



Brief Problem Overview (2023)

THE (NEW) CHALLENGES AND TENSIONS FACED BY UKRAINIAN DIASPORA IN POLAND FOLLOWING THE FULL-SCALE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

Since the Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, there has been a significant influx of Ukrainians into Poland. Within just a few months, the number of Ukrainian refugees who arrived exceeded the total Ukrainian population that was already residing in Poland before the war. As of April 1, 2022, there were about 3.2 million Ukrainians in Poland (Marcin Wojdat, Paweł Cywiński, 2022), more than half of them arrived after February 24, 2022 as refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Representatives of Ukrainian diaspora - Ukrainians, who already resided in Poland for a significant period - mobilized themselves to assist the newly arrived. They actively participated in providing support to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees in Poland, offering financial, humanitarian, psychological, logistical, participation in protests and other forms of assistance. They faced tremendous challenges as the demand for assistance was huge. For example, the "Our Choice" Foundation, created by Ukrainian migrants in 2009 to help integrate migrants into Polish society, was flooded with numerous requests for help. In response, the team quickly grew from two to twenty members and organized 46 Polish language classes for both children and adults, as well as six Ukrainian women's clubs and more (Sarian Jarosz, Witold Klaus, 2023).

Before the massive influx of Ukrainian refugees to Poland in 2022 caused by the war, there had already been waves of Ukrainians coming to Poland, but on a smaller scale. There were certain tensions between Ukrainians-representatives of different waves of migration.¹ (Lapshyna, 2019). For example, Lapshyna's research highlights that there were challenges and tensions between the representatives of the old and new migrant groups who arrived to Poland after 1991. One of the main sources of these challenges was the difference in the lifestyle pace and the different problems faced by different groups of migrants. A representative of the new diaspora in Warsaw highlighted that "those Ukrainians who were born here [in Poland] lived a very quiet life.... They have their own problems which are more related to history. ... newcomers have different kinds of problems" (Lapshyna, 2019).

It can be assumed that Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Poland in 2022 also have different perspectives, lifestyle pace, and prior experiences compared to migrants who

¹ Lapshyna I. Do Diasporas Matter? The Growing Role of the Ukrainian Diaspora in the UK and Poland in the Development of the Homeland in Times of War. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 8(1): 51–73 (2019).

were already living in Poland. Most Ukrainian refugees left their country by force, in panic and fear. This was the first case of such a massive influx of women with children and the elderly people to Poland. Ukrainian refugees were much more likely than migrants to need help in almost every aspect and had difficulty making plans for the future (Sarian Jarosz, Witold Klaus, 2023)². And it is likely that such a difference in problems and past experiences can also cause challenges leading to misunderstandings, tension and conflicts between Ukrainian refugees and pre-war migrants.

Marcin Wojdat and Paweł Cywiński in the framework of the research in 2022 have suggested that tensions between Poles and Ukrainian refugees may arise after initial emotions subside³. Among the factors that can cause tensions between Poles and Ukrainians, the researches mentioned the following, among others: a feeling of injustice among some Poles arises from the large-scale social and financial assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees, as well as the rapid increase in rental prices in cities due to increased demand from migrants etc. (Marcin Wojdat, Paweł Cywiński, 2022). It can be assumed that Ukrainian migrants who lived in Poland before the war in Ukraine may also have similar reactions and tensions towards Ukrainian refugees. This may have been further complicated by the fact that Ukrainian migrants were less likely to receive certain types of assistance than Ukrainian refugees. For example, refugees were more likely than migrants to receive help in finding or renting free housing. (Sarian Jarosz, Witold Klaus, 2023).

Additionally, based on the "special law" on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict, Ukrainian refugees obtained the right to legal residence as well as access to many other social benefits that Ukrainian migrants did not have before the war⁴.

It is reasonable to suppose that Ukrainian migrants who had lived in Poland for a long time faced new challenges, tensions and emotions. However, there is a limited amount of research dedicated to this issue. The lack of a deep understanding of these processes complicates the development of effective strategies for supporting and integrating the Ukrainian refugees and migrants in Poland.

For more information, please contact:

Svitlana Matus,
Foundation "MAMA-2022"
ngomama2022@gmail.com

² Sarian Jarosz, Witold Klaus. POLSKA SZKOŁA POMAGANIA. Przyjęcie osób uchodźczych z Ukrainy w Polsce w 2022 roku (2023) <https://konsorcjum.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Polska-Szkola-Pomagania-raport-1.pdf>

³ Marcin Wojdat, Paweł Cywiński. URBAN HOSPITALITY: UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES. (2022) https://metropolie.pl/fileadmin/news/2022/10/UMP_raport_Ukraina_ANG_20220429_final.pdf

⁴ The law on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of the country (Poland) <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/5382a6cf-f7c7-4b3f-9a4c-9a92ec99459a>