

**INTERACT – RESEARCHING THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS’ INTEGRATION AS A THREE-WAY PROCESS - IMMIGRANTS, COUNTRIES OF EMIGRATION AND COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION AS ACTORS OF INTEGRATION**

***Integration Policy and Activities  
in Poland***

**Renata Stefańska**

INTERACT Research Report 2015/07



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Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of  
Integration**

**Research Report  
Country Report**

**INTERACT RR2015/07**

**Integration Policy and Activities in Poland**

**Renata Stefańska**

Research Associate at the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw

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European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy

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## **INTERACT - Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process - Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration**

In 2013 (Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>), around 34 million persons born in a third country (TCNs) were currently living in the European Union (EU), representing 7% of its total population. Integrating immigrants, i.e. allowing them to participate in the host society at the same level as natives, is an active, not a passive, process that involves two parties, the host society and the immigrants, working together to build a cohesive society.

Policy-making on integration is commonly regarded as primarily a matter of concern for the receiving state, with general disregard for the role of the sending state. However, migrants belong to two places: first, where they come and second, where they now live. While integration takes place in the latter, migrants maintain a variety of links with the former. New means of communication facilitating contact between migrants and their homes, globalisation bringing greater cultural diversity to host countries, and nation-building in source countries seeing expatriate nationals as a strategic resource have all transformed the way migrants interact with their home country.

INTERACT project looks at the ways governments and non-governmental institutions in origin countries, including the media, make transnational bonds a reality, and have developed tools that operate economically (to boost financial transfers and investments); culturally (to maintain or revive cultural heritage); politically (to expand the constituency); legally (to support their rights).

INTERACT project explores several important questions: To what extent do policies pursued by EU member states to integrate immigrants, and policies pursued by governments and non-state actors in origin countries regarding expatriates, complement or contradict each other? What effective contribution do they make to the successful integration of migrants and what obstacles do they put in their way?

A considerable amount of high-quality research on the integration of migrants has been produced in the EU. Building on existing research to investigate the impact of origin countries on the integration of migrants in the host country remains to be done.

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*For more information:*

INTERACT

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI)

Villa Malafasca

Via Boccaccio 151

50133 Florence

Italy

Tel: +39 055 46 85 817/892

Fax: + 39 055 46 85 755

Email: [mpc@eui.eu](mailto:mpc@eui.eu)

**Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**

<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/>

## **Abstract**

This report aims to present integration activities undertaken by state and non-state institutional actors at the national and local level in Poland. Up to now, the issue of immigrant integration in Poland has been neither a social nor a political problem, which can be explained in particular by the fact that foreigners constitute only a small portion of Polish society. A lack of interest in immigration by the wider public fosters the elaboration of integration-related policy in a more technocratic way, without pressure from politicians and the media. Despite the adoption of the strategic document “Poland’s Migration Policy – Current State of Play and Further Actions” by the Polish government in 2012 (supplemented by the action plan approved in 2014), Poland’s integration policy may still be regarded as not well-considered or developed. It is based largely on integration activities carried out by NGOs and is highly dependent on the availability of EU funds. Without this external funding, the majority of integration projects in Poland targeted at third country nationals, especially those not under international protection, could not be implemented.

**Key words:** integration, integration policy, third country nationals, NGOs, Poland

**Table of contents**

- 1. Introduction ..... 7
- 2. The political, legal and institutional framework of immigrant integration ..... 8
  - 2.1 Strategic documents and legal acts dealing with the integration of immigrants ..... 8
  - 2.2 Institutions responsible for immigrant integration ..... 9
- 3. Integration policy tools..... 12
  - 3.1 Policy tools used before departure ..... 12
  - 3.2 Policy tools used in-country ..... 13
  - 3.3 Bilateral and multilateral international agreements ..... 16
- 4. Integration policy at the local level ..... 17
- 5. Engagement of non-state actors ..... 21
  - 5.1 Integration initiatives undertaken by migrant associations ..... 22
  - 5.2. Activities carried out by other ethnic institutions ..... 24
- 6. Conclusions ..... 25
- References ..... 26



## 1. Introduction

The issue of immigrant integration in Poland – in contrast with Western European countries – is still not a social problem and is not politicised, which means that it rarely becomes a subject of public, media or political debates.<sup>1</sup> This is particularly due to the fact that Poland has traditionally been a net emigration country and up to now – owing to a small scale of immigration – it has not even been recognised by most scholars as an “emerging immigration country” (Kraler and Iglicka 2002; Brücker and von Weizsäcker 2007; Fassmann *et al.* 2014). What is more, according to researchers, the transformation from an “emigration country” to an “immigration country” – which took place in the majority of European countries – cannot be taken for granted as an inevitable process in the case of Poland (Grabowska-Lusińska and Okólski 2009; Górny *et al.* 2010b). So far, emigration exceeds immigration and foreigners constitute only a small portion of Polish society: according to the estimate from the Ministry of the Interior, they account for only around 0.5 percent of the whole population (Ministry of the Interior 2014).

The majority of migrants stay and work in Poland only temporarily (Kraler and Iglicka 2002; Górny *et al.* 2010a; Duszczek and Góra 2012), which is currently possible mostly on the basis of a simplified procedure of employment for foreigners from the East: under this procedure, citizens of six countries – Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine – are allowed to work in Poland without a work permit for up to six months during twelve consecutive months on the basis of an employer’s declaration to hire a foreigner. In 2013, 235,616 such declarations were registered<sup>2</sup> at local labour offices throughout the country (this number is on the rise); most of them (92%) were issued to Ukrainian migrant workers.

In the light of the latest statistics released by the Office for Foreigners, on 9 December 2013, there were 121,219 foreigners from non-EU countries living in Poland under various types of residence permits (this number does not include visa-holders, e.g. numerous seasonal workers). Their main countries of origin were three geographically and culturally close countries of the former Soviet Union that border Poland in the East, i.e. Ukraine (31% of the total), Russia (10%) and Belarus (9%), and two geographically and culturally distant Asian countries, i.e. Vietnam (11%) and China (4%). The share of foreigners with long-term residence permits accounted for more than 50% of the total. The geographical distribution of foreigners in Poland was uneven; among 16 provinces, the largest concentration of residence holders was in the Mazowieckie province (43%), followed by Dolnośląskie (8%), Małopolskie (7%), Śląskie (5%) and Lubelskie (4%). Although the stock of migrants in Poland is relatively low, it is slowly but steadily growing; in 2013 it was 20% higher than five years earlier in 2008 (97,080).

The small percentage of foreigners in Polish society is one of the reasons that the topic of integration of newly arrived immigrants is not high on the political agenda and – with the exception of the issue of support for repatriates – it is absent in programmes, activities and discussions of political parties in Poland (Każmierkiewicz and Frelak 2011).<sup>3</sup> The only interest groups active in this field, i.e.

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<sup>1</sup> Aside from parliamentary discussions concerning laws on foreigners. These debates, however, are usually not very heated and do not arouse controversy (see e.g. Józwiak, Nestorowicz, and Lesińska 2014). The issue of immigrant integration was raised for the first time by the president in December 2014 during a debate devoted to Poland’s migration policy in the context of demographic challenges (see <http://www.prezydent.pl/dialog/fdp/solidarne-spoleczenstwo-bezpieczna-rodzina/aktualnosci/art,31,ruchy-migracyjne-trzeba-ujac-w-okreslone-ramy.html> [Accessed 20 January 2015]).

<sup>2</sup> The number of foreigners who obtain visas and undertake work in Poland on the basis of these declarations is lower and accounts for around 70% of the total number of registered declarations (Duszczek and Góra 2012).

<sup>3</sup> At present, anti-immigrant initiatives are incidental, small-scale and only sporadically undertaken by non-parliamentary groups, e.g. a fan page on Facebook, “No for Islamisation of Europe” [*Nie dla islamizacji*

trying to exert influence on the shape of Poland's integration policy and law regarding foreigners' integration in Poland, are Polish non-governmental organisations working on behalf of immigrants, and, to a much lesser extent, migrant-led organisations, international organisations (IOM, UNHCR) and research institutions.<sup>4</sup> A lack of interest in immigration by the wider public fosters the elaboration of Poland's integration policy in a more technocratic way, without – the usually populist – pressure from politicians and media.

This report aims to present Poland's policy towards the integration of immigrants as well as numerous integration initiatives undertaken by various stakeholders at the national and local level. The structure of the report is as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the most crucial political documents, legal acts and institutions dealing with the integration of immigrants in Poland. Section 3 focuses on the main integration policy tools used by the Polish state. The next section is devoted to integration efforts undertaken by the government and municipal authorities – often in partnership with NGOs – at the local level. In Section 5 an overview of non-state institutions' actions is provided, with special attention given to projects and programmes carried out by various ethnic actors.

## 2. The political, legal and institutional framework of immigrant integration

### 2.1 Strategic documents and legal acts dealing with the integration of immigrants

The key government strategic document covering the issue of immigrant integration,<sup>5</sup> “Migration Policy of Poland – Current State of Play and Further Actions” [*Polityka migracyjna Polski – stan obecny i postulowane działania*] (hereafter: “Migration Policy of Poland...”), was elaborated by the inter-ministerial Committee for Migration in July 2011 and then adopted by the Polish government in July 2012. In December 2014, the action plan to this document was developed by the Committee – it specifies ways to implement the recommendations contained in the document, costs, sources of financing, responsible institutions and deadlines for implementation – and was approved by the Polish government. The majority of actions which address the recommendations concerning integration are due to be completed by the end of 2016.

These two documents are to be supplemented by the “Polish Immigrants Integration Policy – Assumptions and Guidelines” [*Polska polityka integracji cudzoziemców – założenia i wytyczne*], which is to be drawn up by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in cooperation with the inter-ministerial Working Group on the Integration of Foreigners which operates within the Committee for Migration (at present it is undergoing inter-ministerial review). It will present in more detail activities indicated in the action plan which are aimed at the integration of immigrants.

(Contd.)

*Europy*], with 78,500 likes, although the estimated number of Muslims in Poland is more than two times smaller (Pędziwiatr 2011), see <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nie-dla-Islamizacji-Europy/182944451832138> [Accessed 18 February 2015, with about 197,500 likes]; a fan page on Facebook created by the National Movement, “We Do not Want an Immigrant – We Want a Repatriate!” [*Nie chcemy imigranta – chcemy repatrianta!*], see <https://www.facebook.com/events/1405314166353476/> [Accessed 20 January 2015]; local protests against building a mosque in Warsaw (Pędziwiatr 2012).

<sup>4</sup> It is worth emphasising that the main ministries involved in the elaboration of Polish integration policy, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of the Interior (as well as local authorities), express openness to the opinions of other non-governmental stakeholders (see Section 2.2 and 2.4).

<sup>5</sup> This issue is also included in a number of other government strategy documents, including: “Strategy for Social Policy 2007-2013” [*Strategia Polityki Społecznej na Lata 2007-2013*]; “National Action Plan for Employment 2012-2014” [*Krajowy Plan Działań na Rzecz Zatrudnienia na Lata 2012-2014*]; “Mid-Term State Development Strategy. Poland 2020” [*Średniookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju. Polska 2020*], “Social Capital Development Strategy” [*Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego*], “Efficient State Strategy 2020” [*Strategia Sprawne Państwo 2020*], “National Programme of Action for Equal Treatment 2013-2016” [*Krajowy Program Działań na Rzecz Równego Traktowania 2013-2016*].

In contrast with Western European countries, which often identify immigrant groups in their integration strategies that are particularly “difficult to integrate” (such as Muslims), the Polish strategic documents and official Polish discourse do not indicate such groups. Instead, the key strategic document “Migration Policy of Poland...” mentions groups of foreigners who “integrate easily” into local communities and thus should be a target group for the Polish migration policy. Among the indicated priority groups are foreigners of Polish origin, foreigners from the East<sup>6</sup> and international students (Committee for Migration 2012). The integration policy in Poland is also not specifically directed at any ethnic or nationality group.

According to Poland’s migration policy rules, as set out in the strategic documents, the overall aim of integrating immigrants in Poland is to foster their independent functioning in the country, in particular in the labour market, as well as to help them gain independence from social assistance benefits. Integration programmes – in the light of these documents – should be designed in such a way that they are not perceived by foreigners solely through the prism of the provision of social benefits (Committee for Migration 2012; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2013). These objectives seem to stem from a narrow definition of integration which concentrates on the economic aspect of this phenomenon.

There is no single piece of legislation governing the issue of immigrant integration in Poland. Its different aspects are regulated by various legal acts, which usually pertain to both Poles (primarily) and foreigners, in particular by: the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland, the 2013 Act on foreigners, the 2004 Act on social assistance, the 2000 Act on repatriation, the 2004 Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions, the 1991 Act on the system of education, the 2005 Act on higher education, the 2004 Act on healthcare services financed by public sources, the 1999 Act on the social security system, the 1989 Act on guarantees of freedom of conscience and of religion, the 1989 Act on associations, the 1984 Act on foundations, and the 2009 Act on Polish citizenship.

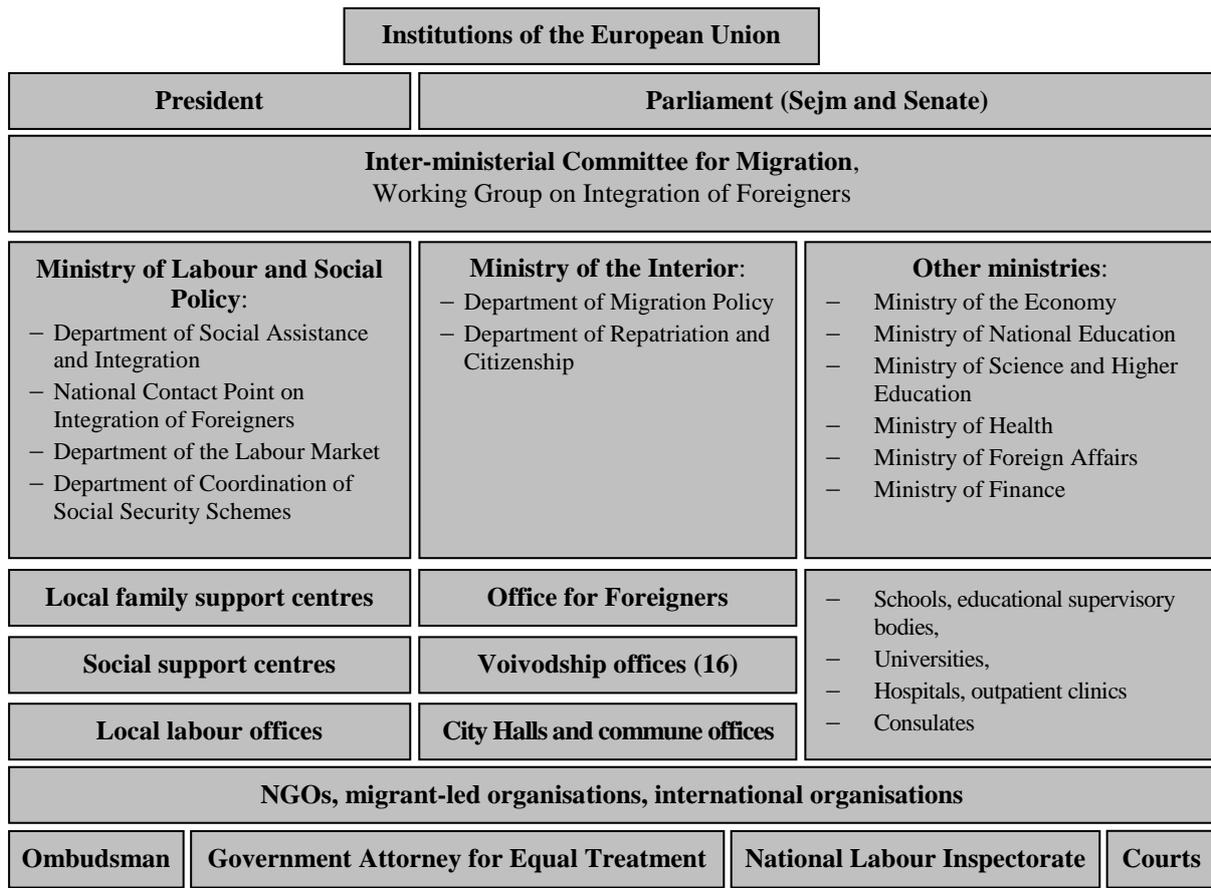
## 2.2 Institutions responsible for immigrant integration

Poland does not have a one central authority at the national level which comprehensively deals with the issue of immigrant integration.<sup>7</sup> This task is divided between several ministries that are not primarily focused on immigrants (see Figure 1).

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<sup>6</sup> This geographical preference (and in fact – cultural preference) is clearly stipulated in the government strategy document on Poland’s migration policy: “In accordance with the priorities set out in Resolution No. 2 of the inter-ministerial Committee for Migration of 2007, geographic preference for the admission of third country nationals to the Polish labour market (the Eastern Neighbourhood countries and the Caucasus countries) should be maintained” (Committee for Migration 2012).

<sup>7</sup> However, one of the recommendations included in the draft document “Polish Immigrants Integration Policy – Assumptions and Guidelines” says that a body or authority responsible for the coordination of all activities related to the pre-integration and integration of foreigners should be established in order to ensure the cooperation between and coordination of actors dealing with immigrant integration (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2013).

**Figure 1. Institutions dealing with the integration of immigrants in Poland**

Source: own elaboration.

The key state institution responsible for the creation and coordination of integration policy towards immigrants is the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), and in particular the Department of Social Assistance and Integration, which is in charge of integration courses (so far, only for refugees and foreigners who are granted subsidiary protection) as well as issues related to social assistance. It is worth noting that currently only one person in the Department is employed to deal with immigrant matters, which may reflect the small significance of this issue at the governmental level. Important departments of the MLSP include also the Department of the Labour Market (access for foreigners to the Polish labour market and unemployment benefits) and the Department of Coordination of Social Security Schemes (which negotiates and concludes international agreements on social security).

The Ministry of the Interior plays an almost equally significant role as the MLSP in the field of immigrant integration. One of its departments, the Department of Migration Policy, coordinates the whole migration policy, including the integration policy, which means ensuring consistency in the development and implementation of various aspects of migration policy through the exchange of knowledge, mediation, moderation, etc. (it does so primarily through the inter-ministerial Committee for Migration, headed by the Minister of the Interior; see below). The other department, the Department of Repatriation and Citizenship, coordinates the provision of adaptation support to repatriates and members of their families and deals with the granting of Polish citizenship. Moreover, the minister responsible for internal affairs supervises the work of the Office for Foreigners, which is in charge of, *inter alia*, the legalisation of stay of foreigners and the pre-integration of foreigners seeking asylum in Poland (other integration-related issues are beyond the scope of the Office).

Other ministries accountable for various aspects of immigrants' integration are: the Ministry of National Education (education of foreign children, Polish language tuition), the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (foreigners' access to higher education and recognition of qualifications and education), the Ministry of Health (health insurance for foreigners and access to the public healthcare system) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (issuance of visas, provision of information on living and working conditions to potential immigrants, organisation and/or financing of non-mandatory Polish language classes for foreigners who have been granted a promise of a repatriation visa). The role of the Ministry of Finance should not be neglected as it allocates financial resources for different tasks and activities undertaken by the state institutions and, thus, influences the scope of support provided to immigrants.

The already mentioned inter-ministerial Committee for Migration serves as an advisory and consultative body to the Prime Minister and plays a significant role in the development of Poland's migration strategy and the coordination of its implementation. The Working Group on the Integration of Foreigners, operating within this Committee and coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, is involved in drawing up the national integration strategy. Representatives of other ministries, i.e. permanent members, participate in the meetings of this group as well as representatives of NGOs, international organisations, research institutions, social assistance agencies and government and self-government bodies.

In the Polish institutional system there is no official consultative body or dialogue platform at the national level that is made up of representatives of migrant associations or Polish non-governmental organisations dealing with immigrant issues; such bodies are present only at the local level in two Polish cities: Warsaw and Lublin (see Section 4). However, members of NGOs representing migrants are often invited to take part in meetings of the above-mentioned inter-ministerial Working Group on the Integration of Foreigners. Furthermore, the representatives of the Ministry of the Interior – who are responsible for the coordination of the development of Poland's migration and integration strategy – participate in seminars organised within the framework of the National Cooperation Platform for Integration, which is headed by the International Organisation for Migration (the project is co-financed by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals). These seminars bring together NGOs, including (only a few) migrant associations and migrant leaders, researchers and public administration employees to discuss various issues related to the functioning of immigrants in Poland, present opinions regarding proposed legal amendments and strategic documents as well as initiate changes in the law ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=18845](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=18845) [Accessed 20 January 2015]). The opinions of this body were taken into account, among others, while elaborating the strategic document "Migration Policy of Poland...". Also, the comments from the Team of Experts Monitoring Progress in Integration Policy, established by Caritas Poland, exerted influence on the shape of this document with respect to integration. It confirms the openness of the government institutions that are dealing with integration issues to third-sector representatives and scholars, despite the fact that this cooperation has not yet been formalised. This may be in part due to the relative novelty of the phenomenon of immigration to Poland, the small number of people specialising in immigrant integration and, thus, a high demand on the part of governmental bodies for expertise in this field.

The significant role of the European Union as a provider of funding and of non-governmental organisations as actors responsible for the implementation of various integration projects (usually co-financed from EU funds) should be emphasised.

### 3. Integration policy tools

The majority of public administration actions in the area of immigrant integration are implemented within the territory of Poland. Integration policy tools, however, also include tools that are targeted at potential migrants in their countries of origin and tools which are implemented in close cooperation with migrants' source countries, i.e. bilateral and multilateral agreements concerning issues that are important for the integration of migrants, usually migrant workers. In the next subsections, the most important integration policy instruments that are currently applied in Poland are presented.

Not all migrant groups are eligible for the same integration policy tools. The main reason for this is the lack of financial resources to ensure integration support for all the immigrants who need it. For example, integration courses are available only to a small group of newly arrived immigrants: repatriates and those under international protection. Also, the opportunity to benefit from integration support that is provided by non-governmental organisations in the framework of projects co-financed from EU funds depends on the fulfilment of certain conditions: benefiting from international protection (in the case of the European Refugee Fund (ERF)), staying in Poland for at least one year, possessing a residence permit that is valid for at least one year, or, exceptionally, possessing a promise of a repatriation visa<sup>8</sup> (despite staying abroad) – in the case of the European Fund for Integration of Third-Country Nationals (EIF).<sup>9</sup> Only integration solutions pertaining to the education of foreign children (see Section 3.2) and financed from the state budget apply to all foreigners, including to children staying in Poland illegally.

It is worth underlining that “the vast majority of actions aimed at the integration of foreigners who were not beneficiaries of international protection were associated with the implementation of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (EIF)” (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2013: 16) in 2008. Unlike in most other EU countries, especially Western European countries, in Poland the EIF serves as a primary, not merely supplementary, source of funding for integration initiatives targeted at third country nationals (*ibidem*: 17).

According to the recommendations included in the strategic document “Migration Policy of Poland...”, non-mandatory integration programmes, cultural orientation trainings as well as Polish language courses should be available to all foreigners willing to take part in them. Moreover, the Polish state should introduce a “system of incentives” that encourages foreigners to participate in such courses (e.g. easier access to Polish citizenship for participants of Polish language courses) (Committee for Migration 2012). These recommendations have not yet been implemented (not taking into account the various projects aimed at supporting the integration of third country nationals which are conducted by NGOs and financed by the EIF) as their realisation – in the light of the action plan to the document “Migration Policy of Poland...” – depends on the availability of external (EU) funds (Committee for Migration 2014).

#### 3.1 Policy tools used before departure

Generally, Poland does not use special integration policy tools before departure. In contrast to some Western European countries, such as the Netherlands or Germany, immigrants applying for visas to Poland – even if they intend to settle in Poland – are not obliged to pass an integration or language test before arrival (so-called integration from abroad). The provision of information on legal channels of

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<sup>8</sup> These repatriation visas are issued provided that – in accordance with the 2000 Act on repatriation – foreigners present proof of possessing accommodation and livelihood in Poland.

<sup>9</sup> Although – for instance in the light of interviews with immigrants (Bieniecki and Podgórski 2013) – integration support is most needed at the very beginning of an immigrant's stay in Poland. Initiatives such as introductory courses for newcomers are not financed from state or local budgets due to the lack of financial resources.

migration to Poland and on living and working conditions in Poland to potential immigrants in consulates and embassies or during workshops organised within the framework of international projects implemented in Georgia and Moldova – “Support for the Reintegration of Returning Georgian Migrants and the Implementation of EU-Georgia Readmission Agreement”, “Strengthening Armenia’s Migration Management Capacities with a Special Focus on Reintegration” – can hardly be considered an element of a systemic programme. The only example of such permanent activities are Polish language courses, financed by consuls, which are designed for foreigners who have been granted a promise of a repatriation visa.

The lack of a state policy referring to pre-departure support for potential immigrants is partially compensated for by the activities of non-governmental or international organisations, sometimes arranged in partnership with governmental bodies. They are implemented within the following projects: 1) “Migrants’ Rights in Practice” (IOM, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Labour Inspectorate) – one of the elements of this project is the info-line for foreigners who wish to work in Poland, which operates in three Eastern European countries: Ukraine, Belarus and Armenia. Potential immigrants can also receive consultations also via e-mail or Skype; 2) “Migrants in Poland – Information and Legal Assistance” (the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights) – within this project a manual for foreigners, “Navigating Poland. Helpful Information for Third-Country Nationals”, was prepared and distributed, among others, to all diplomatic offices abroad so that all foreigners planning to come to Poland could familiarise themselves with the Polish legal provisions regarding integration (e.g. work, education, health care) and with Polish reality (the publication is available in seven languages: Polish, English, Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Chinese and Vietnamese); 3) “*Q-Adaptacji*” (the “Salvation” Foundation) – language and adaptation courses organised in countries of residence for foreigners of Polish origin (and members of their families) if they possess a promise of a repatriation visa (in Georgia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan); 4) two publications: “Vademecum for Repatriates” and “Studies in Poland – A Good Choice” for foreigners willing to study in Poland were elaborated within the framework of this initiative (for more information about the project, see: [http://fundacjaocalenie.org.pl/stara\\_strona/?page\\_id=34](http://fundacjaocalenie.org.pl/stara_strona/?page_id=34) [Accessed 18 February 2015]). All these projects are/were co-financed by the European Fund for Integration of Third-Country Nationals.

### 3.2 Policy tools used in-country

The main post-arrival policy tools pertaining to the integration of immigrants in Poland are integration courses which target only two categories of immigrants: foreigners who have been granted international protection (a refugee status or subsidiary protection) and repatriates and members of their immediate families (children and spouses, including foreigners). The description of these courses is provided in Table 1. The officially stated goal of individual integration programmes for foreigners under international protection is to enable them to lead an independent life in a local community without the need for social assistance. The focus is primarily on Polish language learning, which is considered very important for economic integration, then on the labour market and finding accommodation. At present, however, ensuring social security by providing cash benefits seems to be the most important part of the programme in practice. The main aim of orientation courses for repatriates and their family members<sup>10</sup> is to facilitate their orientation and functioning in Polish society, especially in the Polish labour market.

Integration courses in Poland are voluntary. However, receiving cash benefits for integration within the framework of individual integration programmes (IPI) for refugees and foreigners who have been granted subsidiary protection is dependent – at least in theory – on active participation in the programme and fulfilling obligations contained in the integration contract signed by the foreigner (see Table 1),

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<sup>10</sup> In addition, repatriates are entitled to other benefits, e.g. a settlement and maintenance grant, and subsidised employment. Repatriates invited by communes are provided with accommodation and at least one guaranteed job offer.

which may be perceived as both an incentive for active participation in the course and a solution designed to discourage foreigners from dropping out of the course. Assistance for integration may be withdrawn if foreigners miss foreign language classes for no reason, spend money for purposes other than declared, mislead social workers about their life situation, remain in a hospital for more than 30 days or are criminally prosecuted. In practice, integration assistance is withheld sporadically, mainly due to the immigrant's moving abroad. Foreigners may lose their right to support under IPI if they were convicted of an intentional crime (e.g. illegal border crossing in an organised group).

**Table 1. The main features of integration courses for selected groups of immigrants in Poland**

	<b>Individual integration programmes for refugees and foreigners granted subsidiary protection</b>	<b>Adaptation courses for repatriates and members of their immediate family</b>
<b>Content of the programme / course</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– monthly cash benefits ranging from 446 PLN (around 105 EUR) to 1,175 PLN (around 275 EUR) per person (depending on the size of the household) for maintenance, in particular for food, clothes, shoes, personal care products, housing expenses and costs related to learning the Polish language;</li> <li>– health insurance and the right to free health services in public facilities;</li> <li>– support of a social worker;</li> <li>– specialist counselling, including legal, psychological and family counselling;</li> <li>– providing support and information such as contacts with institutions, in particular with labour market institutions, local community, local institutions and non-governmental organisations</li> </ul>	<p>For adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– legal situation (rights and obligations) of repatriates and their family members in Poland;</li> <li>– dealing with everyday situations such as looking for a job, setting up a business, education, etc. (at least 40 hours);</li> <li>– Polish language classes (depending on the level of language skills – from 30 to 100 hours);</li> <li>– familiarisation with Polish history, culture and customs.</li> </ul> <p>For children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– educational and integration games,</li> <li>– learning Polish language through play</li> </ul>
<b>Obligations of participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– registration in the place of residence;</li> <li>– registration at the local labour office and active job searching;</li> <li>– participation in obligatory Polish language courses (if necessary);</li> <li>– contacting a social worker on a regular basis;</li> <li>– complying with other obligations stated in the “integration contract”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– participation in the course</li> </ul>
<b>Duration</b>	up to one year	seven days (currently)
<b>Institution responsible for implementation</b>	Implementation by local family support centres ( <i>powiatowe centra pomocy rodzinie</i> ); coordination by province governors	the Polish Teacher Training Centre in Lublin ( <i>Polonijne Centrum Nauczycielskie w Lublinie</i> ), which is on the commission of the Ministry of National Education

Source: own elaboration.

In addition, all foreigners applying for refugee status in Poland take part in orientation courses organised by the commission of the Office for Foreigners, during which they learn about Poland, Polish culture, Polish customs, the legal system, social assistance, transport, etc. Each course participant receives a guide for foreigners entitled “First Steps in Poland” (Committee for Migration 2014).

At present, state institutions do not organise and finance Polish language courses for immigrants. However, a wide range of language classes is available in big cities with relatively large numbers of immigrants, for example in Warsaw. These courses are usually free of charge (or cost a small fee) and most frequently they are organised by non-profit organisations within projects co-financed by EU funds: the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (EIF) and the European Fund for Refugees (EFR).

The language requirement for naturalisation as a Polish citizen<sup>11</sup> may be considered an incentive for foreigners to learn the Polish language, which consequently fosters integration. The Act on Polish citizenship does not specify the level of language proficiency required. It merely states that foreigners should attach to their naturalisation applications an official certificate issued by the State Commission for the Certification of Proficiency in Polish as a Foreign Language, a school leaving certificate obtained in a Polish school or a foreign school leaving certificate obtained in a school with Polish as the language of tuition. At present, the State Certification Commission organises only B1, B2 and C2 examinations. Therefore, in practice, the minimum language level required for acquiring Polish citizenship is B1 (after the amended Act on the Polish language comes into force, the lowest level of Polish language knowledge, A1, will be enough to acquire Polish citizenship).<sup>12</sup> The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy points out that this exam was designed primarily for students and people of Polish origin who wish to study in Poland, and therefore it is very difficult for less educated migrants (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2013).

An important element of Poland’s integration policy is the support provided to foreigners’ children who are subject to compulsory education (6-18 years old), which is the responsibility of the body running the school (usually local authorities). In particular, this assistance includes: additional free Polish language classes at school for at least two hours per week (in the form of group or individual lessons); remedial courses in other subjects (in the form of group or individual lessons), up to two courses five hours per week, including Polish language classes; courses in the language and culture of the child’s country of origin (but only if there are at least seven foreigners willing to take part in them), organised and financed by the diplomatic posts of the child’s country of origin or by cultural and educational associations; and – at least in theory – the support of a teacher’s assistant (a so-called intercultural assistant) who speaks in the mother tongue of foreign pupils and plays the role of an interpreter and intercultural mediator between Polish and foreign pupils, teachers and foreign children’s parents (currently, only several such assistants are employed in schools throughout Poland; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2013).

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<sup>11</sup> It is possible to naturalise without meeting the requirement of certified knowledge of the Polish language but only under the procedure of granting Polish citizenship by the Polish president.

<sup>12</sup> The draft Act on foreigners envisaged the introduction of a language requirement for foreigners applying for permanent residence permits. However, the parliamentary subcommittee working on the draft Act on foreigners has decided to drop this condition due to objections raised by NGOs, which argued that the Polish state does not provide opportunities for foreigners to learn Polish language, so therefore it should not require this knowledge. There are plans to re-introduce this requirement after the Polish state ensures that there are adequate Polish language classes for foreigners (Committee for Migration 2014).

### 3.3 Bilateral and multilateral international agreements

Poland has not signed a significant number of agreements affecting immigrants' integration. This is not only the fault of the Polish government, but a result of the reluctance of some of the source countries to conclude such agreements. Among key bilateral arrangements are:

- Eight social security agreements concluded with: Yugoslavia in 1958 (currently this refers to three countries: Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Macedonia – in 2006, Canada – in 2008, the United States – in 2008, Australia – in 2009, South Korea – in 2009, Ukraine – in 2012 (this is a particularly important agreement as Ukrainians constitute the largest group of immigrants in Poland) and Moldova – in 2013. At present, such agreements are being negotiated with Turkey, Israel, Japan, Mongolia and Quebec (for more details see Committee for Migration 2014; Łukaszczyk 2014; <http://www.mpips.gov.pl/koordynacja-systemow-zabezpieczenia-spoiecznego/umowy-miedzynarodowe-o-zabezpieczeniu-spoiecznym/> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- Eighty-nine agreements on preventing double taxation – most of them have been concluded with Polish emigrants, not immigrants, in mind, (the full list of such agreements is available on: <http://www.finanse.mf.gov.pl/en/abc-podatkow/umowy-miedzynarodowe/wykaz-umow-o-unikaniu-podwojnego-opodatkowania> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- Nine valid agreements on the mutual recognition of education, concluded with Libya in 1989, Austria – in 1995, Germany – in 1998, Belarus – in 2005, Lithuania – in 2005, Slovakia – in 2005, Ukraine – in 2005, the Czech Republic – in 2006, and France – in 2008 (see <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/uznawanie-wyksztalcenia/akty-prawne.html> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- One agreement on cooperation in the area of occupational safety and health and the protection of workers concluded between the Polish and Slovakian National Labour Inspectorates. There are plans to conclude such bilateral agreements with France, Finland, Romania and Ukraine (Ministry of the Interior 2014).

The Polish government plans to continue cooperation with the Ukrainian government in order to prepare a bilateral agreement on employment, concerning, among other things, cooperation with Ukrainian state labour offices with regard to recruitment for work in Poland (Committee for Migration 2014).

Among the multilateral legal arrangements – besides the EU directives – one should mention several international agreements on equivalences in education concluded with, among others, now non-existent countries (<http://www.nauka.gov.pl/uznawanie-wyksztalcenia/akty-prawne.html>) and the Geneva Convention of 1951 setting out the minimum range of rights of refugees pertaining to integration, among other things.

#### 4. Integration policy at the local level

Local authorities play quite a significant, although not leading and coordinating, role in the field of immigrant integration in Poland. First of all, according to the law on foreigners and repatriates, they are responsible for the implementation of integration and orientation courses for newcomers. Individual integration programmes for foreigners who have been granted international protection are managed by local family support centres and coordinated by voivodship offices, while adaptation assistance for repatriates and their family members is provided at the level of communes and *poviats* (it does not apply to introductory courses for repatriates and their family members, which, at present, are organised only by the Polish Teacher Training Centre in Lublin, which is on the commission of the Ministry of National Education). The issuance of residence permits and work permits, as well as the recognition of foreigners as Polish citizens belongs to the tasks of the province governors. In addition, financing and the provision of educational support to foreign children is a responsibility of local public administration bodies.

It is worth stressing that a significant role of local public administration institutions co-financing integration projects is conducted by non-governmental organisations, which have to provide a relatively high financial contribution (10-15% of the project's value) while applying for EU funds, as well as allocating funds from local budgets for local integration initiatives. Without the financial support from local authorities, many of these projects could not be implemented.

However, additional integration activities at the level of cities – which are implemented by local authorities but are non-mandatory – are not very well developed. None of the Polish cities has a local strategy aimed at the integration of foreigners. Some of them have or plan to develop strategies for anti-discrimination education and for counteracting discrimination on the grounds of, *inter alia*, ethnic, racial and religious differences (e.g. the strategy of Warsaw, “Diverse Warsaw”). Generally, Warsaw and Lublin stand out from other Polish cities as far as additional integration initiatives are concerned.

Despite the relatively small number of integration initiatives at the local level which are organised or financed by local state institutions, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that local authorities, at least in several Polish cities, seem to be open for cooperation not only with various state stakeholders dealing with immigrant issues, but also with non-state organisations. The establishment of several dialogue platforms at the local level (see below) seems to confirm this observation. However, according to the results of the research conducted by the Association for Legal Intervention, representatives of migrant associations complain about the lack of permanent cooperation with local authorities. In their opinion, cooperation is limited to meetings, panels, seminars or simply to the allocation of funds (Grzegorzółka 2013).

The Other Space Foundation (Warsaw), in cooperation with the Homo Faber Association (Lublin) and the Association *Interkulturalni PL* (Krakow), has carried out two projects concerning integration policies at the local level: “Local Cross-Sectoral Policies on Integrating Immigrants” and “Local Migration Policies – Exchanging Experiences of Different States on Migration Management in Cities”. The purpose of these projects was to prepare recommendations for the development of coherent policy on the integration of immigrants on the basis of the inter-sectoral experiences of three main immigration destinations in Poland – Warsaw, Lublin and Krakow – to be shared at three cross-sectoral working forums organised in these cities ([www.politykimigracyjne.pl](http://www.politykimigracyjne.pl)). Within the framework of one of these projects, the “Open Cities” action was organised to identify and promote good local practices in the field of immigrant integration according to the following criteria: engagement of local authorities, long-term nature of the initiatives and comprehensiveness. The practices were evaluated in nine categories: the system of management of cultural diversity, city strategies in favour of multiculturalism, activities geared towards inviting migrants, employment of foreigners in local offices, platforms of inter-sectoral cooperation, grant competitions for non-governmental organisations, friendly spaces for migrants, sheltered housing for forced migrants and comprehensive actions for the

education of migrants' children. The majority of awarded good practices were implemented in only two cities, Warsaw and Lublin (read more in Kościeszka 2014).

*Examples of integration initiatives undertaken by public institutions in Warsaw*

- **The Foreigners' Forum** is a consultative and advisory body appointed by the Mazowieckie Voivodship Office – as a response to criticism from representatives of the third sector (Kaźmierkiewicz and Frelak 2011) – to create a platform for cooperation and joint actions between representatives of state institutions and NGOs dealing with immigrant matters (in practice, these are mainly non-governmental organisations led by Poles), and to improve the system of services for foreigners in the Mazowieckie province as well as relations with foreigners / clients of the Voivodship Office (it is one of a dozen of such forums at the Office). The meetings of the Forum are organised on an *ad hoc* basis to solve concrete problems in the foreign community. One of the results of the cooperation was implementation of a common project by the Mazowieckie Province Governor, the Association for Legal Intervention and the Polish Migration Forum, whose aim was to improve the functioning of the Office and to raise standards of services for foreigners. Within the framework of the project, the Information Centre for Foreigners at the Mazowieckie Province Governor's Office was launched (described below), trainings for the office staff in the field of intercultural relations were carried out (described below) and leaflets for foreigners were prepared, etc. ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=15743](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=15743) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- Since 2009, the Mazowieckie Province Governor has carried out a project – co-financed by EIF – called the **“Information Centre for Foreigners”** (in cooperation with the Association for Legal Intervention and the Polish Migration Forum). The most innovative elements of the initiative are: an advisory point for third-country nationals, which is run by the Association for Legal Intervention and located at the Department for Foreigners of the Mazowieckie Voivodship Office so that foreigners can obtain free legal assistance and help writing applications, appeals, etc. directly at the Office; a helpline for third country nationals, which is managed by the Polish Migration Forum, and available online ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=19560](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=19560) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- Within the project “Information Centre for Foreigners”, **a series of trainings** was conducted in 2009 **for civil servants working with foreigners**. What is unique about this project is that representatives of migrant associations served as trainers in several of these workshops. The purpose of this initiative was to provide public administration employees with knowledge about foreigners' rights, to sensitise them to working with culturally different people and to increase their competence in the field of legalisation procedures. The themes of the workshops were as follows: “Working with a multi-cultural client from the perspective of a civil servant”; “Working with a multi-cultural client – how to cope with stress, frustration and discouragement”; “Multi-culturalism in practice”; “Polish offices from the perspective of a foreigner – Chinese mentality and culture”; “Polish offices from the perspective of a foreigner – Vietnamese mentality and culture”; “Polish offices from the perspective of a foreigner – Chechen mentality and culture”; “Polish offices from the perspective of a foreigner – African mentality and culture”; “Legal and administrative issues in the practice of the Department for Foreigners”; “Islamic law and culture – Arab culture”; “Multi-culturalism in practice – African culture”; “Administrative Procedure Code in the practice of public administration institutions”. Similar trainings were conducted for the Police (Grzegorzółka 2013).
- In 2013, the Mazowieckie Province Governor started implementation of the project entitled **“Administration Closer to a Foreigner”** (co-financed by EIF), whose goal is to improve the functioning of the Department for Foreigners at the Mazowieckie Voivodship Office and to introduce facilities for foreigners / clients of the Office. The project consists of four elements: 1) the modernisation of the customer flow management system, i.e. the elimination of queues at the Office by introducing the possibility of registering for a meeting by Internet (“Internet calendar”); 2) the modernisation of the electronic document circulation system so that foreigners can monitor the status

of their case by Internet; 3) study visits by the Departments' employees to several EU countries in order to elaborate a collection of good practices on providing services to foreigners; 3) an information campaign addressing foreigners on the new tools for them, including the creation of an e-learning platform available in several languages, which explains step by step how to fill in residence permit application forms etc. and the organisation of an open house day at the Office to present the results of the project to foreigners (Matusz Protasiewicz 2013).

- In November 2012, the City Hall of Warsaw established the **Social Dialogue Committee for Foreigners**, an initiative and advisory body to the Mayor of Warsaw. Participants in the meetings of the Committee include representatives of the Centre for Social Communication of the City together with representatives of almost 30 NGOs providing assistance to foreigners and migrant associations operating in Warsaw. One of the results of the meetings was the elaboration of a common position regarding the draft Act on foreigners (<http://ngo.um.warszawa.pl/komisje/komisja-dialogu-spoecznego-ds-cudzoziemc-w> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).

- In December 2014, the Mayor of Warsaw settled a tender for running the **Warsaw Multi-cultural Centre (WCW)**. The aim of the Centre will be to provide a platform for cooperation between NGOs dealing with foreigners, migrant-led organisations and municipal institutions. It will operate in the following areas: 1) information (both for foreigners on the functioning of public administration and programmes implemented by city institutions and NGOs, and for residents of Warsaw on the multi-culturalism of the city); 2) activities (support programme for migrant organisations, incubator of initiatives, integration activities, etc.); 3) education (cooperation with schools, education in a multi-cultural environment, Polish language courses, etc.); 4) culture (implementation of cultural and artistic projects, including support for activities undertaken by migrant organisations); 5) research (Kościeszka 2013b; <http://ngo.um.warszawa.pl/aktualnosci/warsztaty-planowania-przestrzeni-warszawskiego-centrum-wielokulturowego> [Accessed 18 February 2015]). The seat of the Centre (a two floor building provided by the City) will be a working space for representatives of organisations dealing with multi-culturalism, who do not have their own seats. It will be a continuation of the three-year project, **“Pilotage of the Warsaw Multi-cultural Centre”**, coordinated by the Other Space Foundation and financed by the EIF and the Culture Department of the City Hall of Warsaw ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=21012](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=21012) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).

- In 2009-2011, the City Hall of Warsaw in cooperation with local authorities of Caerdydd (United Kingdom) carried out the **“CAERDYDD – WARSAW Integration Project. Bridging the Education and Social Gap for Young People and their Parents”**. It was implemented in two Warsaw schools and its purpose was to: prepare school staff and teachers to work with foreign students in a multi-cultural classroom; to appoint a Support Group for Parents of foreign children; and to disseminate knowledge on methods and tools for working with foreign students – by drawing up documents that can be used in different stages of education, such as a “Welcome Pack” that contains information to facilitate the integration of foreign children and their parents in a Polish school environment, and which is available in the main languages of foreign children in Warsaw schools: English, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Chechen (<http://www.comenius.org.pl/galeria-projektow/pps-regio-wiu/caerdydd-warsaw-integracja-projekt> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).

#### *Examples of integration initiatives undertaken by public institutions in Lublin*

- The City Hall of Lublin carries out a project **“Lublin 4 All”**, whose aim is to create and introduce a **participatory management of cultural diversity** in the city. Under the framework of this project, the City Hall of Lublin established cooperation with NGOs and other entities involved in serving immigrants in Lublin. They form a so-called Support Group, whose task is to develop solutions on the basis of a wide coalition. The Group encompasses representatives of the City Hall of Lublin, the Police, the Municipal Family Support Centre, the Lubelskie Voivodship Office, cultural institutions, the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, the College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin, the

refugee centre and NGOs. The Support Group plans to develop a system of trainings for teachers, students and civil servants and to design an internal management system of diversity for the City Hall of Lublin. The components of the system will include, among other things: a coordinator for multi-culturalism, employed by the City Hall of Lublin, who will deal with the issue of immigrant integration and will constitute a contact point for NGOs, minority groups and high schools; a website on multi-culturalism in Lublin; a public calendar of integration events and a comprehensive mailing list facilitating cross-sectoral communication on immigrant matters (Kościeszka 2013a; <http://bip.lublin.eu/um/index.php?t=200&fid=12631> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).

- In 2009, the Municipal Family Support Centre in Lublin and Caritas – within the framework of the project “Common Home – Poland. Integration of Asylum Seekers, Foreigners Granted Refugee Status and Subsidiary Protection through Social, Psychological, Educational and Legal Support” (co-financed by EFR) – established an **Interdisciplinary Team for the Integration of Foreigners**, whose aim was to develop an integrated support system for foreigners in the local community and a model of cooperation between government and self-government institutions as well as non-governmental organisations. Foreigners from Lublin could take part in the Team’s meetings. Problems discussed by the Team have included: the education of disabled foreign children, pre-school education, life-long learning, domestic violence, addictions, crime, trainings for people working with foreigners on psychological support for people from different cultural backgrounds, and the most prevailing problems in the Lublin province – unemployment and housing. One of the successes of the Team was the change in local regulations entitling social housing to foreigners in Lublin who have been granted subsidiary protection (<http://pomagajmyrazem.com.pl/zespol> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- The Municipal Family Support Centre in Lublin is one of the most active and successful local state institutions that obtains EU funds for the integration of foreigners who have been granted international protection. Among the projects carried out by the Centre, it is worth mentioning “**Safe Harbour – Sheltered Housing for Foreigners**” (the flats are the property of the city) and “**Accommodation and Work – the Integration of Foreigners in Lublin**” (which includes support for a family assistant to help immigrants gain empowerment and self-sufficiency by overcoming life, emotional and family problems and obtaining sheltered accommodation).

#### *Examples of integration initiatives undertaken by public institutions in Krakow*

- Implementation of the anti-discrimination project entitled “**Against Racism and Xenophobia: City Response and Prevention Strategy**” by the City Hall of Krakow in cooperation with the Association *Interkulturalni PL*. One of the results of this project was the elaboration of the “Draft Proposal of the Prevention and Reaction Strategy on Racist or Xenophobic Incidents in the Urban Space of the City – Proposal to the Local Government of Krakow (2012-2016)” ([http://ngo.krakow.pl/mowis/34621,artykul,projekt\\_strategii.html](http://ngo.krakow.pl/mowis/34621,artykul,projekt_strategii.html) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- In April 2013, the City Hall of Krakow appointed a **Task Team to elaborate the draft resolution regarding multi-culturalism, counteracting discrimination, racism and xenophobia** in Krakow (Kostecka and Machalewska 2013).
- Organisation of cultural and educational events promoting multi-culturalism by the City Hall of Krakow, e.g. “**Interkulturalia. Let’s Meet!**” whose aim was to present the cultural diversity of Krakow (<http://interkulturalni.pl/-203.html> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- The Małopolskie Voivodship Office in Kraków, in the Department for Nationals and Foreigners, organised workshops on laws pertaining to foreigners for employees of international student offices at high schools in Małopolska and launched information campaigns targeted at foreigners which aimed to raise their awareness of their rights and obligations.

- The Municipal Policy of the City of Krakow is involved in **combating racist and anti-Semitic graffiti in the city**. An interactive map of the city was created, on which residents of Krakow may mark places that have illegal graffiti (Kostecka and Machalewska 2013).

#### *Examples of integration initiatives undertaken by public institutions in Bialystok*

- The City Hall of Bialystok finances numerous cultural events and projects dedicated to multiculturalism and tolerance, such as “So Different – So Close” – a series of meetings (lectures, recitals, film screenings, exhibitions, etc.) aimed at shaping attitudes of openness towards racial, ethnic and religious differences (organised by *Centrum im. Ludwika Zamenhoffa*); “Tolerance is ok” – educational projects for gymnasium students and residents of Bialystok (*Centrum im. Ludwika Zamenhoffa*); “Playground Arsenal” – an educational programme for children aimed at the integration of children of various religions and cultures; and cooking workshops “*Substancja Odżywcza*” for Polish and Chechen women.
- After racial incidents in Bialystok in 2013, the City of Hall of Bialystok commissioned a study “**Diagnosis of Attitudes in Tolerance of Bialystok Residents**” on the sources of the problem and an assessment of its real scale. Its aim was to indicate groups with a higher degree of intolerance in order to create appropriate instruments of social policy addressing these groups ([http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2344391](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2344391) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- At the Podlaskie Voivodship Office in Bialystok, the **Committee for Counteracting Racism and Xenophobia** brings together directors of the relevant departments of the Office and appointed representatives of, among others, the Police and the Internal Security Agency. Its aim was to elaborate a long-term strategy for Bialystok to solve the problem of racism and xenophobia (Kościeszka 2013b). The programme worked out by the Committee, entitled “**Bialystok for Tolerance**”, was adopted by the City Council of Bialystok in December 2013. Its goal was to prevent and combat xenophobia, racism and intolerance, as well as to promote the culture of tolerance towards all people, regardless of their race or faith (<http://www.bialystok.pl/1317-bialystok-dla-tolerancji/default.aspx> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- In 2008, the Podlaskie Province Governor established an **Advisory Team for the coordination of activities by public administration bodies in the field of the integration of foreigners who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection** in the Podlaskie region ([http://bip.bialystok.uw.gov.pl/Show\\_Item.aspx?ID=21949](http://bip.bialystok.uw.gov.pl/Show_Item.aspx?ID=21949) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).

## **5. Engagement of non-state actors**

It is characteristic of the Polish case that the majority of non-governmental organisations providing assistance to immigrants in Poland are led by Poles. The scope of their activities is wide: from providing legal advice and practical information on functioning in Poland, ensuring assistance with contacting institutions, organising Polish language and vocational courses, lobbying public institutions, to organising cultural events and social campaigns that are targeted both at migrants and the host society (for an overview of NGOs operating on behalf of immigrants, see e.g. Slany 2014). Their activities, and even their existence, are, to a large extent, dependent on European sources of financing (see e.g. Bieniecki and Pawlak 2012).

There are also a growing number of associations or foundations that are active in the field of immigrant incorporation which were established by immigrants themselves. It is not easy to determine the exact number of such organisations (Ziōła 2010) because they are not centrally registered; some of them are informal and some have suspended their activities. Selected initiatives of various ethnic institutions are described below.

### 5.1 Integration initiatives undertaken by migrant associations

Migrant-led organisations are usually “young”. Only a few have a relatively long history, e.g. the Socio-Cultural Association of Vietnamese in Poland, established in 1986, or the Armenian Cultural Association (OTK), established in 1992 (Wysieńska 2011). Many of these organisations were created by immigrants from the former Soviet Union, Vietnam and Africa. Their activities usually are oriented towards members of their own ethnic group (Każmierkiewicz and Frelak 2011).

Several migrant associations were set up and/or formally registered thanks to a project carried out by the International Organisation for Migration “**Active and Competent – Migrants in a Civil Society**” (co-financed by EIF). Within its framework, migrant community leaders were provided with small grants for the registration of their associations, creation of websites, printing of promotional materials, etc., and could take part in trainings to enhance their knowledge and competences in the field of civic participation (the themes of the workshops included: the functioning of civil society in Poland, group advocacy, participation in the process of formulating state policy, cooperation with stakeholders, etc.) ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=19552](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=19552) [Accessed 18 February 2015]). Similar support for newly established migrant associations is currently provided by the Foundation for Somalia, within the project “**Inter-cultural Incubator for Migrant Organisations**” (<http://en.immigrantsinaction.pl/incubator-participants> [Accessed 18 February 2015]), and will be provided within the framework of the **Warsaw Multi-cultural Centre** which will serve, among others, as an incubator of immigrant initiatives, especially in cases of organisations or informal groups of migrants that do not have their own offices.

The main area of action undertaken by immigrant organisations is – especially when migration from a given country or region is relatively “new” – providing information and assistance to newly arrived immigrants with regards to finding accommodation, legalising their stay, obtaining work permits, finding work, obtaining contacts for public institutions, enrolling in Polish language learning, etc. Other activities focus on education and culture, including activities designed to support and preserve cultural identity and the culture of the sending country, e.g. cultivating the immigrant’s own customs and traditions, organising language and history classes for immigrant children, as well as promoting immigrant cultures among Poles (Frelak and Kaźmierkiewicz 2011; Grzegorzółka 2013). Vietnamese organisations, i.e. organisations of a relatively “older” migration community in Poland, have started to focus on the second generation of migrants, on the one hand, (e.g. by organising Vietnamese language courses for youth), and socio-cultural integration, on the other, (e.g. Vietnamese-Polish research initiatives undertaken in the newly established Institute of Vietnamese Science and Culture by the Association of Vietnamese in Poland “Solidarity and Friendship”) (Wysieńska 2011).

Migrant organisations, in contrast to Polish NGOs dealing with immigrants, are not very active in the field of lobbying for changes in policy and law concerning the integration of foreigners (with some exceptions, e.g. the Foundation for Development “Beyond Borders”). For example, only one migrant association – out of sixteen invited – responded to the survey of the Ministry of the Interior on the shape of the future integration policy of Poland (Ministry of the Interior 2011). None of the migrant-led organisations presented a written statement on the draft strategic document concerning Poland’s migration policy (Committee for Migration 2012) or the draft Act on foreigners adopted in 2013.

Although organisations of foreigners are generally not financed from public budgets but rather from private sources or membership fees, and the majority of their members work as volunteers without remuneration, the continuity of their activities and their ability to hire employees on the basis of employment contracts usually depends on the possibility of obtaining funds from Polish or EU sources (Grzegorzółka 2013). It is worth noting at this point that small migrant organizations in particular, without the necessary experience and specialised knowledge, find it difficult both to apply for EU funds – the high financial contribution required from the organization is mentioned as one of the obstacles – and to implement EU projects, due to the complicated rules for reporting and

accounting, which is perceived as a paradox of the functioning of EU funds that were established to facilitate the integration of migrants (Bieniecki and Pawlak 2012).

The high level of self-organisation by the Vietnamese in Poland and the high availability of ethnic services provided by Vietnamese to Vietnamese, on the one hand fosters the adaptation of Vietnamese to Polish reality, but on the other, frequently results in the isolation of Vietnamese people from Polish society; e.g. disputes among members of this community are not resolved by Polish institutions (the Police, courts, offices) but by Vietnamese leaders or the Vietnamese Embassy, or foreigners do not feel the need to learn Polish language (Stefańska 2008), which can hardly be considered compatible with Poland's policy towards immigrants. Also, providing assistance to unauthorised immigrants may not be perceived as in line with this policy.

*Examples of activities undertaken by organisations of immigrants from Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, targeted at immigrants from these countries*

Although immigrants usually act on behalf of their own ethnic groups (Frelak and Kaźmierkiewicz 2011), there are not many examples of specific initiatives targeted at immigrants from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus (non-EU priority countries of the INTERACT project).

- One of the most prominent example is the project conducted by the “Our Choice” Foundation led by Ukrainians titled “**Nasz Wybór – Information Resources for Migrants from Ukraine in Poland**” (co-financed by EIF). Within its framework, a newspaper for Ukrainians is issued in printed and electronic versions – prepared by an editorial team consisting of 25 Ukrainians –, and regular meetings for Ukrainian migrant workers are also organised (on issues crucial for migrants, including individual consultations on participants’ specific problems). The language of the newspaper is Ukrainian, as it is targeted mainly at newcomers whose knowledge of Polish language is insufficient to understand information in Polish and to get necessary information that is useful from the point of view of integration. The website is in Ukrainian and Polish. It contains information on legal changes pertaining to migrants in Poland and Ukraine, counselling services, training opportunities, contacts at various institutions, etc. The monthly is distributed free of charge to places frequently visited by Ukrainians (e.g. churches, Ukrainian consulates, Polish offices, non-governmental organisations, etc.) in several big cities ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=34030](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=34030) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- Another project carried out by the “Our Choice” Foundation is the **Ukrainian Women’s Club**. It aims to support the integration of Ukrainian women employed as domestic or care workers in Poland who have limited contact with either representatives of the host society or other migrants and, because of this, are vulnerable to social exclusion. They are provided with the opportunity to take part in various trainings and events as well as in meetings with members of successful women’s organisations such as the Polish farmers’ wives’ associations.
- The Ternopilaska Foundation runs **consultation centres for migrants**, mainly Ukrainians, in Warsaw and Żyrardów (a city near Warsaw). The scope of the counselling services includes, among others: legalising an immigrant’s stay in Poland, concluding employment contracts, enrolling in studies, conducting banking services, filling in administration forms, providing the support of an interpreter in public institutions, etc.
- The “European Belarus” Foundation implements a project in Warsaw – financed from a local budget – called “**The Family**” [*Rodzinka*]. Its goal is to organise a Polish-Belarusian club to promote Belarusian culture and language and to support the integration of Polish-Belarusian families through actions such as the organization of a national cuisine feast, tourist trips, and a series of lectures on the education of children and adults.
- The Other Space Foundation, in cooperation with the Institute of Culture of Caucasus Nations, has helped Russian citizens of Chechen origin residing in Warsaw establish a **Refugee Self-Help Centre**

**(SINTAR)**, whose goal is to increase refugees' levels of self-reliance in order to facilitate their integration. The Centre focuses on cultural and civic education: organising Polish and Chechen language and history classes, English language courses, *vainakh* dance, drama and art workshops, computer classes, etc. ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=20236](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=20236) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).

#### *Examples of other activities undertaken by migrant organisations*

- The Foundation for Development “Beyond Borders” (led by Belarusian migrants) organises **Polish language classes for third country nationals** at all levels of proficiency for a small fee (the project is co-financed by EIF). It also conducts, among others, **workshops on legal aspects of functioning of foreigners in Poland** (legalisation of stay, work permits, setting up a business, Polish citizenship, etc.).
- The **“Welcome Centre in Warsaw”** – a project carried out by, among others, migrant-led organisations, the Foundation for Development “Beyond Borders” and the “Our Choice” Foundation (co-financed by the EIF), which aims to provide counselling services to immigrants through Mobile Advisory Points (operating, for example, in open air markets or bazaars) and a Permanent Advisory Point ([http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID\\_ITEMS=29003](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/details.cfm?ID_ITEMS=29003) [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- In the **Meeting Centre “Chmielna 26”** (co-financed by the EIF), run by the Somali Foundation, foreigners of various nationalities can obtain specialist assistance provided by a lawyer, a job counsellor, a psychologist and a mediator. Moreover, they can take part in free Polish language courses at every level or in workshops on intercultural differences and intercultural communication. Specialist support is provided to mixed marriages and couples facing communication difficulties (<http://chmielna26.fds.org.pl/centrum-chmielna-26-otwarte/?lang=en> [Accessed 18 February 2015]).
- The Association of Vietnamese in Poland, “Solidarity and Friendship”, conducted a project co-financed by the EIF – **“Supporting the integration of Vietnamese emigrants”**, within which the following activities were implemented (only by Vietnamese): organising Polish language courses, publishing the magazine *“Que Viet”* and running a website (Matusz Protasiewicz 2013).
- The VietForum Foundation supports the civic participation of Vietnamese migrants by stimulating their interest in social and political issues. It plans, among other things, to launch a campaign encouraging Vietnamese with Polish citizenship to participate in Polish elections (Wysieńska 2011).

## **5.2 Activities carried out by other ethnic institutions**

Other ethnic institutions playing a crucial role in integrating migrant communities in Poland are churches and embassies of the immigrants' countries of origin. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic church in Warsaw (on Miodowa street) may serve as a prominent example. Besides meeting the religious and spiritual needs of migrants, it provides a wide range of adaptation assistance to Ukrainian migrants from Warsaw and its surrounding areas, including to undocumented migrants. Firstly, it is a place where Ukrainians hold informal meetings, during which they may exchange information and experiences about functioning in Poland. It also functions as a place for formal meetings with representatives of the Ukrainian Embassy, Polish and migrant-led NGOs, the Police, the City Hall of Warsaw and other state or non-state institutions (depending on the needs). It is possible to contact a legal advisor there or to read advertisements related to job vacancies, renting flats, etc. As far as the activities of embassies are concerned, on the one hand they can be helpful if they foster the functioning of foreigners in their new reality (e.g. the Embassy of Norway provides comprehensive care to youth from Norway studying in Poland), or the integration of the community (organising cultural events, providing assistance to migrant associations). On the other hand, they can have a negative impact on immigrant integration; e.g. the Vietnamese Embassy together with the Association

of Vietnamese in Poland, “Solidarity and Friendship”, plays a significant role in resolving conflicts among Vietnamese migrants, sometimes without involvement of Polish institutions, such as the Police (Stefańska 2008).

## 6. Conclusions

Despite the adoption of a strategic government document concerning migration policy in 2012, and an action plan to this document in 2014, it cannot be said that the immigrant integration policy pursued by the Polish state is now comprehensive and cohesive. In fact, it has still not been well deliberated. It is fragmentary and addressed mainly to repatriates and foreigners who have been granted international protection. Polish state institutions are not obliged to provide special integration support and services to other categories of third country nationals; this task is left to non-governmental organisations which rely on external sources of financing.

The dependence on EU sources – primarily on the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals and the European Refugee Fund (since 2015, these funds will be replaced by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) – can be regarded as a characteristic feature of the Polish integration-related policy. Integration projects are usually carried out by NGOs, whose existence is often inseparably connected with the availability of EU funds. Without this external funding, the vast majority of integration activities in Poland targeted at third country nationals could not be implemented. Unfortunately, the government’s strategic documents do not provide for alternative sources of funding for them. Such a situation does not guarantee stability and continuity for these organizations’ actions.

Due to the small scale of immigration to Poland and the novelty of this issue, integration projects co-financed from EU sources – according to the opinion of administration officials – serve as a “laboratory” for testing various integration solutions and are very useful within the current stage of development of Poland’s immigrant integration policy (Każmierkiewicz and Frelak 2011; Kaźmierkiewicz 2013). Hopefully, these experiences will become a solid basis for the formulation of a more concrete and more complex concept of immigrant integration and the creation of more stable foundations for financing integration actions in Poland.

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