is even the case that people who speak communicative, basic Polish are immediately rejected. (...) The employer, for example, does not have time to explain that chickens must be put on higher shelves and turkey on lower shelves. Someone may not understand this or require more time. We had a situation where someone said 'I don't have time to translate, so I'm not interested. I want people speaking Polish. And that is it' (PLMZP1).

Respondents of all nationalities mentioned learning the language as the main barrier when entering the labour market and regarding chances for promotion. In 2014, 18 people among 198 participants of IIP in Mazovian Voivoidship admitted that poor knowledge of Polish was the reason for not taking up the job (MUW, 2014). They were aware that without learning the language they have no chances to work, as said Chechen interviewee: *'You have to speak Polish to find a normal job apart from cleaning. (...) I have no choice. I am in a foreign country.'*

First, I have to study the language' (PLMICH02). Also, the Syrian refugee described the situation of the sister for whom:

it is hard to find other office works without the language; without English or Polish. [she has] a very basic use of languages, so she is looking for a coffee shop, it is a simple work. It is just to get some practice with Polish and contact with Polish people and when she improves her Polish, she will try to look for an office work (PLMISy25).

The same problem was mentioned by one Ukrainian woman from a different perspective, She does not feel comfortable with her knowledge of Polish and as a result, it brings additional stress for her while working at the checkout in a grocery store: *'Maybe it was not very hard work, but I know that I speak with mistakes, and it is stressful for me. I am afraid of everything'* (PLMIUK19).

The knowledge of Polish language is important not only for work, but also for participation in any vocational trainings. The Iraqi interviewee noted in his testimony that the only possible courses for him were language courses. When he wanted to participate in any vocational training, it came out that:

in order to learn anything, to help me find a work, they said: It's not possible unless you know Polish language. I mean, it was not available in English language. I wanted to attend courses in English language, so I could learn a vocation, which I could start working with even not using the Polish language... (...) it was not possible. (...) It was through the real labour office, I asked the labour office, and they said that I can't unless I know Polish language. (PLMIlr28)

The challenge of learning Polish language is followed by already mentioned problems related to lack of education and/or lack of documents confirming the level of education.

Furthermore, interviewees also mentioned a problem with recognition of diploma and qualifications and the possibility of their use in Poland. All of these influence not only the amount of money received for the job, but also possibility to work matching educational and further gained qualifications. In 2014 the main reason of not taking up the job for the participants of IIP was a lack of an adequate offer in compliance with skills and qualifications (17% of participants). Micro level interviewees were aware that sometimes their education and work experience are difficult to be utilized on the Polish labour market. Among others, one of our interviewees mentioned their relative who was an artist, and used to work in a company of production and arts back in their home country. She explained that the job similar to the one on editing Turkish series *'is something different or difficult to find (...) here in Poland'* (PLMISy25).

Although the beneficiaries of international protection have similar rights on labour market with Poles, they face too much complicated procedures regarding their employment on the labour market. As one of the interviewed practitioners highlights, the procedures make employers confused and unwilling to spend too much time in order to make things properly:

The rules are complicated. Access to them is complicated and there is a multitude of different forms of stay in Poland, employment opportunities. It introduces chaos. Employers are not willing to search through the procedures. The HR department will not search three hundred-sided laws and check whether this type of employee is entitled (PLMZP1).

In addition to language and procedural barriers, the perception of foreigners by a host society as well as the perception of a host society by foreigners are also crucial. In line with the perception of foreigners by host society, one Chechen interviewee said:

People approach me saying that they are fed up with us, migrants and that we take their jobs. In the beginning I was upset with them and was asking myself why those people telling me such things, but now it's ok (PLMICH09).

Those discriminating issues may however, go further and lead to rejection of employment. One of the interviewed experts described a situation where a very well-educated woman could not find employment because she was wearing a scarf:

(...) every day I hear from people stories as this one - a woman who was a nurse in the country of origin, was aware that she would not find the job as a nurse, but she visited clinics to find a job at the reception, in administration – she was fluent in Polish, and able to use a computer etc. So, she had all the qualifications and even higher. In two or three places they said they did not need one at the reception and they looked at her that it was visible that it was because she was wearing a scarf. It was straightforward for her to understand that it was the reason (PLMZSO1).

Meanwhile, the perception of a host society by foreigners is visible when beneficiaries of international protection are afraid to take up a job among Poles. As explained by one Chechen woman who, although used to work in a kindergarten in the country of origin, was afraid of taking up a job in Poland, because she would be afraid to work with Polish children. She explained that:

There are the people, who don't like foreigners, that's why. I would like to work somewhere, where there are no people and you just have to do your job and to go away (PLMIUk19).

Further she described her experiences in searching for a job:

I wrote whether there is still a vacancy for a lady from Ukraine? And I received only one reply, a woman from the grocery at the [street name] invited me for an interview (PLMIUk19).

Therefore, she found it difficult to find herself in Polish society and it was hard for her to find any support around. As she mentioned she was not accepted at her workplace by a colleague who *'didn't like to work with a Ukrainian woman, I think so. She showed me everything only once. And I was very scared – of a grocery, of the clients, of a lot of people'* (PLMIUk19).

Not less important is an issue concerning cultural differences. For instance, Chechens are not willing to work with pork or alcohol and their women are not always willing to work with men. Finally, expectations of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection regarding their possibilities to be hired on the Polish labour market were also mentioned. Limited knowledge of Polish language and inadequate education do not respond to possibilities they have here. One of the interviewed practitioners gave an example of men from Caucasus:

Men from Caucasus do not love to work. At home country, they were always involved in a trade. They were drivers, managers (...) or mechanics, some business. But physical work...People who worked with them said that they are not born to physical work. I have heard that after a short time they get discouraged, they are not able to work longer in one place (PLMZP3).

Finally, one of the interviewees mentioned discrimination regarding amount of money he received for the same job as Poles and Ukrainians. He explained:

For example, you try to find a job. There are Poles and let's say Ukrainians. They get better salaries than I do. I can get 12 PLN (3 EURO) and they can get 18 or 20 PLN (4-5 EURO) per hour, though I work more than they do. It's not everywhere like this but mostly yes. Basically, I have such kinds of problems (PLMICH11).

On the other hand, there is an opinion mentioned by meso level interviewees, that some beneficiaries of IIP have unrealistic expectations regarding payment, which are quite above market reality. One of them noted that common opinion among beneficiaries of IIP was that *'for 80 zł [around 18 EURO] per day only Ukrainians may work, not us'*, which is accompanied by *'inadequate assessment of their capabilities'* (PLMZP2).

Factors Facilitating Access to Labour Market

There are different ways to find a job on the Polish labour market. The most crucial actors/institutions facilitating access to labour market that were mentioned by interviewed beneficiaries of IIP are NGOs. Our interviewees deeply appreciated their help, sometimes even with gratitude towards a particular person, whom they mentioned during the interviews.

The assistance provided by Family Support Centres is equally important. The centre may refer people to some courses or practices during IIP. This kind of help demands, however, some flexibility and engagement from the office workers, because each case is different. For instance, one Ukrainian interviewee already had a work and did not want to participate in classes that were couple of months long. Even if the classes were out of charge, he would not be allowed to attend due to his current place of employment. Instead, the officer from Family Support Centre recommended him to consider asking for apprenticeship in his current workplace and he managed to get permission. He found there a practice – training and theory. As he explained *'That was faster. I worked, I earned money and I got certificate.'* Thanks to the adequate advice and guidance, his situation became stable and he had chances to develop his skills. He mentioned:

We do everything when it comes to cars; mechanics, roofers... Today I don't need to attend any course... Although, maybe I would like to attend a course about hybrid cars, but I don't have time for it now. My boss said to me that when I am ready, he'll send me there (PLMUK16).

Some interviewee tries to find work through Internet. This way is challenging if someone has language difficulties. Advertisements are usually posted in the Polish language and in the end one needs to contact the employer in Polish as well. This was described in the testimony of one Ukrainian woman who said:

I found the job in the OLX. I sent an SMS. It was difficult for me to speak through the phone at that time, since my language level was not good (PLMIUK19).

On the other hand, interviewees with higher skills found social media more useful. For instance, one Syrian refugee mentioned:

(...) In my case, for example using some social media websites such as LinkedIn, was more useful, to be honest... (...) In fact, before I had the internship in a different company for three months, so, when I finished the training, I applied for a full-time job in another company. (...) (PLMISy22)

Those beneficiaries who possess on-demand skills on the market that do not necessarily require recognition of their qualifications are able to find a job that matches their education and experiences more easily. This mainly applies to people with particular craft skills, IT or linguistic qualifications, often young enough to be more flexible on the labour market.

This kind of specialists looks for advertisements of those specific jobs, which they can perform. For instance, one Georgian man was looking for advert of mechanics jobs through Internet:

I came to Warsaw and started looking for a job. I grabbed a phone and started to make calls... (...) I am mechanic, and I need those specific conditions...I just looked for online ads that matched my expectations. (...) I came to a first car workshop and they asked me for my number; it was a hard time for me because I could name car parts in Russian and Georgian, I didn't know Polish names! So, it happened two times that they asked me for my number. When I came to the third workshop I met with the owner and I said to him that I have all skills that he listed in his ad. He asked me "When you are ready to start?" That was so nice! "Now!" (PLMIUK16).

Different forms of social networks, friends, co-ethnics, and other refugees play an important role in looking "*for a job for a friend*" (PLMIJe29). This becomes crucial in particular groups or sectors, for instance among Chechens, admitted by one of the micro level interviewees:

I just had some Chechen friends who were working in security service and they told me I can work with them. We, Chechens help each other here (PLMICH09).

Sometimes opportunities come in an unusual way. A Syrian refugee mentioned in his testimony: '*people that I know. They told me: "look there is this company there and they need an Arabic-speaking person."* So, I applied, and they said to apply online, so I applied online.' (PLMISy21). He managed to get that job. So as in ordinary life, it is crucial to have luck and react for opportunities quickly.

Finally, jobs may be offered not only by friends, but also by Poles who are willing to help, or even by strangers interviewees meet in different situations. The Ukrainian woman mentioned before gives an example of such a case when while not being comfortable working in the grocery store was offered a job at owner's relative's bistro. This help from strangers is usually very much appreciated, and as the lady highlights '*I didn't work in a bistro before, but I like it very much that she offered it to me. I was very grateful to her and I work in the bistro till now*' (PLMIUK19). This gratitude together with friendly atmosphere at work strongly influences potential unwillingness to change jobs. The same lady mentioned:

About changing the job? No, I didn't think of it. (...) I like the team. Maybe sometimes it is hard, there is a lot of work, and there are a lot of customers. When it is snowing we need to clean floors by ourselves, we have to clean when we finish the workday. But we have a good team. And I'm afraid that if I chase something easier, I might encounter a team that would not like me. So, I don't want this (PLMIUK19).

However, approach towards change of workplace differs in regard to current situation. Some other foreigners look around whether they can find something more suitable for them. The Syrian refugee admitted:

For a small period of time [I attended] courses of 2 or 3 days. Nothing special. (...) [That were] alternative possibilities to check, if I can change my domain or something. (...) Like coffee brewing and a barista course. This kind of stuff (PLMISy23).

These are stories of those who have already managed to find a job. Those, who are at the beginning of this path, and often without external support, do not know where to start the search or who to turn to. It was similar with the case of this Yemeni interviewee, who admitted:

(...) I am trying [to find a job], but till now, I don't know how... (...) I am trying with NGOs. Apart from help of foundation (...) there is someone who is trying to, I mean, I tried to talk to him, so he could help me in so... Something like this... (...) I spoke to him, he is an individual, I spoke to him but there is nothing yet. (...) He is someone who has been here for 2 years as a refugee, so... (PLMIJe29).

Therefore, adequate trainings, well directed information and welcoming atmosphere are the keys in successful inclusion of foreigners into labour market.

To sum up, the access to the labour market of beneficiaries of international protection and their families is held almost equal to citizens of Poland. However, in practice, for a wide range of reasons discussed above they face many obstacles and limitations, mostly informal. The biggest problem is the insufficient linguistic preparation of labour market services and/or poor knowledge of Polish and low social capital of refugees. Discrimination on the labour market, as well as difficulties in the acquisition of work skills, and recognition of qualifications are some of the other important issues discussed above. Some of these problems, interviewed beneficiaries of international protection solved or facilitated with the help of the actors from the governmental and non-governmental sector. This support has always been very much appreciated by our micro-level interviewees. As we have shown above in this section, although early and effective inclusion in the labour market gives a greater chance for integration of beneficiaries of international protection in Polish society, there is lack of a mechanism in mainstreaming integration of beneficiaries of international protection in labour market.

5. Integration of Refugees in Education

This section of the report aims at presenting inclusion of beneficiaries of international protection, (refugees and persons with subsidiary protection) both children and adults, in education. Although, with respect to children, it also includes asylum seeking children, since the inclusion of children in education in Poland starts during the asylum procedure. Firstly, it portrays the legal framework of the access to education for refugee children and adults in Poland. Secondly, it shows the findings from the meso- and micro-level interviews which were analysed through the prism of good practices and their implementations and main challenges. The part based on empirical material was broken down according to the subjects of the studies – children and adult refugees. The themes presented in the part about education of refugee children comprise the implementation of preparatory classes and integratory instruments by cross-cultural assistants, teacher's individual approach to refugee children, implementation of multicultural and anti-discriminatory education, role of NGOs in supporting refugee children's inclusion in education and other challenges. With respect to refugee adults, the presented topics are the practice of Polish language learning and their access to universities together with recognition of their prior education and obtained degrees.

Regulations Related to Refugees' Access to Education

Access to Education for Children

Children who are beneficiaries of international and national protection in Poland (or the members of families with a status of international or national protection) have access to education on the conditions applicable to Polish citizens. It applies to people with all types of protection available in Poland, namely: persons who have been granted refugee status, persons who have been granted subsidiary protection, persons who have been granted permission to stay due to humanitarian reasons, persons with temporary protection on the territory of Poland, and persons having a permit for tolerated stay.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 (Journal of Laws 1997 No. 78, item 483 with amendments)⁴¹, everyone has a right to education and education is compulsory until the age of 18 (Article 70(1)). In fact, the right to education is guaranteed to all children residing in Poland (regardless of their nationality or legal status), including beneficiaries of international or national protection, who have free and unlimited access to education in public schools until the age of 18 or the completion of higher school.

The obligation of education is regulated in detail by the Law of 14 December 2016 – Law on Education (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 910) (in short: Law on (School) Education)⁴². This Law determines compulsory schooling education for all children from 7 until 18 years-old (Article 35(21)) and compulsory schooling for all children from 7 year-old until the completion of primary school, but no longer than until the age of 18 (Article 35 (2)). Furthermore, it introduces the obligatory one-year pre-school preparation for all 6-year-old

⁴¹ Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r. uchwalona przez Zgromadzenie Narodowe w dniu 2 kwietnia 1997 r., przyjęta przez Naród w referendum konstytucyjnym w dniu 25 maja 1997 r., podpisana przez Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 16 lipca 1997 r. (Dz.U. 1997 Nr 78, poz. 483 z późn. zm.).

⁴² Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 910).

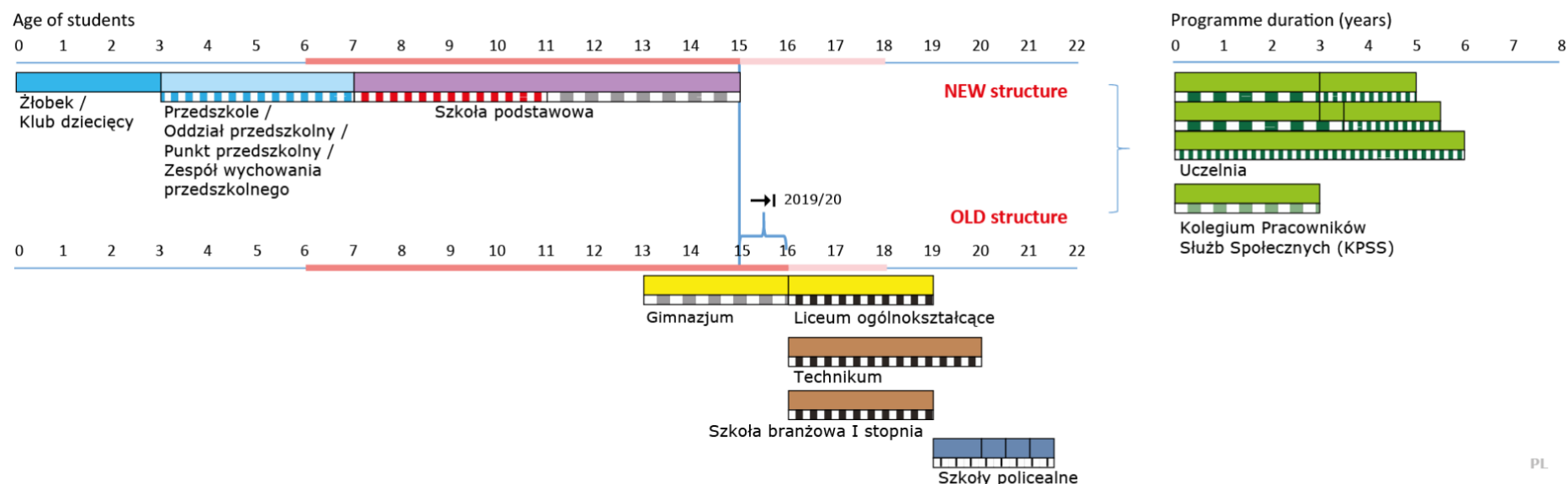
children (Article 31(4)). The latter can be carried out either in primary schools or kindergarten or other form of pre-school education. With regard to pre-school education, it applies to children from 3 to 7 years old, although it is not obligatory and sometimes also non-available, except for the one-year pre-school preparation for 6-year-old children (Article 31(1)(4)).

In Poland, as of September 2019, full-time compulsory education lasts for 9 years. It comprises last year of pre-school education and 8 years of primary school education. In the Polish educational system, full-time and part-time compulsory education are defined as follows (see Figure 5):

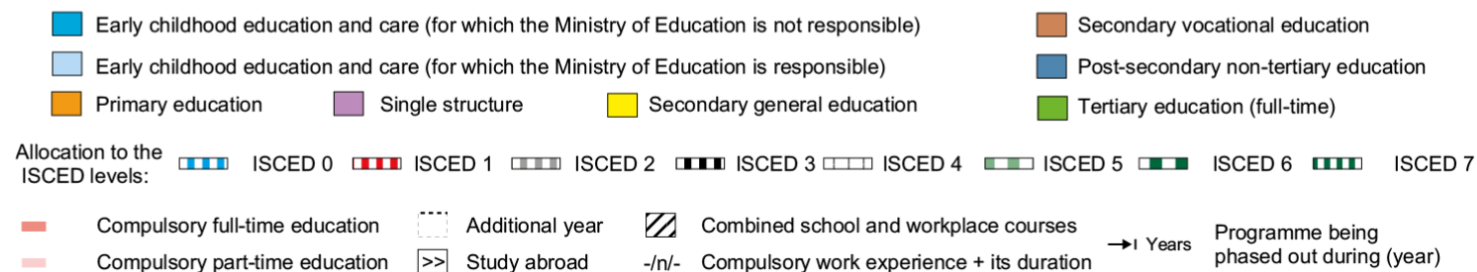
- Full-time compulsory education (obligation to attend 8-year primary school) applies, in general, to pupils aged 7-15 years.
- Part-time compulsory education (obligation to be in education) concerns pupils aged 15-18 and it may take place either in school settings (a pupil attends upper secondary school) or in non-school settings (e.g., a pupil follows vocational training offered by employers).

Reform of the Polish school system has been underway since 1 September 2017. In December 2016, two key acts were passed by parliament, specifically the Law on School Education and the Provisions introducing the Law on School Education, which have largely replaced the Law on School Education of September 1991. The main change involves replacing the previously existing 6-year primary school and lower secondary school (6+3), leading to upper secondary education in 3- or 4-year schools, with the single 8-year primary school and extending the duration of education in (upper) secondary schools to 4-5 years. This will partly re-establish the model that was in place in Poland before the school system reform of 1999/2000 (Pachocka et al., 2020, p. 52).

Figure 4 Structure of the national education system in Poland



**Poland
2018/19**



Source: (Eurydice, 2018)

Refugee Children in the Polish Education System

As of September 2019, there were 1523 children with different types of international or national protection (including children of parents with such statuses) who were attending primary and secondary schools in Poland. Out of them, 243 had a refugee status (or were children of parents/a parent with a refugee status), 165 – subsidiary protection, 304 – unknown type of protection (mistakenly indicated as temporary protection in the data retrieved from the Ministry of National Education)⁴³, 135 – a permit for humanitarian stay, 676 – a permit for tolerated stay. Considering the whole population of foreign children in Polish schools in 2019 (41,274), beneficiaries of international and national protection comprised less than 4% (MEN, 2019b).

Table 5 Number of beneficiaries of international and national protection statuses in Polish schools in 2011-2019

Protection status	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Refugee status	125	117	129	287	284	303	343	212	243
Subsidiary protection	194	182	163	216	147	161	235	310	165
Unknown type of protection	70	39	31	63	199	233	305	448	304
Humanitarian stay	*	*	*	76	86	144	193	179	135
Tolerated stay	181	172	257	434	521	506	624	815	676
Total number of students with international and national protection	570	510	580	1076	1237	1347	1700	1964	1523
Total number of foreign students in Polish schools	6,489	7,298	8,174	10,064	14,408	20,911	29,942	43,999	41,274

Source: Education Information System (MEN, 2019b)

Since 2011, the increase of foreign children in Polish schools has been skyrocketing. In 2011 only 6489 foreign pupils attended schools in Poland, which comprised 0.1% of all children registered to schools in Poland. Among them there were 570 children with different statuses of protection, which constituted nearly 9 % of all foreign students⁴⁴.

According to the Educational Information System, in the 2018/19 school year (MEN, 2019b) in 40,854 schools in Poland of all types: primary, lower secondary (*gimnazjum*), upper

⁴³ According to the Ministry of National Education, the schools are responsible for filling in the table with statistics related to the pupils and sending it to the Education Information System. The schools are given a template with specified columns (ex. containing all types of protection), but it is a duty of school officials to fill them in properly. It turned out this process is not free from errors and omissions, since the school officials indicated number of children with temporary protection, although such a status has been never granted in Poland yet.

⁴⁴ Education Information System (MEN, 2019b).

secondary (*ponadgimnazjalne*) and upper primary (*ponadpodstawowe*) schools, 4,744,984 children, youth and adults were educated, which constituted 12.4% of the country's population. In addition, 1,392,920 children attended kindergarten or „0-class” in a primary school⁴⁵. In the group of students there were 43,999 foreigners, including 1964 beneficiaries of international or national protection.

Over the years, the reliability of the data related to refugees in schools has varied; schools are not required to know the status of children and sometimes they enter the data of the school children intuitively and sometimes not (because the system only required the determination of the total number of foreign children in schools, and giving the legal status of children was not obligatory). According to the Ministry of National Education, the schools are responsible for filling in the tables with statistics related to the pupils and sending it to the Education Information System. The schools are given a template with specified columns (ex. containing all types of protection), but it is a duty of school officials to fill them in properly. It turned out this process is not free from errors and omissions, for instance the school officials indicated the number of children with temporary protection, although such a status has never been granted in Poland yet.

All foreign children subject to compulsory schooling who do not know Polish or whose level of Polish is not sufficient to benefit from education are entitled to additional, unpaid Polish language learning in the form of additional classes. These classes are conducted individually or in groups, at least for two hours and lasting for up to 5 hours (in a situation if a child does not participate in compensatory classes described below) a week. Learning Polish continues until the student masters the language to a degree enabling learning in Polish during classes and is not time-limited (Ordinance of the Minister of National Education, 2017: para 17)⁴⁶.

Foreign children can also benefit from additional compensatory classes organised by the school if a teacher conducting educational classes in a given subject finds the need to supplement the curriculum differences in that subject. Such additional compensatory classes in a given subject are conducted individually or in groups in the form of additional lessons in this subject for one lesson per week for a period of 12 months. However, there is a limit of five hours of additional language and compensatory classes per pupil (Ordinance of the Minister of National Education, 2017a: para 18 and 19). Although the period of compensatory classes for foreign children is limited to 12 months, after this time these children can attend didactic and compensatory classes organized for students with learning difficulties, in particular in meeting the educational requirements resulting from the general education core curriculum for a given educational stage (Ordinance of the Minister of National Education, 2017b: para 15)⁴⁷.

In response to the increasing number of pupils with migration experience in Polish schools and communications problems stemming from it, the Law on School Education) introduced the possibility to create a preparatory class (also called ‘a welcome class’). This was a new organisational form of education for children who do not know Polish well enough to study in

⁴⁵ Educational Information System, <https://cie.men.gov.pl/>

⁴⁶ Ordinance of the Minister of National Education, 2017a. In Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie warunków organizowania kształcenia, wychowania i opieki dla dzieci i młodzieży niepełnosprawnych, niedostosowanych społecznie i zagrożonych niedostosowaniem społecznym Dz.U. z 2017 r. poz. 1578 z późn. zm.).

⁴⁷ Ordinance of the Minister of National Education, 2017b. In Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 9 sierpnia 2017 r. w sprawie zasad organizacji i udzielania pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach (Dz.U. z 2017 r. poz. 1591 z późn. zm.).

this language or who have adaptation problems after arriving in Poland. The departments can be created in public and non-public schools by a school's governing body, either at the beginning or during the school year. In principle, education in a preparatory department lasts one school year, but it may be shortened or extended by a maximum one school year (Law on School Education, Article 165 para 11). The Ordinance of the Minister of National Education of 2017 specifies the organisation of the work of the preparatory department, in particular the maximum (15) and minimum (1) number of students, which aims to ensure an individual approach to each pupil. Teaching in the preparatory class should be conducted according to school curricula, with methods and forms being adapted to individual development and educational needs as well as mental and physical abilities of students. Compulsory teaching of Polish as a foreign language is carried out for pupils not less than three hours a week. A pupil of the preparatory class also has the right to take additional Polish language classes as mentioned above (Ordinance of the Minister of National Education, 2017, para 16 and 17).

Children also have a right to the assistance of a person who knows the language of their country of origin, which can be employed as a teacher's assistant (also called 'a cross-cultural assistant') by a director of the school. This assistance is limited to a maximum of 12 months for a student (Law on School Education, Art. 165 para 8). The tasks of the teacher's assistant usually include supporting foreign students in learning, facilitating adaptation in new surrounding and integration, supporting teachers in teaching foreigners, monitoring and supporting attendance into classes controlling attendance, and mediating, also as translators, in communication between school staff and parents of students (AIDA, n.d.). It is worth to mention that this solution is not easy to implement, since the final decision of hiring a teacher's assistant rests with a local government responsible for administering a particular school.

Access to Education for Adult Refugees

The Law on School Education stipulates that beneficiaries of international and national protection and members of their families in Poland have access to education in public schools for adults, public post-secondary schools, public art schools, public institutions and colleges of social service employees and vocational qualification courses under the conditions applicable to Polish citizens (Law on School Education, Art. 165 (3)).

With respect to higher education, beneficiaries of international protection have access to it under the conditions applicable to Polish citizens (Law on Higher Education, Article 324 para 2). In order to study in Poland there is a requirement of a completed secondary level education and having a maturity certificate confirming eligibility to apply to university. By the virtue of law, the lack of such a document in case of refugees does not constitute an obstacle to study, since there is an administrative recognition procedure intended especially for them.

According to the Law on Education System of 1991⁴⁸, foreign school certificates, diplomas or other educational documents may be recognized in Poland either automatically⁴⁹ or as a result of an administrative recognition procedure done by a province education superintendent.

⁴⁸ Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty (Dz.U. 1991 nr 95 poz. 425 z późn. zm.) <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19910950425/U/D19910425Lj.pdf>

⁴⁹ It pertains to certificates, diplomas or other educational documents that confirm the completion of secondary education in the European Union, European Economic Area (EEA) or OECD member states (MEN, 2019a)

Regarding the latter, the Mazovian educational superintendent (*Mazowiecki Kurator Oświaty*)⁵⁰ may confirm the level of educational qualifications obtained abroad by a refugee⁵¹ or a beneficiary of subsidiary protection or a person who holds a permit for temporary stay in Poland in case of significant difficulties with the provision of an original (or duplicate) of a certificate or the authentication of such certificate. The procedure of administrative decision can be used to confirm the primary, lower secondary, basic vocational or upper secondary level of educational qualifications and the entitlement to continue one's education in Poland, including the entitlement to apply for admission to a higher education program (Law on Education System, Article 93a).

With regard to recognition of foreign higher education degrees in Poland, the general rule is that a foreign degree giving access to further studies or the right to start doctoral proceedings in the country where it was awarded, gives its holder access to second cycle studies, postgraduate studies, third cycle / doctoral studies or the right to start doctoral proceedings in Poland. A foreign degree may also be recognised for the purpose of further education on the basis of an international agreement. If the obtained degree does not give an access to further studies in a country where it was obtained, in order to continue education in Poland there is a need of confirmation or recognition of the degree. Confirmation of the degree is a procedure stipulated by the Law on Higher Education for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (and members of their families with a temporary residence permit) who graduated from universities but do not have a diploma. Recognitions a process of recognising a foreign diploma as an equivalent to a Polish diploma. The competent authorities to conduct the confirmation or recognition of procedure with regard to higher education diplomas (university degrees) are higher education institutions authorised to grant the academic degree of a doctor (PhD) in a given field of science or art (Law on Higher Education, Article 327).

Although confirmation of a degree, in principle, should be made easier for refugees, there is a need of attaching documents to the application which certify graduation, completed classes and grades obtained, exams passed, professional qualifications or qualifications obtained, completed apprenticeship or employment (Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, 2018, para 9(2))⁵².

Beneficiaries of international protection are obliged to learn Polish language if they are participants of Individual Integration Programme (IIP) and if their knowledge of Polish is not at a sufficient level (Law on Social Assistance, Article 93(1)). Since the IIP cannot last longer than twelve months, the obligation of learning Polish does not go beyond this period. In addition, the Law on Social Assistance stipulates that a beneficiary of IIP should cover expenses of Polish language course by himself/herself using the cash benefits received through IIP (Art. 92. 1.b). What is important, assistance for a foreigner (including the cash benefit) may be suspended in case of, among others, unjustified absence from Polish language courses - for up to 30 days (Law on Social Assistance, Article 95(1)). It needs to be underlined that

⁵⁰ For foreigners who received refugee status or supplementary protection or a permit for temporary stay in Poland: are conducted by the Masovian education superintendent in Warsaw (*Mazowiecki Kurator Oświaty*).

⁵¹ It applies to refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, persons who hold a permit for temporary stay in Poland and persons who suffered a loss as a result of an armed conflict, natural disaster or other humanitarian crisis, whether of human or natural origin

⁵² Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, 2018. In Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 28 września 2018 r. w sprawie nostryfikacji dyplomów ukończenia studiów za granicą oraz potwierdzania ukończenia studiów na określonym poziomie (Dz.U. 2018 poz. 1881).

participation in IIP does not include automatic registering at a Polish language course, because it depends on the courses availability. Assessment of the need of learning Polish is made by a social worker from the Poviast Family Support Centre responsible for mentoring the beneficiary of IIP. However, it is not specified what level of Polish language should the beneficiary of IIP reach after accomplishing the programme (Pawlak, 2019b).

Integration of Refugee Children in Education

The most popular models of integration policy in the European Union in the field of immigrant education are the integration and separation models. The integration model foresees foreign children to attend classes together with the children from host societies, where foreign children are admitted to classes according to their age or level of knowledge. They also receive help and support with the host country language learning as part of additional language classes. Separation model, however, is based on organization of separate classes for immigrant children with the aim for them to learn the host country language to the extent enabling them to participate in lessons in ordinary classes. There is also a third model – a mixed approach, considered by many researchers as the optimal one. According to this model, foreign children learn the language of the host country in separate language classes, whereas lessons in which the knowledge of the language is not required, like gymnastic, technical, artistic classes, take place together with the host country students (Januszewska, 2017, p. 134). In general, Poland applies integration model. However, since 2017, when schools started opening preparatory classes (though on a small scale), the model of the mixed approach has started to be used.

Below are presented the findings from the micro- and meso-level interviews with regard to practices and challenges of refugee children in the field of integration in education.

Cross-Cultural Assistants

As a result of increasing migration to Poland, mainly due to the economic reasons, the education system is being slowly adapted to new reality and since 2010 new solutions have been introduced, namely cross-cultural assistants (introduced in 2010) and preparatory classes (introduced in 2017). It is worth to mention that NGOs have recommended to implement these solutions to education in Poland for a long time (for more see Chrzanowska, 2009).

Although a possibility of hiring a cross-cultural assistant on position of teacher's assistants has existed since 2010, it is still not a common practice. The help of a cross-cultural assistant is limited to a maximum of twelve months for a student, which is considered insufficient. Moreover, due to the fact that such assistants are treated as administrative employees rather than teachers, their remuneration is too low. In some schools NGOs provide cross-cultural assistants in the framework of their projects, but such support is dependent on the NGOs' funding (AIDA, n.d.).

A practitioner from a school, which has employed cross-cultural assistants, appreciated their role as mediators between foreign children and teachers and between the school and foreign children's parents:

What is he doing? First of all, he is obliged to be at a lesson with pupils who have some learning problems or help them during entire lesson, approach them, ask if they understand that they were asked to take out school accessories. He also looks after

foreign pupils during the break - he talks to them if they are in trouble. He is a kind of link between them and the teachers. The main idea was that the children had someone to turn to. Sometimes these children speak Polish poorly and will tell more to such an assistant than a teacher who goes somewhere in the corridor. Moreover, he is our contact with the [accommodation] centre. He has parents' phone numbers and informs parents that a child behaves badly. Of course, in addition to us, because we do it officially. He can individually reach these parents and ask them, what else can be done for this child, how to talk to him/her, how to behave better at school, or insist that the parent takes care of the child's homework, for example. (PLMZP3)

The educational subsidy does not include specific funding for hiring cross-cultural assistants, therefore schools which are in a need of them struggle with providing salaries to them:

We have had cross-cultural assistants since 2010. Earlier they were employed from various EU projects written for us by NGOs. Sometimes these were projects of the Masovian Voivode - multicultural Mazovia and similar. We could employ such assistants - there were three of them in the whole school, when there were many foreign students. Now we have one cultural assistant employed as a teacher by the school. The municipality agreed to increase the number of employees by one. He works as a service employee according to the Labour Code, he has an employment contract. (PLMZP3)

A representative of a local government also praised the role played by a cross-cultural assistant, although he admitted it was not easy to employ such a person due to limited funding:

We requested for hiring of a teacher who is called a cross-cultural assistant. We have implemented this solution for three years. Unfortunately, these measures have been limited at the moment, but the law allows such an assistant to be hired when it is an assistant from this cultural group who is helpful to the leading teacher in the school. It brings really good results, because certain barriers are disappearing. I think that peer aggression is born of a lack of communication, if something is not entirely clear, it causes some emotions and then even some cases of peer violence occur. When there is this cultural assistant, he/she perfectly solves these problems. On the one hand, there is a language barrier. On the other hand, sometimes it is necessary to clarify certain rules arising from religion or culture, which are very different and often there are some disputes (PLMZLG1).

The opinion of the importance of cross-cultural assistants was shared by an employee of the Office for Foreigners:

I think that the role of such a cross-cultural assistant, especially regarding children newly admitted to school, is invaluable and very important. However, the decision to hire an assistant depends on local authorities, so we have no influence on that either (PLMZOF3).

I think there are one or two [cross-cultural assistants] right now in Góra Kalwaria. I know that a headmaster of one school in this community asked for some support so that such an assistant could be hired. Especially when it comes to Chechens, when it comes to young boys, there is a problem with obedience, but this problem does not pertain to girls (PLMZOF3).

As mentioned before, a cultural assistant was meant as a mediator between foreign children and Polish teachers, also between children and their parents, so ideally he/she should come from the same cultural background and speak the same language as foreign children. It turned out that this solution is hard to be put into practice, since apart from a large number of Ukrainian migrants (mainly economic ones), foreign children (forced migrants) come from many different countries:

Theoretically, this should be a person from a particular cultural background. So the idea is cool - we had a lot of Chechens. It is known that Chechen, who has been in Poland for a long time, speaks Polish and it is best if he/she is a person who knows culture and speaks Polish very well - this is the perfect solution. But if we have two Syrians, an Afghan, two Chechens and a Cuban, then a problem arises (PLMZP1).

As our meso-level findings proved, the possibility of hiring a cross-cultural assistant has been commonly praised as a solution facilitating the adaptation of children with migration experience. However, the implementation of this solution is often impeded by limited budget of local governments responsible for administering the schools.

Preparatory Classes

In September 2018, out of nearly 44 thousands of foreign children in Polish schools, only 371 attended preparatory classes. In 2017 and 2016 the numbers were even smaller: 170 and 194 children, respectively. Since the introduction of such a possibility in 2016 until 2018, the preparatory classes were opened in 133 schools in 90 locations (Polsat News, 2019). This solution is mainly used by schools in cities with a big number of migrants, such as Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań or Gdańsk. According to Michalina Jarmuż, an expert on multicultural management in schools in the commune of Lesznowola, another shortcoming is lack of standards of teaching and materials designed especially for these preparatory units: "Although schools have the option of opening a preparatory department, the 2016 MNE regulation does not contain information on how to teach and verify pupils' knowledge in preparatory departments. In addition, no curriculum for such department was proposed yet" (Wójcik, 2019).

According to a practitioner from a school, there is a point in creating such a class for children in the same age who do not know Polish language. In addition, when referring to the curriculum taught in preparatory classes, she mentioned a good practice from Finland:

Preparatory classes can be opened for pupils of a similar age who do not know the language. Then this class is created for about a year or half a year, depending on how many children need separate care. They mainly learn Polish at this time. Of course, they also implement the core curriculum, but compared to what I saw now in Finland, there are completely separate programs for these preparatory classes. There, a teacher focuses on the Finnish language and on preparation later for entering the classroom. And unfortunately, here [in Poland] we have this unfortunate curriculum that has to be followed. And we deal with it variously. During the lessons, we gave pupils alphabet books for 6-year-old so that they at least would learn the alphabet and the basics of the Polish language while sitting in the classroom, without understanding what was happening (PLMZP3).

The practitioner praised the solution of a preparatory class, but according to her it should be based on principles different than those pertaining to regular classes:

If it was possible to create such completely separate classes, such as preparatory classes, it is the only way that children are in this class for half a year or a year and they learn the language. But the point is not to teach them all subjects at once, including geography, Polish history, etc. It is about teaching them weekdays, month names, a good alphabet, and colloquial speech. But also, we use in teaching such a scientific language, because another language is mathematical, other names are used in nature, in biology. Just a language in which he could speak and communicate during the lesson. And not necessarily that we would be obliged to pursue the core curriculum of general education (PLMZP3).

According to the above quoted practitioner, in her school there was no possibility of opening the preparatory class due to

too few children and too few pupils at a given age. We could create one joint class for grades of 1-3, one for grades of 4-6, and possibly one for a junior high school. But we never got such a large homogeneous group. They were siblings, where one child was in zero, one in the fifth grade, one in the seventh. The rotation of these children, their movement was so high, especially in 2013, 2014, 2015 - we had such a situation that every 2-3 weeks some were leaving and others were coming (PLMZP3).

He also mentioned situation with a big rotation derived from the fact that until 2018 a vast majority of asylum seekers, after submitting an asylum application in Poland, left the country and continued their journey to Germany, Austria, France or other countries (see more at: Szulecka et al., 2018). In 2017 – 53% (3 thousand) of the asylum proceedings were discontinued, in 2016 nearly 80% (12 thousand), in 2015 – 72% (8.7 thousand). The trend slightly changed in 2018 and 2019, when the discontinuation concerned fewer than a half of applications (46% or 1.9 thousand applications in 2018, and 49% and 2 thousand applications in 2019 (UDSC, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016).

It has to be underlined that the possibility of opening preparatory classes is a positive development of educational system in Poland and it has a potential to be much more common practice in the next years. However, the new instrument is still not sufficient, mainly due to lack of funding, which is reflected in the number of children attending the classes. In addition, since the preparatory classes are opened mostly in big cities, refugee children have a bigger chance to attend them if they live in these cities.

Individual Approach to Refugee Children

Without undermining the role of cultural assistants and preparatory classes, the best practice of integration of refugee children in education seems to be a special and individual approach of teachers and school employees towards these children. As emphasized by a practitioner from a school, teachers' individual approach gives the best results with respect to the foreign child's progress and interest in learning:

Our teachers, who often complain about foreign pupils behaviour in the classroom, when having individual meetings with them and individual extracurricular activities, they say that they had a great work today, because the pupils got to know this or that, repeated and were interested, there was silence in the classes, they worked in the group, they reported to reply one by one because they knew what we were talking about, because it was at their level. And of course, I was hiding the fact that we gave textbooks of 6-year-old to 15-year-old children. But you had to start somewhere. If a 15-year-old child went

to class of 1-2 of junior high school and had to go to physics or chemistry at which he did not understand anything because he had a gap in his education or he had not attended such classes before, what he was supposed to do for so many hours? (PLMZP3).

The above reflection is supported by an earlier research of the Office of Commissioner for Human Rights. One respondent cited in the report from the mentioned research discussed the role of people engaged in supporting refugee and asylum seeking children in their education in primary school in Podkowa-Leśna: teachers, psychologists and a special assistant for foreign children hired by her school.

Operation of such a system is possible owing to good communication of all cooperating people and high flexibility on their part. Its functioning is also possible due to the relatively small number of foreign children who are currently studying at school. Conducting such individual classes would certainly be more difficult if the numbers were twice as large. It should also be noted that refugee children were not formally covered by the individual mode of education, and their receipt of such support was only possible due to the large, over-the-involvement of teachers and other school staff in their education. The organization of such a teaching system could not be covered by educational subsidy, even if the latter has been increased. The local government also covered the full-time position of the assistant for foreign children, the organization of additional Polish classes and compensatory classes, as well as the cost of transporting children to school (a school practitioner) (Piechowska, 2016, pp. 17–18).

Another observation was that currently such an individual approach requires deep commitment of teachers and their extra-curricular and often over-time work:

It turned out that we have one of the best teachers in the Warsaw district, because the ladies who conducted the last 20 evaluations said that we beat Warsaw schools when it comes to conducting classes. Our teachers think that also because foreigners were here they had to learn a lot of flexibility and various interesting methods of conducting classes for all students - they had to attract their interest visually and in groups. I tried to give them a free hand enough to develop, to develop activating methods in class, and to let these students learn something new. Teachers specialize in such cool forms of teaching. It positively influenced our kids doing well in other schools (PLMZP3).

Another good practice stemming from the individual approach and meeting needs of refugee (including asylum seeking) children is finding a field in which these children are good at and allowing them to develop their interests and/or skills. A practitioner from a school told us about additional classes of wrestling organized in her school in order to help children from Caucasus with adaptation and integration process:

Two weeks ago there was a freestyle wrestling competition because we created a wrestling section. It happened that trainers started to work here and at school. It turned out that many foreigners enrolled in this section because wrestling is their national sport in Caucasus. It turned out that they began to be very successful. Every week they practically bring a cup from the competition. They defeat young people from Warsaw or somewhere in Poland - these are serious competitions, and this is a tiny school. It turned out that foreign students found their niche. Indeed, even Poles go with them to these classes and they are full of admiration that they can do it here. Surprisingly, this section gave a lot to foreign pupils, because these children who were so depressed by the fact that they did not know Polish, they did so poorly in mathematics and they did nothing at all, when they started winning laurels and suddenly appear on appeals - I also promoted

them in such a way that they were bringing me this cup, they appeared at the roll call, I handed them this cup, everyone applauded them, they were distinguished, they had to go out through the whole school and show that they won this cup or this medal. They got applause. Then they grew so much that they were needed, that their diplomas could hang in the corridor. This is a cool thing (PLMZP3).

The mentioned example turned out to be a very good idea for initiating integration of both, foreign and Polish children, even with some encouragement from the side of parents of Polish children:

At these trainings, Polish parents behave well and appreciate the fact that their children go with foreigners, because the latter are better. Their children can match to the better ones. This section lives thanks to foreigners. I think that even those parents who were against the presence of foreigners appreciate that their children attend these classes (PLMZP3).

Special classes in wrestling designed with foreign children in mind are just one of many embodiments of introducing an individual approach to pupils with migration experience at schools, including asylum seeking and refugee children.

Multicultural and Anti-Discriminatory Education – a Good Practice in Integration and a Challenge of Implementation

The Ordinance of the Minister of National Education of 10 May 2013, amending the regulation on pedagogical supervision (Ordinance of the Minister of National Education, 2013), introduced an obligation to implement anti-discrimination measures in schools. In 2017, this provision was abolished. This means that in 2014-17 schools were able to implement anti-discrimination activities, they were obliged to do so, which also protected them against possible comments from their parents. Currently, even if there is no national obligation, anti-discriminatory education can be introduced by the local governments, which administer the schools.

Over the course of our research we discovered that multicultural and anti-discriminatory education is perceived as both, a good practice and a challenge due to difficulties in its implementation. In order to introduce such education, there should be an agreement between various actors involved in education governance: a local government, which distributes money to schools, a school management and teachers, and parents:

As far as I know, anti-discrimination education is not easy to introduce due to the fact that, first of all, the Board of Education (*Kuratorium Oświaty*) has to approve everything. Secondly, parents must agree to additional classes on a given topic. It all depends on the atmosphere at school and how favourable is the school management toward the anti-discriminatory lessons. I skip the fact that teachers are overloaded with a program that they have to implement, in which there is neither multicultural nor intercultural education, in addition to anti-discrimination education (PLMZLG2).

The above quoted respondent from a local government, who told us about projects on anti-discriminatory education, admitted that the cooperation between the local government and school in this area depends mainly on headmasters and their willingness to implement additional, non-obligatory activities.

On the other hand, according to a practitioner from a school, parents of school children often have a deciding voice on introducing multicultural or anti-discriminatory education. In the school of the mentioned practitioner, these additional classes were cut out from the educational program due to lack of some parents' approval:

We used to have classes on the attitude towards foreigners or other religion. We were especially cautious because we knew that the parents' council would not agree on some ideas. And the educational and preventive program must be voted and adopted by the parents' council. Failure to adopt an educational and preventive program for a given year would mean that some part of the school cannot function (PLMZP3).

An interesting finding was that multicultural projects and activities carried out in schools, even if designed with children in mind, often helped to integrate parents. Our already mentioned meso-level respondent recalled some multicultural activities organized by her school, which were treated as integration opportunity not only for Polish and refugee (and asylum seeking) children, but also for their parents:

We had an intercultural day, when students dressed up and showed their dances. At our school festivals the students presented Polish folk dances, and the next were Chechens. We sat at one of the tables with foreign mothers during the festivals, because that's what we usually do, and told them that their bus was ready to leave: 'Don't you ladies want to go back to the centre?' And they said no, because they rarely left 'We in Grozny went to the theatre, to the cinema, we could go somewhere. And here we are sitting in our rooms; we have no time to talk. And here it is cool, the music is playing, we can talk and discuss with each other normally, drink water and eat cake with our friends (PLMZP3).

In addition, it turned out that a school can be a place of mitigation of tensions between Poles and foreigners. Our respondent said the Polish women (mothers of school children) were very surprised after they saw cooking and organisational skills of Chechen mothers during one integration project:

Since then, mothers who before had had worse or even a bad attitude towards foreigners, have gained admiration for these mothers, as they must cook quickly for their ten family members and clean the area in such a small space so that there is no trace, so well-organized women (PLMZP3).

After coming to power in 2015, Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) party two changes were brought to the schools with respect to opportunities for integration of refugees in educational dimension. Firstly, suspension of AMIF funding for NGOs and limitation of EU funding opportunities for schools resulted in cutting many projects aiming at integration. Secondly, and even more importantly, it strengthened the anti-immigration and anti-refugees sentiments in the society, which had an influence on parents' attitudes towards presence of foreign children in schools. Unfortunately, these two effects coincided with each other in schools:

We used to carry out a lot of [multicultural] activities. At the moment, because there are no such projects, and the balance of power has changed, but also the perception of the local community, mainly due to our state policy and the fact that people are constantly threatened by foreigners. Such a historical and patriotic policy. At some point, at the request of the school parents' council, I had to remove the wall newspaper about

foreigners and Muslims and replace it with the wall newspaper about 'cursed soldiers'⁵³. This probably says everything about what is happening in Poland. [laughs] As I talked to this gentleman from the European Commission, he says that nothing has changed in Warsaw, but for us everything has changed by 180 degrees. Even from the educational curricula, we have removed all classes on tolerance. There are no tolerance classes at school. This was at the explicit request of the parents. Also, at the request of the mayor, because it was at the mayor's presence that I was ordered to remove all information from the website that this is a multicultural school, so that this school would not be associated. Parents meant that people who took their children from this school due to the presence of foreigners or did not send their children to the first grade because they have such an opinion about foreigners or were afraid of their own children not to walk with foreigners to school, so that they can come back, so that the school has more students. I think it is not possible since we have a centre for foreigners the next door, and the schools will always have foreign students. Parents know it very well. All they want is to have as few foreign students as possible. At this time, the school has been depopulated (PLMZP3).

In conclusion, it needs to be taken into consideration who should be a target group of multi-cultural and anti-discriminatory education. As many of our meso-level respondents directly or indirectly expressed, multi-culturalism and anti-discrimination should not be treated as additional and optional subjects but should be included into the regular curriculum and be obligatory to all pupils, both Polish and foreign. The latter recommendation was well expressed by one practitioner:

Teaching with elements of multiculturalism should be mainstreamed - not only addressed to foreigners, refugees, but it should be included in the regular curriculum. (...)it seems to me that sometimes it would be useful to say that there is such a thing as Ramadan or Rosh Hashanah or other, Hanukkah. If a girl wears a hijab, it doesn't mean that she wants to blow up right away (PLMZP1).

The Role of NGOs in Integration of Refugee Children in Education

Apart from schools, teachers and local governments, other actors actively involved in educational integration of refugee children are migrant organisations, understood as NGOs supporting migrants in Poland⁵⁴. In accordance with the aim of equalizing education opportunities of migrant children, NGOs support schools in training and proper preparation of teachers or other school employees to work in a multicultural environment. Social organisations provide teachers with trainings on multiculturalism, Islam, cultural differences, and with multicultural psychologists. NGOs active in this field include: Polish Migration Forum Foundation, Foundation Ocalenie, Polish Humanitarian Action, Association of Culture Practitioners, Vox Humana Association, Legal Intervention Association, Foundation for Tolerance Through Intercultural Understanding, Chlebem i Solą (Piechowska, 2016, p. 35).

⁵³ 'Cursed soldiers' (in Polish: żołnierze wyklęci) – anti-communist, independence guerrilla movement, resisting the Sovietization of Poland and the subordination of the USSR, fighting with the security services of the USSR and the services subordinated to them in Poland. In Poland there is a controversy whether they should be praised (right and conservative parties) or condemned (left parties). There are known actions of 'cursed soldiers' which were anti-Semitic and aimed at murdering the Jews who were considered as pro-communist.

⁵⁴ See the section on Citizenship for a definition of a migrant organisation.

An example of such activities was a project 'You can get an education in Warsaw!' carried out by Polish Migration Forum in 2009-2011. As part of the project, Polish Migration Forum supported schools in which foreign students were taught, collected good practices in the field of education of youth from other countries and promoted them in Polish schools, prepared a handbook for teachers, motivated foreign students to start education and offered psychological and educational support during the school year (Ślusarczyk et al., 2015, pp. 17–19).

Cooperation with the non-governmental sector was assessed by a school practitioner as good, although it was halted due to suspension of funding from European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) between 2015 until 2019⁵⁵:

NGOs helped us a lot until last year; they organized on their own more than a hundred hours of Polish language per year for each student. These children could go there during religion classes, during classes they did not necessarily have to be, or they could stay after school time. The additional classes were carried out by foundation employees or teachers employed by them. It was at our school, classes were conducted in a separate room. Or the children who were waiting in the common room at that time could attend these classes. There were also classes in Polish culture, that is, learning the basics of our culture, anthem, geography in general, what is Poland, basic customs and habits (PLMZP3).

The same observation was made in the mentioned research of the Commissioner for Human Rights: "in general, without NGOs, it would be the schools that would put up education in foreigners, because this area is really best penetrated by NGOs. They work the fastest, it is most aimed at the needs and it must also be said that they have excellent professionals. It should be noted, however, that most of these activities were short-lived and ended with lack of financing the project" (a school practitioner) (Piechowska, 2016, p. 35).

Whereas activities of NGOs were praised by schools, their cooperation with local and central government turned out to be a much more complex issue. A representative of social organisation operating in Warsaw was satisfied with cooperation with both, the Mazovian Board of Education⁵⁶ and the Warsaw City Hall:

In the Masovian Board of Education there is a great person who was engaged to provide these foreign children equal access, and equal opportunities. And we could always count on this person. And also, the Education Bureau in the Warsaw City Hall undertook various activities; both in consultation with the organizations and independently involving institutions, whose names I never remember - WCIES, Warsaw Teacher Training Centres, etc. And in cooperation with the social organizations, but not only with them, the Education Bureau produced various methodological manuals for teachers (PLMZSO1).

⁵⁵ AMIF funding was suspended in 2015 and resumed in 2019. The government withheld the funds from the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) in late 2015. In 2017, the government decided to transfer the control over funds from AMIF to Voivodes. As a consequence, the allocation of funds has been carried out in closed competitions, intended only for (or above all) public institutions. As of 2018, only one project was implemented by an NGO and in five others they were partners of public institutions (probably voivodes). None of the joint projects included support for asylum seekers (see more: Klaus (2018) and Szałańska (2019) Pachocka and Sobczak 2020, Pachocka et al. 2020). Since 2019, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration started to announce new competitions for projects within AMIF.

⁵⁶ Mazowieckie Kuratorium Oświaty.

Another story was portrayed when the same respondent answered our question on cooperation between his/her organisation and the Ministry of National Education. It turned out it needed a lot of years of lobbying to convince the Ministry of Education to implement a particular solution:

I remember that a dozen years ago we have the following situation: that if refugee children were well off in local schools, it was based solely on the headmaster or some specific educator. And the solutions we were lobbying for, namely additional Polish classes and some additional compensatory classes were reflected in the Law on the Education System in 2010. However, many other things were left out (PLMZSO1).

The same situation pertained to lobbying for introducing a teacher's assistant to the Law on School Education as a systemic solution. But in order to be recognized as such, firstly it had to be tested by an NGO:

Earlier, for several years, we employed a Chechen girl at school, showing that such a cultural assistant is very much needed. And indeed, two years later in 2010, in the Act on the Education System, there was such a provision that the body running the school should employ a teacher's assistant once there were foreign children. And since then not only NGOs, but the school itself could employ someone like that (PLMZSO1).

According to our respondent, the Ministry of National Education is very reluctant in listening to recommendations of NGOs and lingering with amending the existing regulations:

Whenever we went to the Ministry of National Education with postulates that we observed that it should be done in this and that way, that there are such and such deficiencies and they should do this and that, and in order to do this you need to change the regulations because they do not give such a possibility, every time the answer was, (if we got the answer at all) that the regulations do not allow for the introduction of these solutions (PLMZSO1).

Not surprisingly, it turned out that NGOs, in addition to schools, are the most active actors in the field of educational integration of refugee (and foreign, in general) children.. Activities of NGOs and their support for schools depend on availability of funding and openness of the central and local government for cooperation. Our research proved that the Ministry of National Education has been reluctant to changing the regulations despite NGO's lobbying efforts. However, the Ministry sees foreign children in schools, an evidence of what is for instance a competition to support education in a multicultural school environment organised each year. Activities addressed to children with international protection or applying for protection were one of the supported priorities in the mentioned competition. Another argument is that the Ministry, although it took them some time, finally introduced the solutions of cross-cultural assistants (2010) and preparatory classes (2016), which NGOs strongly lobbied for.

Challenges to Education of Refugee Children

It needs to be underlined that integration of migrant children in education is generally well evaluated by experts who work in the field (Koss-Goryszeska, 2019). Both school and NGOs' practitioners praise instruments introduced to the Law on School Education: compensatory lessons and additional Polish language classes, preparatory classes as well as cross-cultural assistants. Nevertheless, some voices of criticism appear regarding the implementation of these solutions, especially in relation to refugee children. Since we did not conduct interviews

with minors who attend schools, our micro-level data on education of refugee children is limited. However, available secondary sources revealed that refugee children face more obstacles than other children with an immigrant background (Bloch et al., 2015; European Commission, 2013). Not only they have to adapt to a new language and culture, but also they often deal with disrupted or minimal prior education (Block et al., 2014). The challenges might also include lack of documentation of their education, credentials and diplomas. This makes it difficult to place them into the right programme/grade without a systematic assessment of their skills (Cerna, 2019). In addition, refugee children often deal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) caused by trauma, pain and protracted lack of stability (Essomba, 2017).

It is argued that the education systems of OECD countries, including Poland, are not well prepared to receive asylum seekers and refugees. The school curricula often do not provide basic language skills and social competences that refugees need. Additionally, the education system is responsible for schooling refugees in a social context that is not always supportive of welcoming these newcomers (Essomba, 2017). The mentioned unwelcoming context is currently experienced in Poland, taking into consideration the prevailing negative attitudes towards immigrants, particularly refugees, in the country⁵⁷. Furthermore, refugees are often affected by trauma and pain, which, in the case of children, can considerably impact the construction and the development of their personal identities (Essomba, 2017). Therefore, it is really important to provide refugee children with a strong emotional and affective component of teaching, which is not often possible to implement. As a consequence of the mentioned impediments, educational expectations of refugee children and their families are not always met (Essomba, 2017). In case of unaccompanied minors, additional challenges stem from separation from their families (OECD, 2019).

The above-mentioned general observations about education of refugee children in OECD countries pertain also to Poland. Our meso-level data revealed two main reasons behind existing limitations in this area: insufficient funding for schools with foreign children and lack of methodological support for teachers who teach foreign and, especially, refugee children.

The RESPOND research, similar to earlier studies (i.e. Piechowska (2016)), showed that the schools in which foreigners study still receive insufficient financial and substantive support. It is reflected in the actual support for education of refugee children provided by the schools. In practice, schools organise two to ten hours of additional Polish language lessons per week (most of the time it is 2 hours per week which is not sufficient). In some schools they are not organised at all. Schools criticise the limitation of compensatory and additional Polish language lessons to five hours per week, as their practice shows the additional classes should take at least six hours per week. NGOs criticise the automatic limitation of the duration of provision of additional assistance to twelve months, as it should be adjusted individually (AIDA). In addition, in preparatory classes, although they are a relatively new instrument and will certainly become more common in the future, in 2018 there were fewer than 400 children. There were also some complaints of our meso-level respondents about insufficient number of cultural assistants⁵⁸ working in schools. Education of foreign children in general, and refugee children in particular, if it is to be conducted in a way that brings effects, needs greater financial outlays - not only in

⁵⁷ The prevailing negative attitudes towards foreigners or towards admitting refugees were reflected in the surveys of: CBOS (2018, 2017, 2016) and IPSOS (2016, 2015).

⁵⁸ It was not possible to retrieve the information about the real number of cultural assistants working in Polish schools.

the form of increased educational subsidies, but also funds dedicated to individual activities (Piechowska, 2016, pp. 32–33).

With regard to teachers, our respondents from social organisations admitted that they are not well prepared to work with refugee children:

There are issues with methodologies of work, but also teacher preparation to work with these culturally different children and the issue of remuneration for teachers, because this is extra work. These are things, which are limping, which do not exist (PLMZSO1).

An additional shortcoming is a lack of substantive support for teachers who work with foreign children in the form of courses and training, as well as didactic materials (Piechowska, 2016, pp. 32–33). On the other hand, the Ministry of National Education communicates on its website about the Centre for the Development of Education, a unit subordinate to the Ministry, which organizes training sessions and workshops for teachers devoted to working with students with migration experience, as well as for teachers teaching Polish as a second language or working in a multicultural environment (MEN, n.d.). In addition, on the website of the Centre for the Development of Education free materials are available for teachers to work with students with migration experience. These materials include presentations and articles about previous experiences and difficulties at work. There are also materials dedicated to teachers who work with refugee students (ORE, 2019).

A practitioner from a school whom we talked to did not mention any support for teachers from the Education Board. Regarding this matter we again refer to the research done by the Commissioner for Human Rights. According to its findings, the Board of Education offered some forms of support, but the teachers did not consider them as worth using. Teachers often admitted that they worked out methods of working with foreign students by themselves or within the school and did not receive any support from the Board (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2016, pp. 34-35).

Education of Refugee Adults

Educational opportunities for adult refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection include Polish language learning, vocational trainings and tertiary education. The main findings from the micro- and meso-level interviews with regard to the mentioned topics are presented below.

The Practice of Polish Language Learning by Refugees

According to the Law on Social Assistance, every beneficiary of the Individual Integration Programme (IIP) is obliged to attend Polish language course, in case of a need (Law on Social Assistance, Article 93(1)). When it comes to the practice of this element of integration, the system of teaching Polish languages to refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is far from being effective. As indicated by the Supreme Audit Office (*Najwyższa Izba Kontroli*) report of 2015, the actual participation of beneficiaries of IIP in Polish classes varied from 20% in Pruszków and Łuków, to 50% in Biała Podlaska and 70% in Warsaw, which gave an average of 35.6%. The number of Polish lessons hours during IIP was an average of four hours per week, however the situations where the level, scope and frequency of participation in the course were not specified were common (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2015, pp. 40–42).

These classes were often held at the time when refugees worked and in locations distant from their places of residence. The lack of organized childcare during language classes makes it difficult for women who take care of their children to attend the class thus, preventing them from taking part in such classes. Similar systemic oversights are not conducive to the successful integration of refugees, if most people encounter major obstacles at the language learning stage. Such a state policy can be even an incentive to leave the country of residence (Korniychuk, 2016, pp. 16–17).

The Supreme Audit Office confirmed the earlier voices of language learning methodology experts and NGO representatives that one-year duration of the course is insufficient to master the language. Furthermore, although Law made attending Polish classes obligatory for participants of IIP, no funds from the state budget were allocated to conduct Polish language courses, except for the small amounts from the budgets of local governments. Therefore, the obligation to learn Polish during the integration program was almost exclusively carried out by non-governmental organizations (using EU funds). Judging on the latter, the Supreme Audit Office foresaw that the continuity of courses would be threatened due to the significant delay in the entry into force of the new financial mechanism of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for 2014-2020 (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2015, pp. 40–42).

Although the mentioned report of the Supreme Audit Office was written five years ago, there have not been many improvements in the field of Polish language education for adult refugees since then. An interesting finding of the RESPOND research was that social workers often put refugees' work before their need of learning the Polish language:

Of course, if someone takes up a job and works from 8am till 4pm and it is not possible for him/her to attend a Polish language course, then we recognize that work is more important. They will also have some contact with Polish at work, so they will naturally learn, and yet become independent. And that's okay (PLMZP1).

According to another practitioner, sometimes social workers faced difficulties with enforcement of Polish language learning obligation:

If a person is willing that he/she does not want to do something, still does not attend Polish lessons, then no one is able to take him/her to Polish language lessons. The decision is always up to the client (PLMZP2).

The latter quoted respondent admitted that self-motivation of a student was an important factor in learning Polish:

There is also such a thing in language acquisition as self-study. I have a female client who arrived in Poland a year ago. When she had the test of the Polish language, her language skills were higher than the basic level, but lower than intermediate. There was no such a group. She was waiting for the group to be created. I think that if she went to intermediate again today, she would get it calmly. However, she was so motivated that she is already writing in Polish, using the Latin alphabet, and speaking Polish. She confuses the female and male endings of Polish verbs. But she understands direct and indirect communication, jokes, subliminal messages, verbal and non-verbal messages. But when she decided to learn Polish, she turned on the television and lived with the television non-stop, entered into social relations. She is a phenomenon to me - she wanted to learn. Her son who came and I think that although he goes to a Polish school and he learned language faster, but because he knows several languages, he speaks in an incomprehensible language to me, because sometimes he entwines, sometimes he

says something too quickly. She is already a year in Poland. At school, she was awarded for helping a teacher. Can you imagine that? (PLMZP2).

As mentioned before, access to Polish language education for refugees would not be possible without activity of NGOs working in the field of migration:

Courses of the Polish language are provided by the Ocalenie foundation, the Refugee.pl foundation⁵⁹, in the Multicultural Centre you probably can also use something like this - learning Polish at various levels, I do not want to guess who does it for adults and who for children (PLMZSO1).

As foreseen by the Supreme Audit Office, there was a period of either discontinuity of language courses or decrease of the offer provided by NGOs after suspension of AMIF funding in 2015:

In order to provide free courses for foreigners, they must be financed from somewhere. As far as I know, all educational programs are free for foreigners. I remember that one NGO introduced payment for the courses because it had no funding, but it was more for migrants than for refugees. That is, for people who earn and can afford such a course. But it seems to me that whereas Warsaw has a great offer in this respect and you can always find such a course, it is not so obvious to find a course somewhere else in Poland for which you do not have to pay (PLMZSO1).

Our interviews with refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection confirmed findings of the Supreme Audit Office. The micro-level respondents who attended the Polish courses did not find them effective. A female beneficiary of subsidiary protection who attended a course provided by the Municipal Family Support Centre said openly: "I attended the course, but during this course I didn't learn to speak Polish" (PLMICH01). A man from Chechnya, currently a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, shared the similar experience:

When I got a status, they told me that I have to go through some polish language classes. I went to these classes and what was the most interesting thing you know? They told me to take a piece of paper and pen and write down. I told them I can't write in Polish. They told me, write what you hear. It wasn't efficient for me but living here and having conversations with people, the language knowledge came by itself (PLMICH09).

The ineffectiveness of the language courses provided by the Poviast Family Support Centre was repetitive:

I have one thing to say: that these classes were very, very like... How to say? Small number of hours per week. We had three hours a week. Q: So, you don't see that it was effective? Not! At all (PLMISy21).

Another respondent, a beneficiary of subsidiary protection from Chechnya, also sounded critical when evaluating the Individual Integration Programme and the Polish language course he participated in:

It [IIP] was just words. Nobody cared much about this. I was placed at Polish classes and forced by(?) them to pay for that. Nobody cared. I have just classes. No integration programme. (...) Classes were running around two months and that's it. Everybody who

⁵⁹ Refugee.pl foundation was closed in 2019 due to lack of funding.

comes here learns language by practice on the street. Language school didn't teach me a lot, only how to say hello, how are you or goodbye (PLMICH10).

Apart from the quality of language courses, our respondents complained about lack of possibility to combine work with the Polish course. The latter obstacle was a reason of resigning from the language course for three of our respondents (PLMICH07, PLMISy22, PLMICH14).

Another issue indicated by the Supreme Audit Report and confirmed by our research was non-availability of Polish language courses in some communities. The following man from Chechnya has not attended any Polish classes for the last 10 years due to lack of such a possibility: "They didn't have here in [city name] any Polish classes like for example they are in other countries" (PLMICH11). Other respondent compared the situation of the host country language learning in Poland and Germany and pointed out big gaps in terms of integration through the language acquisition possibilities:

If you compare the situation with Germany, in Germany, like, there are German courses everywhere, for learning the language, teaching language, so, for refugees in Germany it's very easy to join any course, but here the situation is very difficult, if we didn't have the chance to be, to have these courses at NGOs, I wouldn't have the possibility to learn Polish. So, we need to focus more on this point, teaching the language, Polish language, and as well, like, if they cannot tell you more about the culture about the stuff, because to be honest if I did not have Polish friends who explain to me how things go, it would be difficult for me to... To be a part of the society (PLMISy22).

It turned out the situation of non-availability of language courses tailored for refugees with specific needs was especially difficult for elderly people:

In the beginning one should learn the language. And for us, I am 65 years old, my wife is 62 years old, it is difficult, and there are no schools, which would teach us the language. Our Polish language level is barely A1. Because I was not attending schools, the only place where I studied is the foundation, and as I told you if I learned today tomorrow I would forget half of it. Because there is no usage of the language, we don't have people that we would talk to them in a continuous manner (PLMISy24).

Interestingly, almost all our micro-level respondents expressed their awareness of importance of learning the Polish language for their life in Poland and integration with the society. An example of such an observation is the following reflection made by a man from Chechnya:

First of all, you need the knowledge of the language for yourself. For any kind of communication, person has to know the language. Without language it would be hard because you would have to ask all the time others for translations. The knowledge of the language makes his/her life and the life of others easier. If you go to foreign country, you have to speak the language. Q: Someone forced you to learn the language or you wanted it by yourself? R: I think my life here forced me to learn the language (PLMICH15).

Although positive examples with Polish language learning were rare, they actually were reported. An exemplification was provided by a woman from Chechnya who could not attend a regular course due to taking care of her children, including one with disabilities: "The teacher comes to my flat to teach me Polish once a week. She comes for 4 hours. I started to study Polish last year" (PLMICH04).

With regard to our Ukrainian respondents, their knowledge of Polish sounded better than of respondents of other nationalities. In addition, all of them chose Polish as a language of the interview, although they were given a choice between Polish and Russian. It is only another proof that language proximity – both Polish and Ukrainian belong to Slavic languages, which is a group of Indo-European languages - significantly facilitates the second language acquisition. A woman from Ukraine told us a story of her husband who managed to learn Polish language to a working level during one-year of IIP:

In case of my husband it was like that. He accomplished the course of Polish twice, it was a short one. The first time it was one month from the employment office, somewhere in the city. And the second time it was from the social service. And he accomplished it, he also got a certificate, a confirmation of attendance. Q: Does he also speak Polish? R: Yes, he does, he does. Of course, with some mistakes, but somehow. Also we write with mistakes. But he learned in [a city name] how to write, how to read. Earlier I was the one who filled in everything. And now he does it by himself. I don't remember when I did something for him in offices. It was him, who submitted all applications, like 500+... So he can handle it (PLMIUK19).

Another respondent from Ukraine was able to learn the Polish language to a working level only owing to work and private relations with Poles:

I learned the language at work, by ear, maybe because I studied the violin at music school, because I need to do everything by ear. I learn the same way when someone tells me something. I hear, I try to remind myself, sometimes I don't understand something, for example "Jak się masz" and "siema". It is the same, only short, or not "na razie " only "Nara". And such slangs. And after that you can hear, who is learning the language, because some friend, she studied Polish at school, and then at the university. And she doesn't speak like on the street, but like a professor. And everyone says "your Polish is cool, we can't hear that you are a foreigner, but your Polish is like from a professor". You don't have this type of "siema, nara" (PLMIUK18).

Our micro-level interviews do not allow to make any generalization about Polish language learning attitudes of female and male refugees, since the attitudes of our respondents varied depending on many different factors, including gender but without its significant influence. However, one of our meso-level respondents brought up an issue of Muslim background, which can hamper a woman's participation in a language course:

There is no space for these cultural differences that can make some things difficult to accomplish. For example, learning Polish for a woman who comes from a Muslim environment that is very conservative. She can't attend Polish classes, because her husband won't let her (PLMZLG2). In conclusion, our research confirmed that Polish language acquisition is considered by both, meso- and micro-level respondents as an essential factor of integration. In addition, our respondents, in general, shared an opinion that the Polish language courses, available for refugees (if available) are insufficient and not effective. A refugee from Syria told us his ideas for improving the Polish language learning system and linking it with a cultural orientation education:

We could make it better, as I told you in the beginning let them make proper schools for teaching immigrants or the refugees who are coming to this country, that they teach them the language, this would facilitate integration very much. Secondly, the person who is coming should learn the traditions and habits of the country where he/she is coming to,

so if I am coming to Poland I should learn the habits and traditions of the Polish people. How do they live, I live like them. This would make relations much easier, that the most important thing is the language and learning the habits and traditions of the country, and how they live, and take into consideration the economic and political situation that is present in the country. Once I know the law in the country I will integrate in the country and I would live according to law and live a good life (PLMISy24).

Access to Universities and Recognition of Foreign Diplomas

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have access to universities on terms applicable to Polish citizens, which means they can study for free at public universities, if they are admitted. However, their actual possibilities of studying at a university can be hampered by the lack of documents confirming their education or a university degree obtained before.

It is worth to add here that in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 some universities in Poland offered special scholarships for refugees. The first ones were the University of Warsaw and the AGH University of Science and Technology from Cracow which declared admission of 10 and 20 refugee students, respectively. Refugees accepted at the University of Warsaw could also take part in Polish language and Polish culture courses organized by the Centre for Polish Language and Polish Culture for Foreigners "Polonicum". The scholarship was planned to cover the costs of education, i.e. any tuition fees (normally foreign students, contrary to Polish citizens, are not entitled to free study in Poland), as well as living in a dormitory and a social allowance. With respect to an issue with lack of documents required to begin studies often faced by refugees, rector of the University of Warsaw declared that the university authorities will develop solutions adapted to the actual situation of refugee students (PAP, 2015).

In the wake of declarations of the University of Warsaw and AGH University of Science and Technology, 21 other public universities and one private announced similar instruments for refugees. In total, these 23 universities in 2016 offered studies for approx. 200 refugees, Polish language course for 155 refugees, accommodation in dormitories for 90 refugees and scholarships for 73 refugees (Kontowski, 2016).

One from our micro-level respondent used the opportunity of a scholarship provided by one of the mentioned universities. Although he already accomplished two years of studies at a university in Syria, he had to start the studies from the beginning, since his earlier stage of studies was not recognized:

Actually, I just went to this university and I have my notes. You know because this situation of war and all this and the difference between the educational system in Poland and Syria. So I just took a test to check my level of Spanish. I got very good and high marks. They said okay, we accept you in our university, welcome, but you have to repeat all this and start from zero, starting from the first year. It means that your years or your studies in your country cannot be accepted because there is a difference between the subjects or some credits of our educational system and your educational system. It is not because of the University of Syria, it can happen with another university of Spain or sometimes it can happen between two universities in Poland but in different cities. So, this can happen every time so you just have to start from the beginning, from the first year and keep studying here normally like Polish students. So, I said okay I can repeat all the years, I want to learn, I can study this here with this new credit. There is no

problem. It was really hard to start from the beginning after finishing two years in your university, but it was really necessary and I have to do everything. Obligatory language courses and all this, and I am here having the same situation as any Polish student (PLMISy25).

In order to continue studies in Poland after obtaining a degree in the country of origin and in case of a lack of graduation diploma confirming it, a person still needs to attach such documents as certifying graduation, completed classes and grades obtained, exams passed, professional qualifications or qualifications obtained, completed apprenticeship or employment when submitting application (Ordinance of the Minister of Science and Higher Education, 2018: para 9(2)). Collecting all mentioned documents can hardly be possible for people fleeing their country due to the fear of persecution. In addition, refugees who hold university diplomas, however, do not receive assistance from family support centres in carrying out the procedure for recognition of these diplomas in Poland (Górny et al., 2017, p. 67). A practitioner from a family support centre whom we talked to confirmed the above observations:

The fact they often have no documents is the basic reason for continuation of education.

If someone does not have a high school diploma, it is difficult for him/her to go to study in Poland. If one had a high school diploma, he might have started the studies (PLMZP2).

It turned out that refugees sometimes do not take diploma with them not only because they flee their countries suddenly and, in a hurry, but also they are afraid they might lose the documents during the risky journey. It was well portrayed by the following woman, a graduate of a university in Chechnya who asked if she had her diploma replied *“now I have it at home in Chechnya, because I was afraid to lose it. My husband will bring it to Poland now”* (PLMICH02).

Although we were not able to obtain statistical data showing the number of refugees studying in Poland, we can assume the numbers are not high. For instance, out of our 30 micro-level respondents only one person was admitted at studies in Poland using the facilitated way provided for refugees. Furthermore, none of the respondents who obtained higher education in their countries of origin had their diploma recognized or had the accomplished studies confirmed, which proves these procedures are not as available and commonly used as they should be. As a consequence, refugees are often treated as having no secondary or higher education, which deprives them possibilities to begin or continue studies and often condemns them to pursue the simplest, lowest-paid professions⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ For more consequences of lack of recognition of qualifications and diplomas with relation to the performed jobs see the Labour Market section (pp. 49 –50).

6. Housing and Spatial Integration

Legal and Institutional Context of Housing Policy for the Beneficiaries of International Protection

This section of the report briefly discusses the legal and institutional context of housing policy for the beneficiaries of international protection in Poland. A detailed presentation of housing for asylum-seekers as part of reception policy was included in the report dedicated to the Polish reception conditions (Pachocka et al., 2020). Based on the latter, one has to remember that asylum-seekers can be accommodated in one of the available residence (stay) centres for foreigners or outside during their asylum procedure. Majority of them choose the second option and support in a form of housing allowances. In accordance with Art. 83 of the Law on Protection in conjunction with Art. 74, a foreigner is obliged to leave the centre on the next day after the period of providing social assistance and medical care under reception support. This period expires in two months from the date of delivery of the final decision on granting international protection.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 stipulates in Art. 52(1) that: 'Everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of movement in the territory of the Republic of Poland and the choice of place of residence and stay'. This means that the beneficiary of international protection decides independently where he/she will live⁶¹. The voivodship of residence is important because a person can apply for IIPs and fulfil it only in one voivodship in the country. The place of residence in a given *powiat* and commune is also significant if a beneficiary needs to apply for a flat from the commune's housing resources. Art. 50 of the Constitution stresses that: 'The integrity of the apartment is guaranteed. A search of an apartment, room, or vehicle can only take place in the cases specified in the Law and in the manner specified therein'. This is true to anyone, not only nationals but also foreigners.

Polish law does not offer separate legislation regarding housing for foreigners, including refugees. Beneficiaries of international protection are generally subject to the same rules as Polish citizens. Therefore, two key laws can be identified (see also Appendix Table 12) as the ones regarding housing policy in general:

- Law on Tenancy and Housing⁶²,
- Law on Housing Allowances⁶³.

The Law on Tenancy and Housing regulates the principles and forms of protection of tenants' rights and the principles of managing the housing resources of the commune. It indicates, among others, the rights and obligations of owners and locators of flats, defines housing stock (resources) of the communes and the rules of rent of social housing (subsidised

⁶¹ It is not uncommon that persons granted international protection leave Poland to join their families and friends in Western Europe.

⁶² Law of 21 June 2001 on the protection of the rights of tenants, the housing stock of the commune, and the amendment to the Civil Code (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 611) (Ustawa z dnia 21 czerwca 2001 r. o ochronie praw lokatorów, mieszkaniowym zasobie gminy i o zmianie Kodeksu cywilnego (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 611)).

⁶³ Law of 21 June 2001 on housing allowances (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 2133) (Ustawa z dnia 21 czerwca 2001 r. o dodatkach mieszkaniowych (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 2133)).

housing). The Law on Housing Allowances, in turn, regulates the principles and procedure for granting, determining the amount and payment of housing allowances, as well as the competences of authorities in these matters.

Foreigners' rights on access to housing are limited in terms of property rights. They can purchase flats, but if they purchase land or a house, they must obtain permission from the minister of the interior and administration (Koss-Goryszewska, 2019, p. 28). Although the state does not offer preferential access to housing for refugees, a kind of housing support (rather housing counselling) is offered as part of the integration activities under the Law on Social Assistance. As it was already mentioned in the section 'Political, Legal and Institutional Framework', the *poviat* family support centre is obliged within IIPs to provide assistance in obtaining housing to refugees, including in a protected flat, if possible (Law on Social Assistance, Art. 93(1)(1)). In addition, the beneficiaries of IIPs are entitled to receive monthly cash benefits to cover, among others, housing costs (Art. 92). Sometimes, housing assistance is implemented as part of the *poviat's* own tasks (e.g., special projects). In practice, this means that the only gateway to special or dedicated housing solutions for refugees are those offered by local authorities. It is well reflected in the activities implemented by the Warsaw Family Support Centre on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Resolution No. LVIII/1751/2009 of the Council of the Capital City of Warsaw of 9 July 2009 on the principles of renting flats that are part of the housing stock of the Capital City of Warsaw⁶⁴ in conjunction with Regulation No. 43/2013 of the Director of the Warsaw Family Support Centre of 10 September 2013⁶⁵. In accordance with § 5 para. 1 point 5 of the 2009 Resolution, the Warsaw Family Support Centre is entitled to apply for the conclusion of a rental (lease) agreement to an apartment from the housing resources (stock) of the Capital City of Warsaw, for persons with refugee status or subsidiary protection. However, the WFSC cannot submit more than five applications annually. Pursuant to the abovementioned resolution, a rental agreement may be concluded with a person who resides in the flat in which the density does not exceeds 6m² of the living space per person and this person/family is in poverty (which is defined by the income criterion based on the average monthly income per member household). The 2019 edition of the housing contest for flats set aside by the municipality for persons with international protection was open to people who, among others, completed an IIP in Warsaw and did not have legal title in the form of ownership or joint ownership of a dwelling, were not a party to any flat rental agreement, did not have the right to reside in the communal/social apartment, were not on the list of people waiting to sign the contract of renting an apartment from the housing resources of the Capital City of Warsaw, and received from the competent office of the district of the capital city of Warsaw refusal to qualify on the list of people awaiting rent for flat from the housing resources of Warsaw (WCPR, 2019).

The Warsaw Family Support Centre's housing support also includes providing assistance to refugees in the form of organizing their temporary stay in a protected (sheltered) flat what results from the provisions of the Law on Social Assistance (Art. 93 in conjunction with Art. 53). According to Art. 53(1) and (2), a stay in a sheltered flat can be granted to a person who, due

⁶⁴ Uchwała nr LVIII/1751/2009 Rady m. st. Warszawy z dnia 9 lipca 2009 roku w sprawie zasad wynajmowania lokali wchodzących w skład mieszkaniowego zasobu m.st. Warszawy (Dz. Urz. Woj. Maz. z 2009 r. Nr 132, poz. 3937 z późn. zm.).

⁶⁵ Zarządzenie Nr 43/2013 Dyrektora Warszawskiego Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie z dnia 10 września 2013 r.

to a difficult life situation, age, disability or illness, needs support in everyday life, as well as a foreigner who has obtained refugee status or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Poland. The flat is a form of social assistance that prepares people staying there, under the care of specialists, to lead an independent life or replacing a stay in an institution providing full-time care. Details of this form of social support are contained in Regulation No. 11/2015 of the Director of the Warsaw Family Support Centre of 24 February 2015 regarding the principles of functioning of protected apartments for foreigners run by the Warsaw Family Support Centre.⁶⁶ Stay in protected housing can be granted to foreigners who (WCPR, n.d.):

- received refugee status, subsidiary protection, or are members of their families,
- are staying in Warsaw and intend to settle there,
- expressed their will to implement an individual integration programme or are already under IIPs coordinated by the Warsaw Family Support Centre,
- have difficulties in integration,
- are affected by a difficult life situation, especially in housing, which is confirmed by the WFSC social worker,
- demonstrate a commitment to solving life problems.

The period of stay cannot exceed 12 months, and in particularly justified cases may be extended to three months by administrative decision. Foreigners bear the full cost of living there.

It is rare in Poland that local authorities provide refugees with free access to an apartment. This possibility was created by the project WITEK—'Warsaw test project of integration of foreigners with regard to the needs of the labour market' initiated and coordinated by the Office of Assistance and Social Projects of the Capital City of Warsaw in 2017-2019. Most participants took advantage of this opportunity, considering this even more important than professional support in accessing the labour market. Material security in the form of a flat for more than two years gave them a sense of stability and security (Gać and Pachocka, 2019).

In the 2015 report mentioned above on the social assistance to refugees in Poland, the Supreme Audit Office indicated that the beneficiaries of IIPs most often lived in premises rented on the free market. Only a few families used a protected flat or a flat from the commune's housing stock. Housing assistance in the audited *poviat* family support centres most often consisted of providing foreigners only with information on possible forms of access to flats (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2015).

Challenges related to housing policy concern, among others, limited supply of affordable housing, high rental costs, especially in large cities, but also the lack of specialised housing counselling for beneficiaries of international protection and the risk of homelessness after the end of institutional support under IIPs (Koss-Goryszewska, 2019).

⁶⁶ Zarządzenie Nr 11/2015 Dyrektora Warszawskiego Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie z dnia 24.02.2015 r. w sprawie zasad funkcjonowania mieszkań chronionych dla cudzoziemców, prowadzonych przez Warszawskie Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie.

Key Issues with the Provision of Housing for Persons with International Protection

The quality of housing has a significant impact on the pace and depth of the integration of refugees in the host country, as well as, on the physical and mental condition of the individuals and entire families who escaped wars or various types of persecutions in their home countries. Not without importance is also the location of the refugee centres, as well as the flats and houses in which they live. High concentration of immigrants in the given locality may on the one hand facilitate initial familiarisation with the new place and country, but on the other hand delay the process of integration (Alba and Nee, 1997).

In so-called ethnic enclaves in countries of high immigration, one may observe the phenomenon of institutional completeness when migrants can take advantage of full socio-organisational infrastructure (shops, places of worship, cultural and social organisations) offered in their language and focused exclusively on members of migrant community (Breton, 1964; Portes and Jensen, 1989). Effectively, this phenomenon may lead to ghettoisation and spatial isolation of migrants, and separation from the host society. In these type of situations the symbolic borders become also physically tangible ones (Barth, 1969).

From the point of view of the host country, a much more convenient solution is the spatial dispersion of immigrants, which forces them into greater interaction with neighbours representing the host society. This, in turn, should result in speeding up their integration in other areas (cultural, social, etc.). On the other hand, however, as it was well documented by John Rex et al. (1967), spatial concentration of migrants might be the result not only of their individual strategies and willingness to live close to members of their community, but also indirectly it can be a result of segregation and discrimination on the part of the host society, manifesting itself, among others, in refusal to rent or sell apartments to foreigners in some neighbourhoods.

As we have shown in earlier reports (e.g. Pachocka et al., 2020; Szulecka et al., 2018a), although Poland is a new immigration country, (Pędziwiatr, 2019) persons seeking asylum have been arriving to the country since the early 1990s (Górny et al., 2017). One of the key issues with the housing provision for them is not so much their concentration in certain parts of the cities, as their location far from urban centres where they have fewer opportunities to interact with members of the host society and limited access to the labour market. Among other issues that had emerged already during the stage of pre-integration, or while being in the process of claiming asylum, and which frequently continue to the period after one has received internal protection, there are also issues such as: lack of adequate and affordable accommodation, discrimination in the housing market and limited support of the state institutions.

As one of the interviewees from the meso level clearly pointed out this basic need is often neglected. Our interviewee from the state institution very pertinently argued that:

“We provide integration (referring to IIP), but without foundation from which it could start. It is obvious that, if someone has a problem with paying for his or her apartment, or has no financial means to sustain himself/herself, then they will not think about learning Polish or somehow cultivate themselves culturally. This is the Maslow Pyramid level above, and we didn't provide the basic ones.” (PLMZP1)

On the basis of the research data, below we first describe what non-state institutions and actors perceive as the key issues with the provision of housing for persons with international protection, and how they assist them with addressing some of the problems of finding adequate accommodation. Later we analyse the experiences of persons with international protection with access to housing. Social organisations play a key role in facilitation of access to housing for persons with the refugee status or other form of international protection.

Key Issues with Access of Refugees to Housing–Perspective of the Non-state Actors

One of the issues related to access to housing faced by persons with international protection that is most frequently pointed out by actors from non-government sector is the lack of adequate and affordable rooms, flats and houses. Refugees tend to settle in big cities where the labour markets are bigger; hence there are more offers of finding suitable jobs (PLMZSO2). On the other hand, the access to cheap and adequate housing might be limited in such cities.

Some of our interviewees from the social organisation rightly pointed out that difficulty of finding adequate housing by persons with the refugee status or other type of international protection is part of a general shortage of affordable housing. According to experts, there is a shortage of approximately 2,1 million houses in Poland. This situation most frequently affects people with medium and low income. They neither have access to cheap mortgages nor finances to buy the apartments. The social housing in the country estimated at 150-200 thousand premises is absolutely insufficient for the needs of the population (Chabasiński, 2018).

One of our interviewees argued that:

Housing is one of those things that do not work in Poland at all. Our experience often shows that when we talk about a problem that affects refugees, we de facto talk about a problem that affects everyone. The refugees have just a harder time than the rest of society with the same problem (PLMZSO2).

Key challenges according to this actor from the NGO sector is that:

There are too few cheap flats, too few social housing options, and these flats are poorly managed. There is also a lack of relevant legislation that could put more flats on the market. There are flats that are empty and people do not want to rent them and keep for themselves as a form of capital investment. There are countries where there are legal solutions that prohibit such a situation (PLMZSO2).

Another interviewee from the social organisations argued that

The lack of automatic access to cheap housing is what I consider the biggest barrier in the integration process. It seems to me that this is the first human need - to ensure a sense of security when you have a roof over your head ...Only then can you think about work, qualifications, retraining, etc. (PLMZSO1).

This member of the NGO sector, involved in the provision of assistance to refugees, persuasively argued that if this basic need is not provided, then it is difficult for migrants to advance in other dimensions of integration. As shown in the earlier report majority of asylum seekers decide to move out of the refugee centres, yet while their applications are being

processed. In this way the shock of being forced to find a suitable accommodation is frequently felt, however before a given person is granted international protection.

Persons whose applications for asylum were assessed positively have the right to apply for social housing through the same channels as citizens of Poland. If they meet the conditions, which in each locality might be different, then they can get a municipal or social housing. They also face the same barriers as Poles - a small housing stock, numerous persons requesting such housing, long queues and waiting time. Sometimes, as one of our interviewees from the social sector noticed, they also face discrimination on the basis of being foreigners. If there are not enough houses for “us”, we should not provide them to “aliens” – one may hear during these discussions (PLMZSO1).

Some other interviewees from the NGO sector also claimed that discriminatory practices in the housing market make it increasingly difficult for the refugees to gain access to decent housing. One of them, for example, argued that:

The problem with flats also forces refugees to leave Poland, because in the West, it is easier to find a flat and there are fewer prejudices (PLMZSO2).

This interviewee also claimed that they have people in their team who talk Polish with and without foreign accent. If persons with the accent inquire about a given flat, they much more often hear that the offer is not valid. This interviewee also recalled a situation when a young Chechen couple was looking for an apartment. A few times they had a situation that the landlords agreed give them the apartment for a rent, but later refused to do so, when they learned that they were from Chechnya. More recently this couple was going to sign the contract, and when the owners saw that the girl was in hijab, although she spoke perfect Polish, they refused to sign it (PLMZSO2).

The research into anti-refugee and anti-Muslim prejudices partially confirms the aforementioned interviewee's point on the levels of discrimination towards the persons perceived as “aliens” in contemporary Poland. The study from 2011 revealed that 47% of Poles believed that ‘too many Muslims live in Poland’ and that among the eight nations involved in the research, Poles were the most critical towards Islam. Nearly 62% of the Polish respondents agreed with the thesis that ‘Islam is an intolerant religion’ and only one in five believed that Muslim culture could adapt to life in a European/Polish society (Zick et al., 2011). Even if the aforementioned statistics need to be understood in light of different contexts of public expressions of prejudice (Piekut et al., 2020), the findings of various national studies (see CBOS, 2015a, 2015b, 2012) confirm an unprecedented level of anti-refugee and anti-Muslim prejudice expressed in Poland.

These prejudices have been very effectively mobilised and used in the parliamentary elections in 2015 that overlapped with the peak of the so-called “migration crisis” (Legut and Pędziwiatr, 2018; Pędziwiatr, 2017). In the aftermath of these elections refugees were further portrayed negatively, securitised and used as a key element of the social and political mobilisation by the ruling coalition, as well as, far right and populist members of the opposition (e.g. Kukiz15 lobbying for the so-called “refugee referendum”, similar to the one that was carried out in Hungary on 8th October 2016). As a result of these actions the general perception of the persons seeking international protection in Poland has transformed from relatively open and positive yet at the beginning of 2015 to negative one from the end of 2015 onwards (Legut and Pędziwiatr, 2018).

The negative portrayal of refugees has further aggravated their difficult situation on the housing market. It has made the offer of the prospective houses and flats, which they could rent, increasingly scarce.

According to some members of the social organisations, lack of affordable housing is the key reason why many people who claim asylum in Poland treat the country only as a transitory one. One of them argued:

If you depend only on your source of income, you may find it difficult to pay for the rent of the flat where you live. And this may be the moment when people decide to leave Poland. If people are wondering why Poland is still a transit country, it seems to me that the key issue has to do with access to affordable housing (PLMZSO1).

One may find this observation also in some other studies on the situation of refugees in Poland. The latest annual report of the Association of Legal Intervention points out that one of the major reasons persons with international protection leave Poland has to do with lack of “housing security” (Chrzanowska et al., 2020).

NGOs and the Access of Refugees to Housing

The non-governmental organisations take various measures in order to improve refugees’ access to adequate housing. Some of those NGOs are: Halina Nieć Legal Aid Centre (Centrum Pomocy Prawnej im. Haliny Nieć), Caritas Poland (Caritas Polska), Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, HFHR), Association for Legal Intervention (Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej), Ocalenie Foundation (Fundacja Ocalenie), Refugee.pl, Polish Hospitality Foundation (Fundacja Polska Gościnność) and With Bread and Salt (Chlebem i Solą).

Below we will point out only some of the most important ones emerging from our research. One of the NGOs that devotes significant amount of its time to improve the housing conditions of persons with international protections is the aforementioned Association of Legal Intervention. In its latest annual report, it describes in detail all the actions it takes towards this goal. It argues “After leaving the Centres for Foreigners, persons who received international protection rent flats on the free market for very high prices, inadequate to their earning potential. We help dozens of families a year in their struggle to obtain social housing. Every week, during the time for individual legal advice, we provide detailed information about the requirements for applying for a flat from the social housing pool, assist them with filling out the necessary applications, respond to calls from the Municipal Department of Housing Resources, collect additional documents, provide explanations, etc. Sometimes we accompany our clients as translators during their visits to the Municipal Department that are aimed at providing additional information. The procedures for qualifying for inclusion on the waiting list for the social housing usually take several months, and after being enlisted, the waiting time for the apartment lasts from about a year (in very favourable circumstances) to several years.” (Chrzanowska et al., 2020). The report also describes several cases of persons with international protections who sought to improve their housing conditions with the help of the Association.

Among our interviewees from the NGO sector, several persons pointed out that their organisation actively engages in various actions to improve the access to adequate housing to refugees. One of them, for instance pointed out that:

(...) we only exceptionally engage in the search of flats for refugees on the free market. However, for years we have been supporting refugees in applying for social housing and we have been quite successful in this field. (PLMZSO1).

Our interviewee also claimed that:

The big problem is that people often don't have patience. Because they want this apartment or flat now, and not in three years when the court takes decision in favour of their application (...) They have to live somewhere (PLMZSO1).

Here, the interviewee refers to the situation when the decision to refuse a given refugee social housing is taken to the court. Then the court's ruling on such case may come after three years or more. The legal procedures take long time while most of the refugees seek help of the non-governmental organisations to access better housing in the given moment.

In order to help the persons with international protection the NGOs closely cooperate with the state sector. Numerous actors from the NGO sector pointed out that this cooperation is particularly fruitful with the municipal authorities (PLMZSO3, PLMZSO1, PLMZSO4). One of them, for instance, pointed out that:

At city level there is definitely a lot more openness when it comes to refugees and migrants. Sometimes they come to us with ideas, we can contact them at any time. It is also a matter of financing some small projects for us, but also at the level of conceptual and substantive cooperation. (...) From my perspective, this relationship is more of partnership like (PLMZSO1).

In the absence of the overarching state policy on migrants' integration (Pędziwiatr, 2019b), many cities in Poland (including Gdańsk, Cracow, Poznań and Wrocław) have developed their own migrant integration programmes (Pędziwiatr, 2019).

The increased influx of persons seeking asylum from 2014 onwards, and growth of the securitisation of their presence has resulted in the emergence of numerous bottom-up initiatives to help refugees. One of them is "With Bread and Salt" (In Polish "Chlebem i solą" - which is a traditional way of greeting some very important persons).⁶⁷ As one of our interviewees point out this group functioned before, but after 2014 it became very active. When it became clear that Poland would not participate in the EU relocation and resettlement mechanisms, some of these initiatives have redirected to work for those who are already here and for instance, help the persons with international protection in Poland to access adequate housing (PLMZSO1). Another grass-roots project 'Refugees Welcome' which has been absorbed by the Ocalenie Foundation has also very important housing assistance dimension. Now the Foundation has been providing housing support for refugees more systematically (e.g. looking for adequate flats for them)⁶⁸. An important element of this is the first attempt of adopting the idea of private sponsorship of refugees on Polish soil. This is the key goal of the programme "Witaj w domu" (Welcome at home).⁶⁹

An interesting project mentioned by our interviewees from the social organisations, which is partially directed at refugees (they are one of the recipient groups) has been developed by the Christian organisation Habitat for Humanity. Their project aims at combating homelessness

⁶⁷ For further information about the initiative, see its social media page (Chlebem i solą, n.d.)

⁶⁸ More information about the project can be found on the program's webpage (Refugees Welcome Polska, n.d.)

⁶⁹ More information about the programme can be found on the program's webpage (Fundacja Ocalenie, n.d.)

more generally. They run a comprehensive work with selected people from the group, for now they took two groups to the workshop - Polish homeless and refugees who are not necessarily homeless in the sense of total homelessness, but those who need housing support. And this is such a support and research project, because they simultaneously conduct research and do interviews, among others, with people who did not qualify for their housing assistance. They simultaneously offer housing support and professional support at the labour market. They expect people who take part in the project and improve their housing conditions to take up work or improve their working conditions, change jobs for better, or stop working in the “grey zone” and take up jobs with proper contracts⁷⁰ (PLMZSO1).

Practices, Experiences and Perceptions of Housing

As far as the experiences of persons with international protection are concerned, they frequently pointed that having adequate housing is one of the most important needs. One of our interviewees argued, for example that when he had been granted international protection his first need was an apartment, because “without flat you can’t move any further. You can’t think about finding a job etc. Currently an apartment issue is the main problem” (PLMICh10).

The research data shows that those persons who seem to have particularly big problems with finding the right accommodation are those who have been living in one of the refugee centres financed by the Centres for Foreigners during the whole asylum procedure. As shown in the earlier report the majority of asylum seekers decide to live outside of such centres and seem to learn about the difficulties of finding adequate housing at the earlier stage of their stay in Poland. One of our interviewees who was in a difficult situation during the transition with a family from the refugee centre to live outside of the centre pointed out that: “*We had only 3-4 days more in the centre and then we were about to be on the street*” (PLMIUk20). She was also surprised that a small allowance paid to her and members of her family would stop being paid. She said that “*I was in shock, I could not understand how they cannot give us money*” (PLMIUk20). Our research data shows the difficulty of some of the families of transferring from the refugee centres to accommodation and financially managing to find a new house before receiving access to the financial support within the Individual Integration Programme (IIP). Signing a rental contract usually means that one needs to possess not only adequate funds to pay for the monthly rental fees, but also a deposit for the rented property. Many persons moving out of the refugee centres do not have savings that would allow them to pay for such costs.

The aforementioned transition and the process of searching for adequate housing have been facilitated by different actors. Some of the most frequently mentioned ones were different social organisations, members of the social networks and representatives from the local authorities. For instance, the interviewee mentioned above was helped by the activists of the initiative With Bread and Salt (Chlebem i Solą). She described this assistance in the following way:

I called Chlebem i Solą. They took photos of us. And in the centre, I met a woman from Kyrgyzstan, and she also was moving out from the centre. We agreed to look for a flat together, since we could share the bills, and together we had 1500 zł. (...) Chlebem i Solą found a house for us and invited us to see it. We saw it. It is the same house where

⁷⁰ More information about the organisation can be found on foundation's web page (Fundacja Habitat for Humanity Poland)

we live now, we live there till now. Why there? Because we didn't have any alternative. Chlebem i Solą posted an advertisement on the Internet and then some people answered it. (...) When we arrived, the landlord on the same day went for shopping and bought a fridge and a washing machine. We also had help from Chlebem i Solą, they collected things for us. I was very grateful. It was like a fairy tale to us that we moved out from the centre, that we received a status (PLMIUK20).

We may learn from this excerpt also that it is not uncommon that the refugees in order to be able to afford to rent a certain flat or house need to do it with other persons or families to share the cost of rental. Subletting parts of the flats or house is another practice of dealing with high prices of rental. As one of our interviewees pointed out that sharing a room or flat with another family is frequent since "it is cheaper this way". (PLMICH08).

The phenomenon of subletting parts of the flats and houses is closely linked with the one of overcrowding. The following excerpt from the narrative of one of our interviewees from the micro level makes it quite clear. "I lived almost one year in my sister's apartment because it was hard to rent a flat. In one apartment we lived almost 15 people" (PLMICH11).

As far as the non-governmental organisations are concerned, one of the most frequently mentioned organisation by our interviewees in the context of housing, has been the Foundation Ocalenie. Numerous persons with international protection approached by us in the course of the research have expressed their appreciation of the Foundation's efforts with helping them to rent flats and houses. One of the interviewees, for instance said:

That is a great house, which is rented for me by the Ocalenie Foundation. Partially I pay house rent, partially it is paid by the Foundation. (...) I have been living here for more than 4 months. We have all the necessary furniture and supplies." (PLMICH13).

In the case of the above-mentioned interviewee, the Foundation not only found him a place to live, but also partially covers the costs of place in which he lives. Another interviewee who was helped by the same NGO said:

I met the woman, who helps people to find the flats in the foundation 'Ocalenie'. (...) Somebody in the refugee centre told me about it. (PLMICH07).

Among other facilitators who have helped our interviewees to find their flats and houses when they moved out of the refugee centres were members of their ethnic community and friends, but sometimes also strangers whom they have met coincidentally online or offline and who decided to help them. One of our interviewees, for example, pointed out that:

Our Chechen friends were living here before and they had planned to move out. They asked if we wanted to take it. We did because before we were living in one room apartment. Everybody wants more comfortable living conditions, so we decided to move here (PLMICH10).

Another female interviewee recalled that:

The woman from my daughter's school helped me. Her neighbour works in administration. He helped me to find this flat. The owner is a very good person. He wanted to get 1600 PLN a month for this flat, but when I told him I couldn't pay him 1600 PLN, he agreed to charge me 1200 PLN a month (PLMICH04).

This account shows also the flexibility on the part of some of the persons letting the apartments rent their properties for lower price than originally requested.

One of the strategies employed by our interviewees from the micro level in finding adequate housing is to apply for social housing. Generally, their access to this pool of flats, as mentioned earlier, is on the equal basis with other residents of the given part of Poland.⁷¹ In practice, it means that if they qualify for such housing they need to wait for many months, if not years to be allocated a flat from this source. One of our interviewees in the following way recalled her experiences with applying for social housing:

We applied for social flat, but we received a negative answer (...) They wrote that we collected 22 out of 28 points. And I knew it from the beginning, because we had a normal income, we both work, we have a neat apartment. I didn't expect that we would get a social flat. But the municipal employee told us that one could apply for social flat every year. So ok, maybe after 10 years we will get it (PLMIUK19).

Our data also shows that sometimes the applications for social housing are important reasons why some persons do not change their current inadequate housing arrangements. One of our interviewees argued, for example, that:

I cannot rent a bigger room than 6 square meters for 1 person, as I have applied for a social flat. (...) If I rent a bigger room, they will not give me the flat, they will tell me, that I have enough space (PLMICH08).

Another interviewee also mentioned that her efforts to obtain social housing is one of the reasons that keeps her with the family in the house where the roof is leaking when it rains and where *'the landlord does not do anything about it'* (PLMIUK20). She claimed that she did not search for any new place because she applied for the communal flat and *'I should not change my place of living, I should stay in the house where I live now'* (PLMIUK20). She also said that it is the first reason for her housing immobility, but not the main one. She pointed out that the main reason is proximity of her daughter's school:

I really don't want to change it. We have already changed five schools for her. It is my dream that she can live close to the school. Now it takes her only five minutes to be in the school. I would like her to get used to the school where she has friends. She really likes having friends, and now she has some (PLMIUK20).

Apart from the aforementioned problems that limit the access of persons with international protection to adequate housing, one needs to mention also the issue of discrimination. Several interviewees from the micro level pointed out that sometimes even though they had the necessary financial resources for a given flat, their owners refused to rent these flats to them. One of such persons pointed out that:

It was very difficult to find a flat because their owners refused to rent them to refugees, or to foreigners. (...). After the 10th refusal I thought 'how come, one receives a protection, but cannot find a flat'. It was difficult, difficult (PLMIUK19).

As far as the spatial integration is concerned, the research data shows high preference among the interviewed persons with international protection to live in cities. They mentioned numerous advantages of life in a big city such as good school education, work, sport and transportation. *'Here is a civilization, everything is very accurate, good and nice.'* – argued one of our interviewees (PLMICH13). Meanwhile, similarly to the following interviewee, they were

⁷¹ More on the case of Warsaw and flats set aside for persons with internal protection see WFSC report (2020).

aware that finding an adequate place to live in a city for a reasonable price is not easy. This was aptly caught in the following statement:

I'd like to live in the bigger city where you have more opportunities, chances to do more or find people who have the same point of view or interest as I do. (...) At the same time, it is also more problematic, because accommodation is more expensive in bigger cities (PLMICH10).

Our interviewees were fully aware of the difficulties linked with finding adequate and affordable housing in big cities where the majority of them wished to live. As we have shown above in this section, apart from the housing problems similar to those faced by Polish citizens, persons with international protection had to face yet additional ones. Discrimination on the housing market, as well as insufficient social, cultural and financial capitals are some of the important issues discussed above. As we have shown above in addressing some of these problems, our interviewees from the micro level were assisted by the actors from the governmental and non-governmental sector. This assistance has been always very much appreciated by the beneficiaries of international protection. It has also played a key role in the facilitation of their integration with the host society.

7. Health

The Legal and Institutional Context of Healthcare for the Beneficiaries of International Protection

This section of the report discusses briefly the legal and institutional context of healthcare for the beneficiaries of international protection in Poland. The detailed presentation of medical services for asylum-seekers as part of reception policy was included in the report dedicated to the Polish reception conditions (Pachocka et al., 2020).

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 stipulates in Art. 68: '1. Everyone shall have the right to have his health protected. (...). 3. Public authorities shall ensure special healthcare to children, pregnant women, handicapped people and persons of advanced age'. This indicates universal access to healthcare without distinguishing between citizens and foreigners. In accordance with Art. 74 of the Law on Protection, social assistance and medical care are provided to a foreigner granted international protection two months from the date of delivery of his/her final decision on the asylum application.

Polish law does not offer separate legislation regarding healthcare for foreigners, including refugees. Beneficiaries of international protection are generally subject to the same rules as residents of Poland. A fundamental legal act in this regard is the Law of 27 August 2004 on healthcare benefits financed from public funds, already mentioned, called the Law on Healthcare Benefits (see also Appendix Table 12). The right to use healthcare services financed from public funds on the principles set out in this law have, among others (Art. 2(1)):

- 1) persons covered by universal—compulsory and voluntary—health insurance, referred to as 'the insured',
- 2) persons other than insured persons residing on the territory of the Republic of Poland, who have Polish citizenship or obtained refugee status or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Poland, or a temporary residence permit as members of their families, and they meet the income criterion specified in the Law on Social Assistance,
- 3) other persons than those listed above who are under 18 years of age who:
 - a) have Polish citizenship or
 - b) who have obtained refugee status in the Republic of Poland or subsidiary protection or a temporary residence permit granted as members of their families residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland,
- 4) persons other than those mentioned above who have a place of residence in the territory of the Republic of Poland, who are pregnant, having a child, or in the postpartum period and:
 - a) have Polish citizenship or
 - b) who have obtained refugee status or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Poland, or a temporary residence permit as members of their families.

In the case of persons other than those mentioned above, health services shall be provided on the terms set out in separate provisions and international agreements (Art. 2(2)). The law

includes, among insured persons, those who have obtained refugee status or subsidiary protection in Poland, or enjoy temporary protection on its territory (Art. 3(1)(2a)). The document confirming the right to healthcare services of a beneficiary of international protection is the decision of the governor (mayor or president) of the commune competent from the point of view of the place of residence of the beneficiary, confirming this right (Art. 54(1)). This document is issued only after submitting all the compulsory documents, including among others, documents confirming residence in Poland and documents confirming possession of international protection or being a family member of such a beneficiary and fulfilment of additional requirements under the Law on Healthcare Benefits (Art. 54(3)) in conjunction with the Law on Social Assistance. As stipulated in Art. 66(1)(27) of the Law on Healthcare Benefits, persons who have obtained refugee status or subsidiary protection in the Republic of Poland and are covered by an IIP are subject to health insurance (except when they are insured for another reason). In this case, the costs of their health insurance are usually covered till the completion of the IIPs by the *powiat* family support centres from the voivode's budget.

Persons with international protection face the same challenges as citizens. In their case, obstacles also include a language barrier and cultural differences. Unlike the stage of applying for protection, the law does not distinguish between groups requiring special treatment that could be formally included in the vulnerable group.

Access of Persons with International Protection to Healthcare - Practices, Experiences and Perceptions

This part of the report deals with the practices, experiences and perceptions of the access to healthcare of the persons with international protection. It sheds light on the key insights from our semi-structured interviews as well as relevant studies on the subject that explain, contextualize and complement RESPOND fieldwork data in this domain. It elaborates on views about the healthcare provision among our interviewees from the meso and micro levels. Below in separate sections we first present opinions from the employees of the Office for Foreigners, practitioners and NGO actors (our meso level) and then beneficiaries of international protection (our micro level).

Before we flesh out relevant results from our fieldwork, it is worth mentioning that medical care is a provision particularly important for refugees who are frequently victims of all kind of violence which they have endured either in the countries of origin or while fleeing them in search of security and safety. As such they often require specialised medical treatment not only with regards to their physical health, but also mental health. The easier access to such treatment may sometimes be the reason why the persons with international protection decide to stay in Poland with their dependents (if applicable). Limited access to some specialised treatments may also be the key incentive which pushes the persons with international protection to leave the country (most commonly to Western European countries) in search for a better quality medical care or access to it.

Some of the key issues that beneficiaries of international protection face while accessing medical care are similar to the problems faced by other members of the Polish society. Low healthcare funding, insufficient and ageing medical manpower and poor infrastructure are only some of the problems that are faced equally frequently by refugees and Polish citizens using medical services covered by the compulsory health insurance managed by the state agency, the National Health Fund (in Polish: *NFZ - Narodowy Fundusz Zdrowia*). These major issues

of the healthcare provision in Poland frequently translate *inter alia* into difficult access to specialists, long waiting lists for specialised treatments, or necessity to use private sector and pay for such services – to mention only some of the problems.

As mentioned earlier and elaborated in detail in the report dedicated to the Polish reception conditions (Pachocka et al., 2020), the access to healthcare for asylum seekers is regulated differently than the same provision for persons with international protection. The transfer from the model of medical care provided by specially selected service provider (currently private medical company Petra Medica), which is the case of the asylum seekers, to the general public national health care system – case of beneficiaries of international protection – is frequently not an easy one with many uncertainties. That is why some of our interviewees suggested that not only refugees, but also persons seeking international protection should be treated like citizens when it comes to healthcare provision (PLMZSO1). According to them, there could be not only organisational, but also financial benefits of such arrangement. At present, the cost of the medical care for persons in reception can be either overestimated or underestimated, as it is a subject of agreement between the Office for Foreigners and the institution that wins the competition for provision of medical services to asylum seekers. If the healthcare provisions for them were public and under supervision of the National Health Fund, such a situation should not occur. Another benefit of such a change could be smooth transition with health care provision from the reception phase to the integration phase, which at present remains highly problematic.

The payment of compulsory health insurance gives a person with international protection, similarly to any citizen of Poland, a legal entitlement to access health care provisions. As one of the practitioners pointed out:

At the moment when they gain protection, they fall into the same NFZ system as we do. They must have insurance paid either by their employer or office for the unemployed, or they can personally pay their insurance with the National Health Fund. They are similar patients to any other citizen of the country (PLMZSO1).

Another social worker assisting beneficiaries of international protection explained to us that agencies providing social assistance would pay health insurance contributions only for those who cannot do it themselves.

For example, for people of post-production age (65 years old and older). Otherwise if persons with international protection are able to work then we try to make the employer pay for it, if someone works, or that people register at the labour office and obtain health insurance in this way (PLMZSO2).

Some of our interviewees from the meso level argued that one of the problems seen in healthcare provision to persons with international protection is that they lack knowledge about their rights in this respect. One of our respondents from the social organisation pointed out:

People don't even know they have certain rights. In the project we now have, we have information sessions to which we invite people from the National Health Fund, from various institutions, to tell them what rights people have (PLMZSO7).

On the other hand, one of the practitioners whom we interviewed in the course of the research argued that an important problem might be cultural barriers. This interviewee, interestingly, pointed out that:

Chechens are unlikely to go to a psychologist, because they still see it as ‘when I go to a psychologist, I am mentally ill. Never.’ But for example, I noticed that Syrians and Iraqis are aware that a psychologist is there to help me. (...) I had also people from that region who associated a psychologist with a psychiatrist. Meaning a person - ‘give me pills to calm me down and let me forget’ (PLMZP1).

One of the major issues, however, which has been repeated by numerous interviewees from NGO sector as well as those working with refugees in the state institutions is the language barrier or more broadly *linguistic and intercultural competences of medical personnel*. One of the strategies of addressing this challenge, which has been developed by some state organisations and many social organisations, is the accompaniment of the refugee by a translator. “*If someone comes, has a problem and wants to go to a doctor and does not speak Polish, one of us goes to the doctor with such a person*” – described one of the interviewed practitioners (PLMZP2). In this way some of our interviewees from the meso level acted as interpreters.

The aforementioned linguistic help seems particularly important when it comes to psychological assistance. One of the practitioners described it in the following way:

Psychological help is badly needed. (...) We have two psychologists in our institution who speak Russian, English, so we can provide this. What about people who speak Arabic? There is no one in Poland who could conduct such therapy (...), not even psychological consultations in Arabic. If it is done through the interpreter then it is inefficient and many people back down, they don't want to do it. And in another language, you are not able to express all emotions, so it doesn't work (PLMZP1).

Our interviewee also pointed out that the offer available in Warsaw in this regard is much richer than the one in other parts of the country.

As far as vulnerable persons are concerned, experts point out that in spite of some improvements, specialized treatments for victims of torture or traumatized asylum seekers and refugees are not available in practice in Poland because of lack of qualified psychologists and therapists specializing in treating trauma, in particular in an intercultural context. At the same time, the assistance provided by specialists working for non-governmental organizations is not sufficient to fill the systemic gaps, such as for example lack of psychotherapy available under general healthcare provisions (AIDA, n.d.; Szczepanik, 2017).

Our interviewees from the meso level also pointed out important role played by the NGO sector in provision of supplementary psychological assistance to persons with international protection. At the same time some of the social actors argued that this type of psychological help provision has been negatively affected due to financial difficulties of some of the organisations providing this type of assistance since 2015 and re-direction of the funds from the AMIF to state agencies and other types of organisations (PLMZSO1).

As far as the persons with international protection are concerned, most of our interviewees from this group were satisfied with the healthcare provision. One of our interviewees for example said: “*Here doctors treat well*” (PLMICH11). Another one who has experienced a medical treatment in the Polish hospital pointed out that “*In the hospital, everyone was paying attention to details*” (PLMIUK16). Yet a different respondent from the micro level when asked about the larger Polish medical system pertinently noticed:

If we are talking about paid private clinics – it's very fast and of good quality. If we are talking about free state medical system the quality of it is good, but you have to wait a long time (PLMICH11).

Discrimination with access to healthcare was one of the issues pointed out by some of our interviewees. One of them recalled the following situation:

I've experienced discrimination in the hospital. It was my first time in the Polish hospital and I didn't know what to do. So, I took a number and stood in the queue and waited in line for around 2 hours. When it was my turn one woman approached me and said: 'You are a refugee, so for you the entrance is prohibited. Go home and treat yourself there'. It was just the first shocking experience (PLMICH10).

Another interviewee who complained about the unjust treatment described the following situation:

I experienced an incident when my blood pressure increased. I laid in bed for three days. (...) We called an ambulance, but it didn't come. They explained that 180 was not a high blood pressure, but I felt very bad that I couldn't move in order to walk to the hospital by myself. But they said they don't send the ambulance to such cases. (...) I think, that the true reason was that they heard Ukrainian accent (PLMIUK19)⁷².

Similar to the interviewees from the meso level, the persons with international protection interviewed in the course of the research pointed out linguistic barriers with access to medical services. One of our interviewees for instance pointed out that the doctor he was seeing did not know English. "*I was suffering because of the language, frankly, communicating with him was difficult because of the language*" – he recalled (PLMIIR28). One of our interviewees who had similar problems described the following coping strategy:

If I don't understand what he is talking about, he knows it from expression of my face and tries to explain it. But if I don't understand something completely, I look for the answers on the internet (PLMIUK19).

If the persons with international protection do not want to or cannot wait too long time to see a specialist, and have sufficient financial means, then they employ the same strategy as most Polish citizens do, namely use the private sector. One of the persons who did that was the following interviewee who pointed out that:

I went to hospital to Brest in order to have an appointment with the endocrinologist, because you have to wait too long for such an appointment in Warsaw. I paid 80 PLN for this (PLMICH04).

To sum up, the provision of health care services to beneficiaries of international protection is formally equal with the same services provided to other members of the Polish society. However, in practice, for a wide range of reasons discussed above, this access is often significantly restricted. The transition from the medical services provided by a private company Petra Medica to the public health after the reception of the international protection is also one of the changes that some of our interviewees found problematic.

⁷² Yet additional example of the discrimination in access to healthcare is discussed below. It deals with the case of clear Islamophobia in the context of health care provision and it is disused in the section on religion of refugees.

8. Religion

Some scholars argue that religion in pluralistic societies becomes more of an individual matter, releasing religion from the function of social integration (Connor 2009, p. 782). Yet religious communities and religions continue to play a key role in the processes of integration of migrants with their new host countries and their societies. Yang and Ebaugh show, for example, that minority groups such as Hindus and Muslims report being more religious after settling in the USA than in their home countries (Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Religions may provide not only important spaces for generating bonding and bridging social capital, but also areas where the persons possessing international protection may substantially advance their integration with the host society in all dimensions, including: cultural, social, economic and political. For many migrants as well as non-migrants religions continue to also play a critical role in identity construction, meaning making, and value formation.

In the context of increasing numbers of vulnerable migrants in Europe in the last years, many churches and other faith-based organizations have also provided sanctuary to those at risk of deportation. In January 2017, the German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum (GECCA) informed about 323 on-going cases of church asylum for 547 persons 145 of which were children (Mitchell, 2017, p. 70–71). In this way religious communities have been able to postpone or reverse decisions of expulsion of some migrants from Europe.

This part of the report deals with refugees and their religion in Poland in the light of the collected research data. It first sheds light on refugees and their religion from the perspective of the key religious players in the country and then from individual perspective of our interviewees with international protection.

Refugees and their Religion in the Public Sphere

In Poland, which is a highly religiously homogenous country where over 80% of adhere to the Catholic Church (GUS, 2013), religious communities have been playing an important role in shaping attitudes towards migration and certain groups of migrants. As it will be shown below they have also been participating in the processes of their integration in the country. Their role, however, is more complex.

Some of the religious leaders and communities have also contributed to the politicisation and racialization of the figure of refugee in the last 5 years. This process which has been linked with the notion of a religious and civilizational threat from Islam led to the new “civilizationist” articulation of nationalism (Brubaker, 2017) and growing negative feeling towards asylum seekers and refugees, in particular those perceived as non-Christian ones.

With the vast majority of the population adhering to the Catholic Church, its leadership have an important influence in shaping debates held in Poland including those around refugees. Pope Francis’ call in the midst of the migration crisis for more active help to refugees based on the ethics of cooperation, responsibility, solidarity and openness to other religions as well as the retreat from religious monopoly (in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council’s *Nostra Aetate*) was received by the Catholic Church in Poland with mixed feelings.

On the one hand, the Church leadership followed the Papa’s call based on theological (e.g. Mathew 25: 35-36) and ethical/social legitimization and issued several statements calling for the assistance of Churches in the Middle East (KEP, 2015a) and refugees from Iraq and Syria (KEP, 2015b). In its statement on the migration crisis from September 8, 2015, the Polish

Bishops' Conference (the central organ of the Catholic Church in Poland) stated, however, that 'The assistance is necessary for those who suffer as a result of wars in their countries (...) in Poland the main initiative and responsibility lies on the shoulders of the secular authorities. It is they who are the inviting side' (Makowski, 2016). Thus, in a way the Church's leadership tried to pass the obligation of assistance onto the state authorities that, especially after parliamentary elections in October 2015, became increasingly reluctant to provide any assistance to refugees from Muslim countries. Ahead of the World Youth Days in Cracow in July 2016, the Bishops' Conference once again decided to bring up the issue of assistance to refugees and suggested copying the Italian model of 'humanitarian corridors' and bringing refugees to Poland (the first pronouncement of the Conference in this spirit). However, with the refusal of the government to relocate any refugees to Poland, and numerous Islamophobic statements by members of the government, the initiative was abandoned at the end of 2016 (Pędziwiatr, 2017).

As far as individual statements by the bishops are concerned, research by Kamil Kaczmarek shows that amongst the Polish bishops there are more supporters of 'building bridges' and cautious acceptance of refugees than supporters of 'building walls'. (Kaczmarek 2016). Some of the important supporters of the ethics of cooperation/responsibility are Bishops Stanisław Gądecki and Krzysztof Zadarko. Among the 'wall builders' and advocates of ethics of defence/principles are Bishops Libera and Marek Jędraszewski. The latter argued, for example, that the parishes are too poor to help refugees (Makowski, 2016). While some Catholic media outlets (in particular the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and monthly *Znak*, linked with the moderate wing of the Church) have dealt critically with the growing phenomenon of hate speech and the demonization of refugees and Muslims since 2015, others associated with the conservative wing of the Church (e.g. the web portal *Frona.pl* and the bimonthly glossy magazine *Polonia Christiana* - web portal *PCh24.pl*) have significantly contributed to the stereotypical portrayal of refugees, Arabs, and Muslims (Pędziwiatr 2019c) and to country's Islamophobia confirmed by numerous studies (e.g. Stefaniak 2015, Skrodzka and Stefaniak 2017, Wiśniewski et al. 2017).. Thus, they served as very important 'thickening agents' (Minkenberg, 2015)⁷³ of the thin populist ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic camps (in their view with strong civilisationist overtones), and politics as the expression of the 'general will' of the people (Mudde, 2004).

At the same time some Catholic organisation or those religiously inspired and indirectly linked with the Church have been actively helping asylum seekers and refugees regardless of their religious affiliation for many years. One of the organisations worth mentioning is the Volunteer Centre in Lublin (pl. Centrum Wolontariatu w Lublinie). It was established in 1999 by young people and priests working in the Centre for the Youth Chaplaincy of the Lublin Archdiocese, set up by Archbishop Józef Życiński. The Centre has been in cooperation with various local and national organisations providing diverse help to persons seeking asylum entering Poland through "Polish Lampedusa" (as Father Puzewicz calls Belarussian-Polish border crossing in Brześć-Terespol) and beneficiaries of international protection, from accompaniment, through various integration activities, such as introducing third-country nationals into Polish society, facilitating their adaptation to host society by enabling the acquisition of information on rights and obligations, supporting participation in the social and cultural life of the host country, supporting migrants in overcoming the language barriers,

⁷³ By thickening is meant a process whereby populist ideology acquires additional features thanks to which it generates its 'thicker' versions - Minkenberg, 2015, p. 28.

including access to teaching aids for learning the Polish language. Moreover, the Center provided support in communication between foreigners and Polish institutions and local communities, as well as in solving current problems, including finding a flat, help in accessing the labour market, checking lease or employment contracts, assisting in medical facilities and during medical visits, learning city topography and referring to translation services and psychological support. The Centre closely cooperates with the city and regional authorities in the implementation of these activities as well as with numerous current and past refugee centres (e.g. Biała Podlaska, Kolonia Chrubieszów, Bezwola, Łuków) in the region (wolontariat.lublin.pl and telephone interview with Father Puzewicz 04.10.2019).

Another organisation linked with the Catholic Church and actively involved in help of refugees is the Community Sant'Egidio formed in 1968 in Rome, which has been functioning in Poland since 2000s with its branches now in Warsaw, Chojna and Poznań. This community of lay Catholics combines help to the poor and the homeless with missionary elements (Santegidio.pl). Its Warsaw branch has also been involved in providing care to refugees. One of the interviewees of the RESPOND project depicted the help received from the organisation as the following:

If Sant'Egidio didn't help us with the housing, and food and clothing, we wouldn't have been able to continue. This was at the beginning, before we were transferred to the family help centre and started receiving an allowance of 930 złoty (220 EUR) per month, then somehow it was okay adding to the help of Sant'Egidio. Because there was no foundation which would help here, not at all (PLMISy24).

The support provided by Sant'Egidio to this Syrian refugee is not only an important psychological support, but also a vital financial help.

As far as the Muslim organisations in Poland are concerned, they have not developed a long-term assistance projects for refugees, but have been engaged in helping them on ad hoc basis. The Tatar led Muslim Religious Union (in Polish *Muzułmański Związek Religijny*) has been, for example, actively helping Crimean Tatars who escaped from occupied Crimea in 2014 and sought asylum in Poland. Around 30 families, who settled in the city and surroundings of Białystok, have received support from the local Tatar community. This support consisted of not only significant legal help, which facilitated their path to receiving some form of international protection, but also material and spiritual help. Crimean Tatars with international protection actively participate in the religious and partially cultural activities of Polish Tatar community. Muslim Religious Union has also been closely cooperating with Chechen imams in different parts of Poland (e.g. in Warsaw in the Chechen Mosques on Budrycha 41 and Skalnicowa 7) providing religious education to Chechen children (Nalborczyk et al., 2018, telephone interview with imam Minkail 04.10.2019).

The second largest Muslim organisation in Poland, Muslim League (In Polish *Liga Muzułmańska*), that runs first purposed-build Mosque in Warsaw has mainly been an important meeting point for refugees and has been referring them to various actors of civil society dealing with support and integration of persons in a procedure or with international protection. One of the groups of refugees for whom the mosque serves as an important meeting and conversation place about their problems related to living in Poland are Tajik women linked with the banned in Tajikistan an-Nahda Party. According to the female manager of the mosque, some of these problems have to do with the fact that "In their country they were seen as terrorists and had to flee because of it, and here they often feel that they are also seen in this way" (Interview with AŁ 30.04.2019).

Refugees and Religion – Individual Perspective

The following part of this section of the report deals with the importance of religious identity for refugees in Poland along with their reaction to the socio-cultural realities of the highly religiously homogenous country, which has been characterised by the significant levels of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism.

In terms of religious identity, the RESPOND sample in Poland included 11 Muslims, 6 Christians and 2 agnostics. The rest of the respondents did not reveal their religious identities. One of our Chechen interviewees, for instance, stressed that for him this is deeply personal matter and said “*With regard to my religion, I don’t talk to anybody about it*” (PLMICH12). This might be one of the reasons why not all interviewees wished to reveal their religious identities. Another might be connected with the cost of openly associating with the stigmatised Muslim identity.

All of the interviewees who said that they were Muslims belonged to the Sunni branch of Islam and most commonly to Shafi school of thought within Islamic jurisprudence (madhab). The sample included both the persons very strongly identifying with their religion and claiming that it has a paramount importance in their life (religious Muslims), as well as, individuals for whom religion was more a socio-cultural milieu in which they were brought up but did not actively practice (cultural Muslims – see Pędziwiatr 2007, pp. 42–45). Some of the interviewees belonging to the first category were Chechens claimed similarly to the following interviewee that “*I get a great pleasure when I read Koran or pray to God, I really enjoy it*” (PIMICH14).

The sample also included interviewees who were less focused on religious matters, if interested in them at all. One of such interviewees, for example, said:

Actually, in documents I am Muslim, but in reality, I'm not so religious. I'm open-minded. I don't care a lot about this (PLMISY22).

Similarly, among the Christian refugees interviewed within RESPOND, we encountered persons for whom religion played an important role in their lives as well those for whom it was irrelevant or not important at all. Majority of them identified with various Christian Orthodox Churches and one with Catholic Church. They included persons for whom religion played very important role in their everyday life as, for example, for some of our Syrian and Georgian interviewees. One of them, for instance, said:

I believe in God very deeply. I don't go to church every weekend; I don't even pray. I don't remember when I lighted a candle for the last time. But, inside myself, I really believe in God (PLMIUK16).

One of our Syrian interviewees argued:

I'm Christian, but not too much Christian. I tried to go to the church a little with my ex-girlfriend. I tried to go to the church many times, but really, I was just sitting and not understanding anything, so it doesn't make sense for me to go (PLMISy21).

There were also persons not identifying with any religion. One of them, for example, argued: “*In terms of religion, I am an agnostic. In general, I don't believe in any religion*” (PLMISy23).

Importantly some of the interviewees stressed the transformation of their religiosity as a result of migration processes. One of them, for instance, said:

In Chechnya I didn't visit the mosque because I was afraid of Kadyrov's people who can blame you for some reason. They would see my long beard and make a problem. Here in Poland I feel free. I visit an Arabic mosque here and it's fine. God created man with beard and women without to distinguish them from each other. Here I became more religious (PLMICH14).

One of the important features of the country's religious landscape which has contributed to the religious transformation of the aforementioned interviewee was the freedom of religious practice and lack of fear that his practice may endanger him personally or his family as it does in his home country. Similarly to members of minority groups researched by Yang and Ebaugh (2001), this interviewee and a few others reported being more religious after settling in Poland than in their home countries.

For many of our interviewees from the micro level, religion has been playing an important role in the key existential meaning-making system and a resource from which they draw when facing with all kinds of problems, including psychological ones. It provides them with the sense of stability and continuity at the time when they are often deprived of these key elements of the psychological well-being. One of our interviewees, for example, argued that: "Yes, I am religious, my religion is Islam (...) We pray every day and do everything, what is necessary. No matter where you are, you should remember, who you are" (PLMICH02). Some of the important factors influencing the scale and pace of the transformation religiosity of migrants in new host countries, as noticed also by other scholars, (e.g. Yang and Ebaugh, 2001) include the size of migration community, the scale of its dispersion, its urban or rural character, expectations and intentions that its members associate with migration as well as social, cultural, political and legal environment in which they settle (Pędziwiatr, 2007).

The Muslims interviewed in the course of the research generally positively viewed their interactions with host society. Many of them, however, complained about the spread of anti-Muslim sentiments in the country. One of our Chechen respondents argued, for instance, that:

People in the West think that Islam is associated with violence, with terrorism, but Islam teaches that the main feature of a person is mercy. Muslims are loyal and friendly (PLMICH13).

The peaceful character of Islam was also stressed by other Muslim interviewees. One of them even included this element in his self-description saying "*I'm Sufi... I belong to 100 % peaceful category*" (PLMICH13).

Both our male and female Muslim interviewees mentioned several situations when they were made to feel that their religious identity was not welcomed. One of them, for instance, recounted the following story:

When I was working in security, I went to changing room and saw an inscription which was saying: Islam-free zone. I was shocked, especially as it seemed our team was very friendly. No negative signs were seen from their side. After, I called my friend who helped me to get this job and told him what saw. He called the boss and the boss came saying that he would not tolerate such behaviour. They said sorry and took those signs away (PLMICH15).

Muslim women wearing hijabs being "visibly Muslim" are particularly prone to various verbal or physical attacks. The example of one of our female Chechen interviewees shows,

however, that one does not need to wear hijab to be a victim of the anti-Muslim racism. She said:

I went to a doctor, a pediatrician and she asked me, if I was a Muslim. I said, that I was. She told me that in the old times Arabs kidnapped Polish women and raped them. I told her that Hitler was Catholic. She didn't like my reply and in the end she showed me an indecent gesture with her finger. She told me that she would treat my child only after I learn Polish (PLMICH02).

The same person later in the interview said: "*Usually people help me. (...) Maybe if I was wearing a hijab, they wouldn't*" (PLMICH02).

The public display of religiosity in the form of hijab has been mentioned also as "problematic" in Poland by some of our male interviewees. One of them said: "*My wife wears a headscarf and when she is alone, she sometimes hears unpleasant words*" (PLMICH14). Another interviewee in the same gist pointed out:

I'm afraid when my wife goes outside alone. I have heard that there are a lot of Nazis here and that someone spit on Muslim women. That's why she is at home all the time (PLMICH15).

In the case of the last interviewee, his fear of Islamophobia limited the scope of interaction of his wife with wider society.

The project data also shows that one does not need to be a Muslim, but it is enough to "look Muslim" to face some forms of macro aggressions linked with anti-Muslim racism. One of our Christian interviewees recounted:

I have my beard, my black beard, I'm going on the street and someone tells me 'Allah Akbar' or something. This is the only stuff that makes me feel that I'm not that welcome (PLMISy21).

As shown above religion plays an important role in the life of many beneficiaries of international protection in Poland. To some extent the fact that religion plays a significant role in the Polish public sphere facilitates the processes of integration through religious channels. Partially though politicisation of religion results in strengthening of prejudicial views on Islam and Muslims. In this process the religion of persons seeking asylum and beneficiaries of international protection is de-privatised against their will and viewed a paramount element of their identity. This may negatively impact their integration with the host society.

9. Citizenship, Belonging and Civic Participation

Citizenship, Belonging and Civic Participation of Refugees in Poland

This section of the report aims at presenting integration of refugees⁷⁴ in dimensions of citizenship, belonging and civic participation. Firstly, it portrays the legal framework of the access to citizenship and other rights for beneficiaries of international protection in Poland. Secondly, it presents civic participation of the mentioned group, and as such, involves findings from the meso- and micro-level interview analysis. Thirdly, it sheds light on challenges faced by refugees in belonging to Polish society. The analysis based on 16 meso-level interviews envisages the role of migrant organisations and other forms of refugees' participation in socio-political life in Poland. Findings from 30 micro-level interviews with forced migrants were grouped in the following themes: their involvement in associational life, their attitudes toward acquiring citizenship, their plans for the future, refugees' belonging in the host community, their participation in integrating activities and their understanding of integration.

Access to Citizenship

Naturalisation in Poland is regulated by the Law on Polish citizenship of 2 April 2009⁷⁵ (in short: Law on Polish Citizenship), which entered into force on 15 August 2012. According to this Law, Polish citizenship can be obtained through four ways:

- 1) by virtue of law;
- 2) by granting Polish citizenship;
- 3) by recognizing as a Polish citizen;
- 4) by restoring Polish citizenship (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 4).

With regard to beneficiaries of international protection, they can obtain Polish Citizenship through two procedures: by being granted citizenship by the Polish President (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 18) or by being recognized as a Polish citizen (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30).

Firstly, citizenship can be granted by the Polish President (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 18). Any foreigner can apply to President to be granted Polish citizenship and there are no specific conditions and criteria for obtaining citizenship in this procedure. A foreigner only has to submit a form with information about him or herself and justification, why he/she applies for Polish citizenship, to a Voivode or a Consul⁷⁶, who hands on the application to the President (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 19-21). In this procedure there is no criterion of knowledge of Polish language, however, the application form is in Polish and should be filled in in Polish. Submission of the application to a Voivode is free of charge, whereas in case of submitting it to a Consul, there is an administrative fee of EUR 360 (MSWiA, 2019b). The cost of proofreading of all documents into Polish has to be covered by an applicant. In this procedure, the President's refusal is a final decision and cannot be appealed.

⁷⁴ For the purpose of this section, the term refugees include mainly beneficiaries of international and national protection, but also, to a limited extent, asylum seekers.

⁷⁵ Ustawa z dnia 2 kwietnia 2009 r. o obywatelstwie polskim (Dz.U. 2012; poz. 161 z późn. zm.)

⁷⁶ Applies to those living abroad.

Secondly, a foreigner can be recognized as a Polish citizen if he or she fulfils criteria specified in law (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30). Both refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries have to obtain first a permanent residence permit (*zezwoleńie na pobyt stały*) or EU long-term residence permit in Poland. A permanent residence permit is granted to refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries on their motion, based on the fact whether they continuously stay in Poland for at least 5 years before the submission of the application. The asylum procedure is taken into account in this calculation (Law on Foreigners⁷⁷, 2013, Article 195(1)(6) and Article 195(3))⁷⁸.

A refugee who has been granted permanent residence permit and has been staying continuously on this basis in Poland for 2 more years can be recognized as a Polish citizen (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30(1)(3)). There is no similar rule concerning subsidiary protection beneficiaries. To be recognized as Polish citizens, they have to fulfil the same criteria as any other foreigner who obtained permanent residence permit or EU long-term residence permit in Poland (i.e. 2-3 years' stay in Poland on this basis or 10 years of legal stay in Poland independently of the basis of the stay, stable and regular sources of income, legal entitlement to stay in a residential property) (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30(1)(1), (2) and (6)).

Both refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries, to be recognized as a Polish citizen, have to prove that they know the Polish language (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30(2)). Foreigners should present a document confirming that they have either graduated from a Polish school or a school with Polish as a language of lectures, or that they have passed the state exam for Polish as a foreign language (at least at B1 level). Those examinations are organised approximately three times a year (before 2018 the frequency was twice a year) in bigger cities in Poland, and in Ukraine, Belarus and France. In 2020 they were scheduled to be held in Warsaw, Krakow, Gdańsk, Wrocław, Poznań, Katowice, Lublin, Łódź, Rzeszów, Opole, Bielsko-Biała, Białystok, Bydgoszcz, Chełm, Przemyśl and Słupsk. The fee for the exam is EUR 150, plus EUR 20 for issuing a certificate ("Certyfikatpolski.pl," 2020), which is quite high and adding the costs of transportation to the city of the exam, can be an obstacle to naturalisation.

Other obstacles to naturalisation through recognition as a Polish citizen are in particular, difficulties with providing a legal entitlement in writing to stay in a residential property (e.g. owners often do not want to sign a rental agreement, prefer oral agreements) and difficulties with obtaining civil registration documents from a country of origin (Kaźmierkiewicz, 2019a, p. 25).

Applications for being recognized as a Polish citizen are submitted to Voivode who has jurisdiction over their current place of stay (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 36(1)). The fee for the decision of granting citizenship is 219 PLN (around 50 EUR). The Voivode decision can be appealed to the Minister of Internal Affairs (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 10(4)). In theory, the procedure should last up to two months, but in practice it often lasts longer (AIDA, n.d.).

The Law on Polish Citizenship of 2009 substantially changed the provisions on acquisition of Polish citizenship by a foreigner. Under the previous Law on Polish citizenship of 1962, it

⁷⁷ Law of 12 December 2013 on foreigners (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 35 with amendments) (Ustawa z dnia 12 grudnia 2013 r. o cudzoziemcach (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 35)).

⁷⁸ Law of 2 April 2009 on Polish citizenship (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 347) (Ustawa z dnia 2 kwietnia 2009 r. o obywatelstwie polskim (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 347)).

was the President (before 1990 - Council of State)⁷⁹ who most often decided on granting citizenship and, in principle, the President could grant citizenship to a person who had lived in Poland for at least 5 years on the basis of a permanent residence permit (Law on Polish Citizenship, Article 8)⁸⁰. The Law of 1962 also stipulated that the condition of permanent residence could be omitted in particularly justified cases. In practice, the decision of the President was discretionary and the citizenship could be granted to anyone he wanted. There were cases of granting Polish citizenship by the president in a very short time to football players who were associated with Poland only through football clubs, and the main premise for granting them Polish citizenship was the fact of their appointment to the national team⁸¹.

On the other hand, under the previous regulations, recognition of a foreigner as a Polish citizen by a Voivode applied only to stateless persons and persons without a determined citizenship. There was also a condition of living in Poland for at least 5 years on the basis of a permanent residence permit (Law on Polish Citizenship, 1962, Article 9).

In addition, in the light of the new regulations, granting Polish citizenship or recognition as a Polish citizen do not require renouncing previous citizenship, which could be possible according to the previous law (Law on Polish Citizenship, 1962, Article 8 (3), Article 10(2) and Article 11(2)). On the other hand, the new law sets out certain conditions impeding the acquisition of citizenship, such as the need to prove having means of subsistence without the need for social assistance and a legal title to the accommodation they live (although they do not apply to refugees, they apply to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and national protection) (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30(1)). Another impediment is the requirement of the knowledge of Polish language (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30(2)).

Under the current Law on Polish Citizenship, the President still grants Polish citizenship at his discretion, while with respect to the Voivode, the catalogue of cases in which he recognizes a foreigner as a Polish citizen has been significantly expanded (see Table 6).

Table 6 Procedures of recognition as a Polish citizen and granting Polish citizenship before and after 15 August 2012

	Law on Polish Citizenship of 15 February 1962	Law on Polish Citizenship of 2 April 2009
Granting Polish citizenship by a President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirement of residency in Poland for at least 5 years (in special cases there is a possibility of omitting this condition) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No condition of residency in Poland for a specific time span No requirement to submit an evidence of loss or exemption from foreign

⁷⁹Since 1952 until 1989 the Council of State of the Republic of Poland was a collective head of state organ. The Council of State consisted of seventeen people: the chairman, four deputy chairmen, the secretary, and eleven other members.

⁸⁰ Law of 15 February 1962 on Polish Citizenship (Ustawa z dnia 15 lutego 1962 r. o obywatelstwie polskim (Dz.U. 1962 nr 10 poz. 49 z późn. zm.))

⁸¹There were the cases of citizens of France - Ludovic Obraniak and Damien Perquis, citizens of Germany: Adam Matuszczyk and Eugen Polanski,, Emmanuel Olisadebe of Nigerian origin and Taras Romanczuk of Ukrainian origin.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be required to submit an evidence of loss or exemption from foreign citizenship • Decision of the President is discretionary, there is no requirement of justification, and it cannot be appealed 	<p>citizenship (a possibility of holding dual citizenship)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision of the President is discretionary, there is no requirement of justification, and it cannot be appealed
Recognition as a Polish citizen by a <u>Voivode</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies to a foreigner with undetermined citizenship or stateless person • Requirement of residency in Poland for at least 5 years • Possibility of appealing against the decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies to every foreigner (including stateless person) • Requirement of residency in Poland for a specific time span after receiving permanent residency permit, depending on the category of foreigners (it can be 1 year – for those who obtained a Pole's Card (Karta Polaka)⁸², 2 years – for refugees, stateless people and foreigners married to a Polish citizen for at least 3 years; 3 years for others) or requirement of 10 years of continued residency in Poland for those who received a permanent residency permit⁸³; • Requirement of knowledge of Polish language; • Possibility of appealing against the decision.

The new Law on Polish Citizenship of 2009 has raised some controversies. Changes regarding the institution of recognition as a Polish citizen became the subject of a complaint addressed to the Constitutional Tribunal by the former President Lech Kaczyński in 2009. Such

⁸² Pole's Card (in Polish: Karta Polaka) is a document confirming belonging to the Polish Nation. The Pole's Card may be given to individuals who declare their belonging to the Polish nation and prove their attachment to Polish culture and traditions, and who do not have prior Polish citizenship or permission to reside in Poland. It was established by the Act on the Pole's Card of 7 September 2007 (Law of 7 September 2007 on the Pole's Card (Ustawa z dnia 7 września 2007 r. o Karcie Polaka (Dz.U. 2007 Nr 180 poz. 1280 z późn. zm))).

⁸³ Except for children to whom apply different regulations.

a significant modification of the institution of recognition as a Polish citizen raised many doubts as to the compliance of the provisions of the new act with the Constitution, and above all, with the belief expressed that the granting of Polish citizenship by the President of the Republic of Poland is the basic procedure for acquiring citizenship, and the institution of recognition as proposed by the Act leads to the erosion of this presidential prerogative and reduces its real practical significance. Finally, on 18 January 2012 the Constitutional Tribunal ruled that granting citizenship and recognition as a Polish citizen are two significantly different and non-competitive ways of obtaining Polish citizenship. As the Tribunal emphasized, the new Law on Polish Citizenship is a manifestation of the "open vision of Polish citizenship" (OTK-A 2012/1/5, 2012).

Naturalisation Statistics

Numbers of foreigners who have acquired Polish citizenship either by being recognized as a Polish citizen by Voivode or by being granted Polish citizenship by the President increased from 2,361 in 2011 to 6,450 in 2019 (Table 7). The data cannot be easily juxtaposed with the statistics of granting a refugee status or other types of protection, since acquiring citizenship by the persons with mentioned statuses usually takes at least 7 years (for refugees) or 10 years (for persons with other types of protection).

One commonly used indicator is the 'naturalisation rate', defined as the ratio between the total number of citizenships granted and the stock of non-national residents at the beginning of the same year. In 2017, Poland had naturalisation rate⁸⁴ of 2%, which positioned the country in the middle among the EU member states (Eurostat, 2020).

Table 7 Acquisition of Polish citizenship in 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total 2011- 2019
Recognized as Polish citizens by Voivode	37	339	1832	1881	1639	1390	2656	3257	4293	17324
Being granted Polish citizenship by a President	2324	2456	2418	2637	2413	2739	1637	1972	2157	20753
Total	2361	2795	4250	4518	4052	4129	4293	5229	6450	38077

Source: data received by the RESPOND team from the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, 2020

There are no statistics depicting the actual numbers of beneficiaries of international protection who acquired Polish citizenship. The Central Registry of Data on the Acquisition and Loss of Polish Citizenship does not contain information on the legal basis of the applicant's stay on the territory of Poland (permission obtained), as well as information on whether the foreigner is covered by various forms of international protection (refugee, person under subsidiary protection or temporary protection). However, it was possible to obtain the data

⁸⁴ Naturalisation rate - calculated as the share of foreign citizens acquiring the citizenship of a state in relation to the total number of foreign citizens resident in the same state.

about the number of persons with a refugee status recognized as Polish citizens by a Voivode, on the basis of the procedure stipulated in the Article 30(1)(3) of the Law on Polish Citizenship⁸⁵ since 2012, that is the year of entering the Law into force (see Table 8).

Table 8 Number of refugees who were recognized as Polish citizens in 2012-2019

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total 2012- 2019
Number of persons	0	0	16	18	31	18	59	20	162

Source: data received by the RESPOND team from the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, 2020

Due to the fact that the procedure stipulated by the Article 30(1)(3) of the Law on Polish Citizenship is intended for refugees, the above presented data does not include persons with other types of protection who acquired citizenship. In addition, it only shows the number of refugees who were granted Polish citizenship by Voivode, and does not include number of those who were granted citizenship by the President.

Another source of data, the Office for Foreigners, can be helpful to determine the previous nationality of beneficiaries of international protection, who acquired Polish citizenship (see Table 9). However, the below statistics do not match the one obtained from the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. As explained by an employee of the Office for Foreigners, the Office receives the information about changing the legal status of a person with a delay of a couple of months or even years after acquiring Polish citizenship.

Table 9 Number of persons who were deprived of an international protection status (or the decision of the granting the status has expired) with relation to obtaining Polish citizenship in 2011-2019

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	201 1	201 2	201 3	201 4	201 5	201 6	201 7	201 8	201 9	Total 2011- 2019
Afghanistan	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-		11
Belarus	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	2	7
Ethiopia	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-		1
India	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-		1
Iraq	-	-	-	-	4	5	-	-		9
Cameroon	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		1
Liberia	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-		1
Moldova	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		1
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-		2

⁸⁵ A refugee who has been granted permanent residence permit and stays continuously on this basis in Poland for 2 more years can be recognised as a Polish citizen (Law on Polish Citizenship, 2009, Article 30(1)(3)).

Russia	1	3	-	-	-	3	-	1	2	10
Rwanda	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		2
Serbia	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-		1
Somalia	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-		1
Turkey	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1		1
Turkmenistan									1	1
Total	3	5	1	1	16	10	3	4	5	50

Source: data received by the RESPOND team from the Office for Foreigners, 2020

Access to Rights Without Formal Citizenship

With regard to rights of beneficiaries of international (refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary protection) and national protection, the situation of foreigners depends on the type of protection granted to them. The widest catalogue of rights is vested in persons who were granted a refugee status or subsidiary protection. The persons with the mentioned types of protection have the following rights:

- the right to reside in Poland (they receive a residence card),
- the right to work and do business on the same terms as Polish citizens,
- the right to benefit from social assistance and family benefits,
- the right to health insurance,
- the right to integration assistance within Individual Integration Programme (IIP),
- the right to study in primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and higher education on the same terms as Polish citizens,
- the right to family reunification.

With respect to personal rights and freedoms in Poland, they are generally considered to pertain to all persons, regardless of their nationality. As stipulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997, all foreigners can basically enjoy constitutionally guaranteed “freedom to express opinions” (Art. 54), “freedom of peaceful assembly” (Art. 57) and “freedom of association” (Art. 58). There is only one provision in the Constitution related to the mentioned rights which applies only to Polish citizens – prohibition of expatriation (of expulsion and of prohibition of a return to the country) of a Polish citizen (Constitution, 1997, Article 52(4)).

Nevertheless, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection cannot be expelled from Poland and cannot be given a decision to leave the territory of Poland (Law on Protection, Article 89g (1)) in any circumstances, except from posing a serious threat to national security or public order, as stipulated by the Geneva Convention related to the status of refugees (Geneva Convention, 1951, Article 32 (1) and 33 (2))⁸⁶.

With relation to political freedoms and rights, there are many differences between a beneficiary of international or national protection and a citizen of Poland. The first considers right to vote and to stand in elections, which is, in general, a right of a Polish citizen. It has to be added that the right to vote in local elections in Poland is also given to all citizens of the European Union. Their voting rights are limited to voting for community/municipality council

⁸⁶ The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951.

and for city mayors/community heads (Electoral Code, 2011, Article 10 and 11)⁸⁷. In addition, another right reserved only for Polish citizens is to work in public service (Constitution, 1997, Article 60). Furthermore, only citizens have the right to obtain information on the activities of public authorities and persons discharging public functions (Constitution, 1997, Article 61).

As a freedom pertaining to all individuals, the Constitution also includes the freedom of association (Constitution, 1997, Article 61). In case of foreigners, constitutional freedom of association is limited due to the nature of the association. Whereas foreigners can be members of trade unions, associations, foundations, employers' organizations and other organizations, they cannot join political parties, which associate only Polish citizens on a voluntary and equal basis⁸⁸. The rights of foreigners with regards to association can primarily be exercised by joining associations and establishing them. However, the latter is reserved only for residents of Poland (Rzetecka-Gil, 2017).

Constitutional guarantee of freedom of association is realized by the Law on Associations of 7 April 1989⁸⁹, which defines an association as a "voluntary, self-governed and permanent organization, set up for non-profit purposes" (Art. 2(1)). Under this Law, while all foreigners may join existing associations (as long as their statutes allow this), only residents of Poland may form such associations (Law on Associations, 1989, Article 4). However, the term "associate" used in the Law is imprecise and could be understood narrowly to mean, "participate in" rather than "establish". This restriction was criticized as unduly limiting the application of the constitutional norm and in contravention of the European Convention of Human Rights. A draft bill of the amended Law on Associations, submitted on 4 November 2010 by a group of senators aimed to remove this restriction. The draft made no distinction between foreigners and nationals, extending the right to all physical and legal persons, in the scope envisioned by the Civil Code. However, following severe criticism from the civil society, the draft was withdrawn by the initiators on 3 March 2011 (Każmierkiewicz and Frelak, 2011, p. 4).

The Foundations Act states that foundations may be established by natural persons (or legal entities) irrespective of their nationality or migrant status. In addition, all the legally employed in Poland - including foreigners, irrespective of nationality and/or length of stay in Poland - have the right to form trade unions and belong to them. The issue of the freedom of assembly is similar - the only contraindication is disturbing public order. Despite these rights, migrants are not commonly present as a group in trade unions⁹⁰ in Poland, and they rarely establish their own organizations (in particular associations).

The other onerousness stems from the limited right of beneficiaries of international protection to travel abroad. Refugees are entitled to a Geneva passport, a travel document issued by the country of protection instead of a traditional national passport (Geneva Convention, 1951, Article 28). Holders of Geneva passport are not entitled to the protection

⁸⁷ Law of 5 January 2011 on Election Code (Ustawa z dnia 5 stycznia 2011 r. Kodeks wyborczy (Dz. U. Nr 21, poz. 112 z późn. zm))

⁸⁸ According to art. 11 of the Constitution and art. 2 of the Law of 27 June 1997 on Political Parties (Ustawa z dnia 27 czerwca 1997 r. o partiach politycznych).

⁸⁹ Law of 7 April 1989 on Associations (Ustawa z dnia 7 kwietnia 1989 r. Prawo o stowarzyszeniach (Dz.U. 1989 nr 20 poz. 104. z późn. zm.).

⁹⁰ However, due to the increased migration of Ukrainians to Poland witnessed for the last years, Ukrainians started to join or create their own trade unions. An example of such activity is All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ), under which a small organisation –the Inter-Company Trade Union of Ukrainian Workers in Poland – has been active (Mikulska-Jolles, 2019, p. 24)..

provided to the citizens by the embassies and consulates of the country, which issued the document (Kowalczyk, 2014, p. 354). With respect to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, they are not entitled to Geneva passport. Instead, they can apply for issuing a Polish travel document but only if, firstly, a person lost his/her passport, if his/her passport was damaged or if the passport has expired and secondly, if it is not possible to obtain a new passport from the authorities of the country of origin (Białas et al., 2016).

In addition to the international forms of protection, there are three types considered as national types of protection in Poland: an asylum (stipulated by the Constitution and the Law on Protection)⁹¹, a permit for stay due to humanitarian reasons and a permit for tolerated stay (regulated in the Law on Foreigners) (Pachocka and Sobczak Szelc, 2020; Szulecka et al., 2018a, pp. 50–51).

A foreigner who is granted an asylum status is permitted to settle permanently in Poland. That is to receive a permanent residency card, which gives him/her the following rights:

- the right to reside in Poland (they receive a residence card),
- the right to work and do business on the same terms as Polish citizens,
- the right to benefit from social assistance and family benefits,
- the right to health insurance,
- the right to study in primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and higher education on the same terms as Polish citizens.

In addition, there are two other types of protection: a permit for stay due to humanitarian reasons and a permit for tolerated stay which are perceived as national forms of protection, although they are regulated in the Law on Foreigners (Szulecka et al., 2018a, pp. 50–51).

As compared to international forms of protection, holders of the above-mentioned permits have reduced access to social assistance. They may work in Poland or run their own business, but they cannot access any support in terms of integration or adaptation to the Polish labour market, from which the beneficiaries of international protection may benefit.⁹² The permits are valid for 2 years. They may be prolonged, if there are still reasons to protect the foreigner from being returned to his or her country of origin. Whereas the permit for stay due to humanitarian reasons allows the holder to cross borders (with passports of their countries of origin or with the Polish travel document mentioned above), crossing borders is not possible with a permit for tolerated stay. The protective dimension of these permits should be mostly understood as preventing foreigners from having to return to their country of origin, since their return could cause harm to their family rights or their children's rights (Szulecka et al., 2018a, pp. 50–51). In addition, rights to use social assistance by persons with a tolerated or humanitarian stay permit are limited to those in the form of shelter, meals, necessary clothes and purposeful allowance (Gwiazda et al., 2010). Their right to free education applies only to the extent it applies to all foreigners residing in Poland and does not include tuition free study at universities (Pachocka et al., 2020, p. 50).

⁹¹ The number of people who received asylum in Poland in the last twenty years until 2014 was small - it was literally several people a year. This instrument gained importance in the years 2015–2016 when a total of 110 people received it, including 109 citizens of Ukraine (Górny et al., 2017, p. 11).

⁹² See more in Labour Market Section of this report.

In conclusion, beneficiaries of international protection have similar economic, social and cultural rights to citizens of Poland. They can also enjoy almost equal personal freedoms and rights, although some asymmetry exists. With respect to personal freedoms, the asymmetry in rights is built upon a possibility of expulsion (even if treated as an exception by both, Geneva Convention and Law on International Protection) and impediments to travel abroad stemming from the fact that Geneva passport or a national Travel Document are not universally recognised. With respect to beneficiaries of national protection, the rights of people who were granted a political asylum are similar to rights of refugees, whereas rights of those with tolerated or humanitarian stay are limited, especially in terms of access to social assistance. However, the most substantial differences between citizens and non-citizens exist in the access to political rights.

In Poland, the possibilities of beneficiaries of international and national protection participation in political life are very limited, and Polish law is one of the most restrictive in Europe. The MIPEX III project, assessing the possibilities of participation of foreigners in this aspect of life, confirmed this observation and classified Poland in the penultimate place out of 31 examined countries. Poland has neither signed, nor ratified any of the chapters of the Council of Europe Convention on the participation of foreigners in public life at local level. In Poland, the right to vote is vested only in citizens of Poland (in all elections and referendums) and the European Union (only in local elections and local referendums). The possibility of establishing political parties and belonging to them is also an exclusive right of Polish citizens. In consequence, the parties rarely include issues important to immigrants in their programs. Moreover, at present foreigners are not actively encouraged to participate in the political life of Poland. Until recently, foreigners themselves rarely publicly expressed their desire to have such rights. A sign of some positive change was the document 'Poland's migration policy - current state and postulated actions' of 2012, which emphasized the possibility of starting a debate on granting foreigners registered for permanent residence the right to vote at the local level in Poland. However, the mentioned document together with plans of widening political rights of immigrants, was revoked in 2016.

The Role of Migrant Organisations and other Forms of Refugees' Participation in Socio-Political Life in Poland – Meso-Level Perspective

Non-governmental organizations complement the state's activity towards beneficiaries of international protection, since together with asylum seekers and all other forced migrants they constitute the category requiring the greatest scope of assistance. Social organisations provide forced migrants with various types of support - from ad-hoc direct assistance to struggles to influence the system of reception and adaptation shaped in Poland. In some situations direct assistance means providing accommodation, providing school layettes or cleaning supplies, as well as satisfying other basic material needs. An important role is played by organizations providing free legal assistance, especially important when dealing with difficult administrative duties by those with limited knowledge of Polish. Despite the help provided by the state - as part of IIP, implemented by poviats family support centres - NGOs also support the process of integration of forced migrants in Poland by organizing Polish language courses or vocational training. In addition, NGOs are actively involved in activities to improve the system of reception and adaptation of forced migrants in Poland - both through consultation and monitoring of the

implementation of legal acts, as well as through research on refugees (Pawlak and Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2015, p. 14).

The geographical range of NGOs dealing with the issues of forced migrants residing in Poland varies according to the territorial distribution of foreigners. Almost half of the foreigners living in Poland stay in the Warsaw agglomeration. With regard to beneficiaries of international protection, their geographical distribution can be only estimated, since the information of their place of residence is not registered and they have freedom to choose their place of living guaranteed by the Constitution (Article 52(1)). Most NGOs operating in the broadly understood migration field are located in the Warsaw agglomeration. Apart from Warsaw, there are also other cities, namely Cracow, Lublin, Białystok, Wrocław, Gdańsk and Poznań, which should also be mentioned as centres with higher activity of third sector. Many social organizations, especially those targeting forced migrants, extend their range of activities outside their home cities - their place of business is a result of the policy of the Office for Foreigners, that accommodates foreigners applying for international protection in secluded locations outside the cities. Similarly, detention centres for foreigners run by the Border Guard - for logistical reasons – are mostly located close to national borders (Pachocka et al., 2020; Pawlak and Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2015, p. 17).

In Poland, there are more than forty migrant organisations (Dragan, 2017). In the literature “migrant organisation” is broadly defined as “a group in support of immigrants’ social, cultural, or political interests” (Huddleston and Tjaden, 2012). Often these organisations are defined on the basis of the background of the founders or members of the board, also called self-organisations or self-initiatives (organisations established by immigrants) (Van Dam, 2016, p. 11). In Poland, “migrant organization” is defined according to a broad sense and, to some extent, is socially constructed. It is worth noting that migrant organizations in Poland have “friends” of a given immigrant group among board members, co-founders or members of the association. These friends are Poles who help in registering the organization and in other contacts with the state apparatus. It can be said that some Polish entities are intuitively referred to as migrant organizations, although they do not have immigrant founders or members (Pawlak and Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2015, p. 16).

One of the main tasks of migrant organisations are actions to eliminate the barriers that migrants (including refugees) encounter on the path of integration with Polish society. Non-governmental organizations also take actions to prepare the Polish society for receiving foreigners. Only some migrant organisations are focused on beneficiaries of international protection, whereas majority of them support immigrants in general (Mikulska-Jolles, 2019).

Participation in Consultative Bodies on a Local Level

Another form of political and social participation in the hosting country is engagement in consultative bodies. In the Polish institutional system there is no official consultative body or dialogue platform at the national level that is made up of representatives of migrant associations or Polish non-governmental organisations dealing with immigrant issues. However, such bodies are present at the local level in some Polish cities: Warsaw, Gdańsk, Cracow, Lublin, and Wrocław.

In Warsaw, there is the Sectoral Social Dialogue Commission on Foreigners at the Warsaw Town Hall. The Sectoral Social Dialogue Commission on Foreigners, which has been active since 2012, is composed of – in addition to local government representatives – representatives

of NGOs, including migrant organisations. The commission is empowered to identify areas that should be supported financially by the city, providing expert opinions on legal acts and consultation on documents regarding immigration. The most important achievement in the field of cooperation between the city and NGOs is the establishment of the Multicultural Centre in Warsaw, which is currently the main space for actions aimed at enhancing integration (cultural projects, language training, and serving as an entry point for regularisation of stay applications). The main contributor to its establishment was the Other Space Foundation, which had piloted the Multicultural Centre in Warsaw and, together with other agents, founded the Multicultural Centre Foundation managing the centre in the period 2014–2017. Since May 2017, the centre's hosts have been the Pro Humanum Association and the Foundation for Somalia. In addition to providing funds for the centre, the city of Warsaw also supports the activities of migrant NGOs (such as legal and integration counselling) and the education of foreign students (Mikulska-Jolles, 2019, p. 19).

The Commission's role in identification of areas, which should be financially supported, was confirmed by one of our respondents, a representative of a Local Governor:

The Commission is a body aimed to cooperate with the city, to give opinions on various types of documents, projects, and to recommend what actions should be taken by the city. For example, these recommendations look like we want to announce a competition of offers, we don't have specific needs. NGOs tell us that there is a need of anti-discrimination counselling, for example. Then, the Commission works on this competition announcement, consults it. The final competition is, of course, published. What is very important - organizations are invited to the jury, which then evaluates such offers (PLMZLG2).

However, the same respondent also pointed out some difficulties in cooperation with NGOs on consulting legal changes stemming from the fact that each organisation has its own specific mission and aims and it cannot bend them so as not to risk the interests of their clients:

We had such practices of consulting documents; even to this day the Ministries send some documents to the CDS [Commission of Social Dialogue]. However, these works have not always been easy, because the more organizations, the more voices. Sometimes there were situations when an organisation did not want to join public consultation of a document, because it wanted to give its voice in the consultation in her own name and it did not want to sign something that would be contrary to her position. Very often these discussions blurred (PLMZLG2).

The mentioned Multicultural Centre attracts foreigners with various legal statuses who often do internship or volunteering there. The latter may sometimes end in employment. The Centre is a place, which engages beneficiaries of international protection in its integration activities as well.. As noted by our respondent, by involving migrants, the Centre may facilitate the integration process:

There is a refugee. Or people seeking protection. So such people, these forced migrants operate there. There is one person there who, as a volunteer, practically did not speak Polish. I don't remember what country he is from. I would add that he speaks seven other languages. He's been there a few months and he's making progress. He found a place for himself, finds himself in it and he is there all the time. For refugees it can be a form of integration. Absolutely (PLMZLG2).

In addition to consulting migrant organisations implemented by Warsaw, in 2016 the City of Gdańsk reported the appointment of Poland's first local Immigrant Council. Twelve residents of foreigners' origin in Gdańsk (Chechnya, Colombia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Palestine, Russia, Syria, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan and Tunisia) advise the Mayor and other local authorities on issues and policies related to migrant and refugee integration. To represent the immigrant population in its variety, the selected volunteers have different backgrounds, education levels, and religious beliefs, and include four women. Professionally, the group counts a doctor, a PhD student, an activist, a social worker, a journalist, an entrepreneur, etc. What they have in common is their willingness to live, work and raise their children in Gdańsk (European Commission, 2016b).

In Cracow, a platform for cooperation between the representatives of minorities, foreigners and local authorities – the Interdisciplinary Cooperation Team for the Execution of the “Open Cracow” Scheme – has been established. The “Open Cracow” scheme has been in operation since 2016. Several priority areas have been identified in which concrete actions are taken. One of them is equal access to municipal services and benefits, which is to be ensured by, among others, the activities of the Foreigners Information Point (currently run by the Foundation of Polish–Ukrainian Cooperation “U-WORK”), welcome packages for foreigners, and multiculturalism training for employees. Moreover, responsive mechanisms for discriminatory and racist incidents, including racist slogans and graphics, are being implemented (Mikulska-Jolles, 2019, p. 19).

Another city, Lublin, has set up and implemented the “Lublin for Everyone” project, leading to the creation of a Participatory Cultural Diversity Management Scheme and the introduction of the “Faces of Lublin – Lublin for Everyone” social campaign. In addition to local authorities and public institutions, representatives of minorities from Lublin, as well as NGOs (Homo Faber, Association for Earth, the Rule of Law Institute Foundation, Volunteering Centre and Caritas) have contributed to the creation of the scheme. All the above-mentioned agents form the Integration Support Group as well (Mikulska-Jolles, 2019, p. 19).

The last example of inclusion of migrant organisations in consultancy at the local level is the Intercultural Dialogue Council established in the city of Wrocław in the Office of the President. The Council is composed of national and ethnic groups indicated in the draft strategy, the team of the Wrocław City Council with their thematic teams, NGOs, business, media, police, and universities. The aim of the mentioned body is to indicate problems encountered by, for example, people of foreign origin or of different religion, also those socially excluded due to disability, poverty or previous conflicts with the law. In addition, it has to formulate needs - e.g. towards city authorities or municipal services – in favour of specific groups, culturally different environments, living in Wrocław and the agglomeration, permanently or temporarily (Wieliczko, 2017).

What is significant, inclusion of migrants in consultancy in the local governance could not be possible without lobbying for such a solution by social organisations. Whereas all above mentioned cities empowered migrant organisation with the possibility of consultancy, only Gdańsk included the actual migrants (and refugees) in advisory board. As a practitioner from a social organisation told us, lack of migrants in consultative bodies can be caused by the fact that migrant organisations consider themselves as a representation of migrants' interests and, as such, act on behalf of migrants:

Certainly it is a bit so that through the participation of refugees in NGOs, through the fact that they are employed as mentors or in other positions, these people are often mediators

[of refugees' interests] but it is not formalized in any way that we comprise some board consisting of representatives of these communities. I think sometimes we talk about it. At the organizational level, it is quite obvious that migrants should be included in these discussions about issues, which concern them. But this is not obvious for decision makers at all. It's not like we know better what's best for them (PLMZSO1).

To conclude, participation of migrants, in general, and refugees, in particular, in consultative bodies at the central and local government in Poland is very limited. Whereas there is no such a consultative body at the national level, some big cities like Gdańsk, Warsaw, Wrocław, Lublin, Cracow have started to include either migrant organisations (pertains to all mentioned cities) or migrants themselves (only Gdańsk) in consulting decision related to integration or, more broadly, social cohesion of the city. This practice is in line with the recent phenomenon of taking over responsibility of migrant and host society integration by local governments in a way of filling a void caused by lack of integration strategy at the national level.

Refugees' Experiences and Perceptions - Civic Participation and Belonging of Refugees from the Micro-Level Perspective

The following section aims at presenting our micro-level respondents' (both, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection) experiences and perceptions towards their participation in political, social and cultural life of Poland. The findings are presented through the prism of a broad definition of citizenship, which is understood not just as a set of legal rights and duties, but also as a form of belonging (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 2006), particularly for migrant groups (e.g. Castles and Davidson, 2000; Reed-Danahay, D., Brettell, C.B., 2008). Despite the fact that many existing studies of belonging, and perception of belonging by refugees are limited (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644), it gained some attention among researchers after 2015 (i.e. Mitchell et al., 2019). Here, we look at lived relationships and conceptions of citizenship for refugees in Poland to enhance our understanding of the interplay between integration policies, religiosity, notions of European-ness and belonging.

Civic Participation of Refugees

Civic participation in a broad meaning can be defined as any individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern (Anheier and Toepler, 2010). For the purpose of this report, basing on our micro-level interviews, we indicated the following forms of civic participation of refugees: involvement in associational life, engagement in social organisations' activities, and showing interest in news in Poland and in a country of origin.

With regard to refugees' involvement in associational life in Poland, as our meso- and micro-level interviews showed, refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, if worked for an NGO, mostly did it on a voluntary basis. But it cannot be perceived as a common practice. Out of our 30 micro-level respondents, only one Chechen man was engaged in volunteering for an NGO. In general, the level of public activity of migrants or their level of involvement in associations in Poland is low. Beneficiaries of international protection are members of just a couple of social organisations: Association of Refugees in Poland, Foundation Ocalenie, Foundation Free Syria, Foundation for Somalia, Foundation Multiocalenie, Foundation Sintar of Issa Adayev, Chechen Diaspora in Poland (Każmierkiewicz, 2019b, p. 60).

With respect to self-organisation of migrants in Poland, it has been expanding recently, as admitted by one of our respondents from a social organisation:

As we speak about integration, we can actually say that we have an increasingly strong migrant environment; typically migrant, identity-related non-governmental organizations have emerged. They are not only organisation which support migrants, but they are identity organizations, just like organizations where people with disabilities organize themselves, LGBTQ people, women, independent parents. The same here for migrants and refugees, they have started organizing themselves (PLMZSO5).

The mentioned self-organisation or active participation in social organisations is a feature of long-residing, or better, of settled migrants:

Those who actively contribute are people who have been in Poland for a long time. It can be said that they are integrated. As for new migrants, they are often people from Ukraine. It's just that they appear and disappear. I don't know what is the reason of this (PLMZLG2).

The latter observation is a good explanation of relatively weak self-organisation or participation in social organisations of our micro-level respondents. All of them arrived in Poland after 2011, and the vast majority of them came after 2014, so a period of six years or shorter is probably too soon for them to start social activity. The other, better explanation is that beneficiaries of international protection in Poland struggle with daily life difficulties, like earning enough money to survive, finding accommodation they can afford, finding a job, etc., and self-organisation or social activity is not on their lists of first needs. Another reason can be psychological factors behind their eagerness to involve in civic participation.

Nevertheless, self-organisation of beneficiaries of international protection can be facilitated by existing NGOs. An example of such facilitation is a Refugee Self-Help Centre (SINTAR) established by refugees of Chechen origin and the Other Space Foundation in cooperation with the Institute of Culture of Caucasian Nations. The aim of the Centre is to increase refugees' levels of self-reliance in order to facilitate their integration. The Centre focuses on cultural and civic education: organising Polish and Chechen language and history classes, English language courses, vainakh dance, drama and art workshops, computer classes, etc. (Stefańska, 2015, pp. 23–24). Another example is Foundation for Somalia, established and run by refugees. Apart from the different project carried out by the Foundation, it provides a space for assistance and information exchange for the asylum seekers and refugees who try to navigate in the new Polish reality.

Our meso- and micro-level data showed that beneficiaries of international protection occasionally participate in cultural activities offered by NGO's or other institutions focused on integration. An example of such an institution which attracts both migrants and Poles, is the Multicultural Centre in Warsaw mentioned in the previous section:

In my opinion, what is a good practice and what works in this period is to focus primarily on those who live in the nearby area. People from outside come here, there are various social spaces in the neighbourhood such as a library, a club on the other side of the Vistula, centres for seniors. If only someone walks a little and talks to everyone – you just have to go and talk to everyone, not just hang the poster. I know that this new operator did so. It attracts people. The truth is that local people like these types of events, like join cooking, a multicultural Christmas Eve when you can come and listen, and eat. I think that this is not bad, because it may be the first step that needs to be made. It is

activating for foreigners because they can participate in an integrating activity, not just in a once closed for their group, but we do something together. It does not have to be cooking Ukrainian dumplings, but we can make dumplings from around the world. We want to go in this direction (PLMZLG2).

Although none of our micro-level respondents was a member of social organisation, some of them admitted to participate in NGO's activities, but rather as guests than organisers:

Social grassroots' activities - yes sometimes. From time to time I'm always keen as much as possible. But not so, so, in its wide sense of the word. There are small and limited activities. [it is directed to] foreigners and locals, including children (PLMISy23).

The community of Sant'Egidio, they make social activities for Poles. The Polish people in Sant'Egidio invite us and we go. This is the only social activity that we do (PLMISy24).

We were also learning Polish in this foundation of Somalis and sometimes they are preparing some parties or events. It is something human for people from another country. We were also participating in these events; it is something cultural bringing food from, for example, our culture, typical dishes, watching some documentaries about culture, things like this (PLMISy25).

The common characteristic of the above quoted respondents who participated in NGO's social activities is that they all came from Syria and they have already received a refugee or other type of international protection status and the latter seems to encourage them to participate in social activity in Poland.

Despite the fact that our respondents were not involved in political activity in Poland, which in fact is possible only after acquiring citizenship, majority of them declared they follow the news in both Poland and their countries of origin. However, the interest in political, social and economic situation in Poland was much stronger and more frequent than in the countries of origin.

With regard to the news in the host country, respondents seemed to be interested particularly in news related to the situation of foreigners. For instance, one of the respondents, while being asked whether he was interested in what the politicians say in Poland, replied: *"Yes, I wonder, what they say about foreigners"* (PLMICH02). The interest of other Chechen respondents in the news in Poland, if existed, resulted from their expectations of staying and living in Poland, whereas following the news in Russia and Chechnya was related to their bonding with their homeland (PLMICH10, PLMICH15 and PLMICH03). The following statement presents a good example of the mentioned observation:

As long as I live here, I'm interested in the future of this country. I don't want something wrong or bad to happen in this country. Naturally I want people to live here well and in peace. I'm not so much interested in politics, mostly I read something related to refugee issues. You can't be ignorant about those issues, which directly concern us. I also watch and read news from Russia I can't say I follow on daily basis, but nevertheless it is my homeland (PLMICH10).

All four Ukrainians, whom we talked to, declared their interest in political and economic issues in Poland to a far greater extent than in developments in Ukraine. Presumably, they link their future with staying and living in Poland and they do not anticipate possibility of going back to Ukraine ever. The following words of one of the Ukrainian interviewees present a good example of the mentioned approach: *"About Poland, yes, [I check] on various websites,*

because it occurred to me, that to know what is going on with the body, you need to know its temperature. I live here and I need to look, to understand what is going on” (PLMIUk18).

With regard to our Syrian respondents, almost all of them declared their interest in the news in Poland, which can be related to their already obtained refugee status and plans to stay and live in the country:

I don't have any citizenship or something, so I cannot participate, but I follow the news, I know that next week there will be something about voting for the Warsaw president, yeah. About the economy for sure, because I work here, it's important for me to know the economic situation (PLMISY22).

Of course, as long as I live in this country, I'm following up on the economic and political news of our country [Syria]... what has improved. In addition, for that I live in this country here [Poland], so I am supposed to follow up on the political news that I would understand. That the political situation is stable and good, the economic situation is good, because if the economic situation is good in the country where I live, then this would have reflection on my life. It would have an impact on me, about what services it would provide for me, and what I could make use out of it. So these are things that are very important for us, I mean (PLMISy24).

The latter respondent complained that his limited knowledge of Polish makes understanding of all intricacies of political scene in Poland difficult:

When I hear some political news on TV, of course I would not understand that much, they speak very fast, so I try to ask some Arabs, who I have relations with, who know Polish language, to explain me what was said, (...) then I would understand what was happening (PLMISy24).

There are also people who are not interested in the news at all because of their negative overtone. It is more common for people who are still in the asylum procedure and whose traumatized past is fresh in their memories, similar to a woman from Chechnya who admitted she does not want to listen to the news either in Poland or in Chechnya. She also confessed she is afraid that expressing interest in the events in Chechnya could put her in a danger:

I do not bother with this. When people communicate in WhatsApp they are afraid to share the information, because of phone tracking. They are afraid to talk. They encrypt information if something happens. There has been an explosion in Chechnya recently. I communicate with my mum and aunt through WhatsApp, but they don't talk about that. People keep away from what can cause problems for them. I don't watch YouTube. I've had enough of negative information (PLMICH05).

Another respondent from Chechnya admitted that his weak interest in news in Poland is a result of lack of knowledge of the Polish language. He believed his interest would be stronger if he knew Polish:

It's not about my lack of interests about the news from Poland. I don't speak Polish, so for me it is hard to read news in Polish. When I watch TV, for example, I don't understand anything. So language barrier is disturbing, I simply don't know Polish language, so first, I want to learn it and then my interest will be better (PLMICH14).

One Syrian man expressed lack of interest in the news in Syria as well as in Poland. In addition, all the information he gained about Poland came from his social network and the

information was far from objectivity: *"I am not interested in the political situation, I just listen to my friends that every time there is a change in the laws and the constitution"* (PLMISy25).

Interestingly, our Iraqi speakers admitted they are interested neither in the news nor in politics.

I don't care about the political situation in general. I'm not a political person and actually I don't even like to talk about it. I really don't care who's going to be the president from which party or whatever it is. As far as they are OK to the people. You know? I don't want to attack anyone. You know what I mean? Why not to be open to everyone and do what is good to the country itself in which I'm living, or not living. Anyway, every government should be the same. Doing good for their own people (PLMISy21).

The reason why some of our respondents stopped following the news in their countries of origin is loosening bonding with their homelands and treating the latter as a part of the past which can also be their method of coping with traumatic experiences: *"A lot of things happen in Chechnya, but I don't want to remember the past"* (PLMICH02).

The other Syrian respondent admitted he followed the news only in Poland, because he deliberately loosened his bonding to Syria:

I'm losing connection already. I'm not really interested. Of course, I'm following that's not step-by-step or anything, but I'm interested in Poland much more than that. Like what is happening in Europe, and in European Union much more than I'm interested in what's happening there (PLMISy23).

The Ukrainian respondent also raised loosening ties with the country of origin:

Earlier I looked for the news every day, in order to watch something, read something. But not anymore. Only sometimes, I read something on the Internet, I sometimes talk with my mother-in-law, and she tells me when something big is going on. But only if it is something serious. I don't follow the news every day. There is no point to do it, since there is nothing interesting there (PLMIUK19).

The above analysis revealed that refugees' interest in news in Poland is directly related to their expectations and plans to stay and live here. Our respondents admitted they wanted to know what is the political and economic situation of the country they live and probably will go on to live in. In particular, they were interested in Poland's policy towards migrants and refugees. Interestingly, whereas our Chechen respondents generally admitted to follow the news in their country of origin, the Ukrainian interviewees did not show such an interest. We believe the reason of that is a different approach to going back to the country of origin.

With regard to future plans of our respondents, the majority of both asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protections declared their willingness to stay and live in Poland.

If I obtain an asylum status, I will learn the language, I will start to work, I will send [a daughter] to a music school. I will have a different mood then... (PLMICH03).

What I need now is stabilization. I want to wake up in the morning and not to be afraid, to live normally, to work. I want my children to study (PLMICH06).

I got used to Poland and I don't want to go back to Chechnya (PLMICH08).

Our respondents also pointed out conditions, existing or anticipated, which they consider crucial to stay and continue their life in Poland. For the below Syrian man the main condition was a job:

Life is about the society, right? Society is your friends and your job. So I have all this stuff here. Okay, I have my parents in Germany as well. I don't have friends there, I don't have a job there, right? So, here I have two advantages, and on the other hand, I'm going to visit my family every time I can, as I told you on average it's twice a year. But sometimes even more than that. So sometimes, I go there, sometimes my parents come here. For example, my mother was here for like 10 days, so I'm okay with staying in Poland because of friends and people that I know here and my job, of course. The job comes on the first place (PLMISy21).

Another interviewee from Ukraine conditioned her stay in Poland on opportunities to buy a flat:

If our children are ok, we would like to buy a flat in a small city, on suburbs, because we cannot afford it in Warsaw, for sure. And, if we are going to rent a flat, we will stay where we are (PLMIUk19).

However, some of our respondents expressed their hope for going back to their countries of origin, either occasionally or forever:

Maybe one day, people will return to their homes. At least I hope for that (PLMICH10).

I decided, I'm here temporarily in Poland because I will go back surely to Chechnya when situation will change and Kadyrov will not rule anymore. I will be back home for sure when I feel calm (PLMICH14).

It is my homeland and I am always keen to go there. I don't hide it, once and in the first possible opportunity, when everything is okay, it would be possible to go there. Officially resign from everything and go back home because it is my homeland. I was fighting for that. Two of my brothers were killed defending dignity and homeland (PLMICH13)

Our research revealed that refugees, who anticipated a possibility to return to their countries of origin, did not want to lose their bonding with those countries and following the news was an indication of having that bond. For others, who believed they had left their countries forever, showing no interest in news in the countries of origin was a proof of loss of the bond with those countries.

Attitudes Toward Acquiring Citizenship

None of our respondents has already acquired Polish citizenship, which proves that the latter is a long process, even for beneficiaries of international protection. As mentioned at the beginning of the Citizenship section, beneficiaries of international protection have to wait at least for 7 years (in case of refugees) or 10 years (in case of persons with other types of protection) after their arrival in Poland in order to apply to Voivode to be recognized as a Polish citizen. In fact, granting citizenship by the President is perceived as a more accessible way of acquiring citizenship due to lack of specific requirements like a minimum period of residency in Poland or knowledge of Polish language at least at the level B1. In addition, there is no fee for granting the citizenship by the President, which is also not without significance.

As pointed out by a practitioner from a social organisation, every year an increasing number of beneficiaries of international protection apply for citizenship while preferring the procedure of the President:

More and more people apply [for citizenship] every year. This is conditioned by time - it must take some years for you to apply for citizenship. Many are interested in this path by the President because you don't have to wait until all these years have passed - that you have to acquire permanent residency, you can submit an application to the President at any time. The only problem is that the President can reject the application and there is no possibility of the appeal against his decision. And people often want to apply for citizenship. I have the impression that the strongest motivation is that if you are a citizen of the European Union you can effectively leave Poland and go to another EU country. At least for those who I have contact with this was the strongest motivation than their feeling of connection with Poland, so much that they must have her citizenship (PLMZSO1).

The ease of travel was indicated also with relation to the possibility of travelling to the country of origin. The above quoted practitioner from a social organisation admitted that beneficiaries of international protection often show willingness to occasional travels to their countries of origin:

Some people apply for citizenship in order to go home safer. Because if you are a refugee and you go home, you can be deprived of this form of protection. And this is not a situation that is a very direct threat to life, but they also have put together their whole lives here and do not think about returning permanently to their countries of origin. But they want to go, for instance, to visit family. And then, if they have Polish citizenship, it allows them to leave and come back (PLMZSO1).

Another practitioner from a social organisation reiterated the importance of obtaining citizenship in Poland: "It is very important [to get citizenship]. It's really much easier. If you are a citizen and if you are a refugee, they treat you differently. If you have citizenship, you are a Pole" (PLMZSO7). He also pointed out freedom of movement as a factor of differentiation between Polish citizens and beneficiaries of international protection:

If you have a refugee status, you have a travel document similar to a passport. But most of the countries do not recognize this [as a single travel document]. You must apply for a visa. You may or may not get a visa (PLMZSO7).

One of our interlocutors from Ukraine, yet an asylum seeker, raised the issue of the inability to travel as a nuisance: "I can't see other countries. A lot of my friends are leaving, and they are touring Europe. 'Oh, I'm leaving for Holland in two days.' And I say I can't leave. I don't like explaining, because then there are questions, oh why so" (PLMIUk18). The latter factor, apart from his prolonged asylum procedure and lack of possibility to go back to Ukraine, made him consider applying for Polish citizenship:

Well, I would like to write right away, because there is such a chance to obtain citizenship, one may try to write to the president of the country. And this is one chance, either yes or no. Write a request to the president, and immediately go through all the offices. I understand, my Polish is poor, it would be difficult to pass the exam, my mother's is even weaker, she is over 50 years old and it is difficult. I would like to, because there were some cases in which the Speaker of the Parliament in Ukraine said such things about people from the East, that he is mad or sick to me. And Poroshenko also said that what

is the problem that the kids will sit in the basement and we will shoot. And the Speaker said to encircle the Donbass or to burn those cockroaches (PLMIUk18).

Although the naturalisation is a confirmation of integration of a migrant in the host country and society, not all beneficiaries of international protection are interested in obtaining citizenship. A practitioner who works with them suggested that the mentioned attitude could be related to the identity of a refugee stemming from actual lack of belonging:

I have observed and I am convinced on the basis of my observations that sometimes it seems to them that it is not profitable for them to acquire citizenship. Maybe they think it is not profitable because it is contradictory to their perception of themselves: 'I'm a refugee and I feel worse, you never understand me here because I'm not at home'. Indeed, somehow someone may not be at home, and I don't know if acquiring citizenship would make it different. I find a lot of people who can already get citizenship, who participated in IIP, but they are not interested. However, some people obtain citizenship. More often it concerns the second generation than the first - the children of refugees are more interested in acquiring citizenship than their parents, because they were raised in different circumstances. And if a Polish citizenship is a required condition to have a specific profession, if someone is at this stage, it is understood that he/she applies for citizenship (PLMZP2).

Lack of belonging can explain the attitude of our respondent with subsidiary protection who showed no interest in applying for citizenship. He argued that he was not capable of voting in the election because he is not interested in politics in Poland referred to as 'this country': *"Maybe if I would be 60 years old then, maybe, I could vote. But now i.e. after next four years, I'd have to choose who's good for this country? No, I don't think so"* (PLMIUk16).

As proved by our meso- and micro-level interviews, although obtaining citizenship is an important step in the integration process, it does not protect people of different origins against discrimination on the basis of "a different skin colour or a different accent" (PLMZSO2).

An additional factor hindering naturalisation of beneficiaries of international protection is lack of information about the naturalization procedures provided by the administration offices; having that information would allow an immigrant to plan their stay in Poland appropriately. In fact, no consulting is offered in terms of long-term residence planning (Każmierkiewicz and Frelak, 2011, p. 19).

Refugees' Belonging in the Host Community

Social embeddedness through the structure of relationship of social ties among residents in neighbourhoods is one of the two dimensions of neighbourhood belonging, apart from place attachment. While place attachment describes a sense of belonging and feeling of home through emotional bonds towards places and local areas, social ties describe behavioural aspects of embeddedness and the connectedness to the locale (Guest et al., 2006). The focus on social ties evaluates knowledge of one's neighbours by name and place of living, number of small talks on the street, occasional visits and the number of close friends in the neighbourhood (Hipp and Perrin, 2006).

In order to fully understand the social integration opportunities in Poland, it is worth to outline a short background of the current atmosphere related to public opinion on acceptance of refugees. Since 2015, Poland has witnessed a rapid and radical (as by almost one-third)

drop in the current rather high level of declared positive attitudes towards refugees and assistance, and a strong increase in negative attitudes towards them. From a humanitarian issue, they suddenly became a public (to which public opinion is constantly reacting) and political issue, both in the national and European dimensions, as well as a challenge related to ensuring state security against possible terrorist threats (Górny et al., 2017, p. 72). However, it was not caused by the actual influx of asylum seekers to Poland, which remained at a relatively low level (see Szulecka et al., 2018a). This situation has continued to this day.

Despite the dominating negative attitudes of Polish society towards refugees⁹³, our micro-level respondents did not recall any incident at the level of neighbour ties. Quite the opposite, beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers who lived outside the centres for foreigners felt welcomed by their neighbours and they managed to establish good relationship with their neighbourhood, even if the latter stemmed from the pure courtesy. Below are some positive examples of building relations with neighbours by our respondents:

We build relationships with our neighbours. From time to time we invite them on our holidays, sharing with them our traditional dishes and so on (PLMICH09).

Yes, I know my neighbours. They are very good to me. In autumn they bring me grapes, apples. I have very good relations with my neighbours (PLMICH04).

Public relations even with the neighbours are good, they welcome us, and they know that we are foreigners, they will come to visit us and our relation with them is good. And we always talk to them, they are old, they know only Polish language or Russian, so depending on the words which we know, we talk to them, they get really happy and they smile to us, in Polish of course, in Polish language, we talk to them, they get happy, they smile, and we exchange visits, because they are very respectful (PLMISy24).

As a Ukrainian woman told us, having a dog opened good opportunities of getting to know the neighbours better, especially for her husband who usually walked with the dog: "for example, my husband goes out with a dog and he knows everyone, who lives on which floor. Unlike me, I know only neighbours from my floor and also a guy by sight. But only a little. And my husband knows everyone" (PLMIUK19). She also regretted that her Polish is not good enough, according to her opinion, to socialise more with her neighbours: "*We only say hello to each other. We don't invite one another. I am keen to do so, but I feel ashamed that I cannot speak with them normally. But if they knocked on my door, I would invite them* (PLMIUK19).

Only one respondent openly admitted he learned to avoid some of his neighbours: "*With neighbours we have a positive experience. We talk from time to time, so for now is okay. I don't say we have great relations with all our neighbours. There are some who we better avoid*" (PLMICH10).

Apart from their neighbours, our respondents listed also Polish acquaintances from work and peers from studies, whom they had established relations with. One Ukrainian man told us about going for holidays to his close friends, although did not reveal whether they were Ukrainians or Poles:

I met a lot of people at work, or on a walk on the Boulevards. For several years we have been coming to our close friends for the holidays, in the fourth or fifth generation. It was

⁹³ The prevailing negative attitudes towards foreigners or towards admitting refugees were reflected in the following surveys: CBOS (2018, 2017, 2016) and IPSOS (2016, 2015).

just such a moment, I do not know how it happened. And that's mostly positive. Sometimes there are misunderstandings, but there always are (PLMIUk18).

The other respondent, a Syrian man, was positively surprised by the support he received in the first months of his living in Poland:

I didn't have any idea about the Polish language or the assistance during these first six months, but it is okay. Why? - Because I have very nice neighbours. We often meet in some bars near my home and they are really very nice people. I was so happy that during these six months, I got my first Polish classes not by the legal offices like this. It was just with my friends, neighbours and Polish people, because I live in this region and there are just Polish in this place (PLMISy25).

Later during the interview, the mentioned Syrian respondent admitted that owing to his knowledge of Polish he had more Polish friends than of other nationalities: *"I use Polish with my friends and I told you that I have Polish friends more than other nationalities or Arabs, for example. This is why if you have contact, you can use and keep practicing for sure"* (PLMISy25). His example only proves that knowledge of the language is not only a means of integration, but also a means to establish bonding with the locals of the host country.

Another respondent portrayed the difference between bonds he had lost in Chechnya and the new ones he managed to establish in Poland:

I have many friends but I don't have many close friends, for instance, which you know since your childhood here. We somehow forced all to be here and nobody exactly knows why you are here, I mean your real reasons why you left your country. We get different information here. For instance, I don't want to tell everybody why I'm here and they don't want to do the same. We are all just knowing each other. Yes, we help each other when we need help, but still you keep a distance and not willing to open up to another person because you don't feel that much trust. I often think, we are people like in prison here – we are forced to be here. Naturally everybody wanted to live in his or her own homeland. I want to live at my own home so much, where I have my real friends, since I was a child. With those of my friends I felt so easy, but here it is different (PLMICH10).

As presented above, our respondents had positive relations with their neighbours and they managed to establish some bonds with the host society, even if these bonds were often limited to their neighbourhood, work or studies. In addition, in many cases the new bonds seem to be superficial and could not compete with well-established social networks of the respondents in their countries of origin.

10. Conclusions

Labour Market

In this section we gave an overview of legislation and regulations of employment of beneficiaries of international protection. Further, we described opportunities and challenges they face entering labour market as well as institutions and organisations supporting them to get through challenges.

Our important finding is that although early and effective inclusion in the labour market gives a greater chance of integration of beneficiaries of international protection into Polish society and gives independence on social assistance, there is lack of mechanism to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into labour market. There is lack of monitoring system for labour market inclusion as well as acquisition of work skills and recognition of qualifications of beneficiaries of international protection. Moreover, data regarding trainings and effectiveness of IIP related to labour market inclusion are also not collected in a systematic way.

It was shown that although refugees have equal access to labour market similar to Poles, in fact they face many institutional, cultural and procedural obstacles. Some of the key problems are insufficient knowledge of Polish by beneficiaries of international protection, modest linguistic skills of the Labour market services and low social capital of refugees, which are obstacles for both participation in trainings and finding job. Further obstacles on the refugees' side pertain to lack of adequate knowledge of their rights on labour market that often pushes them into informal jobs, lack of documents that validate their skills and recognise their qualifications as well as expensive and complicated procedures of recognition of qualifications. In regard to employers, it came out that they are not aware of possibilities of employment of beneficiaries of international protection, which is straightly followed by reluctance towards their employment. All these factors lead to unstable or low-paid employment of refugees

Our findings show that gender plays a significant role as an excluding factor on the labour market. Women, as culturally responsible for childcare, even if educated, are not used to work, therefore they find it challenging to enter the labour market. If they are single mothers, childcare pushes them into dependence on social assistance.

We have also noted that although beneficiaries of international protection have equal access to vocational training and employment-related education similar to Poles, in reality this access is limited by lack of language skills. Even if the training is available in a foreign language, then it may become worthless when Polish vocabulary is needed in further job. Therefore, it is crucial to increase efforts on language learning from the early beginning. Finally, the type and duration of those trainings and employment-related education do not respond to market needs.

We have shown that, in general, despite all problems and limitations due to financial issues and political climate, the NGOs and other non-profit organizations supporting activities dedicated towards migrants and refugees in particular, play significant role in their integration, including inclusion into labour market. However, their activities are not coordinated with local or regional authorities.

Education

The integration of refugees in education, of both children and adults, was analysed through the prism of three different levels – macro, meso and micro and with using the background of education of foreign children in Poland. Due to limitations of the research we did not include refugee children as respondents in interviews, so the findings presented in the report lack perspective of the most interested ones – the pupils. Nevertheless, RESPOND research confirmed the observations made by earlier studies in terms of a relatively well functioning educational integration of foreign children. Nevertheless, even though there are instruments stipulated by the Law and designed with foreign children in mind, such as additional Polish language classes, compensatory classes, preparatory classes and cross-cultural assistants, due to insufficient funding their implementation is often inadequate. It turned out that the biggest shortcoming of the inclusion of refugee children in the education system is lack of trainings and methodological support for teachers who work with them.

With respect to multicultural and anti-discriminatory education, our meso-level respondents pointed out some issues with its implementation, which is often dependent on school headmasters and/or parents of Polish children. The practitioners from schools, social organisations and local governments shared an opinion that knowledge about different cultures and anti-discrimination should be mainstreamed into the regular education curriculum and should not be treated as an addition to the latter dependent on availability of funding and NGO projects. Last but not least, our respondents underlined the significant role of NGO's in providing support in introduction of multicultural and anti-discriminatory classes and in hiring cultural assistants for refugee children.

With regard to education of refugee adults, the most important issues appeared to be learning of Polish language and recognition of education obtained in the countries of origin. It turned out that the attendance of beneficiaries of international protection in the courses is very low (approx. 35 percent) which results from either lack of the courses in some localities, inability to reconcile work with participation in a course due to the latter's hours, or low attractiveness of the courses (i.e. their failure to meet the needs of refugees).

The other drawback of inclusion of adult refugees in education revealed by the RESPOND research are impediments to recognition of the prior education or a degree obtained in the countries of origin. However, in order to enable continuation of education for refugees, many universities in Poland offered facilitation in the mentioned procedures together with providing scholarships that would ease refugees' acceptance for studies.

Housing and Spatial Integration

Inadequate quality of housing results in the slow processes of adaptation of the foreigners to the new socio-cultural conditions of the host country and may have negative impact on their physical and mental condition. As shown above, housing is one of the major issues not only for the asylum seekers in Poland who live in the centres run by the Office for Foreigners and outside of them, but also for persons who have already obtained some form of international protection. The situation of the group analysed in this report is even more difficult since they cannot rely on the support provided by the Office for Foreigners in this regard in the form of accommodation in one of the refugee centres or modest housing allowance.

According to our fieldwork data, those foreigners who had lived outside of the facilities run by the Office for Foreigners during the asylum procedure seemed to be better prepared for the numerous challenges of finding adequate housing for a reasonable price after their applications for protection were positively assessed. This section of the report has also shown very important role played by the actors from the non-governmental sector facilitating the access to housing for refugees and persons with subsidiary protection.

We have also shown that sometimes the difficulty of finding adequate and affordable housing is one of the important reasons why some beneficiaries of international protection decide to leave Poland and search for better living conditions in the countries of Western Europe where there might be denser diaspora and other support networks.

Health

As we have shown above, beneficiaries of the international protection have the same right to access the public healthcare services as other citizens of Poland. In other words this provision from the legal point of view seems relatively adequately assured. At the same time, for various reasons linked with insufficient economic, social or cultural capital, they may be denied equal access to all types of medical treatments. One of the clear gaps in the medical services identified by our interviewees is the specialized treatment for victims of torture or traumatized refugees. There is a clear lack in the country of the qualified psychologists and therapists specializing in treating trauma, in particular in an intercultural context.

Our research has also identified other barriers that refugees face while accessing medical services, including linguistic ones and linked with the stereotypical perception of persons coming from a specific part of the globe or belonging to a given ethnic or religious group. Similar to citizens of Poland, persons with international protection who cannot wait to see a specialist and have an adequate funding use the services of the private medical sector.

Religion

Religions frequently act as important existential meaning-making systems and a resource from which beneficiaries of international protection draw when facing with all kind of problems including psychological ones. The section of the report devoted to religion of refugees has shown how it has been brought to the public sphere and how some religious communities and organisations have been dealing with it. Integration of refugees through religious channels does take place also in Poland although these channels are not as professionalised as non-religious ones.

Our research has also importantly shown how “civilizationist” articulation of Polish nationalism which identifies Islam as a key civilizational threat (Brubaker, 2017; Pędziwiatr, 2018) or the moral panic around the supposed “Islamisation of Poland” by persons seeking international protection and its beneficiaries, has negatively impacted our Muslim interviewees from the micro level or persons only viewed as Muslims.

Citizenship, Belonging and Civic Participation

The integration of refugees in Poland with reference to citizenship, belonging and civic participation is not an easy process. Firstly, it is impeded by the regulations, which exclude

their participation in social, cultural and political life in Poland to a lesser (beneficiaries of international protections) or to a greater extent (beneficiaries of national protection). Since refugees have a very limited access to political rights, in practice their political inclusion does not exist and the latter starts only after acquisition of Polish citizenship. Refugees do not have voting rights, either in national or in local elections and referendums. They cannot establish or join political parties; therefore, their voice is hardly heard in political debates.

With respect to the access to Polish citizenship, among all beneficiaries of international and national protection, only refugees (persons with a status of a refugee) are listed in the Law on Polish Citizenship as the ones given some facilitations in the procedure of recognition as a Polish citizen (i.e. shorter period of residing in Poland after receiving permanent residency permit). However, the statistics show that not many refugees use this facilitated procedure, since only 162 refugees were recognized as Polish citizens between 2012-2019. Another explanation of this low number could be that they might prefer the procedure of granting the citizenship by the Polish President. Since the number of refugees who were granted Polish citizenship in the latter procedure is not available, we can only guess whether applying to the President is more preferable to them or not.

Refugees' interests, if expressed, are represented by a couple of immigrant organisations (mainly foundations) or by migrant NGOs established and run mostly by Polish citizens. It has to be underlined that migrant NGOs play the greatest role in integration of refugees and Polish society, although they do not receive enough support, either in funding or the needed regulations, from the central government. It was often repeated by our meso-level respondents that the lack of a clear and coherent government strategy towards integration of migrants has had a negative impact on their activity and services they can provide to refugees. Even though there are some positive developments in inclusion of migrant NGOs or migrants themselves in consultation of policies and their implementation by local governments, it cannot circumvent the policy void at the national level.

The most affected are, undoubtedly, the refugees themselves. As proved by our micro-level interviews, after receiving a status of international protection most refugees are willing to stay and live in Poland, although some of them believe in possibility of returning to their countries of origin. Despite the anticipation of living in Poland, during first years after receiving a status (which as well can be 2-3 years after arriving in Poland) they rarely think of applying for Polish citizenship. In their perception, the whole process is not easy, which is reflected in low naturalisation statistics of refugees. Another thing is beneficiaries of international protection have to reside in Poland at least for 7 years (in terms of refugees) or 8 years (in terms of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection) in order to apply to a Voivode for being recognized as Polish citizens.

With respect to bonds with the hosting country, majority of our micro-level respondents followed the news in Poland and were interested in political developments, particularly those concerning policies and attitudes towards migrants. With relation to ties with their countries of origin, some of the respondents admitted they maintained them, but the ties were limited to the contact with their families living in the countries of origin. They declared they have established friendly relationships with their neighbours, although it seems that the majority of these relationships were a result of superficial politeness. None of our micro-level respondents was a member of an association, a foundation or a trade union, which shows that joining such organisation by refugees is not a common practice. However, they expressed their openness to participate in integrative activities organized by migrant NGOs.

Policy Recommendations

Labour Market

- It is crucial to reopen and finalize initiatives focused on creation of the national integration strategy, especially of those in highest risk, such as beneficiaries of international protection. Those initiatives should rely on expert knowledge, research and practice of those already working in the field of integration at local level.

Preintegration

- Preintegration on labour market is part of integration, therefore already during asylum procedure activities dedicated to asylum seekers that include not only learning of the language, but also acquisition of work skills and recognition of qualifications should be carried out.

Facilitating Recognition of Qualifications and Acquiring New Ones

- Beneficiaries of international protection should be treated as separated privileged group and should be covered by tailored trainings organized by poviats labour offices.
- Programs dedicated to beneficiaries of international protection should merge both improvement of qualifications and gaining new skills as well as learning of Polish language.

Incentives and Employment Facilitation

- It is highly recommended to treat beneficiaries of international protection as a privileged group who benefit from special integration programs, such as exemptions for internship or additional payments for internship or exemptions from contributions towards the state during employment of this kind of person by potential employers.

Improved Monitoring

- The work taken up by the asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection and its correspondence to their skills and qualifications should be monitored.
- The results of acquisition of work skills and recognition of qualifications dedicated to beneficiaries of international protection should be monitored, evaluated and improved adequately to needs of specific groups arriving in Poland.
- It is crucial to systematically monitor the process of integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in the same way as other foreigners applying for work in Poland.

Education

Education of Children Refugees:

- The weighting of the education subsidy for teaching foreign children should be increased and targeted so that local governments and schools can afford to hire cultural assistants and organise preparatory classes and additional Polish language classes, if needed.
- The Ministry of National Education should provide appropriate trainings for teachers working with refugee children, so they have skills to educate pupils who are firstly, not native-Polish speakers, and secondly, have special educational and psychological needs.
- Preparatory classes should be organized in the way that enable children to focus mainly on Polish language acquisition. Meeting school curricula should not be required from children and teachers.
- Decision-making institutions, especially Ministry of National Education and Education Boards [Kuraroria Oswiaty] should actively promote hiring cross-cultural assistants in schools with children with migrant background, including refugee children.
- The good quality multicultural and anti-discriminatory education should be mainstreamed and incorporated into the regular curricula of primary and secondary schools.

Education of Adult Refugees:

- Polish language courses should be provided to all beneficiaries of international protection for free (even after accomplishing the IIP). The time of the courses should be adjusted to the schedule of people who work or/and are involved in childcare. Weekend and online courses should be offered as well, if needed.
- Procedure of the education confirmation (in both, regulation and implementation dimension) should be facilitated and made more accessible (the fees should be waived) for all refugees.

Housing and Spatial Integration

Some of the changes that could improve the housing situation of the persons with international protection in Poland include:

- Making the transition from the refugee centres to housing easier for persons with international protection
- Improving access to cheaper and more adequate housing to refugees and persons with subsidiary protection
- Providing more support to the NGOs facilitating spatial integration of migrants
- Generally paying more attention to spatial integration of persons with international protection

- Providing easier access to social housing for persons with international protection (quota places set aside for them in cities around the country – similarly to the WCPR – (see WCPR, 2020, pp. 29–30))

Health

Some of the changes that could improve the situation of refugees in Poland in the aforementioned domain include:

- Bringing both asylum seekers and beneficiaries of the international protection under the general medical care system funded by the National Health Fund.
- Increasing the availability of specialized medical assistance for people who need such help in culturally sensitive manner.
- Increasing access to psychological help in a language other than Polish.
- Strengthening widely understood anti-discrimination policies in the medical context and outside of it.

Religion

Some of the changes that could improve the situation of refugees in Poland in the aforementioned domain include:

- De-politicisation and de-securitisation of the religion of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. It should facilitate the process of their integration with the host society
- Religious organisations and communities may play an important role in the process of integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection with the new host societies. It is worth noticing their role and supporting their efforts.
- Strengthening the cooperation between various religious and non-religious organisations and institutions combating all kinds of ethnic and racial discrimination

Citizenship, Belonging and Civic Participation

Granting Political Rights to Beneficiaries of International Protection

- Beneficiaries of international protection (refugees and persons with subsidiary protection) should be granted voting rights (both to vote and to stand in elections) at least in local elections. Their participation in local elections would draw the attention of political parties to asylum seekers and refugees' issues.
- Beneficiaries of international protection should be granted the right to join political parties. Opening political parties to them would encourage them to include issues related to migration and integration in their programs. As a result, this could contribute to mainstreaming these considerations in politics.

- Immigrant organizations should be covered by institutional support. Establishing measures to raise the competences and to enhance position of these organizations (and their representatives) should be considered. In this respect, it is also worth to support the establishment of partnerships between NGOs and immigrant organizations. Central and local public institutions should support such partnerships.
- Last but not least, we recommend changing the approach to integration process at the level of national policy. Integration of migrants, generally, and refugees, particularly, should be understood as 'a process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups. Integration refers to a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies and implies consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose' (IOM, 2011).

Appendices

Table 10 Sample of micro-level interviews in Poland

No.	Code	Nationality	Gender	Age group	Place of interview**	Time of arrival***
1.	PLMICH01	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	C	Early arrival
2.	PLMICH02	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	C	Late arrival
3.	PLMICH03	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	C	Late arrival
4.	PLMICH04	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	C	Late arrival
5.	PLMICH05	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	P	Late arrival
6.	PLMICH06	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	P	Late arrival
7.	PLMICH07	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	C	Late arrival
8.	PLMICH08	Russian/Chechen*	Female	27-50	C	Late arrival
9.	PLMICH09	Russian/Chechen*	Male	>50	P	Late arrival
10.	PLMICH10	Russian/Chechen*	Male	27-50	P	Early arrival
11.	PLMICH11	Russian/Chechen*	Male	27-50	P	Early arrival
12.	PLMICH12	Russian/Chechen*	Male	18-26	P	Late arrival
13.	PLMICH13	Russian/Chechen*	Male	27-50	C	Late arrival
14.	PLMICH14	Russian/Chechen*	Male	27-50	C	Late arrival
15.	PLMICH15	Russian/Chechen*	Male	27-50	C	Late arrival
16.	PLMIUk16	Georgian/ Ossetian	Male	27-50	C	Early arrival
17.	PLMIUk17	Ukrainian	Male	18-26	P	Late arrival
18.	PLMIUk18	Ukrainian	Male	27-50	C	Early arrival
19.	PLMIUk19	Ukrainian	Female	27-50	C	Early arrival
20.	PLMIUk20	Ukrainian	Female	27-50	C	Early arrival
21.	PLMISy21	Syrian	Male	27-50	C	Early arrival
22.	PLMISy22	Syrian	Male	18-26	C	Late arrival

23.	PLMISy23	Syrian	Male	27-50	C	Late arrival
24.	PLMISy24	Syrian	Male	>50	C	Late arrival
25.	PLMISy25	Syrian	Female	18-26	C	Late arrival
26.	PLMIIr26	Iraqi	Male	27-50	P	Late arrival
27.	PLMIIr27	Iraqi	Male	27-50	P	Late arrival
28.	PLMIIr28	Iraqi	Female	>50	C	Early arrival
29.	PLMIJe29	Yemeni	Male	27-50	P	Late arrival
30.	PLMIKa30	Kazakh	Female	27-50	P	Late arrival
<p>* 'Chechen' means a Russian citizen with Chechen nationality</p> <p>** C – centre; P – periphery (small town or village outside the city)</p> <p>*** Early arrival – 2011-2014; Late arrival – 2015-2017</p>						

Source: own elaboration by RESPOND team in Poland.

Table 11 Sample of meso-level interviews in Poland

No.	Code	Type of stakeholder
1.	PLMZBG1	Border Guard
2.	PLMZOF1	Office for Foreigners
3.	PLMZOF2	Office for Foreigners
4.	PLMZOF3/4	Office for Foreigners (two respondents)
5.	PLMZP1	Practitioner
6.	PLMZP2	Practitioner
7.	PLMZP3	Practitioner
8.	PLMZLG1	Local governor
9.	PLMZLG2	Local governor
10.	PLMZSO1	Social organisation
11.	PLMZSO2	Social organisation
12.	PLMZSO3	Social organisation
13.	PLMZSO4	Social organisation
14.	PLMZSO5/6	Social organisation (two respondents)
15.	PLMZSO7	Social organisation

Source: own elaboration by RESPOND team in Poland.

Table 12 Main legislative acts relevant to the integration of foreigners (with a focus on the beneficiaries of international protection) in Poland

Original title in Polish with full references (in italics)	Title in English with full references (translation)	Abbreviation in English	Aspects /issues regarding integration
<i>Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r. uchwalona przez Zgromadzenie Narodowe w dniu 2 kwietnia 1997 r., przyjęta przez Naród w referendum konstytucyjnym w dniu 25 maja 1997 r., podpisana przez Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 16 lipca 1997 r. (Dz.U. 1997 Nr 78, poz. 483 z późn. zm.)</i>	Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 (Journal of Laws 1997 No. 78, item 483 with amendments)	Constitution	Civic rights and human rights, healthcare, education, housing
<i>Ustawa z dnia 13 czerwca 2003 r. o udzielaniu cudzoziemcom ochrony na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 1666 z późn. zm.)</i>	Law of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1666 with amendments)	Law on Protection	Residency (stay)
<i>Ustawa z dnia 12 grudnia 2013 r. o cudzoziemcach (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 35)</i>	Law of 12 December 2013 on foreigners (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 35 with amendments)	Law on Foreigners	Residency (stay)
<i>Ustawa z dnia 2 kwietnia 2009 r. o obywatelstwie polskim (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 347)</i>	Law of 2 April 2009 on Polish citizenship (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 347)	Law on Polish Citizenship	Citizenship, naturalisation
<i>Ustawa o pomocy społecznej z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 1507 z późn. zm.)</i>	Law of 12 March 2004 on social assistance (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1507 with amendments)	Law on Social Assistance	Social Assistance
<i>Ustawa z dnia 11 lutego 2016 r. o pomocy państwa w wychowywaniu dzieci (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 2407 z późn. zm.)</i>	Law of 11 February 2016 on state aid in raising children (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 2407 with amendments)	Law on State Aid	Social Assistance
<i>Ustawa z dnia 28 listopada 2003 r. o świadczeniach rodzinnych (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 111)</i>	Law of 28 November 2003 on family benefits (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 1518, item 111)	Law on Family Benefits	Social Assistance

<i>Ustawa z dnia 27 sierpnia 2004 r. o świadczeniach opieki zdrowotnej finansowanych ze środków publicznych (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz.1373 z późn. zm.)</i>	Law of 27 August 2004 on healthcare benefits financed from public funds (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1373 with amendments)	Law on Healthcare Benefits	Healthcare
<i>Ustawa z dnia 21 czerwca 2001 r. o ochronie praw lokatorów, mieszkaniowym zasobie gminy i o zmianie Kodeksu cywilnego (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 611)</i>	Law of 21 June 2001 on the protection of the rights of tenants, the housing stock of the commune, and the amendment to the Civil Code (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 611)	Law on Tenancy and Housing	Housing
<i>Ustawa z dnia 21 czerwca 2001 r. o dodatkach mieszkaniowych (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 2133)</i>	Law of 21 June 2001 on housing allowances (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 2133)	Law on Housing Allowances	Housing
<i>Ustawa z dnia 14 grudnia 2016 r. – Prawo oświatowe (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 910)</i>	Law of 14 December 2016 – Law on Education (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 910)	Law on (School) Education	Education
<i>Ustawa z dnia 20 lipca 2018 r. - Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce (t.j. Dz.U. z 2020 r. poz. 85 z późn. zm.)</i>	Law of 20 July 2018 - Law on Higher Education and Science (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2020, item 85 with amendments)	Law on Higher Education	Education
<i>Ustawa z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r. o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy (t.j. Dz.U. z 2019 r. poz. 1482 z późn. zm.)</i>	Law of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1482 with amendments)	Law on Employment	Labour market
<i>Ustawa z dnia 3 grudnia 2010 r. o wdrożeniu niektórych przepisów Unii Europejskiej w zakresie równego traktowania (t.j. Dz.U. z 2016 r. poz. 1219 z późn. zm.)</i>	Law of 3 December 2010 on the implementation of certain European Union provisions in the field of equal treatment (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2016, item 1219 with amendments)	Law on Equal Treatment	Civic rights and human rights

Source: own elaboration based on: (C.H.Beck, n.d.; Sejm RP, n.d.; Szulecka et al., 2018a, pp. 67–69)

Table 13 Number of IIPs implemented in Poland in 2000-2017*

Voivodeship	2000 **	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL	TOTAL 2000- 2017 %
<i>Lower Silesian Voivodeship</i>	nd	3	2	0	0	0	1	3	0	2	3	2	2	3	7	16	16	14	74	1%
<i>Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship</i>	nd	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	16	0	5	13	9	5	2	4	71	1%
<i>Lublin Voivodeship</i>	nd	19	23	15	14	9	10	18	56	148	84	20	16	11	24	23	12	18	520	9%
<i>Lubuskie Province</i>	nd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	7	0%
<i>Łódź Voivodeship</i>	nd	1	0	0	3	3	2	1	2	5	3	3	6	4	23	19	1	9	85	1%
<i>Lesser Poland Voivodeship</i>	nd	11	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	6	7	7	41	1%
<i>Masovian Voivodeship</i>	nd	97	98	96	111	118	167	149	442	862	433	127	109	121	193	239	163	131	3656	62%
<i>Opolskie Voivodeship</i>	nd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	3	1	5	1	14	0%
<i>Podkarpackie Voivodeship</i>	nd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	0%
<i>Podlasie Voivodeship</i>	nd	4	22	22	26	40	50	37	159	349	183	66	51	20	9	15	10	22	1085	19%
<i>Pomeranian Voivodeship</i>	nd	5	5	4	1	0	0	1	0	10	8	4	3	5	6	5	6	9	72	1%

<i>Silesian Voivodeship</i>	nd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	32	29	5	1	1	2	3	6	5	89	2%
<i>Świętokrzyskie Province</i>	nd	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3	0%
<i>Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship</i>	nd	2	2	1	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	14	0%
<i>Greater Poland Voivodeship</i>	nd	4	5	3	2	0	0	0	5	2	1	1	1	1	4	7	6	2	44	1%
<i>West Pomeranian Voivodeship</i>	nd	2	1	1	2	6	3	1	5	11	2	0	3	4	6	3	2	8	60	1%
TOTAL	18	148	160	143	159	176	233	211	677	1439	764	231	198	185	292	344	243	235	5856	
<i>% Masovian Voivodeship</i>	n/a	66%	61%	67%	70%	67%	72%	71%	65%	60%	57%	55%	55%	65%	66%	69%	67%	56%	62%	
* number of families, not issued decisions or people in a family, ** data available on the website of the ministry are aggregated for Poland, without division into voivodships																				
Source: own elaboration based on Dominik Wach's calculation based on data of Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (MRPiPS, 2020a, 2020b)																				

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