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# **NEWCOMERS@WORK: STRENGTHENING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF YOUNG REFUGEE AND MIGRANT NEETS**

**Work Package 2: Development of the  
Newcomers@Work Curriculum**

## **Needs Analysis - National Report**

**Poland**

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*March 2024*



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<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/2022-1-PL01-KA220-YOU-000089667>

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## REPORT SUMMARY

In Poland NEETs are approximately 730000 young people, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of whom are not looking for a job, half of whom have no work experience, more than 70% of whom are not registered with employment offices. The labour force participation rate of the population aged: 15-24 in 2022 in Poland was 31.1%. The level of unemployment in this group generally increased until 2003, when it reached its highest values, and then began to decrease after 2004 (Poland's accession to the EU), until 2021, currently remaining stable. This is in line with general unemployment trends.

EC stated that young people are the group most affected by the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market. After the recovery from the pandemic, young people are still mostly in temporary employment, and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to further their education, acquire skills and upgrade their competences and thus find a job.

NEETs are often not registered in labour offices and therefore it is difficult to reach them with support. In Poland, most of them do not seek employment due to difficulties in reconciling work and private life, illness, or disability.

In the last two years in connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine in Poland we can observe big flow of immigrants. It has become a challenge to create urban policies that integrate refugees into city life based on: treating them as members of the community, building equality policies and creating welcoming spaces. In Poland, activities in the area of inclusion policies are entrusted to specific municipalities, units are referred to as multicultural centers or migrant support centers or information points for foreigners - Warsaw, Krakow, Łódź, Katowice, Wrocław.

The desk research showed that it is difficult to find up-to-date studies on a specific category such as migrant NEET's. Few thematic studies indicate several aspects. Currently for Poland as a country actively using labour migrants, the current challenge is to make the most of their potential. It is worth making available to foreigners a wide range of opportunities for the realization of professional goals, considering the better use of their knowledge, skills and experience gained outside Poland. Those who have been in Poland for a long time are very likely to know the specifics of the Polish labour market but the level of matching the competencies of foreigners with the needs of the labour market is low. There is a horizontal mismatch - immigrants are doing work incompatible with their education and qualifications, employment below education and qualifications. Foreigners taking jobs that do not consider their high skill level or education profile can lead to loss and obsolescence of knowledge and qualifications and be a significant barrier to labor market mobility and career advancement.

Analysis of ten semi-structured individual interviews (IDIs) shows, that are systemic barriers and complexities young NEET migrants encounter in Poland, including bureaucratic hurdles, lack of tailored training programs, and difficulties in obtaining work permits. These challenges significantly hinder their integration and employment prospects. The language barrier emerges as a major obstacle for migrants, affecting their ability to find employment, access education, and assimilate into the local community. Migrants also experience emotional strain due to the lack of steady employment, longing for home, and concerns for the well-being of family members left behind. The interviews reveal feelings of sadness, stress, and uncertainty about the future among migrants, underscoring the need for holistic support. Despite the challenges, some migrants demonstrate resilience and adaptability in



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their approach to life in Poland. They remain optimistic about their prospects, seek opportunities for self-improvement, and actively engage with the local community. Respondents found Poland hospitable and supportive as a host country with a lot of opportunities – both educational and employment wise – despite inevitable experiences of discrimination. They were honest about what they like and not about their experiences in Poland. They also have a lot of significant remarks concerning Polish approach to immigrants, which can be helpful in the identification of problems but also in the execution of good practices.

Analysis of two FGIs shows, that currently, young migrants in Poland are most often refugees from Ukraine, often suffering from war trauma. “Disappearing Youth” are young people aged 16-17 who have dropped out of the education system and cannot legally work.

People who work with migrants and who are migrants themselves, on the one hand appreciate the great help they have received in Poland and, on the other hand, state that they notice a growing aversion of Poles towards Ukrainians and think that Poles should open more to the newcomers, accept them, and support them more. There is a growing and more urgent need to solve the problem of systemic reaching young migrants in need of help. Support is not provided also to those who are already of age and have come without family or parents, but there is no way to reach them, as they do not seek such help themselves. Various and individualized actions to support refugees are necessary. Essential actions towards all these young individuals include establishing contact, building trust, fostering relationships within both the local Polish and migrant communities, providing psychological support, facilitating training and skill acquisition, as well as motivating them for learning and development. Additionally, supporting refugees and migrants beyond large cities is crucial. Respondents stated that financial issues are a huge problem - paid assistance is available and these commercial offers effectively reach the potential interested parties, while free assistance is needed. It is necessary to support and continuously improve the competences of workers supporting emigrants.



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## PART 1: DESKTOP RESEARCH ON NEWCOMERS' CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES

### Section 1: National context

#### General labour market characteristics

The sphere of employment operates on the basis of the Labour Code Act 1974, currently amended and published on 4.IV.2023 in the Official Gazette of 9.III.2023 on the amendment of the Labour Code Act and some other acts (DzU 2023, item 641).

Ministry of Family and Social Policy in the labour section covers, among other things, matters of employment and unemployment prevention (MRiPS, 2023a). State tasks in the field of employment promotion, mitigating the effects of unemployment and professional activation are carried out by labour market institutions, which are: public employment services, Voluntary Labour Corps, employment agencies, training institutions and institutions of social dialogue and local partnership (MRiPS, 2023b). An important role is played by the Voluntary Labour Corps. The Voluntary Corps is a state-run unit specialising in activities for young people, in particular young people at risk of social exclusion and unemployed people up to the age of 25.

In the area of the labour market there are several other entities supporting the activities of labour market institutions, e.g.: municipal information centres, academic career offices, school career centres, entrepreneurship support centres. Many non-governmental organisations also deal with labour market issues. Of the listed labour market institutions, the largest share in activities undertaken in the field of employment promotion, mitigating the effects of unemployment and professional activation is held by public employment services<sup>1</sup>.

The latest data on the labour market in Poland are as follows (PARP, 2023, p. 3):

- "The registered unemployment rate (CSO) in Poland in January 2023 was 5.5% (down 0.4 p.p. compared to January 2022);
- At the end of January 2023, 857.6 thousand unemployed people were registered in labour offices, i.e. 69.5 thousand (7.5%) fewer than in January 2022;
- In January 2023, 92.0 thousand job vacancies and job activation were reported to labour offices, i.e. 23.8 thousand (20.6%) less than in the previous year;
- Average monthly employment (CSO) in the enterprise sector in January 2023 was 6530.1 thousand; it increased by 1.1% (by 70.3 thousand people);
- The average total monthly remuneration (gross) in the enterprise sector in January 2023 was PLN 6883.96, with a year-on-year increase of 13.5%.
- The unemployment rate for the EU-(EUROSTAT) 27 Member States in December 2022 was 6.1% (n.a. m/m; -0.3 p.p. y/y) and for the euro area (EU-19) was 6.6% (n.a. m/m; -0.4 p.p. y/y). According to Labour Force Survey calculations, at that time the unemployment rate in Poland was 2.9%<sup>1</sup> (-0.1 p.p. m/m; n.a. y/y). Only the Czech Republic achieved a better result (2.3%)."



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Already in 2021. Poland reached a rate of 75.1% of the employed in the 20-64 age group, against an EU average of 73.1%. In 2022, according to EUROSTAT, Poland was the second country after the Czech Republic with the lowest unemployment rate in the EU (2.7%), against 6.1% in the EU and 6.6% in the Eurozone. There is a large variation in the level of unemployment in different voivodeships, with the lowest in the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship at 2.7% and the highest in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship at 7.6% (EURES, 2023).

A review of the research and analysis of the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development shows, among other things, that (PARP, 2023, p. 12):

- "The vast majority of companies in Poland (87%) plan to maintain high recruitment activity. 53% continue to cite business growth as the main reason and 37% the need to find replacements for employees who decide to leave.
- Employers operating in, among others, the IT, marketing, HR, engineering, finance and accounting, e-commerce and digital, and hospitality industries, show the greatest openness to recruitment;
- In January 2023, 255,300 new job offers were posted by employers on the 50 largest recruitment portals in Poland - 3.2% more than the month before and 16.9% less than in January 2022;
- The largest y-o-y increase in the number of job vacancies was recorded for financial and health occupations (17% more each than in January 2022). The largest decrease was in demand for workers in the legal industry (-42%)."

One third of companies in Poland currently employ foreign workers, 89% of whom are from Ukraine, working in various companies in different industries, while 6% of companies employ people from Asia, Africa or South America, and the rest employ citizens from other European countries (GiGroup, 2023, p. 41). A total of one million foreigners work in Poland legally and pay taxes. The most numerous group are citizens of Ukraine -735.8 thousand, the second most numerous group are Belarusians - 91.2 thousand, the third are citizens of Georgia - 29.1 thousand (Serwis Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, 2023).

### **Labour market of Youth / Migrants / NEETs**

NEETs are approximately 730000 young people, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of whom are not looking for a job, half of whom have no work experience, more than 70% of whom are not registered with employment offices and 80% of economically inactive women in this group are not looking for a job due to family or caring responsibilities (Smoter, 2020).

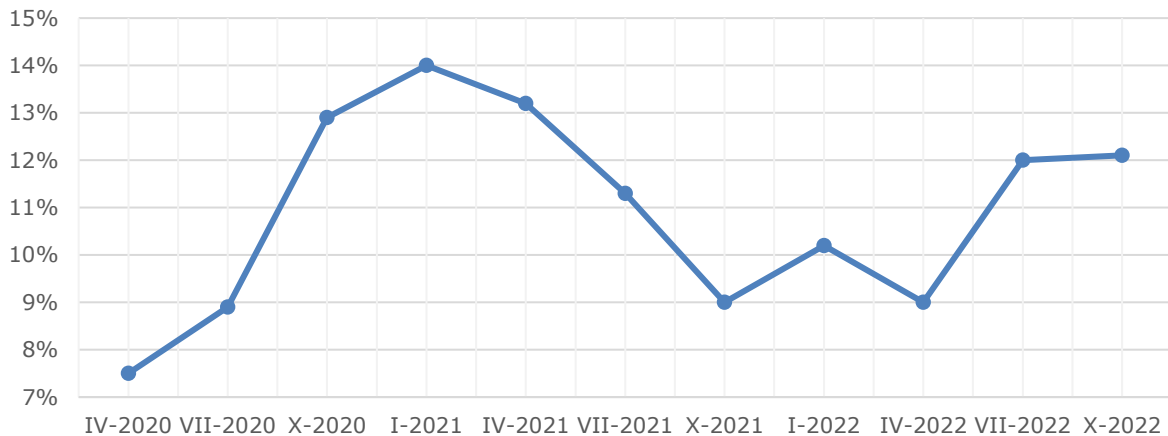
The labour force participation rate of the population aged: 15-24 in 2022 in Poland was 31.1% (y-o-y unchanged) (MRiPS, 2023c).



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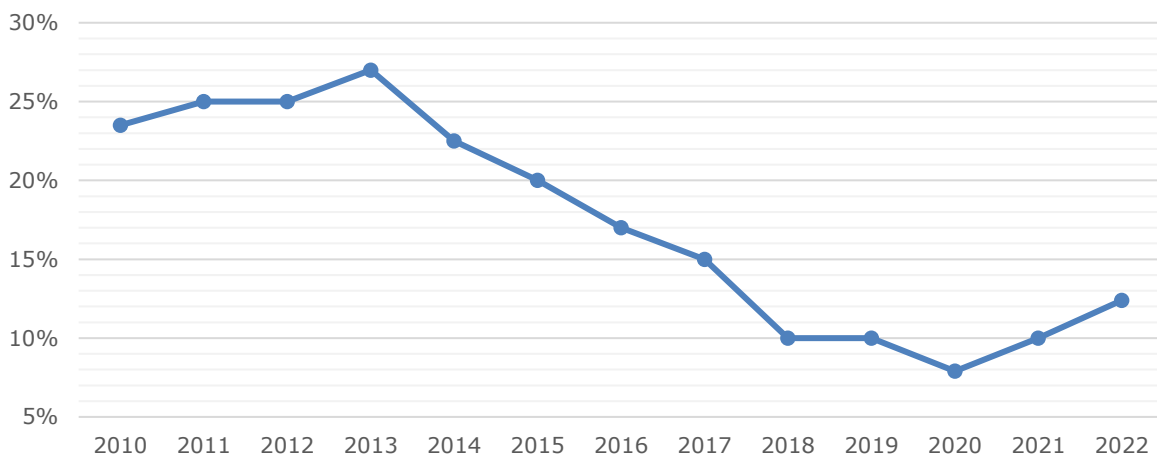


**Chart 1. Unemployment rate of persons aged 15-24 in 2020-2022, data as of 6.04.2023**



Source: own compilation based on: Rynek Pracy, 2023.

**Chart 2. Unemployment rate of persons aged 15-24 in 2010-2022, data as of 6.04.2023**



Source: own compilation based on: Rynek Pracy, 2023.

Data on the economic activity of the population and the area of education have been studied by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) since 1992, and such data were also collected in the National Population and Housing Census in 1.IV-30.VI.2011.

The Central Statistical Office (CSO), on the basis of the LFS (cf. point 1 above) conducted quarterly, reports unemployment rates. Among young people, it is the LFS unemployment rate for the 15-24 age group and is a ratio where the numerator is the number of unemployed people of that age and the denominator is the number of economically active people of that age (i.e. employed and unemployed together). The rate for 15-24 year olds was 12.1% in Q4 2022. The highest value of this rate was recorded in Q1 2003 (46.5%) and the lowest in Q4 2019 (7.9%). Long-term analyses show that changes in the youth unemployment rate are consistent with changes in the population as a whole. From the beginning of the survey in 1992, the level of unemployment in Poland generally increased





until 2003, when it reached its highest values, and then began to decrease after 2004, i.e. after Poland's accession to the EU, until 2021, currently remaining stable (Unemployment rate of young people, 2023).

**Table 1. Structure of total unemployed and unemployed up to 25 years of age at the end of 2022**

Specification		Total registered unemployed at the end of 2022.		Registered unemployed up to 25 years of age at the end of 2022.		Increase/decrease in the number of unemployed under 25 compared to the end of 2021.		Unemployed up to 25 years of age as a % of total registered at the end of 2022.
		in absolute figures	Total 100%	in absolute figures	Total 100%	in absolute figures	w %	
<b>Total</b>		<b>812301</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100373</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>-224</b>	<b>-0,2</b>	<b>12,4</b>
gender	women	436409	53,7	54820	54,6	-2072	-3,6	12,6
	men	375892	46,3	45553	45,4	1848	4,2	12,1
Entitlement to allowance	yes	115430	14,2	6686	6,7	-54	-0,8	5,8
	not	696871	85,8	93687	93,3	-170	-0,2	13,4
Length of unemployment in months	Up to 1	82609	10,2	16445	16,4	2087	14,5	19,9
	1-3	160691	19,8	32963	32,8	5517	20,1	20,5
	3-6	121913	15,0	22101	22,0	3220	17,1	18,1
	6-12	118424	14,6	11294	11,3	-2640	-18,9	9,5
	12-24	108017	13,3	9875	9,8	-6178	-38,5	9,1
	over 24	220647	27,2	7695	7,7	-2230	-22,5	3,5
Educational level	Higher	116569	14,4	5008	5,0	-31	-0,6	4,3
	Post-secondary and secondary vocational/professional	180192	22,2	30674	30,6	-403	-1,3	17,0



	General secondary education	96916	11,9	18843	18,8	-1667	-8,1	19,4
	Basic vocational/professional	203331	25,0	25325	25,2	5289	26,4	12,5
	Lower secondary/primary and below	215293	26,5	20523	20,4	-3412	-14,3	9,5
Length of service in years	Up to 1	165370	20,4	32559	32,4	-1912	-5,5	19,7
	1-5	207750	25,6	28266	28,2	3050	12,1	13,6
	6-10	129207	15,9	1059	1,1	-31	-2,8	0,8
	10-20	120392	14,8	X	X	X	X	X
	20-30	60941	7,5	X	X	X	X	X
	30 and over	21782	2,7	X	X	X	X	X
	Without seniority	106859	13,2	38489	38,3	-1331	-3,3	36,0

Source: MRIPS 2023d.

The group of unemployed up to 25 years of age is dominated by women (54.6%), those without the right to benefit 93.3%. The percentage of those unemployed for more than 24 months in this group was 7.7% (among the other unemployed 29.9%) (MRIPS 2023d).

**Chart 3. Unemployed persons aged 15-24 in Poland in 2010-2022 (in thousands)**



Source: own elaboration based on CSO data, Statistical Bulletin No. 3/2023.



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According to the *Occupational Situation of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland* Report created on the basis of a survey conducted by ManpowerGroup together with the Totalizator Sportowy Foundation, in which 950 Ukrainian refugees participated, (4 out of 10 Ukrainian refugees found employment in Poland, 26.01.2023, <https://biuroprasowe.manpowergroup.pl/224521>, 24.05.2023):

- 39% of Ukrainian refugees surveyed have already found employment in Poland, or 61% of them are unemployed;
- According to the respondents, the main reasons for not being employed are: lack of knowledge of the Polish language (54%); lack of offers corresponding to their specialisation and compatible with their competences (39%) and lack of offers for part-time work (32%);
- 79% have taken any job but plan to find a better one, 51% are working in a different job below their competence, 13% are satisfied with their current position and 10% are working in their profession but in a lower position;
- When looking for employment, refugees mainly pay attention to: an attractive salary (75%), the proximity of the job to their place of residence (58%), that the position corresponds to their qualifications and profession (56%) and opinions about working for the company (44%).

Data published in April 2023 shows that (PARP, 2023, p. 12):

- In the nine months since the outbreak of war, the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the Polish labour market and their economic self-reliance have significantly improved. However, still about 20% of them remain in a very difficult financial situation;
- Pre-war migrants are more likely than refugees to declare their intention to stay in Poland permanently (55% vs. 19%).

The youngest Poles (aged 18-24) are the most confident about employment - 63% declare they are not worried (12 p.p. more than in 2022) - anxiety is expressed by 28%. This age group is most likely to look for a job on online job portals (65.8%) and through applications (47.7%) and friends (31.6%), while the least likely are to look through Job Centres and at job fairs (10.5% each). This age group is also the most satisfied with their job - over 75% - and the most likely to be ready to change to a similar job in a remote or hybrid format - 50%. This group is also the most likely to reskill - 56.9%, compared to 27% in the 55-67 age group; this age group also sees the automation of production processes as an opportunity 57% rather than a threat as is the case for older age groups (GiGroup, 2023, pp. 38, 44).

**Table 2. Young people not in education, employment or training NEETs in Poland, aged 15-24, in 2010-2021 (in %)**

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
percentage [%]	11	11,7	12,1	12,5	12,2	11,2	10,8	9,7	8,8	8,2	8,8	11,2

Source: CSO, [https://sdg.gov.pl/statistics\\_glob/8-6-1/](https://sdg.gov.pl/statistics_glob/8-6-1/), 25.05.2023.

The percentage grew until 2013, then declined until 2021 when it experienced a sharp increase and then a decline.



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### **Key labour market programmes / policies aimed at these target groups to tackle youth unemployment and inactivity.**

As of September 2022, there were more than 1.37 million persons under the protection granted under the Act of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine. It has become a challenge to create urban policies that integrate refugees into city life based on: treating them as members of the community, building equality policies and creating welcoming spaces. In Poland, activities in the area of integration (inclusion) policies are entrusted to specific cities (municipalities), which choose a model of action that they believe is appropriate. Such units are referred to as multicultural centres or migrant support centres or information points for foreigners (Warsaw, Krakow, Łódź, Katowice, Wrocław). The main challenges faced by these units are: the temporary nature of the support and funding (they operate in project form), the access to services ends at the end of the project, the rigidity of the tasks set by the public principal, as well as the competition for resources between these organisations, or not enough quality control of their activities. Examples of such initiatives/programmes are Wrocław's WroMigrant, Open Krakow, or Poznań's Migrant InfoPoint and Migrant and Migrant Women Support Centre, which came into being from a bottom-up initiative. Initiatives also include language support for migrants in the form of municipal websites, information portals or mobility applications in Ukrainian, as well as targeted services in the area of housing, the labour market or education - examples of such initiatives include: service points dedicated to foreigners at the Labour Offices, databases of job offers in different language versions, the provision of remote workplaces equipped with computers with keyboards in Ukrainian, the provision of language courses or access to childcare (Cichocka E., et. al. 2022, pp. 13-20).

Active labour market policies include: counselling and job search assistance, subsidies for employers, direct employment/job creation programmes, training (EC, 2023). To the passive ones - protective measures such as unemployment benefits or early retirement.

An unemployed person in Poland can count on the following forms of support (Serwis Administracyjny-Samorządowy, 2023):

- individual or group, free of charge, career counselling offered by labour office, within the framework of which it will receive support in the form of: planning a career path, preparing application documents and for job interviews, vocational competence tests, advice on the specifics of a given profession, the qualifications needed, the local labour market;
- **Unemployment allowance for** persons who have lost their jobs and registered with the employment office and who have worked for at least 365 days during the 18 months preceding registration in a job for which they received at least the minimum wage and for which they paid social security and FP contributions; the rates of allowance depend on the length of employment;
- **family allowance when** raising a child, also an allowance to partially cover the child's living expenses;
- **parental benefit and periodic allowance if** there is no entitlement to maternity benefit and therefore includes the unemployed;
- **subsidies from the labour office for starting a business** - the amount of the subsidy depends on the average salary in the sector;



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- **EU start-up grants** - you can get a loan on preferential terms or non-refundable funding;
- **various types of training;**
- **traineeships from the labour office** fully financed by the state through EU or FP funds.

Funding of activation measures is also possible with the support of EU funds; e.g. co-financing of activation measures within ROPs carried out by labour offices, entrepreneurs, NGOs, universities, business environment institutions and other partners. Currently implemented under 16 regional programmes (e.g.: ROP for Kuyavia and Pomerania under the new perspective 2021-2027 under area CP4 - operates in the area of economic activation of disadvantaged and economically inactive people); (*European Funds for Kuyavia and Pomerania 2021-2027*). Also important in this context is the support under the *European Funds for Migration, Borders and Security* programme and the *European Funds for Social Development* programme targeting the activities of the changing labour market (MFIPR, *European Funds 2021-2027*).

The EC Report shows that young people are the group most affected by the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market. After the recovery from the pandemic: young people are still mostly in temporary employment (46% among the total 10%), households that young people support are more likely to be poor, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to further their education, acquire skills and upgrade their competences and thus find a job (EC, 2022).

## Section 2: Key challenges of NEETs / Youth / Migrants in the Country

NEETs are often not registered in labour offices and therefore it is difficult to reach them with support. In Poland, most of them do not seek employment due to difficulties in reconciling work and private life, illness or disability. Increasing employment in this group could be achieved through: promotion of the offer by employment offices among unregistered persons, especially in small towns and villages, running mobile job placement and career counselling points, promoting the offer of professional activation at job and education fairs, organising mobile career counselling points, promoting the offer of support and employment at local events, or through cooperation with local NGOs or social services - these are activities requiring significant involvement of officials. It is also postulated that greater use should be made of the potential of Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy (OHPs) with outposts throughout the country also in smaller towns, where access to UP officials is difficult, and OHPs have experience in working with young people (also excluded, with problems) and run projects that are also available to people not registered with the UP (Smoter, 2021).

As many NEETs (mainly women) do not work due to the need to care for children or other family members, it is also important to have well-functioning and accessible care institutions (e.g. crèches) and at the same time the possibility to work part-time (e.g. part-time). For this group, it is extremely difficult to enter the labour market, due to the dominance in peripheral communities (in villages and small towns) of the traditional values, patriarchal family model, where traditionally the woman stayed at home. According to Geert Hofstede's model on the *male versus female society* continuum, Poland scores 64



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points out of 100 (Hofstede Insights, 2023), which means that traditional, patriarchal patterns are largely dominant here, where men are expected to acquire money and goods, make a career and be productive, while women are mainly expected to care for the family, relationships and care for the weak.

Among the key reasons for the problems of young *people* in the labour market are (Rak, Marcysiak, 2017, pp. 185-189):

- qualification mismatch (lack of marketable qualifications);
- lack of professional experience;
- an education system that has, for the past 20 years or so, placed ever lower demands on enrolment and during studies, resulting in a multitude of graduates with a university degree but realistically low qualifications.

The skills mismatch manifests itself, among other things, in shortages of workers in occupations/physical jobs such as roofers, electricians, concrete masons and in the IT and medical industries (Lewiatan Confederation, 2023).

Another well-known problem/practice with regard to young people on the labour market is adultism, i.e. discriminatory treatment on the basis of young age, manifested, for example, in the following ways: offering short-term, part-time, freelance contracts, often below qualification level, for little or no pay; lack of respect or unfounded accusations of irresponsibility or immaturity without actual knowledge of the person in question.

In the case of migrants, there are many problem areas: due to the language barrier, they often work below their qualifications and in low-paid professions. Problems also arise from the need to nostrify diplomas (doctors, teachers, engineers), which not everyone has the strength or time to do, as the need to make a living and earn money is pressing and the procedures are ongoing.

The same is true for recruitment processes in companies where migrants are trying to get hired. Initial declarations to simplify procedures for refugees are often not followed by companies and refugees, like everyone else, have to go through multi-stage, time-consuming processes. Above and beyond this, the offer of support in induction into work is more the domain of large companies, in small companies it is spontaneous and employees often feel that they have been given a job beyond their strengths and abilities. Also problematic is the lack of individualised support for refugees, which yields very good results (cf. good practice 2).

There is no precise data on illegal employment of migrants, but border guards and the Państwowa Inspekcja Pracy (PIP) identify such cases during routine inspections. The largest number of them is in the construction and transport sector - in 2022, 1,100 were detected in the Warmian-Masurian voivodeship alone (Krenc, 2022). It can therefore be assumed that the scale of the phenomenon is significant.

The following actions are commonly postulated as necessary: efficient procedures related to nostrification of diplomas, supplementing qualifications in order to make employment possible, including language courses, support for families with children (care in clinics, nurseries, kindergartens and schools), mainly because the majority of Ukrainian refugees who found themselves in Poland are women with children. Reversing the activities with job offers in such a way that it is the jobseekers who determine the professions and industries in which they could work and, on this basis, searching for possible places of employment, rather than only proposing offers made by potential employers as I have traditionally done in the UP, gives good results.



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It is also necessary to mention the generational specificity of young people entering the labour market. The models of generations BB, X Y, Z, Alpha are known from the literature, which are a considerable simplification of reality, nevertheless they show certain dominant tendencies. Subsequent generations share certain common traits, adhere to certain common values, have some similar attitudes to work. Currently, generations Y and Z, i.e. those born in the 1980s and 1990s, are the youngest on the labour market. Unlike the previous generations, which were characterised by respect for work and placing it among the main values, the youngest generations entering the labour market expect something different from work. They treat it rather instrumentally, as a means to realise themselves outside of it, but at the same time they want it to be in a good atmosphere, satisfying and provide opportunities for development. They do not live their work, they do not want to work after hours, they are not attached to their employer or their workplace, and they change jobs if they are dissatisfied. They are often described as disloyal and demanding. Of all generations, they change jobs most frequently - not only between employers/companies, but also between regions of a country, or even countries and continents, as it is their natural state to function in change and, thanks to the internet, in a global environment. They are not afraid of challenges and neither are they afraid of new technologies, especially relevant with remote working becoming more and more popular. In the context of the discussed difficulties of young people on the labour market, the briefly characterised peculiarities of the youngest generation of employees may have difficulties with: finding a job (exaggerated or even unrealistic expectations), keeping it (limited loyalty to the employer), satisfaction (need for freedom and reward-praise).

### **Section 3: Skills required from NEETs / Youth / Migrants to enter the labour market**

The desk research showed that there are studies on the living or economic situation of refugees, the employment situation of migrants, including in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are analyses of unemployment, in a variety of cross-sections, but it is difficult to find up-to-date studies on a specific category such as migrant NEET's. There are also emerging studies on migrant students in schools, the challenges of intercultural competence. The situation is similar when it comes to competencies that would be expected by employers.

One of the few thematic studies is the publication by Olena Shelest-Szumilas, Marcin Woźniak, Domnik Zasada, The authors rightly conclude that currently for Poland as a country actively using labour migrants, the current challenge is to make the most of their potential. In the first place, it is worth making available to foreigners a wide range of opportunities for the realization of professional goals, taking into account the better use of their knowledge, skills and experience gained outside Poland (Shelest-Szumilas at all, 2021).

"The high potential of foreign workers is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that mainly young people come to Poland. Data from the Ministry of Development, Labour and Technology (MRPiT 2019) shows that in 2019-2020, more than 57% of the declarations on the assignment of work to foreigners entered in the records by district labour offices concerned foreigners under the age of 34. According to information made available by the Statistical Office of Ukraine, Poland is the second most popular labour migration destination for the youngest group of labour migrants (aged 15-29) (Ukrainian Society: Dimensions of Migration 2018). This situation can be explained, among other things, by the fact that



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young people from Ukraine have relatively easy access to higher education in Poland, and therefore migration to Poland represents for them not only an opportunity to improve their material and living situation, but also an opportunity to get an education in a country belonging to the European Union" (Shelest-Szumilas at all, 2021).

Importantly, foreigners who have lived in Poland for a long time may have significant potential. These are people who have already gone through the process of linguistic and cultural adaptation, as well as know and understand the procedures for legalization of residence or the way institutions function. Those who have been in Poland for a long time are very likely to know the specifics of the Polish labour market. This may be especially true for those who plan to stay in the country longer. A survey conducted among Ukrainians living in the Poznań metropolitan area indicated that among those whose children attend Poznań schools, as many as 82% of respondents plan to stay in Poland permanently (Poland-Ukraine Social and Cultural Association 2018).

In general, it can be concluded that the level of matching the competencies of foreigners with the needs of the labour market is low. For example, an analysis of the professional situation of Ukrainian workers in large cities carried out over 2015-2018 showed that 59.9% of migrants from Warsaw, 55.3% of migrants from Wrocław, 50.3% of migrants from Lublin and 48.3% of migrants from Bydgoszcz declared that they were performing work below their qualifications (Górny et al. 2019; Górny et al. 2020 after Szmilas). A survey of workers from Ukraine carried out by the Work Service agency (2019) provides similar observations: more than 70% of the migrants surveyed work inconsistently with their education. Among foreigners living in Wrocław, almost one in three migrants with higher education in 2018 was employed in simple work, while another 28% of respondents from the same group worked as a skilled labourer (Górny et al. 2019). It is worth noting that the collected data allowed the authors of the cited study to formulate a conjecture that a longer stay in Poland increases the chances of finding more attractive and competency-demanding employment.

At the same time, there is evidence of a horizontal mismatch. For example, almost 4 in 10 Ukrainians (39%) employed in the Poznań metropolitan area, whose children attend Poznań schools and kindergartens, declared that they were doing work incompatible with their education and qualifications. Among those not connected by their children's education with the Poznań metropolitan area, almost half of the respondents (48%) were in a similar professional situation. Employment below education and qualifications was reported by 24% and 20% of respondents, respectively (Polish-Ukrainian Social and Cultural Association 2018). Foreigners taking jobs that do not take into account their high skill level or education profile can lead to loss and obsolescence of knowledge and qualifications. Moreover, it can be a significant barrier to labor market mobility and reduce prospects for career advancement " (Shelest-Szumilas et all, 2021).

## Section 4: Good practices

Good practice 1	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	"Exchange house" Youth Centre for Social Innovation and Design
<b>Implementing organisation</b>	Gdynia city council, local community, youth, local government.





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<b>and involved stakeholders</b>	
<b>Short description of the practice</b>	<p>The venue was created on the initiative of the City of Gdynia, after a multi-stage consultation with the local community, young people and local government officials. Firstly, the programme vision was discussed; secondly, the rules of operation (hours, program, etc.).</p> <p>The centre's mission is contained in three areas: 1.supporting the realisation of interests and passions through inter-age education (young for young people) in the form of classes, workshops and various events in a specific location (donated, renovated and decorated for this audience); 2.professional activation by collecting and providing young people, youth organisations and the instructors working in them with information on foreign trips (internships, training, student volunteer exchanges) and on educational programmes, competitions, opportunities to obtain grants and partners for the implementation of projects; 3.enhancing the professional competences of young people, thanks to projects and educational activities aimed at entrepreneurship and personal development.[4]</p> <p>The 'Exchange House' organises events and workshops (including international ones) on youth issues, as well as supporting municipal authorities in developing cooperation with young people so that they can be involved in certain spheres of decision-making about the city's development.</p> <p>There are also ongoing classes at the facility - karate, breakdance, K-POP-NAERO, K-POP BLUE FALME, SALSATION, English Speaking Club, drawing.</p> <p>The offer on the Centre's website is available not only in Polish, but also in Ukrainian and English, so that immigrant youth can also obtain information and participate in events.</p>
<b>Groups targeted by the practice</b>	<p>Originally, the venue was intended for a very diverse group of young people and young adults, who had previously been the focus of various institutions (such as MOPS or ZPS). From the beginning, it was to be an institution that treated its users not as clients and passive recipients, but also as co-creators of the offer [3], and this is what happened.</p>
<b>Main objectives of the practice</b>	<p>Supporting young people with problems. To disseminate knowledge and information on youth issues. Integration of the local community.</p>
<b>Scope of practice (pilot project, national measure, etc.)</b>	<p>The Centre is a point in the Eurodesk [2] network of 36 European countries, in the form of organisations and institutions working with young people. The network is funded and supported by the European Commission, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education through the Erasmus+ programme [4].</p>



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<b>Time of implementation (including start and end date if indicated)</b>	The activities of the 'Exchangers' are financed from the budget of the City of Gdynia [1]. Start date 2012. Still in operation today.
<b>Effects / Outcomes / outputs of the practice</b>	Effects: educational, integrative, enhancing human and social capital. The offer on the Centre's website is available not only in Polish, but also in Ukrainian and English, so that also immigrant youth can obtain information and participate in events. Anyone interested has access to the facility on weekdays between 3 and 8 pm.
<b>Lessons learned / success factors</b>	Inclusion and integration of the community around local issues of importance to the community.  Creating a place with educational and cultural offerings for children and young people.
<b>Sources used (including website / links)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BIP of the City of Gdynia <a href="https://bip.um.gdynia.pl/wymiennikownia,1507/wymiennikownia,448848">https://bip.um.gdynia.pl/wymiennikownia,1507/wymiennikownia,448848</a> (accessed 05.05.2023).</li> <li>2. European information for young people, <a href="http://www.eurodesk.pl/">http://www.eurodesk.pl/</a> (accessed 10.05.2023).</li> <li>3. B. Martela, Description of good practice. Consultations with children and young people, Warsaw 2020, <a href="https://konsultacje.um.warszawa.pl/sites/konsultacje.um.warszawa.pl/files/konsultacje_z_mlodziem_0.pdf">https://konsultacje.um.warszawa.pl/sites/konsultacje.um.warszawa.pl/files/konsultacje_z_mlodziem_0.pdf</a> (accessed 07.05.2023).</li> <li>4. Exchange house, Gdynia My City, <a href="https://wymiennikownia.org/contact/">https://wymiennikownia.org/contact/</a> (accessed 08.05.2023).</li> </ol>

## Good practice 2

<b>Title of the practice</b>	"Model of professional activation of Ukrainian citizens"
<b>Implementing organisation and involved stakeholders</b>	<p>The project implemented under Initiative No. FWD-H-4 entitled. "Model of professional activation of Ukrainian citizens" within the framework of the Bilateral Cooperation Fund "FWD" Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area 2014-2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021. The initiative is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the Norwegian and EEA Funds.</p> <p>The project was carried out by the Lewiatan Confederation in cooperation with Jobs First sp. z o.o. and the Labour Office of the City of Warsaw.</p>



<p><b>Short description of the practice</b></p>	<p>The programme was implemented in three voivodships: Śląskie, Mazowieckie and Małopolskie. Participants were aged 18-65 (most of them under 40 -58%), with various levels of education: higher humanities 37.4%, higher technical 23.7%, secondary technical 15.1%, secondary general education 12.2%, higher medical 4.3%, secondary medical 2.9%, primary and higher economic 1.4% each, secondary general education 0.7% and higher artistic 0.7 each. Only 10% of them knew Polish at a communicative level. 95% of them were working before their arrival.</p> <p>The programme consisted of activation measures such as: assignment of an individual vocational counsellor and provision of constant contact, diagnosis of needs and individualised support - also health, psychological, socio-cultural; search for offers, recommendation to employers, accompaniment in re-qualification, support to employers in formal activities related to employment; provision of intensive learning of the Polish language, child care, support in relocation, vocational courses, implementation of the procedure related to the recognition of documents confirming acquired qualifications (regulated professions).</p> <p>The recruitment was followed by a balance of competences and an IPA Individual Activation Plan. Some participants dropped out of the programme.</p> <p>Those who took up work as part of the activation programme were primarily employed full-time (33 people, 76%).</p> <p>The average salary of Participants in the activation programme was PLN 3,390 gross.</p> <p>As part of the pathway that UP realised, standardised competence tests were abandoned and instead those industries were identified (based on refugees' opinions) in which incoming Ukrainians can take up work relatively quickly. As a result of the activation measures, 23 people took up employment. In three cases it was the launch of their own business. Four persons took up employment on the basis of an employment contract and two on the basis of a contract of mandate, which was later transformed into an employment contract.</p>
<p><b>Groups targeted by the practice</b></p>	<p>War refugees from Ukraine arriving in Poland after 24.II.2022r. (after the outbreak of war), wishing to take up employment in Poland.</p>
<p><b>Main objectives of the practice</b></p>	<p>Developing and defining measures to enable the social and professional integration of Ukrainian citizens arriving on Polish territory in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.</p> <p>Connecting a specific (proven) person with a specific (suitable for them) job.</p>
<p><b>Scope of practice (pilot project,</b></p>	<p>Pilot project.</p>



<b>national measure, etc.)</b>	
<b>Time of implementation (including start and end date if indicated)</b>	V.2022-I.2023
<b>Effects / Outcomes / outputs of the practice</b>	<p>High quality employment. Optimisation of employment.</p> <p>Guarantee of satisfactory employment for a secure/proven person - all participants who took part in the programme and got a job - kept it.</p> <p>Employment of refugees under an employment contract.</p> <p>Effective integration of refugees into the labour market.</p>
<b>Lessons learned / success factors</b>	<p>Effective integration of refugees into the labour market by individualising the support provided.</p> <p>Gathering knowledge about the barriers to integration of refugees in the labour market - lack of knowledge of the Polish language, lack of offers correlating refugees' qualifications with labour market demand (also that a relatively high level of education causes reluctance to take jobs below qualifications), difficulty of going through the recruitment process taking place for refugees according to standard rather than simplified procedures, undercutting of rates by companies, uncertainty causing resignation, seeking social benefits rather than jobs.</p> <p>In addition, it was found that: the majority of companies participating in the pilot had not hired Ukrainian citizens before; larger companies are better prepared to hire foreigners; small ones generally have a short and spontaneous implementation, causing further turbulence mainly the feeling that the employee has been hired without preparation and the work is very difficult.</p> <p>Employment agencies have a leading role to play in the professional activation of foreign nationals.</p>
<b>Sources used (including website links)</b>	<p>[1] <a href="https://lewiatan.org/zatrudnianie-pracownikow-z-ukrainy-wiemy-co-jest-najwiekszym-problemem/">https://lewiatan.org/zatrudnianie-pracownikow-z-ukrainy-wiemy-co-jest-najwiekszym-problemem/</a> accessed 26.05.2023</p> <p>[2] <a href="https://jobsfirst.pl/dzielimy-sie-wiedza/raport-z-realizacji-projektu-model-aktywizacji-zawodowej-obywateli-ukrainy">https://jobsfirst.pl/dzielimy-sie-wiedza/raport-z-realizacji-projektu-model-aktywizacji-zawodowej-obywateli-ukrainy</a> accessed 26.05.2023</p> <p>[3] <a href="https://jobsfirst.pl/pliki/Artykul/17_Raport%20z%20realizacji%20project%E2%80%9EModel%20activation%20of%20vocational%20citizens%20Ukraine.pdf">https://jobsfirst.pl/pliki/Artykul/17_Raport%20z%20realizacji%20project%E2%80%9EModel%20activation%20of%20vocational%20citizens%20Ukraine.pdf</a> accessed 26.05.2023</p>



### Good practice 3

<b>Title of the practice</b>	Model Integracji Imigrantów (Immigrant Integration Model)
<b>Implementing organisation and involved stakeholders</b>	The project was implemented by the City Hall in Gdańsk and subordinate units, and the City Council of Gdańsk
<b>Short description of the practice</b>	<p>In order to improve the conditions of the education and integration process of immigrants – pupils and students, their surroundings and local communities, a package of educational and integration activities was prepared for teachers, administration and service employees, parents, Polish students and the local community, as well as directly for migrant students and foreigners. To improve the integration process of foreign students and foreign researchers, infopoints were created and actions were taken to improve the cultural competences of foreign employees and students.</p> <p>To increase the integration of immigrants into the local community, a pilot system of immigrant integration in local communities was implemented, the Local Resources Database was created and developed, emphasis was placed on intercultural education of the staff of local institutions/organizations working for integration and conditions have been created for the participation of immigrants in decision-making processes of local democracy and participation, through, among others activity in district councils, civic budget, voting, spatial planning, public consultations</p> <p>The role of culture in integration processes has been strengthened by increasing the involvement of cultural institutions / organizations and the quantity and quality of activities for the integration of immigrants through culture and through the education of cultural staff.</p> <p>Emphasis was placed on ensuring security and respect for the rights of immigrants by improving the system of combating violence and discrimination. Anti-discrimination codes were created in urban institutions, and immigrants were given constant access to institutional and non-institutional forms of assistance in the event of experiencing discrimination and violence. In addition, a social campaign “WSPIERAMY RÓWNE TRAKTOWANIE” (We support equal treatment) was carried out.</p> <p>Access to medical services had been increased and the quality of medical services for immigrants has been improved by educating immigrants and healthcare professionals, preparation of a psychological care team for immigrants and refugees and leveling communication barriers ( translation of medical document templates ).</p>



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	<p>In Gdańsk, unemployment is slightly above 4% (data from 2016), which is associated with growing demand for employees. To improve the situation of immigrants on the labour market, the development of competences ( including linguistic ones) immigrants and recognition of education acquired abroad were supported, an internet platform was created for immigrants and employers as well as a mentoring program on the labour market.</p> <p>The quality of social assistance services supporting the process of integration of immigrants have been developed and improved,, so that they are able to gain their life independence through the implementation and extension of the Individual Integration Program, as well as cooperation in its implementation with the social sector, extension of the scope of support and social assistance, including social work with immigrants and education of support and social assistance staff.</p> <p>The housing situation of immigrants has been improved by promoting distributed housing solutions, i.e. diverse locations, to avoid ghettos, increase access to housing and combat discrimination in the immigrant rental market.</p>
<p><b>Groups targeted by the practice</b></p>	<p>The practice targets immigrants living in the city of Gdańsk.</p>
<p><b>Main objectives of the practice</b></p>	<p>The main goal of the Immigrant Integration Model is to develop a migration management system in public and social institutions in Gdańsk and to strengthen the integration of immigrants in the areas of: education, culture, social assistance, housing, counteracting violence and discrimination, local communities, employment and health.</p>
<p><b>Scope of practice (pilot project, national measure, etc.)</b></p>	<p>Immigrant Integration Model is part of the implementation of operational programs for the Gdańsk City Development Strategy 2030 Plus.</p>
<p><b>Time of implementation (including start and end date if indicated)</b></p>	<p>Operational programs have been planned from 2016 to 2023, hence the time perspective for implementing IIM is also 2023. The implementation of IIM in Gdańsk should be evaluated in two-year periods and in this framework it will also be possible to introduce changes in the model itself.</p>
<p><b>Effects / Outcomes / outputs of the practice</b></p>	<p>An increase in the number of immigrants who have increased their knowledge of the Polish language, social, health, mental and economic situation as a result of receiving better public services in this area, dissemination of knowledge about culture and increased involvement in working with immigrants.</p>



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<b>Lessons learned / success factors</b>	
<b>Sources used (including website / links)</b>	The official project brochure available at: <a href="https://www.gdansk.pl/migracje">https://www.gdansk.pl/migracje</a>

<b>Good practice 4</b>	
<b>Title of the practice</b>	WHATtoDOif
<b>Implementing organisation and involved stakeholders</b>	The project was implemented by partners from 6 European countries: European Center for Quality Ltd (Bulgaria), SYNTHESIS Center for Research & Education (Cyprus), Spolek PELICAN (the Czech Republic), Fundacja Rozwoju Aktywnosci Miedzynarodowej i Edukacyjnej – FRAME (Poland), INNOVAMENTIS NGO (Italy), The Mosaic Art Sound Ltd. (the Great Britain)
<b>Short description of the practice</b>	<p>The following materials have been prepared to facilitate acclimatization of migrants:</p> <p>Informator dla migrantów (the guide for migrants) contains information for foreigners on key areas of life in Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Italy, Poland and Great Britain. The guide addresses the following topics: visa procedures, human rights and civic and political participation, housing, healthcare, education of children and adults, employment and the labour market.</p> <p>Kompas Językowy is a glossary of basic phrases useful in each of the above-mentioned thematic areas, which will be translated into 16 languages (including key minorities' languages among others Afrikaans, Arabic, Russian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Vietnamese).</p> <p>The Solutions Map is a collection of answers and solutions to the most frequently asked questions. It provides migrants with the necessary information to facilitate their relocation and provides a tool to support social workers and civil society organizations in working with these sensitive target groups.</p> <p>The language pack is a set of courses that deal with topics relevant to migrants, containing both necessary information and useful vocabulary. The courses can be used both for individual learning and during classes under the guidance of a teacher.</p> <p>Video guides, available on the YouTube platform, provide tips and tricks on how to proceed after arriving in a given country.</p> <p>The WHATtoDOif application contains key information about the European Union. It enables expanding knowledge of European institutions and their functions, as well as the opportunities offered</p>



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	<p>by the European Erasmus+ program for individuals and organizations.</p> <p>During the last two months of the project, WHATtoDOif workshops took place in all partner countries, during which the results of the project were presented to representatives of target groups, thus raising awareness and paying attention to social integration.</p>
<b>Groups targeted by the practice</b>	The project is targeted at migrants (EU and third-country nationals), adult teachers, language teachers, social inclusion experts, volunteers, NGOs, migrant associations and other organizations working for migrants, representatives of public authorities.
<b>Main objectives of the practice</b>	The aim of the project is to prevent social exclusion of newly arrived foreigners, migrants and refugees by facilitating their orientation in the economic, educational, social and other aspects of life in the host country.
<b>Scope of practice (pilot project, national measure, etc.)</b>	Erasmus+ programme Project number: 2019-1-BG01-KA204-062401
<b>Time of implementation (including start and end date if indicated)</b>	Start date: 2019.10.01 End date: 2022.03.31
<b>Effects / Outcomes / outputs of the practice</b>	Support for the integration of migrants, increasing awareness of their needs, facilitating their acclimatization and making access to key information easier for new arrivals in social, economic and educational fields.
<b>Lessons learned / success factors</b>	n/a
<b>Sources used (including website / links)</b>	<a href="https://www.whattodoif.eu/site/pl/">https://www.whattodoif.eu/site/pl/</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@whattodoifproject5133">https://www.youtube.com/@whattodoifproject5133</a>





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## **PART 2: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS**

### **Section 1: Analysis of semi-structured individual interviews (IDIs)**

#### **Summary of IDIs conducted by FRAME (5 IDIs)**

##### **Introduction**

The interviews provide insights into the experiences of young migrants in Poland, particularly from Ukraine and Russia. Anastasia, Vladimir, Sofia, Darina, and Dzianis share their stories, highlighting challenges such as finding work and adapting to new living conditions. Sofia and Darina, who fled Ukraine due to the war, assess their living conditions positively despite the upheaval. Dzianis emphasizes the stability and support he received upon arrival in Poland. Overall, the interviews shed light on the diverse experiences and aspirations of young migrants in Poland amidst various personal and geopolitical circumstances.

##### **Background information**

**Anastasia:** Originally from Russia, she moved to Poland with her husband in search of better job opportunities and a higher standard of living. She has a background in graphic design and teaching, with significant work experience in both fields.

**Vladimir:** An 18-year-old immigrant from Ukraine, he left his country due to family problems and found work in Poland after initially struggling to secure a job. He lost his mother at a young age and is now living alone in Poland.

**Sofia:** A migrant from Ukraine, Sofia fled to Poland with her mother due to the outbreak of war. She had completed primary school and passed her matriculation in Ukraine. Her father remained in Ukraine due to restrictions on men aged 18-60 leaving the country.

**Darina:** Also from Ukraine, Darina and her family moved to Poland after the escalation of hostilities in their homeland. Despite traumatic experiences, she remains cheerful and optimistic. She and her family initially lived off savings but later had to find work and enroll in school in Poland.

**Dzianis:** Born and raised in Ukraine, Dzianis moved to Poland alone in search of work due to the ongoing war. He faced challenges in finding a job but eventually secured employment. His decision to leave Ukraine was influenced by restrictions on men leaving the country and increasing military actions.

##### **Determinants and risk factors**

Migrants like Anastasia and Vladimir encounter difficulties in securing suitable employment. Anastasia, despite her qualifications, faces communication barriers in client-facing roles, while Vladimir struggles to find meaningful work despite being open to education and lacking health impediments.



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The experience of family separation weighs heavily on migrants such as Sofia and Darina. Sofia's father remains in Ukraine due to restrictions on men leaving the country, causing uncertainty about the family's future together. Similarly, Darina and her family experience separation from their father, leading to emotional distress despite their determination to pursue education and work opportunities together.

Financial pressures drive migrants to prioritize immediate employment over further education or skill development. Sofia's and Darina's families resort to odd jobs to make ends meet, limiting their ability to invest in training or qualifications for higher-paying jobs.

Despite facing adversity, migrants demonstrate resilience and adaptability in their pursuit of a better life. Sofia dreams of completing studies in new technologies despite current financial constraints, while Darina actively seeks education and plans to start a family business with her mother in Poland.

The uncertainty and challenges associated with migration can take a toll on migrants' mental well-being. Sofia's and Darina's experiences highlight the psychological strain of family separation and financial instability, underscoring the importance of access to mental health support services.

Migrants maintain a sense of optimism and determination in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges they face, individuals like Dzianis remain optimistic about their prospects in Poland and exhibit a willingness to work hard and adapt to their new environment.

These examples illustrate common themes observed among migrants in Poland, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems to address their diverse needs and facilitate successful integration into their new communities.

### **Barriers in Education and Employment**

Across all cases, the predominant challenge is overcoming the language barrier. Anastasia, Vladimir, Sofia, Darina, and Dzianis all highlight the difficulties they face in communication, both verbal and written, which significantly hinder their ability to access education and secure meaningful employment.

Anastasia emphasizes the cumbersome process of obtaining work permits as a barrier to employment. Employers' reluctance to hire foreigners due to administrative complexities and costs further exacerbates this challenge.

Vladimir's experience underscores the need for comprehensive support services, including legal assistance and language training, to facilitate entry into the labour market. Darina also expresses a sense of isolation and a decline in support from the local community over time.

Darina's struggle with formal education due to language barriers reflects a broader issue faced by migrants in accessing educational opportunities. Sofia's Ukrainian high school diploma is not recognized as a qualification in Poland, limiting her job prospects and reinforcing the importance of language proficiency for educational advancement.

Darina's perception of being looked down upon and Sofia's feeling of cultural misalignment highlight the psychological toll of migration. This sense of inferiority and isolation can erode migrants' confidence and hinder their integration into the host society.

Dzianis' situation highlights the competing priorities faced by migrants, such as balancing work commitments with educational aspirations. Limited access to resources and support networks further complicates their ability to address these challenges effectively.



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In conclusion, addressing the multifaceted barriers faced by migrants in education and employment requires comprehensive support systems that prioritize language training, simplify administrative procedures, provide guidance and mentorship, and address the psychological well-being of migrants.

### **Supports to finding employment and education**

Across all cases, access to language courses and training is identified as crucial for overcoming communication barriers. Participants express a strong desire for language instruction tailored to their needs, preferably in their native language or with translated materials to facilitate learning.

Anastasia's positive experience working with individuals from different cultural backgrounds underscores the value of cross-cultural environments in facilitating employment. This exposure fosters adaptability and enhances intercultural communication skills.

Sofia and Darina emphasize the importance of practical guidance on navigating the job search process in Poland, including crafting CVs, understanding job platforms, and acclimating to workplace culture. Practical resources and workshops on these topics would empower migrants to better engage with the job market.

Darina's aspiration to start her own business highlights the need for support in entrepreneurship, including training on business setup, administration, and legal requirements. Such initiatives can empower migrants to pursue alternative pathways to employment and economic independence.

Dzianis' uncertainty about his future career path underscores the need for vocational counselling and career orientation services. Guidance in exploring potential interests and identifying suitable career paths can assist migrants in making informed decisions about their professional trajectories.

Darina's positive experience with support from her school community highlights the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive environments for migrants. Access to supportive networks, both within educational institutions and the broader community, can facilitate social integration and enhance well-being.

In conclusion, comprehensive support systems encompassing language training, practical job search guidance, entrepreneurship support, career counselling, and community integration initiatives are essential for empowering migrants to overcome barriers to employment and education and achieve meaningful integration into their host societies.

### **The future**

Anastasia emphasizes the need for language training, particularly in Polish, to enhance her communication skills and integrate with the host country's population. She also expresses interest in general language training and customer service courses to support her career goals.

Anastasia identifies the lack of nostrification of her diploma as a barrier to pursuing her desired career path in teaching. She seeks opportunities for re-branding her skills and integrating them into her work. Professional development in the graphics industry is also a priority.



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Anastasia recognizes the importance of integrating with the local community and seeks opportunities to engage with Polish culture and society. However, she acknowledges the absence of experience in this regard and expresses a willingness to participate in community activities, such as discussion clubs.

Vlad expresses uncertainty about his future job prospects but remains active in seeking support and opportunities for assistance. He shows a preference for non-governmental organizations over private entities in seeking assistance.

Despite facing challenges, Sofia remains optimistic about her future in Poland and is committed to improving her skills to enhance her job prospects. She plans to invest in linguistic and cultural competence training, aligning her goals with long-term residency in Poland.

Darina expresses a desire to pursue a career in nail styling and considers self-employment with her mother. While she acknowledges cultural barriers and the need for effective communication skills, her focus is primarily on practical skills training related to her desired profession.

Dzianis maintains an optimistic outlook on his future and remains open to opportunities for education and career advancement. He recognizes the importance of gaining knowledge and skills, particularly in areas of potential interest such as litigation, journalism, or transport. Additionally, he is receptive to the idea of self-employment but acknowledges the need for further learning in this area.

Overall, the participants exhibit a proactive approach to their future plans, emphasizing the importance of language training, professional development, community integration, and ongoing education in achieving their goals and enhancing their prospects in Poland.

### **Additional remarks and commentary of interviewer**

The additional remarks and commentary provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by young NEET migrants in Poland, as well as their coping mechanisms and resilience. Here are some key takeaways:

The interviews highlight the systemic barriers and complexities young NEET migrants encounter in Poland, including bureaucratic hurdles, lack of tailored training programs, and difficulties in obtaining work permits. These challenges significantly hinder their integration and employment prospects.

The language barrier emerges as a major obstacle for migrants, affecting their ability to find employment, access education, and assimilate into the local community. While some migrants have a basic understanding of Polish, they struggle with formal communication and navigating the job market.

Migrants experience emotional strain due to the lack of steady employment, longing for home, and concerns for the well-being of family members left behind. The interviews reveal feelings of sadness, stress, and uncertainty about the future among migrants, underscoring the need for holistic support.

Many migrants face challenges in assimilating into Polish society due to the language barrier and cultural differences. Limited social interaction with locals further compounds feelings of isolation and alienation.



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Migrants often rely on NGOs and support organizations for assistance with navigating legal processes, accessing language training, and finding employment opportunities. However, the lack of support from family members adds to their burden.

Despite the challenges, some migrants demonstrate resilience and adaptability in their approach to life in Poland. They remain optimistic about their future prospects, seek opportunities for self-improvement, and actively engage with the local community.

Overall, the interviews shed light on the multifaceted experiences of young NEET migrants in Poland, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems to address their diverse needs and facilitate their integration into society.

## Summary of IDIs conducted by GdańskTech (5 IDIs)

### Introduction

All the interviews were conducted online via MS Teams with immigrants from Ukraine, Belarus and Italy. All of them are at the age between 19 - 24 years old. There are two NEETS, two immigrants in Polish education system, and one war refugee, currently in employment.

### Background information

Most of the immigrants and have been living in Gdańsk for a few years now (apart from one Italian immigrant who has been in Poland on her own for 3 months). They came to Poland with their families.

The Belarussians had had a plan to come to Poland but their arrival was accelerated by a threat of being taken to the army when the Russian aggression on Ukraine started. They are currently learning in secondary school – taking matriculation exams this year – and working additionally to support their family.

The Ukrainian refugee came to Poland after the war in her homeland started, and joined her mother, who had already been living here and working. In the beginning the respondent did voluntary work in European Solidarity Corps but now she is employed and works with migrants.

The other Ukrainian immigrant came to Poland with his family during the COVID pandemics because of a lack of prospects for his father's construction company in their home country. He graduated from a university in Ukraine and is currently searching for work in Gdańsk, Poland.

The Italian immigrant came to do voluntary work for European Solidarity Corps, after she graduated from a university in Prague. She is considering staying in Poland for the nearest future and is currently searching for work here.

### Determinants and risk factors

Almost all the respondents came to Poland because they wanted to improve their living conditions, as well as working and learning opportunities. After coming to Poland the immigrants faced various problems, which determined their further paths. The greatest obstacle for all of them was the lack of knowledge of Polish language. Only one immigrant knew Polish because he has Polish roots.



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For the teenagers, who came to Poland at the age of 17, the challenge was not only to get into the educational system but also to get additional employment to support their parents. As they did not know the language there was a high risk that they will not be able to continue and finish their secondary education. However, with the help of their first employer, the respondents were able to find a place at a secondary school. Nevertheless, their situation is not easy as they have to combine education with additional employment, which can influence their chances of taking up higher education.

The Ukrainian respondents face a problem of ill-matching qualifications to job offers. They would like to work in their learned professions but, currently, are unable to do so. One of the Ukrainians cannot have her Ukrainian diploma recognised, while the other cannot find work matching his qualifications, which can be caused partly by discrimination and also lack of adequate experience.

The Italian respondent has difficulties in finding employment in her field of expertise mostly because of the lack of adequate working experience but also because she does not know Polish language yet. However, she has just taken up Polish language course in order to increase her chances of employment in Poland.

### **Barriers in Education and Employment**

As mentioned above, the main and greatest obstacle for the respondents – both in education and job search – was the lack of knowledge of Polish language. Most of the respondents managed to overcome this obstacle by learning Polish to a required level.

Another barrier was discrimination. Both presented by educational institutions as well as by potential employers. Despite the fact that immigrants, especially the Ukrainians, are not regarded as a threat by the Poles, there are instances of discrimination, which make the respondents' lives more difficult. A good example of that can be initial reluctance of school headmaster towards the Belarussian respondents caused by their nationality. Another instance of discrimination is the example of the Ukrainian respondent. In her opinion, she had to make a lot more effort to get her current job in comparison with Polish candidates, which she feels was caused by discrimination because of her nationality. Another instance of discriminatory practices had not been the experience of the respondents but both of the Ukrainians pointed the problem of Ukrainian immigrant children not taking part in Polish educational system, which is mainly caused by discrimination at schools and their local environments. Such children often remain in the Ukrainian educational system via home schooling or online teaching. However, this hinders their chances of future chances for continuing Polish education, finding employment or assimilation with their peers in the host country.

Moreover, the problem of the non-recognition of Ukrainian and Belarussian diplomas is also a significant obstacle in continuing education in the Polish system as well as in finding employment. Similarly, another problem related with the recognition of qualifications is that some of war refugees cannot confirm their qualifications as they could not get their documents with them when fleeing the war zone and thus there is no way they can confirm their education and experience.

### **Supports to finding employment and education**

The respondents experienced a lot of support from Polish NGOs and local authorities on many levels. From satisfying basic needs like help in finding accommodation, financial support, in getting residence card, understanding essential administrative procedures etc. – to help in finding places at schools for children and youth, offering Polish language courses, organisation of other courses that would increase their chances for employment, organising events that would help in the integration of immigrants, as well as vocational



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guidance. The respondents felt that Polish institutions rise to the challenge. They also appreciate general Polish hospitality and willingness to help.

However, there are areas in which respondents feel more can be done. For instance, medical care is an area that immigrants seem to be left without a lot of support. They do not know if they can have a doctor's appointment or a visit in a hospital if needed, and how to do it in practice.

Moreover, in the respondent's opinion, despite the fact that generally provided support is sufficient on a basic level, a more interdisciplinary cooperation between NGOs, local administration, schools and universities would be advisable. The respondents suggest that such cooperation could consist of, for example, the organisation of more specialised courses (like in IT or programming) for immigrants by NGOs but with the participation of university professors or cooperation with entrepreneurs or employers searching for staff in offering practices or internships to immigrants.

Furthermore, apart from individual cases employers do not take active part in supporting their immigrant employees. Aside from offering practices or internships, which would increase their working experience, the respondents would appreciate support in application for work permits or filling in the necessary documents. The employers are reluctant to help them in such matters, which can discourage immigrants to getting legal jobs and push them to grey economy.

### **The future**

On most part, the respondents plan to stay in Poland – at least in the foreseeable future. They want to study and work here. They find Poland a good host country and Poles generally supportive and kind.

Despite the fact that most of the respondents are already employed they think of becoming self-employed because of various reasons: becoming more independent or getting a chance to work in their area of expertise and interest as well as having a job that is meaningful for them and matches their skills and qualifications. However, the respondents find obstacles, which can prevent them from starting their own businesses. For instance, administrative burdens, complicated Polish tax system or uncertainty of earnings (at least at the beginning). All things considered, self-employment – although an attractive idea for the respondents – is still at a theoretical stage.

Despite the respondent's positive experiences and attitude towards the host country, they do not exclude the thought of moving abroad if they do not eventually get a job that would fulfil their expectations. However, they are reluctant to that idea and do not plan moving to another country in the nearest future.

### **Additional remarks and commentary of interviewer**

Generally speaking, the respondents found Poland hospitable and supportive as a host country with a lot of opportunities – both educational and employment wise – despite inevitable experiences of discrimination. They were honest about what they like and not about their experiences in Poland. They also have a lot of significant remarks concerning Polish approach to immigrants, which can be helpful in the identification of problems but also in the execution of good practices.



## Section 2: Analysis of focus group interview (FGI)

### Focus Group Interview 1 - Poland

ID of interview	
Date and time of FGI	22 of January 2024, 1.00-2.30 PM CET
Location of interview	On line (MS TEAMS)
Names (or initials) of participants + type of youth worker/organisation they represent	6 persons: Agnieszka R., Marta M., Katarzyna N., Viktoriia K., Olga M., Aleksandra, Viktoriia T.
Interviewer	Małgorzata Matusiak, Izabela Warwas
Duration of the interview	One and a half an hour

### Introduction

Attention was focused on migrants from Ukraine. This is certainly determined by the scale of migration related to Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine and the evolution of needs. At the beginning of the exodus, the needs were related to migrants' safety and survival, including NEET's - safe lodging, food, communication with relatives in Ukraine. Then, as refugees began to clash with institutions - schools, kindergartens, offices, employers or medical care, problems with formal communication, official language or Polish laws began to escalate. The next phase seems to be marked by a greater awareness of socially and culturally conditioned activities.

### Respondent background information:

In conclusion, it should be stated that the migrant workers participating in the FGI are often migrants (adults) themselves. They therefore face mostly the same problems that young people face, but from a different perspective - that of an adult, a formed person, more resilient to adversity. The people participating in the FGI took part in the interview not only with great willingness, but also with joy, and their behavior indicated that they badly needed such a meeting, because they could speak freely about what troubles them in a foreign country and what help they think is necessary especially for young migrants.

### Target groups of migrant youths:

Actually, one can speak of two groups of migrants from the study group:

- those living in the family home, staying with relatives and family;
- those staying in Poland independently.

Key conclusions:

- it is crucial to improve or even develop ways to identify people in need of help, as they do not seek it themselves;





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- more investment is needed in people and institutions supporting NEETs - migrants are approached by all sorts of commercial offers that they cannot afford - they would like courses, training and other types of assistance to be free of charge;
- emphasis on integration is necessary, both on the part of the receiving and of the incoming migrants, even though integration is extremely difficult for many of the reasons (for example poor knowledge of the language, which does not allow for free conversation and close contacts) there is no other way than cooperation, cooperation, assimilation;
- a solution that could be implemented is a bilingual application containing basic information (legal, psychological, linguistic, job search) for young migrants.

### **Barriers for different groups of youth migrant NEETs:**

#### Short description

Difficulties faced by young migrants are mainly: problems of legalizing their stay, obtaining housing, looking for a job and legal assistance, establishing relationships, ties and assimilation into the local community, the possibility of improving their skills in the form of training and courses free of charge.

#### Key conclusions:

- legalization of residence requires institutional contact and this is a huge problem - respondents cite a situation when the PESEL number of a teenager or a child "disappears" from the system and then the problems start piling up, a refugee is not able to cope in such a situation by himself, so he needs someone to accompany him in dealing with such a matter;
- getting an apartment is a big challenge, and as time goes by these difficulties grow, the problem is compounded by the occurrence of unfair practices on the part of landlords of apartments to foreigners, who, for example, tell them to move out without giving back the deposit for the apartment;
- the main barrier to finding a job is ignorance of the language and lack of knowledge of where and how in the local market to look for one; those who have relatives in Poland who came here before the war in Ukraine are in a better situation, those arriving alone mainly 18- and 19-year-olds are in a much more difficult position, because not only do they not know where and how to look for a job, but they also do not have ongoing support from relatives abroad, which exacerbates their difficult condition;
- in all age groups of young migrants, a huge barrier to functioning freely in Poland is the lack of contact with peers, the lack of a sense of connection and, consequently, the inability to assimilate into the local community, and, as a consequence, the feeling of alienation, of being inferior, unnecessary; in this context, respondents point to the need for psychological support for young migrants (free of charge, of course);
- the courses and trainings offered are often inadequate for the needs, are either too general or do not address the most pressing needs - e.g.: in the case of employment, there is a need for targeted courses for specific positions in demand; chargeability is also a problem - those working with migrants indicate that the expectation on the part of migrants is that they should be free of charge.



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### **Youth workers approach towards different groups of young migrants:**

Although the group of young migrants is diverse (some are minors and came to Poland with their parents or guardians, others are already 18 or 19 and have travelled alone), the needs of young people, regardless of which group they come from, are similar. For they are all either looking for learning opportunities (and here parents or guardians are most often helpful) or employment. The age diversity of these migrants is so small that the need for specific, different approaches to them has not been noticed. They all face similar problems - linguistic, psychological/emotional, financial.

In the case of younger migrants, generally those planning to study in Poland, linguistic and psychological support is certainly needed. Also necessary are tools for teachers to know how to activate young people. Teenagers who come to school (after a shorter or longer period of being NEET) do not speak for weeks or months. They need support from support teachers who speak both Polish and Ukrainian. Respondents indicated that without the help of Ukrainian-speaking teachers, the activation of young people cannot be successful. Unfortunately, there are currently changes to the regulations allowing the employment of such a support teacher in schools to the detriment of migrants.

In the case of young but slightly older migrants seeking employment, support should be directed at: psychological assistance, awareness of intercultural differences and support in dealing with authorities. Such tools should be given to those involved in providing help and support to migrants. It is their activity that should be supported both in the above-mentioned areas and regarding finding people who need help and have come without their parents. The main problem is reaching them. While with younger people, who have come with their families, it is possible to identify, search and support them through contacts with their parents, with older teenagers this is hardly feasible.

Key conclusions:

- to younger migrants wanting/planning to learn (although sometimes it is not their plans, but the plans of their parents) a more relaxed, playful approach, in the form of games and the use of modern technology, assistance in finding interesting content and offers with the help of new media, will certainly be more successful; according to the respondents, young people often lock themselves up at home and do not want to participate in initiatives organised by support institutions; the participants pointed out that the syndrome of phonoholism, phone addiction is very visible, because these people usually only undertake such activities, therefore it is very important to reach out and try to show how important it is to assimilate and establish bonds on the spot, contact and interact with the local community; the youngest migrants are very shy (the respondent gives the example of a boy who was silent for a whole year after arriving in Poland), the lack of colleagues, acquaintances and friends exacerbates this situation, therefore psychological support is also highly desirable;
- the labour migrants need an approach that respects their trauma, their often very difficult mental state, their depressive state; the second area is legal aid and information, where they can look for information on particular topics and where to go if they are victims of some unfair practices, and where to go for support when they have to deal with official matters and it would be good to have someone to assist them;



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- an important support and compensation for psychological losses caused by war trauma, flight and feelings of alienation would be to prepare and reach out to young migrants with sports offers, especially for boys (also free of charge, of course).

### **Good practices in youth work with migrants:**

#### Short description

Art therapy, language learning activities and psychological games are examples of good practices indicated by FGI participants working with migrants (mainly from Ukraine). These types of activities have, according to the interviewees, very good effects in terms of: venting difficult emotions, building good relationships strengthening bonds between participants, or even a temporary break from everyday worries.

#### **Key conclusions:**

- a basic need is to learn a language, so also most of the good practices are organized around this need and are popular, provided that participation is free of charge;
- In relation to the trauma and difficult emotional state of most migrants, initiatives of particular interest are art classes in the form of workshops, which have a positive (art therapeutic) effect, allowing them to forget, for the duration of such classes, the difficult situation in which migrants find themselves, "giving" them at least a short time when they do not have to think about how difficult their prospects are and to face the knowledge that they do not have and are unlikely to have anywhere to return to;
- those working with teenager migrants implement and plan to implement further activities in the future in the form of psychological games, as this formula works very well with young people; such games involving young migrants can also involve their parents, teachers or friends and acquaintances, which is an added value, as it builds deeper bonds between the participants.

### **Any other comments and commentary of interviewer**

#### Short description

The biggest challenges are: reaching the young people in need of support and the fact that most offers of help are paid and are too general and cover different areas, but are not targeted at specific, for example, positions that are on the labor market to be filled, i.e. for which employers are looking for employees.

#### Key conclusions:

- people who work with migrants and who are migrants themselves, on the one hand appreciate the great help they have received in Poland and, on the other hand, state that they notice a growing aversion of Poles towards Ukrainians and think that Poles should open up more to the newcomers, accept them and support them more; they express, regret and bitterness due to the lack of understanding of their situation and the decreasing willingness to help; The respondents pointed out that in the first weeks and months this help was very big and people were eager to help, whereas now, almost two years after the arrival of the largest number of migrants, there is much less willingness to help on the part of the society and the authorities,



and hostile attitudes can often be observed (e.g. when looking for a job). when looking for a job), where migrants have to compete with Poles;

- there is a growing and more urgent need to solve the problem of reaching young migrants in need of help - currently this is mainly done by their parents, with whom it is easier to establish contact, and through the so-called "grapevine"; support is not provided to those who are already of age and have come alone (without family, parents), but there is no way to reach them, as they do not seek such help themselves;
- financial issues are a huge problem - paid assistance is available and these commercial offers effectively reach the potential interested parties, while free assistance is needed and such forms are much more difficult to access, and in principle there are almost none - an urgent need is the availability of language courses at B1 and B2 level (there used to be possibilities of taking advantage of such an offer free of charge, but currently the offers are paid);
- projects and support concerning vocational issues and the labor market are necessary - such support, which concerns strictly vocational counselling and the offer of specific courses and trainings adjusted to the labor market, i.e. in such places, where there is employment - not general courses about job searching, but targeted, job specific courses;
- taking into account all the information mentioned above, it is worthwhile to create a short guide for a refugee in paper and electronic form, which would provide basic legal and help information (where to look for it with addresses and e-mail addresses); such a guide, which would be in both Polish and Ukrainian and would contain in one place most of the data necessary for a migrant would certainly be helpful; it would have to be updated on a regular basis and necessarily be bilingual;
- such a handbook or application could also contain information on symptoms of trauma and depressive states typical for migrants (for self-diagnosis) and basic information on how to cope with such situations; the availability of psychologists in Poland free of charge is very low, and in fact in demand, so such a substitute in the form of basic information on how to cope with trauma could be helpful, if only by: providing basic information, indicating/linking relevant websites or addresses of psychological counselling centers.

### Focus Group Interview 2 - POLAND

Katarzyna Stankiewicz, Gdańsk University of Technology

<b>ID of interview</b>	
Date and time of FGI	7.03.2024 , 3.00 pm
Location of interview	participants connected online from the Tri-City area. Three people from Sopot and two from Gdańsk



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Names (or initials) of participants + type of youth worker/organisation they represent	<p>N. B.: Centrum Pomocy Migrantom i Uchodźcom – Caritas Gdańsk (Migrants and Refugees Assistance Center – Caritas Gdańsk), specialisation: child and youth education</p> <p>A.D: Sopockie Centrum Integracji i Wsparci Cudzoziemców (Sopot Center for Integration and Support for Foreigners)+ Centrum Kształcenia Ustawicznego (Center for Continuing Education) Specialisation: career advisor</p> <p>T.R.: Psychologist, and intercultural assistant working at a kindergartens and schools in Sopot and in Poradnia Psychologiczno Pedagogiczna (Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre)</p> <p>O.K.: Centrum Kształcenia Ustawicznego w Sopocie (Sopot Centre for Continuous Education), Youth educator and counsellor</p> <p>A.B.: Fundacja LWF w Polsce (Lutheran World Forum Foundation in Poland), Migrant support specialist</p>
Interviewer	Katarzyna Stankiewicz
Duration of the interview	1h 40min

## Introduction

The interview has been conducted online with individuals employed by organizations assisting immigrants and refugees in the Gdańsk and Sopot regions, part of a large urban agglomeration in northern Poland. The interview was held in early March 2024, two years after Russia's attack on Ukraine, which triggered an influx of refugees into Poland from Ukrainian territories. This had and continues to have a significant impact on both the manner and extent of the support provided, primarily aimed at families of migrants and refugees from Ukraine.

The overwhelming majority of migrants in the Gdańsk agglomeration hail from Ukrainian territories, comprising two distinct groups. The first group consists of those who arrived before the war, mainly comprising economic migrants or students. The second group comprises individuals who were forced to flee Ukrainian territories as a result of the war.

## Respondent background information:

All interviewees work in organizations providing support and assistance to migrants and refugees, and two of them are also career advisors. One interviewee is from Ukraine and is a refugee, having arrived in Poland two years ago, and has since been involved in aiding Ukrainian children and youth. Another interviewee is a repatriate who came to Poland six years ago and works both in a Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centre, as well as in schools supporting migrant children. The third interviewee has extensive experience (more than 12 years) working in both the Center for Continuing Education and the Sopot Center for Integration and Support of Foreigners. The rest of the participants work in



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migrant support services of Non-governmental organisation and public lifelong learning centre.

### **Target groups of migrant youths:**

The profile of “newcomers” change over last 2 years. Individuals who immigrated to this area between 2012 and 2019 were primarily economic migrants. Contact with them was easy; they wanted to learn the Polish language but also believed that these languages are very similar and could communicate without a translator. They wanted to integrate into the local community.

At the turn of 2019 and 2020, a group of political immigrants from Belarus appeared.

In February 2020, after Russia attacked Ukraine, millions of refugees appeared in Poland. They all required immediate assistance to cover their most urgent needs: medical aid, shelter, food, and clothing. Over time, their needs evolved, necessitating the organization of care and education for children, as well as enabling refugees to find employment. Interviewees emphasises that refugees are a group of people with a different profile that emigrants. They are torn from their place, often with trauma. They do not want to be here; they would like to return home, which is not possible. They are not concerned about integration or learning the language; sometimes, they decide to move further to other European countries. The main part of this group of refugees are women and children of all ages.

The main target groups of youth are those up to the age of 18, meaning individuals who have arrived in Poland and should continue their education at the appropriate level previously attained. In the case of refugee children and youth, education is often abruptly interrupted in their native schools, resulting in a lack of formal certificates and completion records from previous educational stages, as well as a sudden influx of a large number of individuals requiring such support.

This group can be divided into four groups:

One: small children at the preschool level, whose support involves learning the Polish language and integration into peer groups.

The second group: primary school students, who typically require language support but also, especially in the older grades of primary school, support in dealing with knowledge differences required in subjects such as literature or history. This is particularly crucial as knowledge in this area is required in competency exams held at the end of primary school, and the exam results determine admission to secondary school.

Within this cohort, it is notable to recognize individuals aged 13-14 who have arrived within the past two years, concluding their primary education. In their homeland, they planned their future development and study. However, they currently find themselves in a state of disarray, frequently seeking guidance on their next course of action. They stand at a crossroads, uncertain whether to align their destinies with Poland or Ukraine. In Ukraine, they had mapped out certain paths for their development, while in Poland, these paths appear unattainable to them.

The third group: individuals around the age of 16-17 who are dropping out of the education system due to adaptation difficulties and the unpreparedness of the educational system. Unable to be employed formally, they often find themselves in the informal sector, taking



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up casual work for unskilled individuals without legal and social protection. Interviewees referred to this group of individuals as 'disappearing youth,' meaning those who were once part of the education system but, upon dropping out or being abandoned by it, are not accounted for in any statistics and are not subject to the majority of regulations supporting migrants due to the inability to reach them. In this group of individuals, there is a high level of frustration stemming from a sense of exclusion and sudden interruption of their developmental path, compounded by emotional issues related to both the adolescent developmental period and wartime traumas. Interviewees agree that often within this group, there is an expressed desire to return to Ukraine and enlist in the military upon reaching the age of 18.

The fourth group: people over 18 years of age who can participate in courses aimed at acquiring and developing professional skills, seek legal employment, or register with labor offices as unemployed

### **Key conclusions:**

- The characteristics of migrants have completely changed in the last two years. From economic migrants through political migrants to war refugees
- Diversity of needs among young migrants, depending on age and educational background
- "Disappearing youth" - individuals who have dropped out of the education system but are too young to take up vocational courses or work legally

### **Barriers for different groups of youth migrant NEETs:**

All interviewees emphasize the psychological barriers resulting from refugee trauma. Therefore in their opinion refugee cannot be compared with a migrant. The refugees wished to promptly return to their homelands and resume their normal lives. Therefore, the initial phase often involved waiting for the conflict to end. Even after two years, many still struggle with the lasting effects of trauma, which can be seen, among other ways, in their reluctance to learn Polish or integrate into the local community. They describe their personal status as temporary.

Traumatic experiences can lead to a lack of ability to learn or engage in activities. Individuals in such circumstances may be perceived by the school environment as unmotivated, and even to some extent, incapable of learning at the planned level.

Another obvious barrier for youth migrants/refugees is the lack of language proficiency, differences in school programs and educational facilities resulting from cultural disparities (literature, history), and the absence of vocational courses for individuals under the age of 18, as mandated by law. Reasons for leaving the education system include difficulties in passing competency exams after primary school, as they require knowledge of Polish language literature and grammar, as well as history and are conducted solely in Polish.

The interviewees emphasize that difficulties in meeting the demands of the education system and continuing education at higher levels also affect individuals who were very good students in their country of origin.

The important fact is that Polish legal regulations stipulate that vocational courses are open to individuals who have reached the age of 18, thereby excluding participation by those who have left the education system at an earlier age for various reasons. In addition to



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the aforementioned barriers, there is also a lack of understanding of the education system, confusion regarding recruitment rules for subsequent stages. Consequently, there is a growing sense of exclusion exacerbated by difficulties in reaching out to individuals from organizations supporting immigrants. Interviewees highlight further consequences of such a state among young refugee group members, who often, feeling excluded, display a negative attitude towards learning the Polish language, and integration in the local community, reinforced by a strong desire to return to their homeland or move to another one. While at the beginning of the war in Ukraine, hope for a quick return home was significant, it is currently significantly diminished.

#### **Key conclusions:**

- Psychological barrier resulting from refugee trauma
- The feeling of temporariness
- Language barrier
- Disparities in educational programs resulting in difficulties adapting to the educational system in Poland
- Inability to pursue education at advanced levels
- Feeling of exclusion and desire to return to one's own country or move to another

#### **Youth workers approach towards different groups of young migrants:**

Currently, individuals from refugee backgrounds primarily require psychological support to overcome trauma and open up to opportunities within the current situation. The key focus is on gaining trust and offering support. While the actions undertaken share certain common areas, such as building trust as mentioned earlier, each action must also be individually tailored to the specific individual with their unique history. In building trust and a sense of community, it's essential to utilize a peaceful space where these individuals can simply meet, get to know each other, spend time together, have a cup of tea, and talk. Such an environment provides a sense of belonging and being understood by individuals who have experienced the same. This can build a strong foundation for addressing important topics that support the activity of young people.

Conducting support in their native language is of paramount importance. Only then do they feel understood and supported. In many cases, professional psychological support directly in the refugees' language, without an interpreter, is necessary.

Providing proper support requires, at every stage, primarily an appropriate level of sensitivity to help understand the unique and dramatic situation of refugees.

#### **Key conclusions:**

- Individualized and differentiated support tailored to individual needs
- Building trust and a sense of belonging
- Understanding and sensitivity

#### **Good practices in youth work with migrants:**





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Individuals working with refugees should have at least basic psychological knowledge regarding the impact of trauma on human behavior. It is necessary to provide them with appropriate courses and training.

As many support workers as possible should be proficient in Ukrainian or Russian (the refugee's country of origin).

Building trust is essential, and methods of action are tailored individually to each person's characteristics. In some cases, individual meetings are important and necessary, while in others, group meetings are more effective. Particularly in the initial period of engagement, group meetings allow individuals to meet others with similar migration histories, converse in their own language, fostering a sense of belonging and utilizing positive role models from the refugee community. This enables identification and integration into a new group in a new area:

*"So that this person has somewhere to come and be, to feel among their own, to be able to speak up and feel important. Have a cup of tea, play games. They need support also from their own community (migrants-refugees) who give them energy, strength."*

A good practice is for meetings to be as informal as possible, and initiated through personal contacts with cultural assistants, career advisors, and educators. Young people should not feel that supportive actions are a form of "fixing" them. A good practice is to use the ARTE method, which involves using art and artistic activities to build a sense of security, express emotions, and establish relationships.

After trust is being established, it is also important to offer the possibility of further contact with a psychologist in the refugee's language.

Because young refugees often do not speak or do not want to talk about their fears and needs, they are presented with an independent choice of projects, programs, meetings, and courses from which they can select those that interest them.

It is important to emphasize that all skills acquired in courses in Poland can be used later upon returning to Ukraine, including proficiency in the Polish language.

### **Key conclusions:**

- competences to work with people with trauma,
- building trust,
- knowledge of the refugee language,
- building relations with people from the existing refugee community,
- a wide range of courses and programs to choose from,
- success stories,
- Any other comments and commentary of interviewer.

The interviewees stressed the importance of training and developing competencies for individuals working in support centers for migrants and refugees. Alongside enhancing skills directly related to aiding migrants and refugees, there's a necessity for training in coping with stress and preventing professional burnout for youth worker.

The support system in large cities is well-developed, offering access to numerous programs and projects. However, the situation outside major urban areas is notably less favorable. In certain instances, the centers mentioned in the interviews establish mobile support



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points for refugees and migrants. Nevertheless, this initiative alone is insufficient; there is a pressing need to expand support services beyond large cities.

**Key conclusions:**

- The need for trainings to improve the competences of youth workers,
- The need for support against stress and burnout for youth workers,
- The need of expanding the support system for migrants and refugees also outside large cities.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

The specifics of the young migrant group in the Tricity area (Gdańsk - Sopot - Gdynia), as well as in Poland as a whole, mainly consist of refugees from Ukraine. Many of them suffer from trauma, feelings of temporariness, and a lack of rootedness. A particularly challenging situation involves the group of young people aged 16-17 who have dropped out of the education system and at the same time are unable to work legally. They are commonly referred to as the "Disappearing Youth."

Essential actions towards all these young individuals include establishing contact, building trust, fostering relationships within both the local Polish and migrant communities, providing psychological support, facilitating training and skill acquisition, as well as motivating them for learning and development. Additionally, supporting refugees and migrants beyond large cities is crucial.

It is very important to train individuals who support migrants and refugees in managing stress and preventing professional

**Key conclusions:**

- Currently, young migrants in Poland are most often refugees from Ukraine, often suffering from war trauma,
- Disappearing youth are young people aged 16-17 who have dropped out of the education system and cannot legally work,
- Various and individualized actions to support refugees are necessary,
- It is necessary to expand the support network and reach migrants and refugees outside large cities,
- It is necessary to support and improve the competences of workers supporting emigrants.



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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Poland state tasks in the field of employment promotion, mitigating the effects of unemployment and professional activation are carried out by labour market institutions. In the area of the labour market there are several other entities supporting the activities of labour market institutions and many non-governmental organisations

Statistics show that the registered unemployment rate in Poland in 2023 was about 5%, One third of companies in Poland currently employ foreign workers and Polish companies are quite optimistic about hiring. NEETs are approximately 730000 young people in Poland. In terms of migration, the situation in Poland changed abruptly after the outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The situation of Ukrainian migrants is dynamic, About 40% of Ukrainian refugees found employment in Poland.

Among the key reasons for the problems of young *people* in the labour market in Poland are qualification mismatch (lack of marketable qualifications) and lack of professional experience.

Interviews showed that this is not a homogeneous group and it is difficult to make clear conclusions. One can venture a summary like the following:

- Young NEET migrants in Poland face systemic challenges, not just individual barriers.
- The biggest barrier is the lack of language skills in the host country. Lack of language skills closes the way for further development and free communication. This barrier made worse by the lack of accessible language training programs. The language barrier is the most significant, learning the Polish language can be explained as duty to be able to progress -or as "necessary evil" -
- Training is necessary, especially language training. Apart from the difficulties in finding a job, assimilation into the local community is a major challenge - the language and cultural barrier is a major problem here.
- Support in the labour market is needed - legal assistance, counselling assistance with finding employment. Refugees have problems finding a job in Poland, when they find one they often work below their qualifications acquired in Ukraine. It happens that young migrants work illegally. In some cases, it is much easier to find a job in Poland than in Ukraine, because there is simply no work there; some institutions, companies are trying to function normally, but these are not normal conditions. The lack of a permanent job can be emotionally exhausting
- Well-educated women from Ukraine work in Poland as teachers or day-care workers in school day-care centres, but before their arrival, apart from the basics of the Polish language, they also knew Western languages (most often German and English) and then they can teach these languages in schools and work at a similar level as in Ukraine;
- Respondents are in a difficult situation, outside home country, without families and friends, and therefore without support of closest relatives in overcoming everyday difficulties;
- There's a pressing need for more opportunities and support for NEET youths to help them thrive. There are many organizations supporting young unemployed and



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uneducated young people from other countries, but the needs are great. Ongoing assistance, flexibly tailored to specific situations, is essential.

**A focus group interview with people working with migrant NEETs in Poland indicates the following conclusions and recommendations:**

1. Unfamiliarity with the language is a key barrier and the lack of information on where to develop language skills in the local environment only exacerbates it. Courses on language learning should be free. It is recommended to include in the toolkit of the project free activities on learning the language of the host country, including applications for the phone.
2. A very important aspect of working with the target group is psychological and medical support, complemented by interpersonal development workshops or psychological games. Socialization and integration into the local environment are a prerequisite for the success of the implemented activities.
3. The development of professional competence should be supported by a solid diagnosis and "tailored" for a specific position or employer. A "matchmaking" approach between employer and job candidate can reduce potential mistakes and stress on both sides.
4. Fundamental is the selection and implementation of appropriate channels of communication with migrants, reaching out to young people - "slipper mail", communication through parents and organizations working with migrants.
5. An important element of support is legal assistance and the provision of an assistant to assist with official matters.
6. Support of young people must not be oriented only to the acquisition of competence. It is worth taking care of the surroundings - activities focused on sports and leisure. It is worth taking into account facilities for movement - getting to school, work, cultural or educational activities.
7. It is recommended to involve Ukrainian-speaking teachers as emissaries in reaching the target group and gaining trust and facilitating contacts. A variety of stakeholders can be involved, parents, teachers, acquaintances, friends, distant family, or neighbours.



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