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Social relations, individual attitudes and
migrant integration experiences in small
and medium-sized towns and rural areas
in Poland

Country Reports on policy outcomes

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REPORT

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Executive summary

The WP5 Polish report examines integration in four selected localities, two in Lower Silesia region and two in the Greater Poland region. For this research, focus groups with long-term residents and post-2014 migrants, interviews with migrants and participant observations were conducted. The objective of this comparative research is to analyze, post-2014 migrants' experiences, individual attitudes, and social relations in the four different localities. For the Polish case, migrants' experiences varied between localities, based on three main factors; migrants' economic and social status, knowing and being able to speak Polish, the size and location of the locality. One of the localities is a rural area, which makes social relations rather sparse and exclusively for practical purposes as of finding shelter, job and daily shopping. Two localities are in close proximity with big urban agglomerations, which impacts inter-group relations, as migrants very often search for accommodation in these locations because the prices are more affordable and the housing market is more accessible than in large cities. Namely, a lot of them commute from peripheral small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRAs) towards urban centres. Having in mind that migrants most of times work overtime that does not allow them to have extra time to socialize in the localities that they have accommodation in.

The European "refugee crisis" from 2015 did not have a large impact on Poland. The post-2015 migration inflows in Poland were mainly labour migrants from neighbouring countries. However, the first war in the Eastern part of Ukraine in 2014 might be seen as a push factor for Ukrainian migration to Poland. In a very short period of time Poland, became from an emigration country to a European leader in terms of newly issued resident permits. These migrants predominantly came from neighbouring countries and were occupied as temporary or circular migrants.

This has drastically changed after the war in Ukraine from 24th February 2022. This resulted in largest refugee outflow in Europe. In the first weeks almost 3 million of Ukrainians crossed the Polish borders. By the end of October 2022, the number of refugees who stayed in Poland is estimated to be 1,2 million (Duszczyk and Kaczmarczyk 2022).

Despite the high inflow of migrants in Poland in the recent years the national government has not developed a comprehensive migration and integration policy. The regulations related to migration are rather fragmented and integration activities are covered by local level institutions and NGOs. The implementation of the simplified procedure of employment of foreigners allows foreigners who are citizens of Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Armenia and Ukraine to be employed in Poland for six months within 12 consecutive months (Department for Foreigners n.d.). This resulted in Poland being one of the

most liberal regimes in terms of access to labour market. However, this did not trigger a set of policies for the integration of these newcomers.

Overall, the fieldwork conducted showed that local initiatives can influence migrants' experiences, although, individual attitudes and social relations depend also on the dynamics of each community and the reasons of migration

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1. Introduction

In the European Union due to the 2015 so-called “refugee crisis” small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRAs) started to have an increasing role in accommodating humanitarian migrants. The arrival of asylum-seekers and refugees in the EU peaked after 2014 and EU countries have struggled to re-organise and manage the reception of humanitarian migrants. The lack of immediately available reception facilities in cities, coupled with the dispersion policies implemented by states to ensure an “equal” distribution of asylum seekers across their national territories, has led to the increased involvement of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in the reception of people seeking refuge (Flamant et al. 2020). Even though immigrant integration in cities has been in the focus of research since decades now, we know relatively little about smaller towns and rural areas, localities that often have no or little prior experiences with migration. Research has shown, that “the experiences that new arrivals face in the first phase of their reception and accommodation, and the relationships they build in their neighbourhoods and host cities have a long-term effect on their later lives and play a significant role in the way their impressions, aspirations and motivations develop along the way of their integration trajectories” (Seethaler-Wari 2018).

We need to know more, which factors facilitate, and which hinder positive experiences when migrants (mainly arrived after 2014) settle in these small and medium-sized towns and rural areas. The objective of the country report is thus to understand which role specific local contexts (or “local refugee integration opportunity structures”), within the same country, can play in shaping individual attitudes, social relations, and consequently migrant integration experiences in SMsTRAs. We define local (refugee) integration opportunity structures, as “sets of resources, arrangements and pathways that can facilitate or block integration” (Phillimore 2020). Among the contextual factors that determine the local opportunity structure we identify, following and adapting Phillimore (2020), four dimensions:

- a) the social dimension, highlighting the individual (e.g., age, gender, country of origin, class, religion) and the group level factors (e.g., presence or absence of support networks, civil society organisations);
- b) the ideational-political dimension, which includes a set of factors connected to discourse, such as media information, political ideology of leaders and the local community, and political mobilizations pro- and anti-migrants;
- c) the factors connected to governance including the impact of housing, labour market, and specific immigrant integration policies and practices, and their implementation at the local level;

- d) the spatial dimension, focusing on the specificity of SMsTRAs compared to cities but also on local socio-economic determinants and on spatial proximity/segregation.

The aim of this report is to identify in the localities selected and analyzed in Poland, which factors are more relevant in shaping attitudes, interactions between long-term residents and newly arrived migrants.

Migration in Poland significantly differs from Southern and Western European countries. That is mainly due to the timeline unfolding of migrant and refugee waves. While the year of 2015 signifies a milestone in the migration era in other European regions, the first large refugee waves arrived in Poland only recently, due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine starting in February 2022. The previous intense inflows of migrants (after 2014) were a result of labour shortages and the implementation of the simplified procedure of the employment of foreigners. The **declaration on entrusting work to a foreigner** was a breakthrough for the facilitation of employers from Poland and employees from neighbouring countries. Hence, labour migrants arriving since 2014 profoundly differ to the current refugees due to their establishment in the workplace and the experiences steaming from the length of their stay in Poland. We cannot compare the two different groups; however, it is worth asking, how previous experiences with migrants have influenced the reception of refugees in the selected localities during the past months? We can ask the question: To what extend are SMsTRAs involved in the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Poland? Moreover, is the arrival of Ukrainian refugees re-shaping social interactions, individual attitudes and the intergroup relations in the SMsTRAs? Finally, in this country report, we also try to address these questions to capitalise on the research conducted during yet another critical juncture.

2. Methodology

For the Polish case, four localities where selected. Lower Silesia has been a pole for labour migration since 2008-2009 during the financial crisis. Poland withstood the economically challenging period and was even called the “Green Island”, as it managed not to sink in recession (Polanski 2014). This made Poland an attractive destination for labour migrants from neighbouring countries. Simultaneously, several global corporations opened in the region along with some being at medium and small towns. Small towns as the two selected for the report, are mostly welcoming labour migrants for their industrial development or because they are close to larger cities and people can commute and work there. Even before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022, Ukrainians constituted the majority of foreigners employed in Polish companies. According to the ZUS database (Social Insurance Institution) by the end of 2022, out of the 1.1 million of newcomers, there were 620,7 thousand of persons of Ukrainian origin being employed and paying already social security contributions. Based on the Central Statistical Office before the war the number of Ukrainians residing in Poland was estimated to be around 1,35 million. The group was predominately male and economically

active (Duszczyk and Matuszczyk 2018). Due to the temporary and circular migration patterns, these two countries were connected, and the migratory networks, as well as well-developed transportation routes were established. All these factors were relevant by the context of recent inflow of refugees in Poland.

As it was already mentioned after the outbreak of war in Ukraine about 3 million of refugees crossed the Polish border. However, not all of them decided to remain in the country. The settlement of migrants in recent years was clearly concentrated in big urban agglomerations, however, slowly labour migrants spread towards regional centers and smaller towns.

Small towns in Poland gradually show a population decline with low birth rates and internal migration towards larger cities (stat.gov.pl 2019). This led to labour shortages and the need for migrants to work at these localities. Post-2014 migrants, therefore, are arriving there for work either notified for this labour shortages from migrant networks and co-nationals or from employment agencies. Currently, after the 24th of February 2022, more Ukrainian refugees have arrived in these small localities in search of settlement and work.

The Greater Poland region is more populated with one small town and a rural area. Similarly, to the Lower Silesian region, post-2014 migrants arrived for work via migrant networks or employment agencies. The massive labour migration was possible due to both formal and informal recruitment canals, and well-developed migrant networks (Kindler, Wójcikowska-Baniak 2019). The inflow was effect of very good developments in economy of Poland, low levels of unemployment and a significant outflow of Polish workers towards European labour markets. Especially, factories and industrial sites were left with no available workers as the tertiary sector in Poland overtook by large the secondary sector, which used to be quite strong in the country and had a large part of the pie of the labour force.

After years of concentration of migrants in Warsaw and the surroundings, in the last years labour migrants have been more equally distributed across all regions. Warsaw and Masovian Voivodeship stayed the region with higher number of migrants, follow by other regions. New attractive places for migrants to settle have emerged (Kraków, Wrocław, Gdańsk, Łódź), in addition to the traditional ones (Górny and Śleszyńsk, 2019)

The purpose of the selection lays on the fact that both regions are currently having migrants and refugees with constantly growing numbers. This makes them an intriguing unit of research as newly emerging regions in migration. It is interesting to observe how are they tackling new migration waves and deal with integration and social relations between the newcomers and the host community. Moreover, for the focus group discussions and participant observations, it is worth to observe how the relations unfold and why different integration practices are selected and implemented in each locality and what local needs are there.

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

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)

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 each locality, primary data was collected through participant observation in two selected sites of interaction between migrants and newly arrived refugees and local population, in-depth interviews with migrants and focus group discussions with migrants and local population. In particular, the sites of the participant observations were selected at areas with the highest inter-group interactions. The observations aimed at looking at the potential barriers or facilitating factors for the intergroup interactions. The research team seriously considered the possible impacts of the Covid-19 aftermath on patterns of interaction. Interviews with migrants were aimed at understanding migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion in SMsTRAs and at further analyzing the type of interactions already observed through participant observation. Finally, focus group discussions aimed to further explore, which variables are more relevant in each locality in shaping positive/negative social relations and individual attitudes. It should be stressed again, that this dynamic of migration landscape in Poland changed in the recent years, caused by the inflow of high number of migrants, took place without coherent, clearly defined migration and integration policy. Some local level authorities in the big cities such as Gdańsk, Wrocław, or Krakow attempted to develop strategic documents on integration (Matusz, 2020). The national government focuses on the liberalization of access to the labour market as means of economic development for the country but does not incorporate integration measures attached to these policies.

The focus groups aim at discussing the relations between migrants and local populations, attitudes towards the newcomers, the support systems and the integration activities offered by the local institutions.

The observations and focus groups were followed by fifteen in-depth interviews. It was aimed for migrants and refugees that were coming from different age groups, genders and socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, the year of arrival in Poland was aimed to be different stemming from 2014 till recently due to the war in Ukraine. Finding migrant interviewees can be sometimes challenging as some speak only English others only Polish and new waves might struggle with both. In some cases, language barriers did exist, however, the research team decided to proceed as knowing either English or Polish might have also meant a level of integration, hence, discussions with participants, who have trouble speaking Polish or English, could provide us with further insights on different perspectives on finding employment and accommodation with communicational barriers. The interviews were all conducted in-person and mostly at local cafes. In some cases, that was not as private as a house, but it was better for most participants as a lot of them live with other migrants and cafes provided them with more privacy. Overall, migrants were very open to discuss. Finally, due to the fact that all four localities have low unemployment rates reaching from 2-5% (stat.gov.pl 2022). Migrants seem to be busy with day-to-day obligations, which potentially does not give them a lot of time to reflect on their experiences and social relations with the host community. This was really felt during the interviews as questions related to bureaucracy, housing and employment were very easily replied and with confidence, whereas questions about social relations, friendships

and group events were seen as unfamiliar and not something that they are currently concerned with. These questions were responded with short answers and with a lot less confidence.

Finally, the participant observations were conducted in two main places. Main squares and central streets of each locality and areas of food, clothing and consulting aid. Polish towns and cities are built with main squares being the marketplace, where people go for shopping, public offices and other services. As aforementioned a lot of migrants are in the locality prioritizing as of now their work, thus, the extra time of the day is mostly spent to cover basic needs, visit doctors and go for other services. This is where migrants and host community intermingle most. In larger cities there is a variety of places for someone to observe but in small towns there are not so many services, limiting the places of interaction. Even though there are fewer places, these are very representative as the entire community walks past them and it can be a rather realistic image of the microcosm of the locality. Furthermore, food, clothing and consulting aid centers are places where low paid migrants and locals as well as refugees go to seek help. NGOs and municipalities organize these areas with food offered from supermarkets, local stores and clothes from donations across Poland. These places due to the intensity of the activities of people eating together and looking for available clothes put them in a situation, where they have longer conversations than the marketplace or if not verbal communication, they picture more moments of co-existence. These places are more likely to have conflicts as well as the people who visit them become one group, which is not the case in the marketplace, which is a lot more diverse.

More details on the methodology and methods used and on ethics are found in Annex I.

3. Main findings per locality

The Polish government in 2009 started to draft some migration and integration policies, this document was accepted in 2012 but was eventually rejected with the election of a new Polish government in 2015 (Duszczek and Kaczmarczyk 2022). Since 2015, anything related to migration on a national level has been highly dispersed and mainly focused on access to labour market and covering labour shortages. A comprehensive migration and integration policy does not yet exist, which becomes a burden for the regional and local levels as there are no concrete guidelines of how to integrate newcomers.

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

Duszczyk and Gora (2012: 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.

Integration as separate policy has not been discussed. Integration activities at the local level are organised and implemented in Poland by three main actors. The municipalities, NGOs/foundations and community networks/local people. There is no national uniform integration policy and neither funding for it. These grassroots integration activities are mainly associated with cultural events, Polish language classes and legal consultations.

The Polish government addresses the employment of migrants, their access to healthcare and inclusion to social housing and the child benefits. This type of minimal integration can relate to the Whole-CoMM framework of the governance, which is linked to housing and employment.

This gives a burden to municipalities, which do not have systematic policies to follow or funding for the implementation of these. That drives them to create their own strategies and practices to facilitate their own needs.

In case of refugees who arrived in Poland after 24th of February 2022, they were immediately covered by the **EU Temporary Protection Directive**, which grants them numerous of rights. Polish refugee system was based on the Act on granting protection to foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Poland. Shortly after the implementation of the **EU directive on temporary protection**, the Polish government implemented a specific law addressing the emerging situation, **the Law on assistance to Ukrainian citizens** in relation to armed conflict (Website of the Republic of Poland 2022). Beside of granting the temporary protection this special bill covers the issues of financing the reception system. The very recent initiatives for reception of newly arrived migrants/refugees will be described in the next part of the report.

Going back to the selected cases, locality 1 is a small-sized town, where the special economic zone is located. This attract both national and international companies from various industries. The town is located in one-hour distance from the capital city of the regions, which allows workers to commute from the town to the city. There are few employment agencies operating in the town searching for employees for companies located in the whole region. Migrants find their jobs either with these employment agencies, recruiting in Poland and in Ukraine, or from migrant networks. From the fieldwork and conducted interviews, it appears that this location is popular among recruitment agencies, which usually accommodate migrants, due to the accessibility of flats and houses. In many cases recruitment agencies offer a combination of employment and accommodation, which attracts migrants, who come in

Poland for the first time, without knowledge of the language or/and country. Long-term migrants find their accommodation mainly on the private housing market, due to very limited access to social housing. Social housing is offered to migrants under the same rules as Polish citizens. However, the long queues and long-lasting procedures, discourages migrants from applying (Website of the Republic of Poland, 2021). In most cases, this is the general circle where migrants interact mostly. Attitudes and social relations significantly rely on these rather than on how often a migrant/refugee encounters a long-term resident for another reason other than that. In the locality, the municipality being aware of the growing number of migrants, organizes picnics and social events for meet ups between locals and foreigners. These events are a collaboration between the municipality and NGOs in a lot of cases. For instance, the Ukrainian Foundation operates there and hosts events for children and moms with intercultural games (Baianova 2020). Another NGO is operating in the locality and has events and workshops focused on Polish language learning, support for different groups from young to elderly in the community as well as introduction to Polish culture.

Locality 2 is a small town, where most migrants work in industrial sites. Due to the proximity to the capital city of the region, some migrants work there and just have their accommodation in this locality. Previous research has shown that a lot of people work and live but socialize elsewhere around in larger cities near to it (Jaskułowski 2019). Initiatives are also taken from public and private actors, with NGOs based in Wrocław (NOMADA Foundation). The proximity to the big city, which already few years ago implemented local integration strategy, inspired local authorities to replicate similar events. The Ukrainian foundation is also present there with events focusing on employment. They organize educational campaigns called "I Know, I Employ, I Learn", which empower migrants and teach them their working rights, inform them about job opportunities and legal issues. More events starting from 2019, were the "Know, hire, gain", informative campaigns in the locality, which aimed to strengthen the presence of foreigner professions and to highlight their valuable skills (Baianova 2020).

Locality 3 is a small town, with the growing number of labour migrants settle down there. The local authority is aware of the emerging issues of integration, however without a national financing scheme, using only own recourses they can organize basis cultural events to support inclusion of migrants into the local community. In October 2021, a partnership agreement was signed between the Ministry of Family and Social Policy and the Regional Centre for Social Policy in Poznań, (regional centre) representing the Wielkopolska Voivodeship and the Voivodeship Labor Office in Opole, representing the Opolskie Voivodeship. They became project Partners, for the implementation of the project "Building structures for integration in Poland - stage II - pilot of the Centers for Foreigners Integration" a project under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) (Ministry of Family and Social Policy 2021). The aim is increased awareness at the administrative level about the existence of foreigners in the locality and train specialists to deal with paperwork and bureaucracy linked to them. Support

is also given for their labour rights, help with legal issues and with problems with housing. This might be a starting point for development of regional and local solutions to integration.

Locality 4 is a rural area, in proximity to the capital city of the region. From the conducted interviews seems, that many migrants commute to the city, and only have their accommodation there. The locality is known for carpentry, upholstery and furniture. Most migrants are either seasonal or circular migrants coming from Ukraine. However, from the fieldwork and conducted interviews seems that they plan to stay longer, especially in the difficult economic situation in Ukraine. Newcomers socialize mostly at restaurants and cafes where other Ukrainians work. Migrants seem to live and work close to each other at the same neighbourhoods; hence, they can be noticed in the community. Previous research conducted with surveys, which asked migrants if they have Polish friends, most of them were positive and implied that they wish to have more long-resident friends. This shows that even though they are working and living in close environments, they are open to meet Poles and interact with.

This context coupled with the interviews with migrants give us some insights of what facilitates interactions and positive experiences and what hinders these.

Initiatives from NGOs, foundations and municipalities are indeed seemed to foster positive attitudes, intercultural events, picnics, football games are all creating a sense of belonging and community. Most of the events are also allowing foreigners to practice their Polish and seek out for information that they have a hard time to find alone. Particularly, events which include educational training can be vital for migrants. Most of them are employed by temporary agencies and do not necessarily have the luxury to question some working conditions, thus, these kinds of events allow them to ask questions about the Polish labour market, wages and hours of work. Another facilitator is the participation of the local community to integrate migrants with them being open to make friends and include them to their circles. Our research showed that migrants wish to be engaged in the community. Friendships are also long-lasting bonds, which are recurring events than several spread out events throughout the year. One interviewee, who is a refugee from Ukraine mentioned that her personal relations with the long-term resident, who employed her is extremely important for her as she sees him as her support in the country. She mentioned:

“I do not know what I will do without Wojtek. Without him I will be lost, he helped me to find a job but now he is also my friend here, I do not feel alone.” (INT-06-LOC-01)

Especially refugees that have arrived from Ukraine after 24th of February 2022, are in distress as most of them are either alone women or women with children without their husbands as they had to stay back to join the army. A lot of them feel vulnerable and need a stable and reliable support. Initially, they receive this support also from their own community and previous Ukrainian migrants, however, a native can be a sense of stability for them.

Finally, what facilitates integration and interaction between locals and migrants is administrative support. That was mainly discussed in the locality 3. Most labour migrants in Poland are facing hard time applying for their residence permits in Polish. It is a complicated and long-lasting process. Administrative staff that are trained to deal with foreigners can help them with getting their permits and along with it, access the public services. This also provides stability for them and makes them more confident within the community. An interviewee mentioned that paperwork at the administrative offices can be very discouraging for a foreigner and demotivating for the person to engage in local events. He mentioned that he feels welcome, and he has good experiences so far in the community but the stress with administrative stuff makes him feel isolated and helpless. He mentioned:

“Going to the local administrative offices can be very stressful for us. If we do not speak Polish, it is impossible to approach there. The local staff is not always helpful and feels like they do not want us there.” (INT-07-LOC-02).

Changing the attitudes at the administrative offices, which are probably the first contact with locals in Poland, is crucial and can create a certain image of the country, either positive or negative.

Factors that hinder positive interactions are language barriers. From the fifteen migrant interviewees all fifteen mentioned that knowing Polish makes all the difference. If migrants want to interact with locals, knowing Polish is key. It became from the very beginning very clear to everyone that speaking Polish makes long-term residents feel more comfortable to communicate than English and from the point of view of the Poles, it seems that they see it as an effort from the side of the migrants to integrate and this action has a positive reaction. One interviewee said that knowing Polish changed completely his position in the community and that now Poles treat him almost like a Pole. He said:

“It is very different if you speak Polish. People feel comfortable to talk to you. My life changed after I learned Polish.” (INT-02, LOC-01)

Therefore, lack of free Polish language courses at the localities can be a burden for migrants/refugees who do not know the language. Intercultural events are very important, but they are also targeted for people who can have at least a level in Polish. Also, the initiatives are put online in Polish, hence, if someone cannot translate them maybe they are not even aware of them. Locality 2 is trying to solve that with the couples of two- of a local and a foreigner, going around and spreading information about the help that the NGO offers, however, this is not happening at the rest of the localities.

Another thing that can hinder positive interactions is the opportunities that long-term residents and migrants have when it comes to meet-ups. Previous research has shown that migrants are willing to meet locals and intermingle with them, but they are not sure where

and the opportunities offered are not that often to create a sustainable bond between the groups (Fundacja Centrum Badań Migracyjnych 2018). Similarly, our research shows that when migrants were asked, where do they spend their day and hang out, they mostly mistook this question as a description of their job. Afterwards we explained that we would like to focus on their leisure time and that was also seen as something that they do not really do as much and if they do is not their priority. Therefore, by themselves they do not have as much input to go around the town, visit restaurants and meet new people. In larger cities venues and events are frequent enough for a newcomer to join on a weekly basis. However, the opportunities in smaller towns are less and since the community is small, it could potentially work well since people meet daily more often.

Finally, municipalities and NGOs in all four localities should research upon the different nationalities within their communities. It is true that the majority are Ukrainians, however, most foundations are supporting them, and initiatives target Ukrainians. This currently is sufficiently working but as the country is becoming a migrant's destination more and more nationalities might arrive also in medium sized and small towns. This should be catered from now as inclusiveness should be seen as a concept for all and not specific groups.

3.1 General information on the relevant national and state/regional context/s

In case of Poland, and in selected localities, we must distinguish between labour migrants, which numbers has increased after 2014, and very recently arrived refugees due to the Russian aggression to Ukraine. The first category was economically active, very rarely dependent on social services. Their employment and accommodation of these category of migrants were in many cases organized by employment agencies. Due to the high number of migrants arriving to Poland, the migrant networks established and linked both communities in country of origin and destination. In both cases accommodations organized by employers and depended on migrant networks, very often meant the limited relations with Polish community. Migrants stayed together. From the research conducted by BGK (Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego) (2022) seemed that before the war in Ukraine 45% of production company had experiences with employment of migrants. Many of these migrants work overtime and share their accommodation with other migrants, to minimize the expenses. The temporary character of this migration impacted the interaction with local community and public institutions and the search for social or cultural event. From our interviews seems that migrants thinking about their stay in short-term perspective were less likely to established contacts or relations with locals.

Considering the period of COVID-19, the border restrictions introduced, included the restriction of the right of entry in Poland. Exceptions were listed in the regulation of the

Ministry of Interior and Administration of 13 March 2020 on temporary suspension or limitation of border traffic at certain border crossing points. This regulation did not include persons intending to submit an application for international protection in the country, which failed the 1951 Refugee Convention as asylum seekers and persons applying for international protection could not enter. The fact that many border crossings had been closed, including the railway border crossing in Terespol, which is the most frequented crossed land border for persons seeking international protection. Information was provided to these people from NGOs and the Office for Foreigners, which is in contact with the border guards. Despite, these efforts, there was a stressful period when these people were unaware if they can receive medical care and social services in the territory of the Republic of Poland (Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020).

For labour migrants, the decision of the Polish government was the until the end of the 30th day following the date of cancellation of the last state emergency, the legal stay of foreigners will be extended, if temporary residence cards expired, they will be extended as well as deadlines for submitting applications for the legalisation of stay (Website of the Republic of Poland, n.d.). The government also introduced the anti-crisis shield, which mentioned the following: "Employers submitting applications under this tool can do so in one of two ways. The first method includes covering an employee with a so-called idle time. The second possibility involves a reduction of the working hours. By now, nearly PLN 4.95 billion was granted for the protection of over 1.18 million jobs." (Website of the Republic of Poland, 2020). For labour migrants though common problems were that they were let go by the employers or that they arrived in Poland with the declaration on entrusting work to a foreigner. In this case, when an employee became jobless, they could find another employer but this person had to initiate again the procedure and obtain permission to access the labour market. Moreover, the employee can only work for the employer mentioned in the declaration. This became a problem during COVID-19 and reduced work.

Finally, for children the online education became a burden in some cases due to digital marginalisation, in case that the family did not have the technical capabilities. Furthermore, the classes were conducted in Polish and for newcomers, the challenges were apparent.

Overall, the migrants' experiences and the attitudes were mainly shaking due to the lack of information flow. New announcements were made in Polish and migrants and refugees had a period of uncertainty about their legal status, education of children and access to healthcare and other social services.

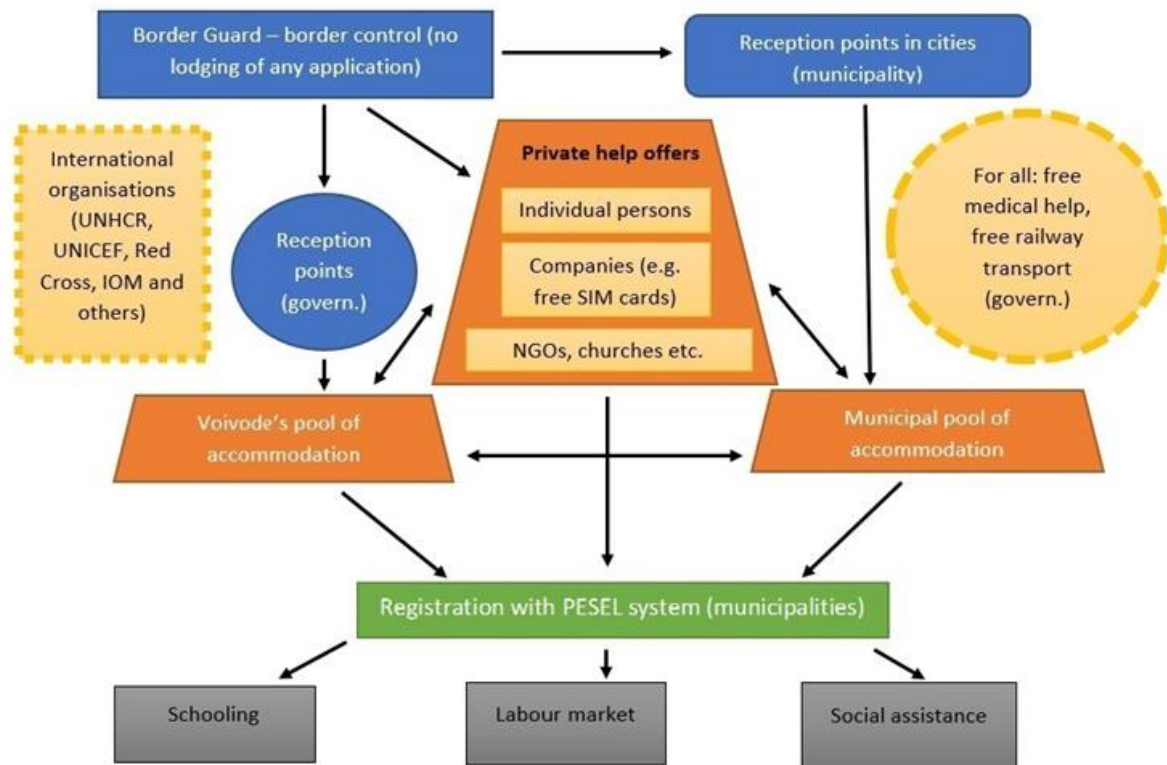
In case of newly arrived refugees the situation seems very different. First of all, these populations were mainly women with children. The Law on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in relation to armed conflict, granted the Ukrainian citizens legal status, facilitated registration system (PESEL- Polish Identification Number) and access to social services. This full access to

health care system has been previously accessible only to Polish citizens or long-term residence.

The refugees who arrived in Poland after 24th of February needed food, clothes, medical help, transport, shelter etc. This basis assistance was organized by different actors: NGOs, private individuals, international organizations, local authorities. These grassroots humanitarianism resulted in the accommodation of refugees mainly in private families. It means that the migration crisis caused by the forced migration was managed by civil society rather than public institutions. Ordinary people provided not only accommodation but also food, clothes, hygiene products. Many volunteers organized themselves via social media. The NGOs of different kind work together with Ukrainians self-organizations and Ukrainian local groups. The graph below shows the actors involved in the reception of refugees after 24th of February 2022. The reception points were organized at the border, but also in big cities. Many refugees arrived by train and went directly to big cities, where they were linked with people willing to help them with accommodation.

After the implementation of the special bill, people hosting refugees in their houses are entitled to receive 40PLN (about 8 euro) per person per day, but only for 60 days. The transition from private accommodation to housing market and labour market seems to be still a challenge for refugees. According to the Polish government data by the end of October about 80 thousand of refugees stay in the provisional accommodation facilities in warehouses, sport halls etc.

Reception of Ukrainian refugees scheme in Poland, February-March 2022



Source: M. Jaroszevska, Stabilisation of emergency measures: Poland's refugee reception system one month after the Russian attack on Ukraine (Forums 2022)

The inflow of refugees to Poland after 24th February 2022, has challenged the public institutions. It goes without saying that this crisis has been managed by civil society organizations. The arriving of new categories of migrants with basic needs of assistance, have impacted not only the big urban agglomerations, but also the medium and small-sized towns. From our fieldwork, it seems that the biggest challenges were related to accommodation and education of refugee children. One of the interviewees said:

"Refugees are provided with the access to school, but schools are not provided with staff. Many children are traumatized, many in need of psychological support. Language is the barrier in communication, and Polish teachers have very little experiences in work with foreign language pupils. This is a big concern for all moms having children in school age. We don't know what to do, send them here to school, stay in online contact with Ukrainian school system. We don't know" (INT-10, LOC-03).

Support has been evident towards refugees across the nation. Solidarity comes from the national level with financial support and the regional and local levels with bulk of assistance from NGOs, local actors and volunteers (Melzer 2022). Across the country, foundations collect food, clothes, first aid kits, detergents and shampoos, blankets and a lot of others, which are

offered by individuals, supermarkets, restaurants. The contributions from all kinds of actors are remarkable as these donations are consistent and support thousands of refugees. The picture below shows a room with ready packaged boxes with vegetables and snacks for migrant and refugee families. The second picture shows a room with garments of all kinds, which are also offered to people, who come to the Fundacja WezPomoz.pl in Wroclaw but also these are later on if excessive sent to other locations across Poland.



Source: Picture taken from the research team from the Fundacja WezPomoz.pl



Source: Picture taken from the research team from the Fundacja WezPomoz.pl

Finally, even though there is no national integration policy, the current refugee waves have pushed the Polish government to address the existence of migrants in the country. Eight months after arrival of first refugees the working group of experts were established in the Office of Polish Prime Minister in order to develop strategic document on integration. From the 1st of April 2022 the position of government plenipotentiary for refugees from Ukraine was announced by the Prime Minister.

3.2 Locality 1 [medium-size town], [Lower Silesia] (Type A)

The four localities chosen for the projects are located in two different regions: Lower Silesia (capital Wrocław) and Greater Poland (Poznań), both in the Western Poland. Both regions attracted significant number of migrants in the last five years. According to the statistics both regions were in the first five regions in Poland with the highest number of migrants.



According to Whole-Comm methodology, two localities are revitalising and two in transition. For the migration processes it is important to add that two smaller localities in both regions, are located in a very closed distance to the capital cities.

Table. Number of inhabitants in the localities.

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

Own elaboration.

Locality one is the medium-sized town in Lower Silesia region with 55 thousand inhabitants, the population density 2546 person per square km. The economic situation of the town is good, with the location of special economic zone, which attract both national and foreign direct investments of divers kind of companies. The level of unemployment by the end of 2021 was 4,5% which is lower than for the whole region, and whole country. 384 persons work per 1000 inhabitants, which is higher than average for the region. 11% of economically active

persons work in agriculture, 47,9% in industry and 13,6% in services. All 3 sectors attract migrants.

About 10 thousand of the town are in the school age. In the town there are 13 primary schools, 14 secondary schools. The level of education among inhabitants is slightly lower than the average for the region, with 14,5% inhabitants with higher education. The school infrastructure offers the places for sport and leisure, not only for pupils but in many cases for local inhabitants.

The housing market in the town is mainly privatized. The total housing stock is 24 719 flats, which means that there are 440 apartments for every 1000 inhabitants. This value is higher than the average for the region. Due to the accessibility of accommodations, the recruitment agencies accommodate migrants coming from Ukraine, who work in the town, or commute to other locations in the region. Migrants are not segregated from local community in terms of accommodation. They or the employment agencies rent flats distributed across the town.

The town is organized around city center, mark with the historical market square with town hall and tenement houses. It is a rather green town, with 8 parks, one of them centrally located. These public green areas offer lots of opportunities for leisure and sports. The cultural and educational offer of the city is created by 4 culture and sport centers, located centrally in the town.

There are several catholic churches in the town, one evangelical, and one orthodox church, which is particularly important for the Ukrainian migrants. The churches are the meeting places for local community, and where engage in connecting people and collecting basic products for refugees in the first days after 24th of February 2022.

There are several shopping centers in the town, located in different parts. The main 4 shopping malls are meeting places for the local community. The located shops, services, banks, and restaurants attract both local community and migrants.

During the first waves of the COVID-19 in 2020, the employers of temporary migrants coming from Georgia, Ukraine and Russia disrupted their contracts, leaving them literally stranded and homeless in the city. Świdnica's mayor, Beata Moskal-Śtaniewska, took the initiative to offer them legal advices, translators, and temporary houses, which shows that the city is taking local initiatives concerning migration policies and practices.

In the first days after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the refugees arriving in the town were accommodated in the temporary shelters mainly in schools.

- **Detailed description of how you conducted fieldwork in Locality 1**

- **Participant observation:**

As it was already mentioned migrants living in the locality 1 are equally distributed in the town. There are no segregated areas where migrants live or hang out. Due to the cultural proximity of most migrants, it is practical not possible to distinguish between them and local community. The only feature that allows identifying migrants in the public spaces is the language they use.

For the participant observation one of the shopping centers was selected. This is the biggest one with shops, restaurants, cinema, and service points. The place is open daily from 9am till 9 pm, except of Sundays. The long working hours make this place accessible for all working late, as migrants usually working overtime. This place was recommended by the local inhabitants in the first set of interviews for this project.

The shopping center was opened in 2014, has 24 thousand km. There are shops and restaurants located on two floors. The place is well connected with the public transport with different residential areas of the town.

We decided to do the participant observation in the normal working day and during the weekend. In the working day we visited the shopping center in the morning and in the afternoon, and in the weekend, we spent only afternoon there. In the working day there were very few migrants coming to this place. There were some workers (in the working uniforms) probably from the next-door construction site, coming for the quick shopping. In contrary to this weekend attracts much more migrants. There were groups of male migrants visiting fast-food restaurants and doing shopping. Due to the accessibility of the playground for small children we saw the Ukrainians families using the space.

- **In-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants**

We selected interviewees using our contact from the first set of interviews in the locations. We wanted to find labour migrants who arrived at the locations time ago, who settled down there more permanently. We wanted to get in touch with both singles, as well as members of families. Knowing that these categories established different relations and use different facilities in the town. We tried to reach as well newly arrived refugees, bearing in mind that they can have some difficulties in describing first experiences within the local context. While interviewing the recently arrived refugees we keep in mind that some might be traumatized and discussing experiences can be difficult. The interviews were conducted in the public spaces, local cafeterias. Many migrants share their accommodations with others, which means that they do not have many spaces for privacy. Selected interviewees were friendly and open to discuss their experiences in Poland, and in this particular locality.

- **Focus groups discussions**

The focus group was organized in the local school, though the contacts established during the first set of meetings in the locality. The group consisted of 4 people, three women and one man. Three of them arrived in the locality as labour migrant and one as refugee, 3 months ago (September 2022). All participants share their experience and discuss openly their thoughts and observations about life in the locality, contacts with local community, attitudes towards migrants in general.

- **Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences**

Before discussing the results of interviews, focus group and participant observation, it should be underline that we have to do with do realities in Poland, before and after February 24th, 2022. Migration to the locality before the invasion on Ukraine, was predominantly economically driven. These group of migrants were active, no dependent on social services or public institutions. The local authorities were aware of the growing number of labour migrants, but there was no pressure on the social services or other local institutions. The employment agencies played an intermediary structure between migrants and employers. In terms of accommodation migrants use the private sector. They were equally distributed among local community, without any segregated areas. There is nothing such as migrant markets or centers. Migrants made use of the same facilities as the local populations. However, the temporary character of their stay, and the strategy of the minimalization of costs, impacted their willingness to participate in local activities, or make use of any facilities. One interviewee describes it, this way:

“In the first two years, I had my family back in Ukraine. So, I did my work and spend time with other colleagues. We did not go to other places. When I had couple days off; I went back home to visit my family. Life was about working. We tried to save money. That was the goal of our stay here” (INT-09, LOC-01)

The other barrier in getting in touch with local community or institutions was the lack of knowledge of Polish language. The problem of communication was touched upon in many interviews. The interviewees mentioned the role of employment agencies and employers as a broker in contact with local social services provider.

“You can work, sleep and go back home in the free time but when you stay 3-4 months in the country, sometimes you need something. The biggest challenge was the access to the doctor. We had the insurance, but without knowing Polish, and the system it is hard to get the appointment. But we always use our boss to organize this. You can always relay on someone from the Ukrainian community, how knows the language. But it is not easy” (FOC-01)

The Ukrainians labour migrants referred to the role of employment agencies. For many of them the agencies played a role of intermediate structure, which impacted not only the decision for migration, but also the relations in Poland.

“The recruitment agencies looked up for people in Ukraine. I did not have any idea about Poland, nor I had money to organize this kind of trip. But they offered you whole package: transport, accommodation, employment and all the paperwork. It was quite easy to try. And

I did. You know, we stayed together with other Ukrainians. For almost 3 years I did not see anything. Work, work, work.” (FOC-01)

For the labour migrants, whose stay was perceived by the local community and by themselves as temporary, there was no special activities arranged by the local authorities. It was not expected by migrants. However, throughout their migrant networks they got information about the services provided by one of the NGO working with migrants.

“We did not search for contacts, we stayed with other Ukrainians. The biggest challenge was the legalization of stay. There is a special office in Wrocław [The Governor’s Office], but it is very hard to get appointment and proceed. Many Ukrainians use the employment agencies, to organize it for them, or there are some Polish companies. They do it for you, but you need to pay. If you don’t speak the language, this is the only solution. One in the church, during Ukrainian service we got the message that there is an organization from Wrocław coming to our city, to advice how to get permit, or child benefit. They have people speaking Polish and it was for free. Good idea, I think” (FOC-01).

Different approach to support by local authorities was presented by newly arrived refugees. They, from the very beginning were much more dependent on the institutional support. The inflow of refugees to the locality, was mobilized the local community. The city mayor was engaged in organizing volunteers, temporary shelters and collecting diverse basis products.

“When we arrived, there was a kind of center were Polish people together with some Ukrainians leaving here longer, connect refugees with families, who wanted to give accommodation. It was a lot of people working there, very professional. We got the warm welcome, food, products for children and babies.” (FOC-01).

To sum up, the authorities in the locality 1 were aware of growing number of migrants in the community, however the labour migrants did not express any need in institutional support. The authority did not implement any local strategy for integration. One of the officials said:

“There are more and more migrants. I think we should start think about them not as temporary residents, but rather a long-term member of our society. We as the city are organizing lots of cultural activities, knowing that migrants live here, we must think how to include them. How to get to know each other. But now [the interview was conducted on 24th of February we can expect here refugees in need of immediate support” (PL-SWI-01).

From the fieldwork in the locality seems that labour migrants, who were economically active, did not established many contacts with the local institutions. They rather stay within they own group, saving money and minimalizing their costs of living in Poland. The situation changes when migrants turn their temporary status into long-term one, and they reunion with their families. Having children in the school age, means for many Ukrainians the initial contact with public institution. The inclusion of foreign-speaking children seems to be the biggest challenge for the local authority, especially after the inflow of refugees staring from February 2022.

There were no protests or antiimmigration movements or protests organized in the locality. And migrants did not refer to any tensions between them and local community. In contrary the refugees underlined the warm welcome and the support system organized by the civil society in the first days after the outbreak of the war.

3.3 Locality 2 (Small Town) (Lower Silesia) (Type B)

Locality two is the small town in Lower Silesia region with slightly about 15 thousand inhabitants, the population density 907 person per square km. 51,3% of inhabitants are female, and 48,7% men. In the years number of population increased by 1,4%. It is due to migration to the town. The town has a negative birth rate. 57.3% of residents are of working age, 18.3% of pre-working age, and 24.4% of post-working age.

The housing market in the town, as in other Polish cities, is mainly privatized. The total housing stock is 6335 flats, which means that there are 405 apartments for 1000 inhabitants. This value is slightly lower than the average for the region. Due to the proximity to capital city of the region, good public transport connections and lower prices of renting flats, this locality attracts migrants who commute to work.

The labour market in the town is attractive, with the demand on workers both in industry and services. 608 people are professionally active per 1000 inhabitants, this value is higher than for the region and Poland. The level of unemployment in the town, by the end of 2021 was 3,0%, which is lower than in the region and whole country. The majority of economically active were employed in industry and construction (59,3%), and 10,7% in services. The unemployment declined from 25% in 2004, to 3,0% in 2021, which shows the positive development of factories located in the town, and surroundings.

In the town are located 4 kindergartens, 4 primary schools and 2 secondary schools. Due to the proximity to capital city of the region, many pupils attending secondary schools commute to Wrocław, where the educational offer is much broader.

The town is organized around city center, with mail shoring street. There is one cultural center and one sport and leisure center in the town. The sport and leisure center is located by the green areas, with many opportunities for divers sport activates. The local cultural institutions organized 46 events (concerts, exhibitions, lectures, workshops etc) in 2021. The proximity of Wrocław impact the cultural offer of the town. It is accessible to visit the cultural institutions in the agglomeration.

There are three small shopping centers located in the town, and several small shops along the main streets. Again, the proximity of Wrocław with variety of big shopping malls, impacted the development of such places in the town.

- **Participant observation:**

It was difficult to find a place where people meet in the town. There are not many shopping centers or markets there. Most migrants are employed in the factories located in the outskirts of the city. In many cases employers organize transport for migrant workers from their accommodation to work. We decided to do the participant observation in the main street of the town. However, it was quite challenging to meet any migrants in the town during working days and hours. In the afternoon in front of the shops, we saw small buses or cars with migrants, doing shopping after work and returning to their places of accommodation. The locality seems a rather calm town, where people stay at homes and there is not so much happening at the streets. Centrum Wsparcia Uchodźców Jelcz-Laskowice. The idea was born thanks to the cooperation of many associations, institutions and people who devote their time to helping refugees from Ukraine every day

- **In-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants**

For the in-depth interviews we found 2 persons living and working in the locality, which was rather challenging due to no meeting place in the town. From the first set of interviews with the local officials, we knew that there are migrants employed in the town. But it was hard to find them. The interviews were conducted in the cafeteria in Wrocław. This location was suggested by migrants, who live between the town and the city. Both interviewees were male, living and working in Poland for couple of years. In the beginning as circular migrants, and since 2020 as permanent migrants. Both pointed out, that the locality 2 is perceived as a place of work, due to its location of many automotive factories, but the life of migrants is more connected to Wrocław as a more vibrant and multicultural place for them.

- **Focus groups discussions**

For the focus group discussion, we found migrants working in the location. But again, they propose to conduct the discussion in Wrocław. We meet in the public library, where we organize the discussion. From the statements of the respondents seems that they do not have many contacts with the local institutions or community. They live in the outskirts of the town, their daily routine is organized by the employer, who provide transport from their accommodation (shared flats with other migrants) to the factory. The interviewees pointed out that the employers support them in the institutional contacts for example by the legalization of stay.

- **Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences**

In contrary to locality one, migrants from the locality two are less connected to the town. They seem to work and live there, meeting their basic needs, but for spending free time, they choose Wrocław, which is easily accessible from the locality. One interview describes this strategy:

“In the beginning we spend time only working and sleeping here. There is not much time left, when you work long hours. And honestly speaking there is nothing to do here. In the summertime there is the green area where people meet, but in the autumn and winter, there is no space to hang out. There are few people walking in the town, so when you go out, you are immediately noticed. After a while here we learned that you can easily go to Wrocław, where the big shopping centers are located. There you can stay anonymous. In Wrocław in all shops and restaurants, or bars Ukrainians are employed, so you can meet someone and talk. Here there is nothing” (FOC-02).

During the interviews with migrants, focus group and interviews with local officials very little was said about migrants needs. It seems that when they first came via employment agencies, they used the whole package employment plus accommodation. This model is used by circular migrants, when they change, they status to long term migrants, very often the employers assist them with the contacts with local administration. From the focus group:

“Ok. To be honest, it is hard to organize things here without knowing the language. And we don’t have much opportunity to learn. You stay with people from your country of origin, you work with them, share flats. So, you speak your own language. In our case, the employer, Darek organize almost everything for us. Some people are coming here for years. They work 3 months and go back home, then come again. If we need something we ask Darek. Of course, we have contacts with Polish workers, but it’s easier to ask boss. For those who came with families and need to legalize their papers, you need someone. There are companies in Wrocław, who deal with the procedure in Urząd Wojewódzki [Foreigners Office on the regional level]. It is better to pay, than to deal with this own your own” (FOC-02)

Migrants are also aware of the role of NGO’s working with migrants, providing legal advice or language courses. “Here it is just a little town, and I don’t know if they care about us much. But in Wrocław there are Polish and Ukrainian organizations supporting migrants. I know that Fundacja Ukraina [Ukraine Foundation] offers legal advice, language courses and some meetings for Ukrainians. But it is in the city and you need time. But in the case of emerging situation, you can get support. I know that there was an organization from Wrocław, coming here for kind of legal advice” (FOC-02).

From the first set of interviews with local officials in the locality, the very early stage of awareness of migration governance came up. “We have many companies from the automotive industry in the town and surroundings, knowing that the unemployment is very low, and there is a constant demand in foreign labour force, we know that one day we should think how to include them to our local community. So far, they did not need any kind of extra support. But maybe when they settle down here with whole families, it will need a special attention. I am aware about the growing number of migrant children in Wrocław’ schools. And

I know that they introduced the welcome classes, for children with limited knowledge of Polish language. But this is still not our case. Maybe one day we will need to attract migrants to our town, in order to help employers to full fill the gaps on labour market” (PL-JEL-07).

There were no tensions reported nether by migrants, nor local officials. Even in the companies where the majority of workers is from Ukraine, the relations were perceived as positive. “You know, we work together. I don’t say we have a lot of contacts, but there are now conflicts between us and them [Poles]. Sometimes in the town on Fridays or weekends when someone is drunk, there were some arguments. But it’s not very serious” (FOC-02).

The necessity for integration has been stressed by the local officials, how as well define what does integration means for them. The definitions of integration presented by all interviewees are based on their personal experiences and observation. It is worth to mention again that there is no national integration policy, giving any frame for activities towards migrants in Poland. “I think, if they stay longer, we have to adopt, both migrants, and we as Poles. They come here and change our local community. It needs work from both sides” (PL-JEL-08).

3.4 Locality 3 (Middle-size Town) (Great Poland region) (Type A)

Location number three belongs to the Great Poland Region. The populations consist of 70 thousand inhabitants, with 52,4% of men and 47,6% of women. The population density 1694 persons per square km. 57% of inhabitants belong to working age population, 17,2% pre-working age and 25,4% post-working. The town faces a negative birth rate. There are inflows and outflows of inhabitants with the slightly positive net migration. But the number of inhabitants did not increase significantly in the recent years.

The housing market in the town, as in other Polish cities, is mainly privatized. The total housing stock is 28971 flats, which means that there are 405 apartments for 1000 inhabitants. This value is higher than the average for the region, and for the whole country. Migrants are using the private housing market. It means that they are not segregated or concentered in one particular part of the city.

The labour market in the town is attractive, with the demand on workers both in industry and services. 321 people are professionally active per 1000 inhabitants, this value is higher than for the region and Poland. The level of unemployment in the town, by the end of 2021 was 3,3%, which is slightly higher than in the region (3,1%). The majority of economically active were employed in industry and construction (42,8%), and 16,6% in services, and 21,3% in agriculture. The unemployment declined from 19,4% in 2004, to 3,3% in 2021, which shows the positive general developments in the region. The special economic zone is located in the town, which additionally attracts inventors. There are several employment organizations located in the city, which cooperate with the local authorities.

The town is organized around city center, with the historical market square. This is the place of many restaurants and cafeterias, where the local community meets. Interestingly in the working days, the restaurants in the center are the gathering spaces for seniors, and in the afternoons for working population. Around the market square the variety of shops and service points are located. The center is well connected with residential areas with the public bus transport. There are several shopping centers located in the town, with the biggest one in the outskirts.

14.777 inhabitants are in the school age, they can attend 20 kindergartens, 17 primary schools and 15 secondary schools. Due to the intense development of single-family housing in the areas near the town, many children from the rural areas attend schools in the town.

There are two main Cultural Centers and one Youth Cultural Centre in the town. They offer variety of cultural and sport activities. In 2021 about 150 diverse cultural events took place in the town (concerts, exhibitions, workshops, cultural competitions).

- **Participant observation:**

Same as in the locality one, in this case we decided to do the observation with two places: firstly, in the market square, usual meeting place for local community of different age, and secondly in the biggest shopping area, located in the outskirt of the town. Both were described by local community as the places of interactions. We did the observations in the weekdays and in the weekend. The market square seems to be place of meeting for local community, migrants were less present in this place, however there visited local shops located near there. Less presence of migrants in the area of local restaurants can be linked to the strategy of minimalizing costs of living. In contrary migrants were visible in shopping center, both in the afternoons of working days and in the weekends. They were doing shopping in men in small groups or families. But they also eat in the fast-food bars located in the shopping center. We did not identify any special places where migrants gather. However, from the interviews with the officials we know, that there are present during cultural events: “We did observe migrants taking part in our cultural events, mainly in the spring and summer time, all these were organized in open spaces. They usually stay together, not interacting with members of our local community. I think if they will stay longer, settle down here, we need to think how to build bridges between them and our community. I know that we can risk living next to each other, and this kind of process can lead to tensions and misunderstandings. Till now, we did not notice any tensions. Sometimes in the local schools, when we have couple of foreign children in the classroom, parents are concerned, that this might slow down the progress of their children. But we react immediately. All children, no matter of their legal status, according to the law, have guaranteed access to schools in Poland” (PL-OST-15).

- **In-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants**

For the in-depth interviews we selected migrants with the experience of living in the locality and the newly arrived refugees. The interviews were conducted in one of the restaurants in the city center. The interviewees were very likely to speak about their experiences. They shared their personal stories of living in Poland, interactions with other migrants, and Poles. Some parts of the interviews were linked to the contacts with the local administration.

- **Focus groups discussions**

For the focus group we selected again migrants with longer experiences in living in the locality, and refugees who arrived after 24th February 2022. It was interesting and inspiring discussion about migrants' life in Poland. Beside discussion about individual experiences, interactions with administration and local community, the participants exchanged their strategies on dealing with difficulties.

- **Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences**

The locality 3 is the middle-size town and can be compared to the locality one. Both towns due to the economic developments and the demand on the local labour migrants attract foreign workers. In both cases main group are Ukrainians, who started to come as circular migrants, and tend to change from temporary to permanent migrants. In the locality 3 there are other nationals present, such as Indians, Pakistani, and Chinese.

Similarly, to locality one and two migrants had a limited contacts with the local community. Labour migrants referred to the working place, as the space where they got in touch with Poles. They again mentioned the language barrier as the obstacle of interactions. Migrants confirmed that they take part in the events organized by the town. They pointed out that the free access to the outdoor events is attractive to them. Much more oriented in the local context are those migrants with families. They know how to make use of sport and cultural offer of the town.

The temporary and circular migrants are more dependent on the intermediary structure (employers or employment agencies) than long-term migrants with families. The migrant networks are important for all categories. It works as a canal for exchange of information, contact with the country of origin, and support system in the emergency situations.

Many labour migrants had a strong relationship with their workplace, the owner or boss. "When we need something, we can rely on our boss, they are Polish and know how to deal with administrative issues, how to get to the doctor etc. Of course, we have contacts with our Polish colleagues but you know, at work there is not much time for interactions. I did not face any negative attitudes towards Ukrainians, but I know that there are some nationalists marching though big cities with the slogans against migrants" (FOC-03).

Our interviewees were aware of the situation in Poland, the inflow of high numbers of refugees, high inflation, energy crisis and rising prices. It concerns them, which came up in

many interviews and focus groups. “You know, it was ok till know, but after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, big wave of refugees arrived. This are mainly women with children. They would need assistance, and it costs a lot of money. In the time of recession Poles can tend against us. They say the Ukrainian diaspora here in Poland consists of more than 2 million people. It’s a lot!” (INT-12, LOC-4).

The newly arrived refugees were very concerned about future: “We got a lot in the first days. First of all, accommodation by the Polish family. Can you understand that almost all Ukrainians found shellers by Polish families, it’s a lot of kindness. Many of people who arrived with me, went to other European countries. Together with me mom, and my 2 children I decided to stay. I can work because my mom helps me. But it is not easy. And for the children it is difficult at school. They have extra lessons of Polish language, but it needs time. I am worried because Ukrainian children stay together and they should make friends with Poles” (INT-13, LOC-4).

The local authority is perfectly aware, that from the stage of observation, they ended up in the stage they need strategy. “It is a shame that in the country of so many migrants, there is no national strategy for integration. We can develop our own, but integration means money. We need it from the central government. Integration can’t be developed, manage and finance by NGOs, local administration and civil society” (PL-OST-14).

3.5 Locality 4 (small town) (Great Poland region) (Type C)

Locality four is a small area in Great Poland, in the proximity of the capital city of the region. The total population consists of 29 thousand inhabitants. In the years 2002 and 2021 the population increased by 2,9%. It is related to the development of housing in this area. Many of the inhabitants commuting to Poznań. The town similarly to other localities has a negative birth rate. 59.1% of residents are of working age, 18.6% of pre-working age, and 22.3% of post-working age.

The housing market in the town, as in other Polish cities, is mainly privatized. The total housing stock is 11006 flats, which means that there are 396 apartments for 1000 inhabitants. This value is comparable to the average for the region. Due to the proximity to capital city of the region, good public transport connections and lower prices of renting flats, this locality attracts migrants who can easily commute to work. They live simultaneously to other locations not centered with one place but spread throughout the town. In case of locality 4 some employers decided to renovate old building or schools to get place for accommodation to their employers.

The labour market in the town is attractive, with the demand on workers both in industry and services. 304 people are professionally active per 1000 inhabitants, this value is higher than for the region. The level of unemployment in the town, by the end of 2021 was 1,6%, which is much lower than in the region and whole country. The majority of economically active were

employed in industry and construction (38,1%), and 37,9% in services. The unemployment declined from 8,5% in 2004 (15,9% in the region), to 1,6% in 2021 (3,1% in the region), which shows the positive development of factories located in the town, and surroundings.

In the town are located 19 kindergartens, 6 primary schools and 4 secondary schools. Due to the proximity to capital city of the region, many pupils attending both primary and secondary schools commute to Poznań, where the educational offer is much broader.

There is one cultural center and one sport and leisure center in the town. The sport and leisure center are located by the green areas, with many opportunities for sport activities. The local cultural institutions organized 66 events (concerts, exhibitions, lectures, workshops etc.) in 2021. The proximity of Poznań impact the cultural offer of the town. It is accessible to visit the cultural institutions in the agglomeration.

There are three small shopping centers located in the town, and several small shops along the main streets. Again, the proximity of Poznań with variety of big shopping malls, impacted the development of such places in the town.

- **Participant observation:**

There is no such a place in the town where people gather, kind of central meeting place. We decided to do the observation in front of local shopping center and in the local sport center (in the summertime, weekend). The observations confirmed that similarly to other locations, migrants follow the same patterns of behavior as the local community. They go for shopping and use the infrastructure of the town to meet their basic needs. In case of this locality many migrants live in the shared accommodation provided by the employers. Some of them are located outside the town. Migrants after work spend time together. Near the accommodations migrants organized the barbecue spots and places to sit outside. They tried to adopt the space around their accommodation.

In case of leisure center, we observed just few migrant families with children. The prices of the tickets might be the barrier of associability for migrants.

- **In-depth interviews with post-2014 migrants**

We conducted the in-depth interviews with migrants in the locations. There were no problems with getting in touch with migrants. We use our contacts from the first set of interviews with the local officials. Migrants discussed openly their experience of life in the locations. Because we organize the interviews in the local cafeteria, some of our interviewees came with their friends or relatives. This gave us the chance to listen to more voices.

- **Discussion on social interactions, individual attitudes, and migrants' experiences**

Locality four is slightly different from other selected localities. Similarly, to location two it's in the proximity to capital city of the region. It impacts the daily routines of migrants. Due to the rather limited offer of big shopping centers, migrants tend to visit Poznań.

Due to the specific construction of factories located in the town and in the close distance (many of them family businesses with a long tradition), some employers offer their own shared accommodations for their employees. The renovated buildings are located in the outskirts of the town, which impact the easy access to the facilities in the town. "Our boss had organized everything for us. We share the accommodation, this is a block of flats which belongs to the company, we have the transport to the factory and back. I know it looks like a ghetto because we stay in our Ukrainian group together. But you know, we are here to save money, for our families back home. Now with the Russian aggression on our country, everything changed. Many colleagues want back home to join the army. Some others decided to stay and bring their families here. We don't know how long this war will last. But I think many of us will stay longer here" (INT-14, LOC-04).

Those migrants who had a longer experience with Poland, and who plan to stay here are more likely to interact. Some of them bought the flats, which means they make contacts with their Polish neighbors, send children to local schools. "We decided to buy a flat. Paying the mortgage is cheaper than renting a flat. And we have our space here. This changes our contacts with Poles. Of course, we still have our Ukrainian friends, but we also made some initial contacts with our neighbours. You know, we are no longer temporarily here, we have our local bakery, local shop. We know people from our street, and they know us. When you decide to live here, you stop thinking about savings, about going back. We go more to restaurants; we live more like locals" (INT-15, LOC-04).

Some of the interviewees were concerned about the anti-immigrant attitudes towards migrants. "We did not experience any tensions between us and Poles, here in the town. Of course, there are some people, who sometimes are unfriendly or give you the impression, you are not welcome, but this is marginal. But now, I know from media in the time of crisis, and the inflow of many, many refugees we can expect change of attitudes. The first weeks were great, Poles welcomed refugees in their houses, but now with the cores of time. It costs a lot of money. Poland was happy with labour migrants, but it was different story. They worked, did not use social services. Now it is different. But maybe I am too skeptical. Maybe it will be fine" (INT-15, LOC-4).

There are some existing concerns in the Polish communities of how to absorb large numbers of migrants as these abrupt changes in the social dynamics are faced initially from individual to individual and later on come the policies and local agendas.

4. Main findings in comparative perspective

In all four localities there is a similar pattern of migrant inflows. Mostly labour migrants started arriving in 2008 and the number have been steadily growing till now. A sudden surge has been noticed after the war in Ukraine, we refugees arriving in medium and small sized localities. Considering the combined fieldwork of focus groups, migrant interviews and participant observations, several similarities and differences have been observed between localities when it comes to the migrants' experiences and the reciprocal interactions and attitudes. Certain factors have been key to facilitate these bilateral relationships and other factors have become a burden between the two groups.

In Poland, due to the few years of the country transforming from an emigration to an immigration state, the phenomenon of the country being a pole of attraction for migrants was gradually felt in peripheral areas with the cover of first needs as of housing, employment, legalization of stay, healthcare being the first, where migrants were felt present in the community. Long-term residents came into contact on a daily basis with foreigners to conduct business and that transformed the way that services were offered. Restaurants with Ukrainian dishes were opened and that become places, where foreigners gathered and spent their time. That transformation is apparent in all four case studies. At the same time, municipalities, NGOs, trade unions, employers and regional administrative centers have actively shown their interest to support these newcomers as in some small towns they are vital for the local industries as with locality 2 and 4. Assistance with their working rights, legal status and accommodation is provided from private and public actors. Social events are organized either from the municipalities or foundations. Schools are also actively engaging children and parents in integration events.

That being said a common feature in all four localities is the difference between quality and quantity of interactions between locals and newcomers. The interactions are frequent and rather positive from both sides. However, the quality of interactions is still absent. There is still a visible division between foreign groups and locals when it comes to leisure time for instance or holidays. From the migrant activities, the questions related to how they spend their time and if they have Polish friends. Five out of seven interviewees suggested that their contact with Poles is primarily related to work, housing and shopping. It is important to note that the interviewees, who had Polish friends were those, who either have been in the country more than 5 years or speak Polish. Hence, another similarity across localities is the language barrier. Locals' attitudes entirely change when a migrant speaks Polish and does not. All migrant interviewees suggested that Polish people feel as if these migrants have taken the time to learn Polish, respect them and voluntarily wish to integrate in the local community. This is also related to reliability, a migrant, who speaks Polish, seems more reliable to Poles as

if they are renting privately an apartment, the landlord feels safer to rent to people, who can easily communicate with him/her than another person, where communication problems exist.

Several differences occurred as well between localities. Localities 1 and 3 have municipalities with Social Democratic political influences and localities 2 and 4 conservative ones. The local responses are not immensely different, however, there is a subtle distinction of the intensity of the initiatives taken at the local level to integrate migrants. Moreover, in locality 2, labour migrants are mostly working at the factories intermingling in certain circles of the secondary sector, similarly to locality 4 where labour migrants can be linked to agriculture. Evidently, the employment sectors vary and that has an impact on the clusters created within the community. When migrants operate in networks and work in certain sector, it is easier for them to have a smooth welcome in the towns but that has a strong impact on frequency of the interactions with locals. According to the participant observations, migrants come into contact with locals during work but that does not necessarily escalate to interactions outside the professional sphere.

Another difference is the focus placed from the municipalities and foundations on integration activities. Locality 4 has rather more support towards consulting on pressing matters the migrants, however localities 1,2 and 3 have more of interactive events with language exchange, social events, football events and others. These events seem to determine the migrants' experiences and the reciprocal attitudes as they are going off the bureaucratic element and touch upon the social integration of migrants.

Factors that hinder the interactions between the groups are not necessarily obvious but from the empirical data, some new migrant and refugee flows can change the current dynamics and that can become a burden that the needs to be tackled locally. Prior to the war in Ukraine, the majority of labour migrants were males. That has drastically changed with the inflow of Ukrainian refugees, who are mainly women. These women are in a lot of cases with children and that requires need for employment for the mothers and for schooling for the children. New needs emerge locally, with schools being affected, employers and healthcare. This change of demographics should be taken under consideration. Most local municipalities have taken the initiative to train administrative staff to work with foreigners, signs and translations of documents have been made in Ukrainian, however, social events need to be shifted to match the new needs of these communities.

All four localities, it was observed by the interviews, the observations and the focus groups that there is no social mobilization. Namely, there are no pro-migrants and against-migrants organisations. That is due to three main reasons, the first reason is the length of the stay of migrants. Usually, in larger cities, migration waves initiated a bit before 2008 and a lot of migrants went through the naturalization processes or received permanent resident permits. However, in smaller towns the phenomenon is more prevalent the past eight years. A number

of migrants stay at the locality for a while but the majority are either circular or seasonal migrants. Since, the length of their stay is not well established that had not allowed any groups supporting or the opposite migrants. The second reason is that the majority of migrants or refugees are Ukrainians. This limits the diversity within the migrant groups. Especially after the war in Ukraine, there is big wave of solidarity. But again, it is quite early to have some definite answer if there are pro-migrant groups as in most case there are charities or volunteers who wish to help the refugees in the town. Finally, the third reason is the demographic decline in these localities. Labour shortages are very obvious and migrants are seen as an essential to the economy of the community.

4.1 Reciprocal interactions and attitudes, and migrants' experiences of integration

In all four localities mostly similarities were observed when it comes to reciprocal interactions and migrants' experiences of integration. Concerning a temporal dimension, namely, how have reciprocal attitudes and interactions, and post-2014 migrants' experiences changed over time, this is more linked in Poland with the formation of two categories between the post-2014 migrants and the current refugees. Definitely, Poland has fast paced into being an immigration country with vast changes since 2014, however, the differences between migrants prior to the war are minimal comparing to the current state of affairs, where all localities have had a transformative experience due to the high inflows of refugees.

All migrant interviews had a similar response to how did long-term residents reacted when they first arrived in the country. They did not recall any negative reactions, neither do they have any bad experience until the day of the interview. One Belarusian migrant even stated: *"when they hear that you are from Belarus, they smile they are friendly, I was afraid with the current situation but they are still polite to me"* (Interview 5, Locality A). Based on the country's tensions with Belarus during the summer of 2021 and the border crisis, relations could be shaken (Bielecka 2022). On top of that the support of Belarus to Russia is also a hit for the relations between Poland and Belarus with Poland asking in October 2022, its citizens to leave Belarus as the tensions between the two countries grow (Reuters, 2022). That being said, the interviewee suggested that Polish people have positive attitudes towards her and smile when they hear her nationality. That was generally the impression that all interviewees had that did not encounter any negative behaviours against them. One Ukrainian interview said the following: *"Maybe I am lucky, I know from other people that Polish people react rudely and aggressively because you are Ukrainian or talk Ukrainian or Russian. I know these examples but with me, it never happened."* (INT-03, LOC-02). Certain stories do circulate with discriminative behaviors and attitudes but more of a form of stories from other migrants but not actual experiences of the participants. Having said that it needs to be noted that when all participants were asked about their daily lives and where do they usually hang out or if they have any friends, who are long-term residents, some of them described these interactions as

positive but they were all based on a context of them being customers at a service or parents at a school. A Ukrainian interviewee mentioned: *“I have a lot of contacts with Polish parents because we went last year with my daughter at these play centers and met a lot of Polish parents. There is a community of parents.”* (INT-03, LOC-02) It is rather not clear from most interviews if these interactions go beyond daily needs and parental obligations.

What was very clear is the attitudes and interactions of the migrants and refugees with administrative offices. In Poland these administrative units are essential for the printing of the so-called “karta pobytu”, this card is a temporary residence permit and apart from that it requires several documents and time from the applicants, it is a challenge, when the person does not speak Polish. There the experiences of the migrants are rather negative. For that reason, lawyers and agencies take over the cases on behalf of the applicants. However, that did not impact the perception of the long-term residents, it rather made clear for the interviewees that knowing Polish is a way of having an easier life in the country. One Ukrainian interviewee described him learning eventually Polish as: *“I succeeded in adapting here”* (INT-02, LOC-01). Hence, integration was seen as a success to become part of the community as an accepted member.

When it comes to what migrants and refugees like in the locality and what do they wish to change in it, it appears that two recurring words came as something that newcomers are pleased with and these are “stability” and “peaceful”. Poland in general is seen as a safe haven and that makes the localities as places reassuring a better place to stay as of now. However, when it comes to attitudes, one Ukrainian interviewee answered when asked if he has long-term residents as friends: *“I would say depends on the age, the younger generation, that are close to my age, they are quite open and friendly. Older generation operate with stereotypes, however, I never had direct confrontations.”* (INT-02, LOC-01) Returning back to the temporal dimension, localities seem to gradually change with younger generations being more accepting.

4.2 Value of social/ideational-political/governance/spatial dimensions/factors in explaining and understanding interactions/attitudes/experiences

The second sub-section will analyze the value of social/ideational-political/governance/spatial dimensions based on the participant observations in all four localities. Several barriers and opportunities for encounter were noticed.

Language barriers are constituting one of the biggest problems for any encounter between long-term residents and newcomers. In the local markets and restaurants, it is obvious that speaking in English or with broken Polish is not necessarily criticized but at the same time not well perceived. It makes a big difference when an individual speaks Polish, this facilitates all types of interactions.

The economic status of the migrants and refugees is also a key factor that impacts the interactions. In locality B and D, labour migrants work in clusters in industrial sites, which in some cases separates them from the rest of the community. If that is coupled with low paid jobs, this results in migrants saving money for themselves or families and wasting less money in leisure activities like going to a restaurant. In these cases, encounters are minimized to work and shopping activities. Hence, the social dimension is closely linked to the social strata and to where the migrants/ refugee works and the subsequently the income that this person receives.

Moreover, the accommodation sites are key to frequent encounters or the opposite. In some cases, accommodation is offered by the employer or migrants find accommodation close to the rest of the migrants. That creates neighborhoods with locals and others with newcomers, which does not necessarily lead to a massive segregation, however, it is apparent that there is a division. Therefore, the spatial dimension because an important factor that can facilitate or hinder integration as it creates bubbles within the communities, with them not communicating or interacting.

The governance dimension, when it comes to bureaucratic matters, the *urząd wojewódzki* as aforementioned is a barrier to integration and does not facilitate the relations between the groups as it is an essential part for the legalization of the stay of a migrant and these is maybe the prime place, where migrants feel intimidated and search for support from their network, employers, trade unions and seek for consultations from NGOs and foundations. Even though, signs are put on the walls in Ukrainian and sometimes Russian, the dismay and discomfort in these institutions is instantly felt and that becomes a negative experience of migrants, which is not only individual but circulates as a collective sort of traumatizing experience.

During the migrant interviews, participants were asked if their gender, age and ethnicity has any impact to their daily lives and integration. Participants did not see a distinction between these qualities, however, participant observations showed that there are several roles attached to each gender. Ukrainian women are more likely to take up jobs in services, restaurants and migrant men in industries and factories.

Post-2014 migrants seem to have established themselves in the workplace, housing and with social circles. Considering that most migrants in the country and localities are Ukrainians, the new flows of refugees are in some cases destabilizing the pre-existing relations that post-2014 migrants have built. These migrants, who have been in the country for quite a long time, came mostly voluntarily and equipped with several skills and diplomas. Current waves are forced to migrant and that is also reflected sometimes in their willingness to interact with Poles and show interest in the country or locality. That is something that post-2014 migrants are working on rather their relations with long-term residents.

Migrants' main motivation to stay in Poland and the localities is mainly work and stability. Most participants did not seem to want to leave the country. Even though Poland in the past

was seen as a transit country or a place of temporary migration, a lot post-2014 migrants have settled, have stable jobs, children in the schools. Therefore, they do not think of leaving in the near future. These participants which mentioned that are considering in the future to leave, where the ones, which have some professional aspirations. These were mostly skilled workers, who wish to move towards the Western Europe in order to gain higher salaries. No mentions were made about discrimination or feeling unwelcome.

5. Impact of Ukrainian refugee crisis on social interactions, individual attitudes and integration experiences in SMsTRAs (to the extent you have data)

In all four localities there is a uniform response towards Ukrainian refugees. This response is mainly about solidarity and support of these people from public and private actors. This mobilisation has obviously changed the scenery of perceptions and integration in all four locations. This is mainly due to the fact that some foundations received emergency fundings from the EU to assist the refugees with among others, their integration in the new communities. That became as a domino effect for other post-2014 migrants too, who have volunteered to support this foundations and NGOs and have taken up a role of hybrid identity between being long-term residents and foreigners at the same time. Hence, the experiences of integration have not necessarily changed because of the implementation of different practices on the ground but mostly due to the intensity of the practices. The large sizes of the inflows have urged the need for a lot more spaces and frequency for social assistance, for legal consultations and integration events. That is a national phenomenon currently rather than a local as this multiplier effect is observed across in all levels (national, regional, local). However, the more populous localities have more initiatives than the rural area.

Long term-residents are considering the latest waves of Ukrainians as vulnerable groups, who need assistance. Having said that inflation in the country and rising needs for housing have made some private house owners to view them as an opportunity to raise the prices and gain profits. Concerning previous waves, it is very likely that since some Ukrainians have already returned back that long-term residents consider them as temporary migrants, thus, there is a difference with previous waves, which came as labour migrants and were immediately received as long-term migrants.

Long-term residents who migrated in Poland from another country, have voiced some concerns of the new waves being accepted in the country and offered jobs instantly, where they had to go through a lot of paperwork and difficulties to find occupation. This has not brought yet any divide within the community but as long as the war is ongoing and waves are keep coming, this can a cause of tension. What can be learned from previous experiences in

SMsTRAs from previous periods of “crises” like this of the annexation of Crimea, can be the language barriers. Current newcomers are mostly women with small children. Men of certain age had to remain in Ukraine and join the army. Previous waves showed that lack of language skills can be detrimental for their social integration. Finding a job can be also very challenging. Hence, offering free Polish language course shall be prioritised, especially in SMsTRAs, where people are a lot less likely to speak English or any other foreign language.

Ukrainians are currently sticking to networks of co-nationals and get help from foundations, however, since most refugees are not staying at refugee centres and are renting private houses, it is essential to regulate the prices of the real estate. As aforementioned a lot of private landlords have seen the opportunity of the rise in the demand and that lays on the sheer need of these to acquire a house as this is a ticket to finding a job, getting a PESEL number (the Universal Electronic Population Registration System), opening a bank account, etc.

6. Concluding remarks and final considerations on the Ukrainian refugee crisis

This country's report objective was to analyze the attitudes, interactions between long-term residents and post-2014 migrants, and migrants' experiences of inclusion/exclusion in the SMsTRAs. The methodology followed was participant observations in all four localities, migrant interviews and focus group discussions between long-term residents and migrants.

Poland is currently experiencing one of the most transformative periods of its latest history in migration. The war in Ukraine in 2022, signaled a prolonged period of refugee inflows and a set of responsibilities stemming from covering the basic needs of these people (housing, clothing, food, healthcare) to assisting them with finding job, bureaucracy and enrolling children at the Polish schools.

From the fieldwork, interesting findings were discovered. When it comes to the attitudes of migrants and locals, they appear to be positive and from the empirical data no reference to discrimination and anti-migrant events were mentioned. During the migrant interviews, some participants did mention some cases of long-term residents being rude, abrupt or even aggressive but that was shared experiences between the migrant community and not a personal experience. Overall, after February 2022, attitudes have remained similar or have gotten better with a nationwide solidarity towards Ukrainians.

Migrant experiences varied according to three criteria: the economic status, Polish language acquisition and size and location of the locality. In general, the personal profiling of the migrant played a key role in the experiences that the person had, started from voluntary vs forced migration, skilled vs unskilled worker, working currently in a company or a factory. Gender, age and race are of less importance than these features, which can determine, the acceptance of the person in a locality and the way that long-term residents evaluate and treat an individual. All participants from the focus group discussions to migrant interviews, admitted that knowing Polish is a great deal in the country as it unties someone's hands from the communication burden in all sectors of life from finding a job, accommodation, receiving healthcare services and having rapport with locals. The size and location of the locality also impacts the number of migrants that it attracts, the economic activities as well as the integration activities organized by the municipality. The location impacts the migrant attitudes as if they commute towards large cities, then social life is rather focused on the urban centers.

Considering the positive attitudes from all groups involved, it is surprising to see that the research finding show formal relations revolving around work, housing contracts, being parent at a school, shopping and others. The interactions are there but intimacy is absent. That is reciprocal coming from both directions as long-term residents have their own circles and migrants their own networks. From the migrant networks it became clear that socializing is not a priority. Certainly, this is a fact for refugees but also for migrants, willingness to socialize

with locals comes after several years of residing in the country. It appeared that having stability, peace, work and a safe space to live were a great deal for migrants and social activities were not something that they were particularly missing.

Definitely in the country there is a big difference from the period of post-2014 till today. Even though since 2015 and the new ruling government has not established a strategic policy for the integration policy, across localities NGOs, foundations, private actors and locals have taken up an active role in the integration of migrants and refugees.

Barriers still exist with the most prevalent being Polish language, bureaucracy and administrative units and no national funding for integration. Poland has implemented the declaration on entrust work to a foreigner, which is a simplified procedure for employees of neighboring countries to find occupation in Poland, however, for longer stays, migrants have to apply for their temporary residence permits and that can be a very stressful experience.

With the war in Ukraine, the demographics have drastically change, prior to the war most migrants were males and now there is an overwhelming number of females and children. These changes are not currently felt at the local level when it comes to interactions and attitudes, having said that some concerns have already been heard about the accommodation of large numbers of refugees.

Finally, the focus group discussions showed a willingness for cooperation between localities but also with the mi\grants and refugees.

ANNEX I Tables with information on interviews and focus groups

Interviewees/participants	Age range	Status	Gender	Date
INT-01, LOC-03	30-39	Labour migrant	Male	15 Oct 2022
INT-02, LOC-01	20-29	Labour migrant	Male	8 Oct 2022
INT-03, LOC-02	30-39	Recognized refugee	Female	15 Jun 2022
INT-04, LOC-01	40-49	Recognized refugees	Female	29 Sept 202
INT-05, LOC-01	20-29	Labour migrant	Female	3 Oct 2022
INT-06, LOC-01	20-29	Recognized refugee	Female	29 Sept 2022
INT-07, LOC-02	20-29	Labour migrant	Male	24 Oct 2022
INT-08, LOC-03	30-39	Labour migrant	Male	28 Sep 2022
INT-09, LOC-01	40-49	Labour migrant	Female	15 Sep 2022
INT-10, LOC-03	20-29	Labour migrant	Female	28 Sep 2022
INT-11, LOC-03	30-39	Labour migrant	Male	28 Sep 2022
INT-12, LOC-04	30-39	Refugee	Female	29 Sep 2022
INT-13, LOC-04	40-49	Labour migrant	Male	29 Sep 2022
INT-14, LOC-04	20-29	Labour migrant	Male	29 Sep 2022
INT-15, LOC-04	30-39	Refugee	Female	29 Sep 2022

A discussion on methods

Participant observation

The participant observations were essential for this research as it equipped the research team with insights about the types of interactions according to different locations in the locality, made us aware of similarities and differences between localities and provided us with the dynamics of the community.

Positive outcomes came particularly by observing the marketplace and foundations which operate in the region. The added value of this method is the timing, it allows us to observe how long conversations last, with whom people go outside, how often people smile or show negative reactions. These behaviors can be also affecting unconsciously the migrants' experiences and long-term residents' attitudes.

Concerns about the research were only raised about how representative certain meetings were, in the marketplace we can remain unnoticed, however, at foundations and other smaller settings, we have been noticed and that can possibly affect the way that participants act and react. This is also linked with bias of the locations selected. Deciding the location of where the observations will take place, can be crucial for the outcome. In working places, migrants and host community intermingle and spend time together, however, during leisure time, this is not always the case. Hence, the day and time of the observations can have a bias on the outcome of the findings.

In-depth interviews

The interviews with migrants were easier to contact the participants as now with the new surge of Ukrainians, most migrants prior and newer waves are happy to discuss about integration in the country as the topic of migration has been very present nowadays but not in a bad light as previously. After the latest elections, migration has been a topic of debate in the country and this past year has changed these attitudes, something that has empowered in a sense the migrants and refugees in the country. Overall, there were some positive outcomes and some concerns. Bias was also a challenging factor. Ethical issues were also raised during the implementation of the fieldwork.

The positive outcomes were that considering some language barriers, when the interviewees could not talk very good either Polish or English, they were all willing to try to finish the interview as it really seemed to the research team that they wanted to share their experiences. There were no misunderstandings of the questions, the questionnaire was simple and understandable, which also made the flow of the conversation smooth and did not bring the interviewee or interviewer to a difficult situation. The discussions as well were very

fruitful with intriguing findings, which can be sensed around, if someone lives in Poland, however, they brought a lot of insights of migrants' experiences, social relations and plausible future problems in the localities.

Some concerns which were raised were the time of the interview. Even though, some time was spent with all interviewees before the actual interview to introduce them to the research and get to know them, their answers were quite sharp and with view sentences. This needs more of a sociological analysis, some preliminary findings on why that might have happened, is that there were some questions about how they spend their leisure time, do they take part in group events or demonstrations. These types of questions were well understood but did not seem to be something that the participants are bothered about on a daily basis. It seemed that day-to-day responsibilities are more what they wished to talk about. This can also be interpreted that most of them that were primarily occupied with job-related and house issues are the ones from the newer waves with migrants, who have been living in Poland longer having further concerns about their social life in the country.

Concerning bias, during the interviews it became clear that migrants, who migrated voluntarily and have been living in the country for a long time period see integration, personal experiences with the long-term residents and host community's attitudes, entirely different from people who came with forced migration. The answer varied in some cases immensely, which became a worry of how we can bias our findings by contacting more participants from either group. This polarization in the answers showed a socio-economic divide between migrants and refugees, which should be considered when contacting participants. Moreover, the majority of migrants in Poland are Ukrainians indeed, however, there is a bias when other nationals are not contacted. Which creates a different bias, we did contact other nationals but how representative are they since in some localities they are by large a very small proportion of the migrants.

Finally, when it comes to ethical issues, the question about them attending demonstrations seemed to be stressful for nationals of Belarus and Russia. Even though full anonymity was granted to all participants, this question was rather sensitive and visibly made the participants uncomfortable. They felt that answering that question might bring themselves or families under some risk.

The migrant interviews brought a lot of added value to the research as their insights are essential evaluators of the local integration policies and practices. Furthermore, their experiences with landlords, employers and administrative offices maps their daily activities and shows us what makes them have certain attitudes and their perception on the host community.

Focus group discussions

The focus group discussions were very beneficial for the stakeholders from different localities as it enabled them to share their experiences, practices and current concerns. It was also a great way for them to suggest good practices and give advice to other actors of how to handle certain obstacles. From the side of the migrants and refugees, it was interesting to hear and have a conversation with long-term residents, however, interviews seemed to work better for them as more intimate way of sharing information. The conversation between the groups, though, was very smooth and both groups seem to be understanding and having similar visions for the future of their communities.

There is considerably more solidarity towards migrants in general after the war in Ukraine, long-term residents have embraced a solidarity stance. Obviously, that does not reflect the entire Polish society, however, actors engaging with migrants and refugees are predominantly following the line of the Polish government of supporting the Ukrainian community. And within this support of Ukrainians, other nationals find support too.

Overall, the focus group discussions added value to this research in the sense of exchanging valuable information concerning good practices implemented at each locality, it created a space for conversation and exchange of ideas. It did pinpoint the interactions and relations between the groups. It is worth saying though that it did not help as much with the individual experiences of migrants as focus group discussions can sometimes mirror collective beliefs and experiences.

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