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Post-2014 migrants' access to housing,
employment and other crucial resources
in small- and medium-sized towns and rural
areas

in Poland

Country Reports on integration



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REPORT
<https://whole-comm.eu>





Executive summary

This report looks at post-2014 migrants' access to housing, employment, and other relevant resources in different small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Poland. Primarily based on interviews conducted in each of the four selected municipalities, it provides an overview of 1) the concrete barriers that post-2014 migrants are facing in relation to housing and employment; 2) the local actors who are involved in, and/or seen as responsible for, facilitating their access; 3) any concrete local measures or practices that help or hinder this access; and 4) the specific target groups of these measures, initiatives or practices. The report finds that the main actors in the employment are temp agencies, recruitment agencies and private employers. In localities 2 and 4, where factories are the main hubs of employment housing can be arranged by the employer, however, for localities 1 and 3 private owners, play the biggest role. Social housing and services are rarely accessed by labour migrants, they are solely distributed for 12 months to individuals with refugee status or granted humanitarian protection. Other social services are less popular among migrants with the 500+ program being a financial assistance for children, which is widespread across the country and usually used by migrant families too. Municipalities endeavour to assist with cheap housing, however, the lack of a national housing policy hinders the efforts.



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1. Introduction

Whole-COMM focuses on small and medium sized municipalities and rural areas (SMsTRA) in eight European and two non-European countries that have experienced and dealt with the increased arrival and settlement of migrants after 2014. More particularly, the research project explores how these communities have responded to the presence of “post-2014 migrants”¹, that is, which policies have been developed and implemented and how these policies shape and enable migrant integration. Taking an innovative Whole-of-Community research approach which conceives of migrant integration as a process of community-making, Whole-COMM pays particular attention to the interactions between multiple actors involved in local integration governance (for example, individuals, public and non-public organizations, institutions and/or corporate entities). Moreover, the project looks at the embeddedness of local actors in multilevel frameworks in which regional, national and EU policies and stakeholders may play a decisive role in shaping local integration policymaking, considering both potential collaborations as well as tensions between actors at different government levels.

Work Package Four (WP4) focuses on local policies, initiatives, and practices addressing post-2014 immigrants’ access to housing, employment and other crucial resources or services.

Following the Whole-comm approach, we assume that the multiple actors involved in integration and community-making processes may have different interests, strategies, resources, and power positions; and that mutual adjustment (between newcomers and long-term residents) and social cohesion do not necessarily represent the only/overall rationale guiding their various efforts; instead, the interplay between different actors (and their various interests and rationales) may also lead to exclusion and inequality. This interplay and the resulting measures can thus be analysed in terms of what Collyer, Hinger and Schweitzer call

¹ The group of migrants that arrived in (Western) Europe after 2014 is very heterogeneous, “but mostly comprises migrants that left from areas of political and humanitarian crises” (Working Paper 1 2021, 1-2). The majority of ‘post-2014 migrants’ entered thus as asylum-seekers but may have obtained different legal statuses by now (see for more detail Working Paper 1 for the Whole-COMM project).



the ‘politics of’, or ‘negotiation around’, ‘(dis)integration’². As these authors point out, integration/disintegration or cohesion/fragmentation should not be understood as simple binary categorisations but as processes that are intertwined and often coexist within and across policies and everyday practices.

By looking at how a wide range of actors (private actors, civil society actors and street level bureaucrats) foster but sometimes also hinder migrants’ access to adequate housing, work and other crucial resources or services, we hope to better understand (and be able to compare) these local politics of (dis)integration across different local and national contexts.

The choice of focusing on housing and employment follows two main rationales. First, they are key resources for granting fundamental rights and sustainable integration. Second, they are not exclusively dependent on local administrations but involve a diverse range of actors, thus allowing us to fully apply the whole-of-community approach. Housing is (partly or, in some cases, almost completely) in the hands of private actors, from big owners (including banks and international investment funds) to small ones. Work depends on employers, which again are very diverse ranging from big to small (including family) employers, from private to public employers and across different economic sectors. In both cases, between migrants and these private actors, we find a broad range of intermediaries (CSOs, trade unions, real estate agencies, civil society organisations, social networks, etc.) and a diverse (and sometimes even contradictory) set of policies and programmes (at the national, regional, and local levels). Apart from housing and employment, WP4 is also interested in local policies, initiatives or practices that affect post-2014 migrants’ access to other relevant resources and services, which might be specific to each national context.

To assess the role (and understand the interplay) of the different actors in relation to migrants’ access to housing, work, and other services and resources, WP4 identifies and analyses:

- major **obstacles/challenges** that are reported to exist in each locality for post-2014 migrants, particularly focusing on those that are perceived as being particular to each locality;
- the **actors** (public, private, and civil society) involved, and their concrete role (e.g., as initiator, promoter, implementer, critic, etc. of a concrete policy, initiative, or practice).
- concrete **local policies, initiatives, and practices** that intend/help to overcome these obstacles. There might also be certain policies, initiatives and practices that have exclusionary effects (whether intended or unintended) and thus aggravate existing obstacles and inequalities in terms of access to adequate housing and employment.

² Collyer M., Hinger S., Schweitzer R. (2020) Politics of (Dis)Integration – An Introduction. In: Hinger S., Schweitzer R. (eds) Politics of (Dis)Integration. IMISCOE Research Series. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25089-8_1

the **target groups of local policies, initiatives, or practices**: who is entitled to particular services and how is this entitlement justified³. This question will allow us to delve into the main deservingness frames regarding migrants' access to housing, employment and other key resources and services.

1.1 Methodology

The cases for the research project were selected based on a set of variables, namely:

Population size	Medium town: 100,000 – 250.000 Small town: 50,000 – 100,000 Rural area: 5,000 - 50,000 and low population density
Presence of a reception center AND/OR Reception facilities	Time period: 2014-2017
Number of currently residing migrants	Time period: arrived after 2014
Share of Foreign Residents	Time period: in 2005 (SF2005)
Variation of Unemployment level	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARUN)
AND/OR Unemployment Levels	Time period: 2005 and 2014
Variation of number of inhabitants	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARNI)
Regional variation	For example: East / West or North / South, choosing localities from different regions
Local politics	Parties in government and local political tradition, choosing localities with different political traditions (conservative / progressive)

³ When explaining who the target of a specific policy or practice is, also those who are excluded (e.g., because they are covered by other policies or because they are simply left out or perceived as less vulnerable) are automatically identified (whether implicit or explicitly).



The variables 'SF2005', 'VARUN' and 'VARNI' were used to identify **four** types of localities:

Type A	Characterized by a recovering local economy and an improving demographic profile and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type B	Characterized by an improving economic and demographic situation and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014
Type C	Characterized by demographic and economic decline and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type D	Characterized by economic and demographic decline and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014

In the case of Poland, it is worth giving a context of the post-2014 migration and long-term residents. Poland, which has recently transitioned from an emigration to an immigration country, has limited years of continuous migrant waves and experiences of how to handle these and apply effective policies regarding migration and integration. After the financial crisis of the 2008-09, Poland remained rather stable, showing to its neighbouring countries that it can be a trusted destination for labour migration. From that point on, labour migration was frequent in small amounts with a high peak in 2014 after the annexation of Crimea in Ukraine. Ukrainian migrants and refugees came in larger groups and that started to formulate a more consistent migration flow into the country. Hence, comparing to other EU states, in Poland post-2014 immigrants are quite prevalent due to geopolitics in the region. That does not mean that they are instantly recognizable in the community, but it became a turning point in the migration scene in Poland. Regarding the long-term residents, after five years of uninterrupted stay, an individual can apply for the long-term EU residence, which applies for EU citizens, but it is also a significant time period of stay in the country for third-country nationals, considering that migration is a phenomenon in the country, only the past 15 years (The Office of Wielkopolska Province, 2022). Therefore, migrants arriving a bit after 2014 can be deemed as an older migration wave in the country comparing to subsequent flows. That is even more relevant in nowadays Poland after 24th of February 2022, with a significant influx of refugees from Ukraine.

For the Polish case, four localities were selected. Two of the localities, demographically can be categorised as a small town and as a Type A according to the economic characteristics and the inflows of migrants. Two other localities fall under the category of rural areas and are closer



to a Type B locality with mostly post-2014 arrivals of migrants. The last locality in particular, a resembles the descriptions of Type B and C, considering its demographic decline, it will be categorised in this research as Type C. Poland's administrative division introduced in 1999, includes the voivodeships, which are large administrative units, in other countries similar to administrative units for each province. There are in total 16 voivodeships across the country. These are crucial for migrants as they are the places, where migrants should submit all the requested, from the Polish government, paperwork for residence permits, work permits and others. Voivodeships represent mostly the regional level regarding migration and integration. Then poviats are local administrative units, corresponding to a county in other countries. These units are having information for the places of residence of the migrants, numbers of low and high skilled workers in the county and employment contracts for migrants provided by the employers, they are representing the local level. *Gmina* might be compared to municipality, three or four *Gmina* together can form a *Powiat*. They also represent the local level in migration, also for integration programs and practices. (Statistics Poland, 2022). Each administrative unit is important for different actions and includes different stakeholders, having said that voivodeships are the prime locations for migrants in Poland as they are the only ones, which issue residence permits. Considering the type and population sizes of the selected localities and the different levels involved, different stakeholders were contacted and participated in the fieldwork. The fieldwork conducted includes twenty-three public and private actors, NGOs, journalists, experts in migration, service providers and school employees. Most interviews were conducted in person, apart from some, which were primarily with experts and journalists, who in some cases were having a very busy schedule for an in-person meeting.

For the Polish case, two methodological challenges occurred. The first methodological challenge had to do with the common questions that all partners of WP4 had to follow for comparative purposes. Some localities, especially the Type B and C are actively having migrant residents and workers, however, the concepts of integration and housing services are not very familiar to the participants as integration is seen as a fragmented topic and housing is mostly done by private housing or real estate agents. More specifically, each service provider or NGO are working on tasks, which are not necessarily seen as a contribution to the entire picture of the integration of migrants. Something that made the interviewees having a hard time to comprehend some of the questions. On top of that Poland is a country, which was primarily an emigration state with people migrating in large numbers till 2004, it is only the past fifteen years that the country is experiencing a transformation into an immigration state. Therefore, these changes are slowly becoming a reality in Poland, however, some actors from municipalities are not entirely acquainted with concepts related to migration and integration. In some cases, actors from municipalities are not familiar with all the reforms and migration policies and that was sometimes a burden for them to confidently participate. The second methodological challenge was for them to participate in the interviews in general, as



stakeholders from larger cities are familiar with interviews about their work and are slightly more self-aware of each practice contributing to the newcomer's settlement, whereas smaller town and rural areas representatives are more reluctant to be recorded and discuss openly sensitive topics like this of migration.

In Poland, migration is a heated topic and a very politicized one, it is also a rather new topic, which translates to the fact that people, who are actively working with migrants are easily recognizable in their communities. Due to this the anonymization of the localities and their names helped the participants to feel comfortable with sharing information and their experiences.



2. Context & cases

2.1. General information on the relevant national and regional context/s

This part of the report presents a brief description of institutional context of **housing** policy for migrants with the status of international protection in Poland. Then it describes the collaboration between the national, regional and local levels for administrative causes. Poland has not implemented so far, any national integration policy. There are some fragmented attempts with Polish language courses, local intercultural activities but all these are left at the local levels to regulate as there is not a nationwide approach. In the WP3 of the Whole-Comm project, we analyse with detail the actors who cooperate considering the integration of migrants in the local context, the problems which occur and local tailor-made solutions. Considering housing, it is available for refugees for 12 months from the day that they acquire the refugee status. For labour migrants there is no specific policy other than social housing, which is very limited not only for migrants but also Poles. Migrants legally residing in Poland find accommodation mainly on the free market, in commercial offers. Since the 1990s, social housing falls under the municipality's responsibility. Namely, municipalities rent cheaper, older in maintenance apartments and allocate them to people who have been recently evicted or are unable to pay for their rent. However, there is no defined government policy regarding housing, something that leaves the municipalities with less funding for the issue. This is partially due to the fact that there are not enough apartments rented with lower monthly rents. The municipalities rent houses, which they sometimes also give to NGOs, which assist migrants and refugees (after the 12 months period) in need.

Asylum-seekers during their asylum procedure can stay in centers for foreigners or in the apartments outside, paying for it from the housing allowance. 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 simply means that migrants with the status of international protection can choose where they want to live. There is not a particular law regulating housing of foreigners, they fall under the same law, as Polish citizens. There are two main regulations related to housing policy in general: **Law on Tenancy and Housing** and **Law on Housing Allowances**. The Law on Tenancy and Housing regulates in principles the rights of tenants, as well as the rights and obligations of owners. The Law of Housing Allowances regulates the competences of the communes and rules of housing allowances. The Poviats Family Support Centers within the Individual Integration Programme. IPI are programmes for foreigners, who have been granted



refugee status or subsidiary protection. These programmes cover their family members as well. IPI rules are indicated in the Act on Social Assistance and Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 7 April 2015 on Providing Assistance to Foreigners. This assistance is mainly housing, medical care and costs for food and other basic needs. Sometimes local authorities can add housing programs to their own tasks (special programs). Access to social housing is very difficult for Polish citizens. Only 4% of the total houses in the country are linked to social housing. After the transformation in 1989, the housing market in Poland has been completely privatised, which impacted the number of social housing available.

On the central level the responsible Ministry for **employment** of foreigners is the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. This Ministry works several social benefits, employment standards, develops labour market institutions and cross-checks the Labour law related to the EU and other international standards. In general, the national level regulates the labour market and the social benefits as a whole society and each of the decisions made, declares if the migrants, refugees and persons with international protection will be included. On the national level which collaborates again with the EU level is the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development. This agency works with the national budget, funds and implementation of state policy regarding entrepreneurship.

On the regional level the voivodes are responsible for all the administrative work related to work permits, maintain records of employed and unemployed and others. The collaboration between the local and regional levels relies on the accumulation of data from the regional units, which eventually are given to the central level for re-evaluation and policy making. Considering the top-down approach, the central level gives the policies that the voivodes apply for instance eligibility for work or social allowance. Refugees and persons granted humanitarian protection have the right to work in Poland without the need to apply for a work permit.

The local level works with entering and processing of economic activity in the locality, population demographics and housing details of the migrants. This level collaborates with the regional level for cross-checking of registers, for the paperwork of migrants. Having said that when a migrant needs to register papers in different administrative units, the person has to go through different procedures, and it can happen that one paper can be accepted in one unit and not accepted in another. Some initiatives initiating from the national level, if not obliged, can also be selectively applied in the regional and local levels.

2.2. Locality 1 ([Lower Silesia], [type A], small town)

Locality 1 is a small town located in the Lower Silesian region and is the largest in size of population comparing to the other three localities. It is an industrial location with foreign labour migrants. Most are registered as seasonal or temporary migrants. The countries of origin of most migrants are Ukraine, Georgia and Russia. During the first wave of the COVID-



19, a lot of seasonal migrants were led off and the local administration, took the initiative to offer them with legal advice, translators, and temporary houses. Illustrating the willingness from the local actors to assist migrants but simultaneously the precarity of the jobs and contracts that the migrants receive, which lead to them being unemployed and homeless in a case of an emergency like the pandemic.

The local news is in Polish but in some cases intercultural initiatives for integration are announced in Polish and Ukrainian. Which shows that there is a significant progress of the understanding of the existence of another large group in the community and their inclusion in the local news.

The region has seen a decline in local population since 2013, with recurring labour shortages as smaller towns in Poland are having a declining economically active population, who usually moves to larger towns or cities. For that reason, for temporary and seasonal work, labour migrants are reviving the local economy.

2.3. Locality 2 ([Lower Silesia], [type B] Rural Area)

Locality 2 is a rural area found in the Lower Silesian region. The area is intriguing as it was an industrial center before 1989, however, like a lot of other towns in Poland, in the time of economic transformation it faced a very high unemployment (more than 30%). The town endeavoured to boost its economic development by modernising and using its factories, which welcomed mostly low-skilled migrants. Jaskułowski (2019), who conducted fieldwork with high-skilled migrants in the town, found out that integration was non-existent to the extent that migrants prefer to live in Wrocław, a city nearby and commute for work in the town. The nationalities of the migrants are similarly to locality 1 with the presence of more Caucasians.

The locality has been exposed to migrants mostly the past decade, hence, the ideas of integration and interrelations with migrants are not very much harvested.

2.4. Locality 3 ([Great Poland region], [type A], [small town])

Locality 3 is a small town located in the Greater Poland region. This is the central region in Poland, which as a voivodeship has more migrants than the Lower Silesian region, where the other two localities are found. The nationalities of the migrants, however, remain the same with Ukrainians being the largest group and Belarusians and Russians to follow suit.

Foreign labour is needed in the region for seasonal work for the agriculture and longer stays are linked to the factories. The inhabitant trends from 2016-2020, show that the town is

constantly losing population with a high emigration rate. However, with an increase in the numbers of migrants as the local powiat showed an increase in 2020 in requests for work permits.

2.5. Locality 4 ([Great Poland region], [type C], [Rural Area])

Locality 4 is a small town according to the national context but resembles mostly to rural area according to the Whole-Comm, found in the Great Poland region. The town has shown in the past years an increase in population due to initiatives to increase the living and working standards of its community. The town is functioning more as a place for labour migrants to live there rather than commute to, as they mostly travel to neighbouring cities for work.

Table 1. Number of inhabitants per locality.

Locality	Number of inhabitants	Region	Subregion	Distance from capital of the region
Locality1	56.800	Lower Silesia	Western Poland	50km
Locality2	15.900	Lower Silesia	Western Poland	28km
Locality3	71.560	Greater Poland	Western Poland	123km
Locality4	29.800	Greater Poland	Western Poland	13km

Table. Number of declarations of intention to entrust work and number of permits to work 2021.

Locality	Number of declarations of the intention to entrust work to a foreigner issued by the local labour office (number of Ukrainians)	Number of permits to work in the region issued by the Governor's Office
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Locality 1	28.952 (24.953)	44.579 (Lower Silesia)
Locality 2	8.669 (7.667)	44.579 (Lower Silesia)
Locality 3	4.837 (4.045)	74.558 (Greater Poland)
Locality 4	93.378* (75.002)	74.558 (Greater Poland)

Table. Number of all types of residence permits to stay April 2022

Region	Number of residence permits*	Ukrainians	Women	Men
Greater Poland	49.430	38.553	29.163	20.267
Lower Silesia	42.672	37.080	18.495	24.177



3. Access to housing

The following section will be focusing on the access to housing in the four Polish localities. At a first glance, this issue can be answered as something that lays entirely in the hands of private housing and real estate agents. The current situation is as such, however, the fieldwork conducted has shown that stakeholders are vocal about this problem of the lack of public housing facilities and have already discussed it with national, regional and local authorities. Therefore, obstacles do exist regarding regulations about migrants and their housing. Empirical data also showed the existence of local initiatives and tailor-made alternatives.

3.1. Main challenges / obstacles

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland established in 1997, Article 32 states “All persons shall be equal before the law. All persons shall have the right to equal treatment by public authorities” (Sejm, 2019). Article 32 appears empowering for everyone living in Poland; however, it has been a subject of intense debate as this “equal” treatment, takes for granted that all persons are facing the same hardships and are treated equally not only by the law but also from the community. The Article continues with “No one shall be discriminated against in political, social or economic life for any reason whatsoever” (Sejm, 2019). In all good will of the Constitution, discrimination is mentioned as something not accepted. Having said that this would be closer to reality, if migrants having access to housing are dealing with public services. What really happens though is that **most of them are finding places via private owners and real estate agents**. Therefore, that leaves them with having a harder time to find places, contact landlords, who mostly speak Polish, and sign contracts, which require them, for most cases, to have two months’ worth of money for deposits plus the money for the first rent. It must be noted here that the possibility for acquiring a rental contract is only in cases that the tenant can provide documentation of a legitimate employment contract to the landlord. In Poland, usually migrants when they apply for a residence permit, they have to wait a response from the voivodeship up to fourteen months. Before that period the person cannot request for a faster reply or use the law against the administrative unit. That instantly translates to that these migrants, who have just arrived in Poland cannot apply for public housing as they do not have the legal papers to qualify. Therefore, migrants for at least a time period are responsible to find a place to stay outside of the public housing. On top of that, **in order to apply for a temporary residence permit or work permit, the person has to have a place of residence registered**. According to the official website of the Republic of Poland, it mentions when listing the requirements for someone to apply for the above permits “the



obligation for a foreigner to have a place of residence on the territory of the Republic of Poland (current Article 114 section 2 of the Act on Foreigners)” (Gov.pl, 2022)

At the national level, public housing services are not seen as a separate service between Polish nationals and migrants. When NGOs are asking for even temporary housing for migrants in need, what they receive as answers are that all citizens of Poland, need to go through the exact same processes. Even though, this can take years for someone to be given a place to stay and the bureaucracy requires someone, who can communicate in Polish and be able to understand all the processes and the paperwork needed. When it comes to the regional and local levels, when NGOs approach voivodeships and powiats and ask for public housing, their requests are declined. One of the interviews, who is a member of an NGO said that the answers that they receive are: “We have no houses, they cannot be treated differently than other citizens.” (PL-JEL-09). At the local level, NGOs work with municipalities particularly in the Type A and B localities in order to provide at least emergency housing for people, who are trying to register for a work permit. As mentioned before based on the Article 114 section 2 of the Act on Foreigners, they need to show a place, where they reside and that can be challenging for a migrant, who has limited economic resources. For that reason, emergency housing appears to be the only solution that NGOs can organise as of now, according to the Constitution and national laws. As the interviewee suggested: “The only difference is that when they have residence, they can sign in for this long queue for social housing together with everyone else. The other option is to live in shared apartments. To hire an apartment like any other person. Soon there will be emergency apartments but no systemic solutions across Poland.” (PL-JEL-09)

Renting a house or room in Poland has changed the past decade. The **pricing of the houses** spiked after 2014, according to Statista (2021) in 2011 the annual house pricing was quite stable until 2013. From 2014 and on the increase is significant. Particularly, during the COVID-19 period the prices saw an abrupt increase. Statista (2021) mentions “Poland registered some of Europe's largest price increases during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. House prices in the Central European country grew by more than 12 percent year-on-year, corrected for inflation.” This led to new challenges for migrants to find housing as the boom in the housing market in Poland allowed the private house owners to become more and more selective of the tenants as they preferred people who can pay the maximum rent price.

Refugees are provided with support with Polish languages and stay for a year and are also afterwards subject to find a place to stay by themselves. Poland has as a method of covering labour shortages, with **the declaration of entrusting work to a foreigner**, which is a simplified way of getting a job in Poland with a valid visa, this applies only to nationals from Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Armenia and Ukraine (Department of Foreigners, 2022). Hence, the majority of labour migrants in the country originates from these countries and in particular from Ukraine and Belarus. Landlords progressively are getting accustomed to tenants from these nationalities, however, refugees from elsewhere face significant more challenges in contacting landlords and receiving positive



answers. For this reason, **some local initiatives from private actors and NGOs** have started with support for housing. The Ocalenie foundation based in Warsaw is assisting refugees with introducing a social rental agency or with translations for house contracts, visits to administrative units and others (Fundacja Ocalenie, 2018). This, however, does not exist around Poland, whereas, what does exist is something quite similar but in a more informal manner in the researched localities of this report. An NGO representative from one of the localities mentioned that there some new jobs emerging with the inflow of migrants in Poland and that is a form of **intermediary between the house owners and the migrants**, they try to connect these two ends and receive an income for providing this service. The interviewee added that individuals have also entered the local level scenery, by saying that: “Houses with no borders are some new social movements, which appeared with the Polish-Belarusian crisis. Private people, who organise themselves in this system.” Individuals offer places for refugees and migrants to stay for a short period to assist with emergency cases and avoid instances of homelessness.

The obstacles regarding housing have profoundly changed the past five years as with more migrants, Poles are called to adjust the housing market to a new chain of demand. New jobs of intermediaries have been introduced, along with private house owners, who are willing to translate the rental contracts in English or mostly Ukrainian. **Inflation** continues to be a challenge as, in some cases, private housing can be unreliable as profit is the prime goal of the exchange and in some cases, migrants are the first to be subject of risk losing their houses/apartments.

It is important to note here that migrants in localities 1 and 3 are mostly finding housing via private owners. This is happening in a lot of cases with the help of an intermediary, who works simultaneously for the migrants and the landlords. For the localities 2 and 4, factory owners and recruitment agencies are also prevalent with the renting of rather cheap housing for the accommodation of the employees. These dormitories or hostels provided to the employees are paid by a small proportion of their salaries, which are cut for the payment.

Overall, small towns have more possibilities for social housing than rural areas, where purchasing and renting a house/apartment in lower prices by the municipality is a rarer phenomenon.

Summing up, challenges in housing policy are related to very limited supply to affordable housing, growing costs of rents for apartments and discrimination of migrants by the commercial housing market.

3.2. Actors involved (WHO)

In all 4 localities, it became apparent that migrants living their depend on the commercial rental market. Due to high rental prices, migrants often decide to share flats. This often causes problems with access to housing. Landlords do not want to decide to rent to migrants, fearing



damage to their premises. On the other hand, **some factories organise their own accommodations for migrants working for them**. The interviewees, who a university researcher and an expert on migration in Poland, pointed out the system of combined work and accommodation offered by employers, in the localities with the factories (Localities 2 and 4) “in our case, the entrepreneurs look for accommodation options themselves. Some of them decided to buy real estate and adapt them to the needs of migrants. Even if these are buildings away from factories, workers are delivered. Of course, with such a solution, Migrants have very little contact with the local population” (PL-OST-13).

In the locality 4 the representative of the local administration says: “we observe two ways of accommodating migrants. Much depends on whether they are temporary workers who come for a few months and then return to Ukraine. Then, employers often arrange accommodation in their own staff hotels. If they are migrants who settled here, they rent apartments on the market. Many people share their apartments to reduce the high cost of renting. We will also observe that more and more agencies have Ukrainian-speaking people. These are brokers especially for these clients” (PL-SWA-22).

Local authorities are responsible for the distribution of social housing. However, all representatives of local authorities indicated that the number of such apartments is so small that it is not enough for local residents. The interviewees pointed out “We sometimes are asked by migrants about social housing, but the queue of people waiting is so large that there is practically no chance for them to get access. Most of the migrants living in our municipality are working people who do not use social welfare and rent apartments on the market” (PL-SWA-20).

In all 4 localities we do speak about one category of migrants, labour migrants, majority residing in Poland as temporary migrants, they all use the private housing market. There is no doubt that **migrants network plays important role** in search for accommodation, as it was pointed out by many interviewees “As migrants living in our commune use commercial rental, most information about the possibilities, prices and offers is provided by other migrants who are already in the place. This information exchange is crucial. Very often, temporary migrants settle in one flat and exchange there” (PL-SWI-05). The role of Ukrainian formal and informal networks was a key point in all interviews “Ukrainian organizations operate in Wrocław, they also carried out information and assistance activities for migrants here. But the main ones work in big cities. These are legal consultations regarding the legalization of stay, employment, also rental apartments. These NGOs also assist migrants with translating house contracts and providing advice about market prices and how to find accommodation.

In smaller towns, migrants mainly organise themselves in **groups on Facebook and other social media** and exchange information there. These function as hubs for exchange of information, experiences and connection with landlords and employers, who join these groups. All news about work permits, new laws, are announced there. Hence, it works as way of creating a community, finding an apartment, a job and learning news about the legalisation of stay and work. Moreover, meetings in **churches** are also very important. Several Orthodox



churches are having Sunday services. Mayors at the local level are even closing temporarily the streets for Christmas and Easter festivities. Places of worship are crucial for networking and exchange of information. In some cases, a first contact is made online via social media, and they proceed to meet in person during the Sunday communes. As a local service provider at one of the localities mentioned: “Where there are many Ukrainians, services are organized. On the occasion of a church meeting, people also exchange messages” (PL-JEL-12).

In conclusion, **the accommodation of migrants in all 4 localities is based on private sector** of housing market, the offer of the municipalities in terms of **social housing is very limited and practically not accessible** for migrants. The support system is based mainly on migrant networks and private actors representing rental agencies. There is very limited activity of local authorities in the area of housing. However, all interviewees stressed out that there are rather few migrants trying to apply for social housing or subsidies.

Furthermore, for any paperwork for employment, temporary residency card even getting a driving license in Poland, the local urzad (local administrative offices) require an official contract with a landlord for the registry before any further action. For that reason, from the very beginning a house address is essential and waiting for social housing will burden a migrant from legalizing the stay in the country and acquiring a legal occupation.

3.3. Policies, initiatives, and practices that foster/hinder access (WHAT)

In the last years the influx of labour migrants in Poland has been very dynamic and has changed Poland from emigration to immigration country. Amongst the migrants settling in Poland, the citizens of Ukraine are the dominant group, other nationalities such as Indians, Pakistanis, Chinese, etc. are represented to a lesser extent. In the case of the influx of migrants to Poland, it is not only about the intensity of this process, but also about a significant differentiation of categories (e.g., seasonal workers, long-term workers, residents, students etc.). A particularly visible change can be seen in the temporary and circular migration categories.

Such a large influx of economic migrants in Poland is associated with demand and supply factors. On the one hand, an improvement in the situation on the labour market, record-low unemployment led to this. On the other hand, this process was also fueled by increasing demand for workers in sectors such as agriculture, services, construction, tourism and industry. In terms of the development of the Polish economy, it recorded steady, stable growth, GDP was 3.6% between the years 2004 – 2016. During the same years the growth in the EU was recorded at 1.6%. Poland also did not experience the economic recession in 2008 – 2009, which affected other EU countries (GUS, 2016). In 2018, the GDP in Poland was 5.1% and was the highest result recorded in the past 11 years (Kaczmarczyk, 2018). Economic development contributed to a decline in unemployment from 6.1% in 2016 to 3.5% in 2019



(OECD, 2019). The outflow of workers as a result of post-accession migrations had clear repercussions on the Polish labour market. Estimated data on the outflow from Poland in 2005 – 2012 states that it was about 2.25 million (Kołodziejczyk, 2016). When it comes to supply factors, the unstable economy and the turbulent political arena in Ukraine resulted in increasing migration pressure in this country. As a result of such an intensive influx of migrants in Poland, a geographical change in terms of their settlement can be seen. New attractive places for migrants to settle have emerged (Kraków, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Łódź), in addition to the traditional ones, such as Warsaw and the Mazowieckie voivodeship (Górny and Śleszyński, 2019).

The most important impact of migration policy in Poland was the introduction of the system of work permits, which is one of the main instruments of migrants' access to the labour market of host countries, has been greatly simplified in Poland. The ***declaration of the intention to entrust work to a foreigner*** system introduced in Poland allowed entrepreneurs to employ migrants without the need to apply for a work permit. This procedure was to enable seasonal and circular work in Poland, in sectors struggling with a high demand for employees. As Duszczak (2012, p. 149) emphasized, 'before the introduction of the declaration system, in the years 2004 – 2006 the interest of employers in legally employing seasonal foreigners was marginal'. The procedure allows employers to recruit foreigners for a period not exceeding 6 months within 12-month period on the basis of declaration. Citizens of Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Georgia and Ukraine are allowed to use the simplified procedure for accessing the Polish labour market.

The migration policy in Poland has been limited to the labour market regulations. The integration policy has never been formulated as a strategic document, some integration activities related to refugees and beneficiaries of international protection were implemented as part of asylum policy (from 2004). The most advanced element of integration policy was the Individual Integration Program (IPs).

The representatives of local authorities pointed out that there are very few beneficiaries of international protections, the main category of migrant living in the localities are labour migrants, temporary and long-term migrants.

3.4. Specific target groups (FOR WHOM)

In the case of Poland, post-2014, refugees or beneficiaries of international protections were a margin comparing to the labour migrants coming mainly from Ukraine, or other neighboring countries. This of course has completely changed after the 24th of February 2022, where the numbers have been reversed. Local representatives from local authorities all seem to agree that **there are no local activities and initiatives related to housing and migrants**. The reason

behind this is two-fold. Initially, as the mayor of one of the localities mentioned: “We do not see the need to build any housing-oriented integration strategy. Migrants benefit from commercial rent. We feel that we should create activities aimed at integrating migrants into the local community, but this does not apply to accommodation” (PL-SWI-01). From the perspective of the local actors there is no significant demand for social housing but more of integration needs, language courses and assistance with administrative procedures. Employment appears to go hand in hand with finding a house. This of course has become more and more challenging the past two years in Poland with a surge in the prices at the housing market. Private owners are not following any migration and integration policies but rather follow capitalistic trends, which can be challenging for migrants, who struggle financially.

The second reason is that in the cases where local actors have asked the local administrations for temporary residences for migrants in need, this was not positively received. Something that shows that different actors respond differently considering the demand from migrants for social housing.

In case of all localities **the main target group is labour migrants**. In larger cities in Poland, it is more usual to have longer lengths of stay and migrants becoming long-term residents, whereas in medium and smaller sized cities and town, temporary migration is more prevalent. Of course, this changes in each sector with some sectors having mostly circular migration (e.g., agriculture) An NGO representative said: “We notice that our local community has changed. But the structure of migrants is rather homogeneous. We mainly have temporary migrants who work in various sectors of the economy” (PL-SWI-05). The “homogeneity” can be analysed as two-faced. On the one side, the types of work, contacts and length of stay of the labour migrants and on the other side, the nationalities that these localities host. When visualising the migration scenery in smaller cities and towns the nationalities are mostly from neighboring countries, which gives an impression to the host community that the structures have not changed. Even after the war in Ukraine and the large influx of refugees in Poland, this has not yet fully spread in smaller cities and towns as migrant and refugee networks work mostly in larger cities, where newcomers can find easier occupation and place to stay.

CASE	Whole COMM typology	Major obstacle(s)	Actor(s) involved	Measure(s)	Target group(s)
Locality 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to social housing High prizes for private apartments 	Private actors	No integration or housing policy	Labour migrants



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discrimination against migrants			
Locality 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited access to social housing• Employers offering run down properties	Private actors	No integration or housing policy	Labour migrants
Locality 3		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited access to social housing• High prizes for private apartments• Discrimination against migrants	Private actors	No integration or housing policy	Labour migrants
Locality 4		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited access to social housing• Bad housing conditions	Private actors	No integration or housing policy	Labour migrants

Table 1: Case-by-case summary of results/findings regarding the area of Housing

4. Access to employment

4.1. Main challenges / obstacles

Based on the latest EU-wide data from February 2021, Poland had the lowest unemployment rate of any Member State, at 3.1%. Last year, the Polish province of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) recorded the lowest unemployment rate in the EU, at 1.8%. Hence, two of the localities of this report are found in this region with extremely low records of unemployment. For that reason, a large proportion of labour migrants work on a legal basis and is covered with health insurance.

Unlike the very low unemployment rates and the demographic decline in the country, the Polish labour market has absorbed many migrant workers but maintains a temporary manner. Which somewhat burdens the development of wages of these migrants as their contracts are renewed as temporary and also blocks their effective integration, when they are treated as solely a temporary phenomenon.

According to Eurostat, 40.6% of non-EU workers in Poland have temporary employment, which is the highest figure among all Member States. Therefore, Poland attracts labour migrants due to its low levels of unemployment but that does not necessarily correlate to ideal working conditions with equal pay to Polish nationals. Also, it is very important if the employment comes from an employer, a temp agency or a recruitment agency. Overall, finding employment does not seem to be problematic in Poland just yet, an interviewee from the local administration said:

“The Polish labor market is very receptive. Demand for foreign workers is practically in all sectors of the economy. Without opening the labor market to foreigners, we would certainly not be able to cope. Entrepreneurs in our commune, especially manufacturing companies, are fully dependent on migrants” (PL-SWA-19).

Migrants are a crucial workforce and especially in the rural areas of this research. The most prevalent labour shortages are seen in the manufacturing sector, which is the case for most of them, migrants are the core of the employees and maintain these industries. A sum of low birth rates, an aging society and outflows of Poles in other European countries has left several industries dependent to foreigners. Moreover, the country’s booming economy has changed the mindset of the locals, who wish to work in more skilled jobs and do not wish to work in labour intensive jobs. All these showcase that Poland needs to feed with a constant inflow of temporary migrants for the smooth operation of several sectors.

Considering cases of **segregation and discrimination** in the employment, one NGO representative mentioned: “The migrants who come to us are very homogeneous. They



are mainly Ukrainians; they are relatively close to us culturally. This means that we are not seeing any conflicts here. This does not mean, of course, that there are any great contacts between the local community and the migrants” (PL-OST-14). Cases of discrimination are not very obvious in smaller cities and towns and rural areas, they are prevalent in larger cities, where also anti-migration mobility is stronger and well organised. In smaller areas around Poland, this is not done systematically but rather fragmented as individual instances. However, as the interviewee suggested the fact that there are no evident clashes does not automatically relate to the inclusion of migrants. Jaskulowski (2019) in his research in Jelcz-Laskowice shows that there are no interactions between the local community and the labour migrants and for that reason, the migrants socialize mostly in the larger cities, where they work.

The **language barrier** also plays a big role, as not speaking Polish restricts a lot of individuals from working. A lot of them were highly skilled back home but with the incapability of speaking the language they end up underemployed with low skilled jobs with low pay.

Another problem is showcased with the answer of the mayor of one of the localities when asked about **maltreatment of migrants at work**:

“I don't have the impression that there is any sort of segregation or discrimination. Of course, the Ukrainians do some of the work that Poles are not keen on doing. There are probably some abuses that someone does not pay or tries to cheat. But those are rather marginal things. Employers are aware that they will not be able to cope without migrants, so they make sure that they work for them” (PL-SWI-01). It seems that the collaboration as of now is linked to solely “getting the job done”, which can potentially lead to similar cases of *gastarbeiter* (guest worker) as of Germany and the Netherlands, namely, to a continuous neglect of the existence of labour migrants who eventually stay permanently in the country.

Concerning cases of **gender biased attitudes**, sexism and discrimination based on ethnicity, it is interesting to examine the following answer from a service provider and compare it with the previous answers of this section. The interviewee mentioned:

“There is no such thing as an unemployed migrant. In our municipality, all immigrants find jobs. We also do not have migrants who use social benefits. Of course, these families who are here longer and are entitled to child benefits get it, but this is all in my opinion” (PL-SWA-20). In Poland finding occupation as long as someone can have a work permit is not very difficult. Having said that the *Declaration on entrusting work to a foreigner* applies for the nationals of Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine (Department for Foreigners, 2022). Finding a job as a non-EU national outside of these six countries becomes more complicated and requires that a person has to apply for a work permit and



visa at the local urząd (local administration), where the person should apply in person or send the papers by mail but later will be called to appear in person (Dolnośląski urząd wojewódzki wrocław, 2017). This is a standard procedure where all non-EU citizens have to go through, but the in-person meetings are mostly declined if the person does not speak or understand Polish. Meaning that foreigners who are not culturally or linguistically proximate to Poland are having a lot more difficulties in applying and getting accepted.

The past five years have progressed very fast for Poland as a country, which has recently transitioned into an immigration state. In more and more national, regional and local services public administration employees are inclined to understand limited English and provide the applicants with English translated applications. Regarding the largest migrant group, Ukrainians, in most services, Ukrainian translations are available. NGOs are also more active in the local governance and provide assistance with paperwork and cases of maltreatment at work or cases of discrimination.

4.2. Actors involved (WHO)

In Poland, employment is done by **private employment agencies, private employers and companies**. Depending on the job and sector, in the manufacturing sector, agriculture and construction private employment agencies are the biggest employers. In cases of highly skilled labour migrants, **migrant networks**, referrals and companies are the ones taking the lead. Finally, in smaller cities and towns entrepreneurs and local employers are also employing foreigners.

A local service provider of one of the localities discussing about the manufacturing sector, mentioned:

“The demand on the labor market is so great that every migrant will find a job. The most popular are obviously employment agencies. They often bring workers straight from Ukraine. The offer often includes work and accommodation. Obviously, they also recruit on the spot. (PL-OST-17). In these cases, the actors involved are the private employment agencies and the poviats, which are local administration for employment. The migrants do not have to process their papers by themselves.

A journalist from another locality suggested that:

“Of course, there are also migrant networks. Particularly circular migrant, they often inform their friends or family and circulate in their workplace, they replace each other when they go back home. You can also see that it's a bit of a snowball effect. First migrant come, and then they inform and invite more. And social media. There are local groups on Facebook and people exchange information about where to find work” (PL-SWI-05). In these cases, circular migration



is very dynamic and works a lot with migrant connections. All information is shared within the community and the actors involved in this case are the employer, the migrant and poviats. In case of circular migration, employers are the ones who fill in the documentation for the employees.

Finally, a person from the local council mentioned that:

“When it comes to issuing declarations of intention for work, the poviat labor offices play the main role. Procedurally, it is a matter between the employer, local labour office and migrant. Well, unless migrants are employed by an employment agency. In this case the employment agency takes care of the documents” (PL-SWI-02). In these cases, if the decision is delayed intermediaries can also be crucial actors. Namely, paid lawyers who assist the migrants with their paperwork, with the Polish language and have contact with the local administrations for information of the decision making and pick up of the physical temporary residence permit card.

Between actors there is collaboration, however, from the sum of the interviewees, it can be observed that employees of public administrations and services are viewing a general picture of the migrant employment in their localities, while NGOs and private service providers are more aware of individual cases and problems. For instance, during the period of the Covid-19, a lot of concerns were raised by NGOs about the protection of migrants at the workplace, the vulnerability of women and precarity of firings when the market is unstable. These are not shared from the public administrators as they view problems from another perspective, which is more procedural and bureaucratic.

4.3. Policies, initiatives, and practices that foster/hinder access (WHAT)

In the case of all 4 localities, **we cannot speak of explicitly formulated integration strategies, including those related to employment.** All interviews show that in the case of economic migrants working there, there is no need for support. Actions taken by local authorities are mostly related to the cultural area, relations, and the inclusion of migrants in culturally activities. The local authorities focus on building of feeling of belonging among migrants and building of awareness among local population about the presence of migrants in the local community. In all 4 cases we do speak about early stage of integration debate. All interviewees pointed out the lack of national regulation in the area of integration. They all stress out the search for own definitions and ideas for integration activities.



The mayor of one of the localities mentioned: “I do not think that we have any pressing needs for the integration of migrants, but of course, being aware that they will stay here longer, we want them not to live next door, to include them, for example, in the cultural life of the municipality” (PL-SWI-01). At a first glance, this can seem as a foster for policies to include labour migrants in the society, however, there is a general idea in the Polish society that there is no eminent need for extra efforts apart from language courses something that later create severe problems as most of the labour migrants come as circular or later on become permanent residents.

The only exception is the education area. A teacher at one of the localities said: “of course, where there are children at school, the challenge arises as to how to integrate them, how to teach the language. More teachers teaching Polish as a foreigner would be useful, and money for preparatory classes, which we know about it, have proven themselves in large cities” (PL-SWI-04). Schools are also functioning as networking places for migrants for findings jobs and housing offers.

4.4. Specific target groups (FOR WHOM)

Considering unemployment benefits in Poland, most laws applied after 2013. A person who has the status of a refugee is eligible for unemployment benefits, a person who holds a temporary residence permit and were having continuously a job for at least 6 months to a year can also get unemployment benefits according to 114 par. 1 or 1a or art. 126 par. 1 of the Act of 12 December 2013 on foreigners (Journal of Laws of 2018, items 2094, 2399). Eligible is also a person with humanitarian protection in Poland. Therefore, post-2014 migrants can benefit from unemployment money in case that they lose their jobs.

The declaration of entrusting work to a foreigner, which facilitates Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Armenia and Ukraine - to work in the Polish territory for up to 180 days within the next 12 months without obtaining a work permit, targets the neighboring countries for work shortages in Poland. Apart from this simplified procedure there has not been any changes to target other groups or solve any challenges regarding employment.

In Poland currently, the low unemployment rates and the booming economy does not really allow a clear image of current problems in the working place as of non-integration policies which does not match with the growth of migration during the past 15 years, difficulties for professionals who do not speak Polish to find employment or register for unemployment benefits, the need for a registered house in order to apply for a work permit with private house owners rising the prices unregulated. Currently, the problems are solely obvious at the poviats and the voivodeships where a law applies that when someone applies for a work permit, this person cannot sue the local administration before 14 months till the issue of the work permit



or temporary residence card. This law hinders the delays and complains, as the person, who applies needs to stay for these 14 months only within the territory of Poland and cannot travel outside of the country. This mention about creating a court case implies that migrants have filed complaints and sued the local administrative units and for that reason this law now applies and protects them.

CASE	WholeCOMM typology	Major obstacle(s)	Actor(s) involved	Measure(s)	Target group(s)
Locality 1			Private actors	No Policy	Labour migrants
Locality 2			Private actors	No policy	Labour migrants
Locality 3			Private actors	No policy	Labour migrants
Locality 4			Private actors	No policy	Labour migrants

Table 2: Case-by-case summary of results/findings regarding the area of EMPLOYMEN



5. Access to other resources and services

5.1. Family 500+ program

Poland is facing a demographic problem like other EU states, for that reason in 2016 the “500+ Family” (“Rodzina 500+”) programme was introduced across the country. The policy resembles any policies aiming to change the population decline, its objective is to offer economic support to families for each child and encourage young parents to have more children as the governments supports them financially. It also aims to limit seek for social assistance and nutrition assistance from parents as they receive a small sum to cover the needs of the child (Ministry of Family and Social Policy, 2017). This family support applies for foreigners as well, giving them additionally 500 PLN per child, which can be a great benefit for economically struggling families.

The challenges that occurred from the very beginning of this policy are mainly two. One is, that anti-migration mobilisation has severely criticised migrants being part of this benefit, accusing the system of leaking money to foreigners. This is amplifying discrimination and hatred against migrants but also gives a false perspective that Poland is giving these people somewhat “free money” even though has been elaborated multiple times that these money come from the general taxes, which labour migrants pay as well.

A second challenge is related to the distribution of this sum without the government having any mechanism to check how this money are spent. Basically, it depends on the family’s ethics and values of how they plan to spend the money related to their children and that unregulated nature raises concerns of if that extra money brings some good results or solely alleviate economic problems of the parents without increasing the living conditions of the children. That of course applies also for foreign children and their wellbeing. Moreover, this child benefit is unregulated when it comes to the family’s financial status. Poland provides this benefit regardless the family’s income, which means that in some cases wealthy families receive an extra 500+ per child without them actually being in need of economic assistance.

Access to this child benefit is easy for all parents of two children and more. As long as someone has temporary or permanent residence card and valid work permit then they can apply for this extra money for their children till the age of 18. Anyone, who receives social benefits from another country cannot be included in this benefit, but this apply both for Poles and foreigners.

Overall, this child benefit has a lot of critics, it appears to be accessible for migrants and can help with extra costs for their children.

5.2. Integration assistance for refugees and subsidiary protection holders



For the total of 12 months, persons who are deemed in the country as refugees or hold subsidiary protection are eligible for the so-called individual integration programs (IPI). These include, cash benefits, cover of living costs, cover costs for Polish language courses, health insurance, contact with Polish institutions and support and integration activities. The sums of cash for the living costs and Polish classes depends on the family members and can be from (PLN 721) 153 euros to (PLN 1,450) 308 euros

The challenges of these benefits are that Poland is facing the highest inflation in Europe at 13.6% (Statista, 2022). Currently, with a minimum wage in Poland being (PLN 3,010) 641 euros and a high inflation the social assistance is very little making it impossible for the persons to pay for their living costs and Polish classes. Our interviewees from different localities suggested that the amount of money is very limited but also the length is challenging, as it is for one year and then these people have no support to continue their Polish classes for instance in order to acquire a job.

Accessibility is also questionable as first the person has to be recognised as refugee or of subsidiary protection and then a lot of the services are mostly offered in Polish like for example the public health care. In that case accessibility does not lay on the potential of having certain services but to effectively access them.

5.3. Cash and non-cash social assistance for eligible applicants

In this case Foreigners entitled to benefit from social assistance, namely, foreigners that can prove that they earn no more than (PLN 776) 165 euros, then they can receive cash and non-cash social assistance exactly under the terms as a Polish citizen. This “temporary allowance” is given due to different reasons like illness, unemployment, disabilities or any other reason that does not allow the person to receive more than the aforementioned sum. This applies across Poland and the time period that a person can receive temporary allowance is decided by the social assistance centre. The non-cash benefits are related to social work, shelter, meals, services and stay at social assistance house. It can also include food aid and integration programs (Ministry of Family and Social Policy, 2021).

Challenges related to the temporary allowance are the main following two. First, in order for a person to apply official website of the Republic of Poland characteristically mentions “Send the application by post with an indication of the current address of residence to which the benefits are to be sent, a copy of the certificate on the use of temporary protection and a declaration of income.” (Website of the Republic of Poland, 2022). Meaning that a person has to have a registered legal residence, which entails a set of problems since as aforementioned, the Polish housing system heavily relies on private owners, who can be either negatively biased against a foreigner or regulate the prices, meaning that a person with financial problems, might not be able to rent one. Moreover, if the person is receiving help for



accommodation from the state or local administrations then he/she is not liable to the temporary allowance.

A second challenge is that in order for someone to receive the allowance needs to provide employment with very low pay but that excludes self-employed professionals.



6. Conclusion

The Polish case has shown that the country has experienced a transformation with a peak in 2014 in Ukrainian refugees and labour migrants. Employment and housing are currently functioning thanks to low unemployment rates in the country, having said that multiple challenges are faced on the national, regional and local levels.

Employment and finding occupation take a lot of forms, one of them is the **migrant networks** either from social media or from close friends' migrants with similar occupation find jobs in Poland with the help of other nationals who suggest them at the working place, this takes in a lot of cases the form of circular migration. In smaller towns and cities private employers are also employing migrants with temporary contracts. This is mostly the case of the declaration on entrusting work to a foreigner, which is a simplified procedure that facilitates both the employer and employee. In a lot of cases in the sectors of manufacturing, agriculture and construction **private employment agencies play a big role**. The **labour shortages** along with the low unemployment rates are making Poland as an attractive destination for labour migrants from neighbouring countries and as of now the possibility of finding a job rather easily has alleviated any existing problems.

The **housing scene is primarily dominated by private house owners and real estate agencies**. Social housing applies to all the citizens of the Republic of Poland, immigrants with permanent residence permit, people with refugee status and persons with subsidiary protection, making it a lengthy procedure that migrants cannot afford to wait as they need for the legalisation of their stay a registered address and a valid contract. What is interesting is that in the researched localities an **emergence of non-official actors in the form of intermediaries**, who work for migrants and translate for them the contracts and basically connects landlords with migrants. Local NGOs are also endeavouring to have empty houses given by the municipalities for emergency cases of migrants who cannot afford a place or who got evicted, etc. With the current inflation in Poland and a spike in the prices of houses, it showcases that **sole dependence on private actors can jeopardize the labour market as labour migrants are unable to find apartments** and houses in reasonable prices.

Extra benefits are given by the Republic of Poland as of the 500+ program for children, the social allowance and unemployment benefit. Among them, migrants are actively using the **500+**, which helps a lot of families to support children with schools, Polish language classes and tuitions.

Several challenges are rising from the fieldwork, three are the most prevalent. The first one is that along with the **non-existence of integration policies**, the Polish government has not introduced targeted programs for migrants it appears that all programs are a prolong of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy. The negligence of having institutionalised social benefits and policies for both employment and housing.



The second challenge has to do with the results of the interviews, there is a visible difference in the answers of public administrative workers and NGOs and journalists. The national and regional levels are seeing a general picture, where indeed most migrants in Poland are Ukrainians and have a homogeneous structure but that leaves out other nationalities, which are not well analysed. A closer look is seen from the side of **NGOs**, however, with **limited resources and ability to act** when there are no policies in place and funds.

A third challenge has to do with **discrimination**, marginalisation and bias against gender and ethnicity. With no policies in place, systematic changes cannot happen since individual cases are reported to local NGOs but that does not suffice for holistic changes. Knowledge or at least understanding of the Polish language can boost someone in the workplace and also during the applications at the voivodeships whereas the opposite happens when someone does not speak Polish.

Overall, in the Polish case the demographic decline, an aging population, low unemployment and a stable economy create good conditions for labour migration and that seems to be understood from the Polish ministries, regional and local governments. However, it is unclear as of now, if Poland will be an attractive destination for labour migrants, if the housing market will not be regulated and more integration policies will be implemented.

Considering the four localities, the main difference lays on the housing as it is more usual to have private houses and real estate agencies offering services to the labour migrants. Social housing is very rare and very few apartments are offered by the municipalities to migrants in need. In the rural areas, housing can be also something offered by the employer with a small deduction from the employee's salary. This is mostly a phenomenon in the farming and construction and industry sectors. Social housing in these cases is almost impossible as most houses fall under private ownership for that reason, the employer is usually catering for it.



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