



MIGRATION · AFFECTIVE GEOPOLITICS · EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

Country Report Poland

Deliverable 2.1

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Date: 31.12.2025



Funded by the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101178269. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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Executive Summary

Following the full-scale invasion of Russia on Ukraine, Poland, from being a migrant-sending country turned into a receiving country. This has had significant implications in all dimensions of socio-economic and cultural life. In this report we focus on three key areas of integration: labour market, housing, and education. The main aim of the report is to present the state-of-the-art in terms of the FDPs overall situation and changing dynamics in these three key areas since 24 February 2022.

The following report is based on desk research and expert interviews with SLB and CSO professionals working in the three fields mentioned above. The desk research involved an analysis of research publications, reports and relevant legal acts. Six interviews were conducted with representatives of public institutions and NGOs based in the Tricity agglomeration.

Our analysis indicates that the Polish state was not prepared to receive Ukrainian FDPs and in the initial phase following the full-scale invasion many measures were conceived ad-hoc and relied hugely on the engagement of civil society, both Polish and Ukrainian (the diaspora). Over time, some of them evolved into more consistent and institutionalised solutions but many policy gaps remain.

Key to Poland's response to the inflow of FDPs was the adoption of the EU Temporary Protection Directive through national legislation. The TPD frame was the most helpful and effective in terms of facilitating access to the Polish labour market. Despite tendencies of de-skilling, FDPs situation on the labour market is relatively good, and they are quite successful in finding employment. However, there are still many access barriers, such as lack of sufficient language competency, lack of adequate recognition of qualifications, or issues connected to discrimination on the basis of socio-demographic features.

In terms of housing, Ukrainian FDPs face similar challenges as Polish citizens, namely, an almost complete lack of public housing policy which enforces a reliance on the free market. Therefore, the main barriers in this area include high prices, high level of uncertainty and increased risk of homelessness.

The TPD frame allowed the FDPs children the same access to education as Polish children, but there have not been many satisfactory educational offers for adults. The Polish state has not provided free language courses for the FDPs, while the NGOs only offered project-based language courses on a very basic level, which was not sufficient for FDPs to enter the labour market according to their qualifications and competences.

In conclusion, despite Poland's unpreparedness towards reception and integration of migrants, the bottom-up response of the receiving society and the Ukrainian diaspora allowed the development of necessary coping mechanisms. Many issues are still unresolved, and the lack of an overarching systemic strategy constitutes a big challenge. Yet, a number of best practices can be distinguished, which provide a good starting point and a basis for further development of policies, regulations and problem-solving.

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Abbreviations

Project abbreviations

HUG	Help Ukraine Gothenburg - Sweden
UPF	Universidad Pompeu Fabra - Spain
LSMC	Lietuvos Socialiniu Mokslu Centras - Lithuania
KKNU	V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University - Ukraine
UEF	Ita-Suomen Yliopisto - Finland
UG	Uniwersytet Gdanski - Poland
UGR	Universitaet Greifswald - Germany
ZAVOD APIS	Zavod Za Avtorsko Produkcijo Izobrazevanje Inovativnost In Sodelovanje - Slovenia
UGOT	University Of Gothenburg - Sweden

Other

CSO	Civil Society Organization
FDP	Forcibly Displaced Person/People
GUS	Central Statistical Office
HoReCa	Hotel Restaurant Catering
MSWiA	Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration
PESEL UKR	Tax identification number confirming the status of FDPs under TPD in Poland
PUP	Powiat Employment Offices (Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy)
SLB	Street-Level Bureaucrat

TPD Temporary Protection Directive (Council Directive 2001/55/EC)

TSL Transport-Spedition-Logistics

Background

Geopolitical lenses

Poland, due to its geographical and cultural proximity to Ukraine, and a large group of Ukrainian labour migrants staying in the country prior the full-scale invasion, became the main destination and a transit route for Ukrainians in 2022 and onwards. While it had been expected that a considerable proportion of migrants would move further, treating Poland as a stepping stone into other EU countries, it is estimated that many of them stayed and continue to live here (UNHCR. Poland Fact Sheet, 2025).

Statistical overview

The Central Statistical Office indicated that around 1 million Ukrainians resided in Poland in 2021 (Migracje Zagraniczne, 2023). Since the full-scale invasion, the arrivals have been heavily dominated by women, representing 61% overall and 77% of the adult population (Obywatele Ukrainy, 2025). As of early August 2025, the age structure of the registered applicants from Ukraine showed a dominance of adult women under 65 and a significant proportion of the underaged, with children accounting for almost a third of all applicants (Registered applications, 2025).

Table 1. Gender and age structure of registered applicants for the UKR status due to the conflict in Ukraine (% , as of 11th August 2025)

Gender	Age			Total
	Under 18	18-65	Over 65	
Women	16.0	48.3	4.0	68.3
Men	16.8	13.7	1.2	31.7
Total	32.8	62.0	5.2	100

Source: Registered applications, 2025

Ukrainians settling in Poland tend to concentrate in regions with major cities, i.e., Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań, Kraków and the Upper Silesia agglomeration. Specifically, the Mazowieckie (22%), Dolnośląskie (12%), Wielkopolskie (11%), Małopolskie (9%), and Śląskie (9%) voivodeships attract the largest proportions of Ukrainian migrants (Obywatele Ukrainy, 2025).

Poland did not choose to implement TPD directly but adopted its own “Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine” (Act on Assistance, 2022) on 12 March 2022, known informally as the Ukrainian Special Act (specustawa ukraińska). According to the Special Act, the primary condition for receiving Temporary Protection by FDPs arriving from Ukraine is applying for the so-called PESEL UKR at any local authority office, within 30 days of crossing the border. The implementation is primarily through PESEL registration (Obywatele Ukrainy, 2025). PESEL is the electronic national identification number used for registration of the population. It is mandatory for all permanent residents in the country and for those temporary residents whose stay extends over two months.

As of March 31, 2023, there were 997,737 Ukrainian residents in Poland (Mieszkańcy Ukrainy, 2023) under temporary protection. In February 2025, Poland provided temporary protection to 993,000 Ukrainians. In addition, 462 thousand Ukrainian citizens have valid temporary residence permits issued before and after the war began. The vast majority of these permits are issued in connection with taking up employment. Permanent residence permits or long-term EU resident permits are held by 92 thousand Ukrainians.

According to IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix’ survey, 93% of Ukrainian nationals’ crossings back to Ukraine from Poland were pendular (short-term visits (27%) temporary returns (27%)). Only 3% were returning from displacement, while 4% remained undecided (Poland – Ukrainian, 2024).

Actors of reception

At the beginning, there were grassroot initiatives from the Polish citizens, “ordinary people”. FDPs were primarily hosted by Polish families (Szeptycki, 2024). The government offered financial support both to the FDPs themselves and to their host families. With time, state institutions partly took over the coordination of aid.

However, because the national governments was initially slow to provide practical support and develop adaptable legislation informed by the evolving situation and understanding of newcomers' needs, there was a greater surge in community-led support (Pędziwiatr & Magdziarz, 2023):366). Local authorities provided various forms of financial support, integration into the local labour market and housing assistance. Business entities offered financial and material help. Education institutions provided help for the Ukrainian students, and in addition, did fundraising and in-kind collections for FDPs. Churches played an important role in fundraising and in-kind collections for FDPs. Non-governmental organizations, in addition to fundraising, provided language and information assistance, and legal aid (Bejma, Pająk-Patkowska 2023; Zając, 2023). NGOs financed their activities with funds received from IOM, UNHCR and other organisations. Ukrainian organisations, virtual communities and informal networks that existed before the war provided invaluable assistance to the FDPs from Ukraine. The best known of these is the Ukraiński Dom (Ukrainian House), established in 2004 (Fundacja Ukraiński Dom, 2025).

Attitudes towards FDPs in the receiving society

In October 2024, a slim majority of Poles (53%) were in favour of Poland accepting Ukrainian FDPs, representing the weakest level of support since the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022 (O Ukraińcach, 2024). This contrasts sharply with the overwhelming support seen in the early days of the war, when 94% of Poles were in favour in March 2022, and 80% remained supportive for the following year (O Ukraińcach, 2024). The public opinion started to shift in the spring of 2023, likely influenced by the "grain crisis" resulting from uncontrolled Ukrainian grain entering the Polish market, first leading to some tensions and growing negative attitudes which eventually caused a decline in support (Kitsa, 2025). Consequently, the proportion of Poles opposing the acceptance of Ukrainian FDPs has grown substantially, from a mere 3% in March 2022 to the current 40%, (O Ukraińcach, 2024).

Types of permits

As of October 2025, the following types of permits are available to Ukrainian citizens, depending on their legal, professional and household situation:

-
- **temporary protection** - right to legal stay, access to the labour market, housing, healthcare, and education for children,
 - **temporary residence permit** - from April 1, 2023, Ukrainian citizens who have a PESEL number with UKR status can apply for temporary residence permits (for the purpose of working or running a business), however the procedure is lengthy (see: Main barriers and opportunities in the labour market)
 - **family reunification** - from 15 May 2024 the FDPs from Ukraine can apply for family reunification. According to Polish law, the following categories of family members may join the applicant in Poland: spouse (from a marriage recognised under Polish law), child (under 18 years of age) of the applicant and/or his/her spouse, parent or other adult responsible for the child (if the applicant is an unaccompanied child) (Łączenie Rodzin, 2025).

Governance and multilevel responsibilities in implementation of TPD in respective countries

Implementation of the TPD (Directive 2001/55/EC) in Poland

As mentioned earlier, the TPD in Poland has been implemented by means of the Special Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens, which is the short name for the Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with the Armed Conflict in Ukraine (2022, the Special Act), which came into force on 12 March 2022. It sets out the rules for legal residence and access to the labour market for Ukrainian citizens who arrived in Poland after 24 February 2022 due to the military conflict. Since then, the Act has been amended several times to extend temporary protection for Ukrainians. Since 1 April 2023 holders of PESEL UKR are entitled to apply [OS29] for a temporary residence and work permit, for a residence permit for the purpose of performing work in highly skilled professions (Blue Card) and for a temporary residence permit for the purpose of conducting business activity (Nowosielski & Raczyński, 2024).

Although on 4 June 2025 the European Commission proposed to prolong the Temporary Protection for FDPs fleeing Russia’s aggression against Ukraine until 4 March 2027, the same document outlines the recommendations regarding a coordinated approach to the transition out of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine (Directorate-General for Migration, 2025). The political climate in Poland is charged with the tension of the unresolved future duration of TPD, which has been further exacerbated by the right-wing candidate's victory in the presidential elections held in May 2025 (Długosz, 2025; Dudzik, 2025; Rupnik, 2025).

Division of responsibilities across different governance levels in relation to the reception and social rights FDPs

In terms of the official division of responsibilities regarding the support for FDPs, they were distributed between various actors on different levels of governance (Table 2).

Table 2. Division of responsibilities across governance levels in key areas of social rights of FDPs

	Local/municipal level	Regional level	National level
Labour market	Poviat ¹ employment offices (Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy, PUP) which register unemployed Polish citizens and support them in finding work, organise training and internships, and conduct professional activation activities are also responsible for the same tasks towards FDPs.	Voivodeship ² employment offices play a coordinating, analytical and strategic role, less ‘direct’ than in the case of PUP. Their tasks include: monitoring and analysis of the labour market at the regional level, regional programmes for the integration of foreigners and professional activation, support for PUP (e.g. training of district labour office employees in foreigner services), management of EU funds allocated to integration and activation projects, recognition of qualifications (in certain regulated professions) and international coordination within the EURES network (job placement in the EU).	Opening the labour market for FDPs under the Special Act

Notes

- 1. poviat (powiat) is the second level of local government in Poland, one above municipality (gmina)
- 2. voivodeship is the regional level of government in Poland, one above poviat

Table 2 Continued

Housing	<p>Initially: municipalities were the key public actors engaged in organising settlement support and coordinating local housing responses through managing temporary accommodation centres, distributing aid and facilitating access to municipal housing stock where available.</p> <p>Currently: depending on availability of resources (usually very constrained), some cities/municipalities provide a limited number of FDPs with the access to municipal housing</p>	<p>Initially: co-management (with municipalities) of temporary accommodation centres</p> <p>Currently: regional offices of the central government still provide some options of temporary collective accommodation, but only for FDPs with special needs</p>	<p>Initially: the central government was involved in providing the framework for support through national legislation and programmes (e.g., compensation mechanisms reimbursing private individuals and institutions hosting FDPs).</p> <p>Currently: no overall policy for providing FDPs with the access to housing - Ukrainian FDPs registered in Poland are expected to rent privately on the open market.</p>
Education	<p>All FDPs under 18 are entitled to attend public schools run by gminas/municipalities.</p> <p>Local governments are responsible for providing places for Ukrainian FDPs. School principals are responsible for implementing regulations and ensuring that Ukrainian pupils have access to education at school. In addition, they organise the process of admitting pupils to school.</p>	<p>They do not have direct, decentralised tasks, but act as intermediaries in coordinating, monitoring and supporting the activities of municipalities within their regions.</p>	<p>Ministry of Education provides general regulations concerning education, including compulsory schooling for children from Ukraine, and monitors their situation.</p>

Source: own elaboration

TPD's impact on the reception and inclusion of FDPs in different spheres of social and economic life

Opportunities:

- Labour market and education – TPD is a significant facilitator in the access to work and education
- Housing – only in the initial phase, when TPD was connected to the 40+ housing subsidy

Barriers:

- socio-political tensions
- lack of adequate social policies

Methods and materials

The country report is mainly based on the analysis of various statistical reports (published online and openly accessible) and research publications (academic papers and monographs), accompanied by relevant legal acts (e.g. the Special Act), and complemented with transcriptions of six expert interviews conducted with representatives of SLBs and CSOs who work with FDPs as part of their everyday job.

The expert interviews were held locally in the Tricity agglomeration (i.e., Gdańsk and Gdynia) during June and July 2025, in person with one exception of an online interview. The experts were recruited from SLBs and CSOs, representing the three key areas in focus of this research: labour market, housing and education. Three of the respondents were members of local NGOs, another two were employees of local and regional governmental institutions, and one was a teacher in a public school (Table 3). All of them experience face-to-face encounters with FDPs on a daily basis in their everyday professional lives. However, only some of them had worked with international migrants prior to the full-scale invasion (e.g., HOU_CS0_PL who has provided support to immigrants since 2012) and some only meet specific groups (e.g., HOU_SLB_PL who provides welfare services and so interacts with the most vulnerable segment of FDPs, i.e., those who qualify for social assistance). These varying perspectives influence the experts' experiences and, by extension, their accounts.

Table 3. Key characteristics of the respondents participating in the expert interviews

SECTOR	SLB	CSO
Labour market	LM_SLB_PL: Face-to-face interview with a person employed in one of the regional employment offices. Their job involves liaising with employers and handling documents to legalise work for citizens of foreign countries (incl. seasonal permits). Since the full-scale invasion, the person has been engaged in running a service point for FDPs.	LM_CSO_PL: Face-to-face interview with a person working in one of the NGOs that has been actively supporting people with migration experience since 2022, amongst other things by conducting integration activities in cooperation with other NGO. The person provides career counselling for FDPs from Ukraine as well as workshops on writing and submitting CVs and starting their own business. These activities are aimed at preparing FDPs to enter the Polish labour market.
Housing	HOU_SLB_PL: Face-to-face interview with a person working in the department for foreigners at the municipal social welfare centre. This department was established in early 2023 (i.e., after the full-scale invasion but not directly because of it) to deal with integration of foreigners, including Ukrainian FDPs. Before this, the interviewee was employed in another department of the same institution, and dealt with similar tasks, which is why following the full-scale invasion, the person was delegated to the local crisis management team.	HOU_CSO_PL: Face-to-face interview with a person who is vice-president of an NGO coordinating a consultation point for foreigners, as well as assisting foreigners in their integration in the Tricity area. Their tasks include providing information about Polish law, residence procedures, different aspects of life in Poland, both formal and less formal. Apart from providing this information, the person also directs clients (incl. FDPs) to other institutions in order to obtain various types of support that their own organisation does not provide.
Education	SLB_EDU_PL: Face-to-face interview with a person working in one of the primary schools in the Tricity. The person has been directly involved in organising education for FDP children since the beginning of the war.	CSO_EDU_PL: Online interview with an employee of one of the foundations in the Tricity that provides comprehensive support to non-governmental organisations and civic initiatives. The person has been engaged in running language courses for adult FDPs.

Source: own elaboration

Policies and outcomes of the labour market integration

Access to the labour market: legal frameworks and structural factors

Due to the recent shortages in the labour force in Poland, the regulations governing access to the labour market for foreigners are considered to be among the most liberal in the EU (Nowosielski & Raczyński, 2024). Depending on the country of origin and/or type of job, foreigners may take up employment on the basis of: 1) declarations of entrusting work (a simplified procedure that allows for an accelerated employment); 2) work permits; 3) seasonal work permits (in sectors related to agriculture, horticulture and tourism); 4) temporary residence permits with access to the labour market (issued, for example, on the basis of work or family reunification); 5) permanent residence permits or long-term EU resident permits.

Under the Special Law, Ukrainian citizens do not need any additional permits on entering the Polish labour market. The employers are only obliged to report the hiring to a local public employment service within fourteen days. This regulation concerns not only FDPs, but all citizens of Ukraine legally residing in Poland (Nowosielski & Raczyński, 2024).

While the responsibility for labour market integration in Poland officially lies with public employment services (local and regional Employment Offices), in reality, a significant proportion of integration occurs through informal networks, primarily via social media platforms and personal contacts (LM_SLB_PL).

Outcomes of the labour market integration

Employment level and structure

By the end of April 2022, almost 100,000 FDPs had found their first job in Poland and this figure more than doubled by the end of June (Gromadzki & Lewandowski, 2023; Zyzik et al., 2024). According to GUS (Central Statistical Office), on 28 February 2025, 708,900 Ukrainian FDPs worked in Poland (Cudzoziemcy wykonujący pracę, 2025). They accounted for 67.0% of the total number of foreigners working in Poland.

Ukrainian FDPs work primarily in the industrial sector and services. The employment rate among this group is lower than among pre-war migrants, but still higher than among Polish citizens (see Table 4). The proportion of women among FDPs is notably higher compared to the proportion among immigrants from Ukraine who arrived prior to 2022. However, the proportion of highly educated individuals is comparable, and the command of Polish is significantly lower.

Table 4. Comparison of the basic statistics on migrants from Ukraine in the Polish labour market

	Immigrants from Ukraine (before 2022)	FDPs from Ukraine (after 2022)	Polish citizens
Activity on the labour market	96-99%	70-80%	58.6%
Share of employees	91-93%	53-71%	56.9%
Unemployment rate	5%	22-26%	2.9%
Share of women	40-54%	67-80%	51.7%
Knowledge of Polish language	58%	5-12%	-
Share of highly educated	46%	50%	23.1%

Source: Wpływ napływu, 2025: 12 (data collated from various reports)

In 2022, more than 50% of FDP workers were employed in elementary occupations, which was a proportion over seven times higher than in the indigenous employed population (Gromadzki & Lewandowski, 2023). At the same time, this occupational structure resembled the one from before the full-scale invasion, even despite the change of the gender structure of the employees.

In 2022, FDPs from Ukraine most often took up jobs in the food industry, construction and manufacturing, with a seasonal (second and third quarters of the year) domination of employment in agriculture, trade and the Hotel Restaurant Catering (HoReCa) industry, and a surge in logistics, e-commerce in the fourth quarter (Tynieć, 2025). As of the beginning of 2023, most FDPs worked in industrial processing, construction, Transport-Spedition-Logistics (TSL) and trade.

In 2023–2024, due to the ongoing situation in Ukraine and the female-dominated structure of the FDP workforce, the Polish labour market still felt the lack of employees in sectors previously dominated by men, such as construction and TSL. Although many companies declared their willingness to create jobs for women in professions traditionally considered ‘masculine’, the implementation of these plans encountered numerous barriers. As a result, even though women began to appear in new industries, including the warehousing sector and the meat industry, overall, instead of transforming jobs, entrepreneurs increasingly looked for male employees from work abroad, especially from Asia, Africa and South America (Tynieć, 2025).

Type and quality of work

Given the educational status of Ukrainian FDPs, of whom the majority have either university degree or secondary education, there is a clear tendency towards de-skilling. Back in 2022 only 17% were looking for a job corresponding to their professional qualifications (Wojdat et al., 2022). De-skilling among the Ukrainian FDPs is found to be one of key factors in increasing propensity to return to Ukraine (Lewandowski et al., 2025).

There is, however, also an increasing tendency towards self-employment. According to an interviewed expert, there are two causes: 1) problems with finding a job/lack of response from employers (also affecting Polish citizens, not only FDPs), 2) self-reliance - some FDPs realize they will stay in Poland for longer and wish to have something on their own, build a future and work in accordance with their qualifications and on their own terms):

this group [i.e., Ukrainian FDPs starting their own businesses] seems to be growing every year, which I think is due to two basic reasons. The first is definitely the difficulty of finding a job, because for a long time, especially this year, many Ukrainian citizens have been emphasizing that they are not receiving any responses. [...] And the second reason [results from a certain] reconciliation with the fact that this war will not end quickly, so it is an attempt to find themselves in our standards and simply to have something of their own (LM_SLB_PL).

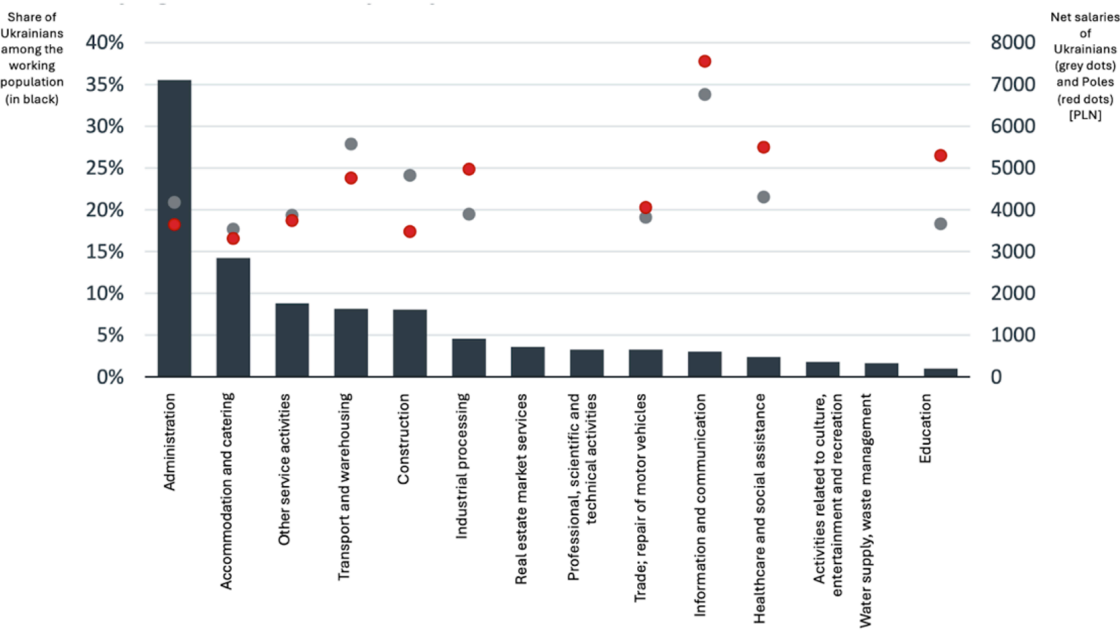
Employment stability

There is no official data on this issue, but from the experts' accounts it is obvious that apart from FDPs with employment contracts, some of them work casually/illegally.

Income and working conditions

According to the National Bank of Poland (Sytuacja życiowa, 2024), the median monthly net salary of immigrants in the third quarter of the fiscal year 2024 was PLN 4,000, while in the Polish economy as a whole it was PLN 4,900 net. An analysis of the available official data reveals that the wages of Ukrainian FDPs exhibit variability in relation to those of Poles, depending on the specific labour market sector. As demonstrated in Graph 1, the mean wages of Ukrainian workers in 2024 were higher than those of Polish workers in sectors where the share of employed Ukrainians was the largest, such as construction, transport and warehousing, and administration. However, the most pronounced wage disparities between Ukrainian and Polish workers, with the latter consistently outperforming the former, are evident in less Ukrainian-dominated high-skilled sectors, including education, healthcare and social assistance, and information and communication.

Figure 1. The share of Ukrainians among those working in Poland and the median monthly net wages in selected sectors in 2024



Source: (Wpływ napływu, 2025 :15)

According to a more recent report, published on 10 June 2025, the wage gap between Ukrainian FDPs and Polish citizens is gradually narrowing, irrespective of the level of remuneration received by either group (Analysis of the impact, 2025).

Long-term effects

FDPs' plans for further stay in Poland vary greatly. A survey conducted in April 2022 revealed that 68% of the respondents had the intention to return to Ukraine following the cessation of hostilities. Of those, 38% indicated a desire to return immediately after the war's conclusion, while 30% expressed a preference to do so after a period of several months) (Wojdat et al. 2022). Furthermore, 14% of respondents indicated their intention to reside in Poland for a minimum period of one year, while 7% intended to relocate to another country and the remaining 11% were undecided. In 2025, this disparity is still valid, although it cannot be approximated due to a lack of comparable data. According to the interviewed experts, while some FDPs have reached a level of stability and a certain rootedness, others recognize their stay as temporary:

Some of the [FDPs] who want to stay [in Poland] already have a sense of stability and settling down, their children go to school, they already have jobs and some kind of stability, but there are families who are [...], convinced] that they will leave, so they don't learn Polish. [T]he children learn [Polish] at school and their parents say, 'the child can do it, so I don't have to learn,' [...]. And there are so many of them that they integrate among themselves, they don't want to integrate [with Poles], – they go to the shop, they are served by people from Ukraine, they spend their time in their own group, they don't necessarily want to integrate here in Poland, learn Polish, or even work (HOU_SLB_PL).

Specific initiatives to facilitate the access to the labour market

Due to health personnel shortages, Poland has shortened the timeline for recognition of medical qualifications for the FDPs (OECD, 2022). In addition, it is beneficial for the FDPs because they often have a chance to be treated by Ukrainian medical specialists.

Vocational trainings are available to FDPs on the same terms which apply to Polish citizens.

As already mentioned, self-employment is a clear trend, but it happens spontaneously, rather than as a result of a specific initiative (LM_SLB_PL). Back in 2022, some companies became partners to the local Employment Offices and offered employment options on an activation/internship basis, but over time these have become discontinued. The reason for this discontinuation was less demand for immediate help as the situation normalised, and this task has since then been completely taken over by employment offices (LM_SLB_PL).

Currently in Poland there is no centralised access to publicly funded vocational language courses (OECD, 2022), apart from those provided by Poviats Employment Offices (LM_SLB_PL). In general, language courses are mostly organised by NGOs that receive dedicated grants.

However, any beneficiary may only participate in the project once, which is why many FDPs who have completed the Polish language course at level A1 are unable to continue their studies. (EDU_CSO_PL).

Possibilities/indications for the labour market career

Language is crucial here, as is the possibility of having diplomas recognised.

Types of financial assistance for those outside of the labour market

Unemployment benefit

In Poland, three conditions must be met in order to receive unemployment benefit: 1) one has to be registered with the local employment office as unemployed, 2) in the eighteen months prior to registration, one has to have worked for at least 365 days, and 3) while being registered, one did not refuse a suitable job offer without justification. According to one of the interviewed experts from the labour market sector, some Ukrainian FDPs expressed considerable surprise at the fact that they were not eligible to receive unemployment benefits upon their arrival in Poland:

for the [FDPs], the employment office is not there to provide jobs. In Ukraine—and many people have confirmed this to me—the employment office is there to provide benefits. So when they came to Poland, (...) they went to the employment office with the assumptions and point of view from their own country, and it was certainly a big culture shock for them (LM_SLB_PL).

Furthermore, what follows from two expert accounts, a (small) share of migrants who had entered Poland since the full-scale invasion were not forcibly displaced people but arrived from areas not affected by the war, seeking opportunity to move from Ukraine to Poland under the TPD (LM_SLB_PL, HOU_CSO_PL).

Both experts maintain that some people among this group have tried to take advantage of the TPD procedure for individual profits:

There were people who arrived with just a handbag or a plastic bag and really had nothing, they had lost everything... There were also people, there were families who arrived in cars packed to the roof and, (...) who came and said, 'Well, the war didn't affect us directly, we came, but in the area where we live, nothing has happened so far (HOU_CS0_PL).

I have seen many cases of abuse and attempts to fraudulently obtain benefits and then transport those benefits to Ukraine (HOU_CS0_PL).

Financial assistance for caregivers of children

Just like Polish parents and caregivers of minors, all FDPs with the PESEL UKR status who take care of children under 18 are entitled to receive “Rodzina 800 plus” (or the so-called 800+) child benefit (800 PLN per child per month, formerly known as 500+). Nevertheless, this entitlement has recently become the subject of political debate, resulting in the amendment of certain regulations. Initially, the only condition was that the child lived with the applicant and was dependent on them, either as a legal or actual guardian. From 1 June 2025 an additional requirement was introduced with a special significance for FDPs - a child for whom they are applying for the 800+ benefit must attend a Polish school or Polish nursery school (known as zerówka) (Pierwsze Ważne Ograniczenie, 2005).

Financial assistance for the elderly and people with disabilities

No financial assistance is available specifically for the elderly FDPs or FDPs with disabilities, and therefore they are at risk of facing exclusion from the labour and housing market (“The older a person is, the more difficult it is for them to find a job”, LM_SLB_PL). Representatives of these two vulnerable groups who are registered with PESEL UKR may apply for social assistance under the same terms as Polish citizens under the Social Assistance Act.

This assistance includes cash and non-cash benefits, including permanent or temporary allowances, which may be granted in the event of incapacity for work or the need for care. However, it is important to note that such allowances are generally minimal (“People who are ill or disabled, even if they can take advantage of our benefits, it doesn't really solve the situation, and it also creates a sense of uncertainty and [raises questions] ‘what next?’”, HOU_SLB_PL).

Main barriers and opportunities in the labour market

Barriers:

- **language barrier** (“Men very often want to work in the port or in construction, because, as they say themselves, these are often jobs where you just need to point your finger and you don't need to speak the language”, LM_SLB_PL)
- **responsibilities related to children upbringing** (Janowska, 2024), (“Women most often want to work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., as [this is when] schools, kindergartens and nurseries operate”, LM_SLB_PL)
- **gender barrier:** the Polish labour market needs male workers,
- **discrimination:** e.g. inadequate or no pay, exploitation of a weaker position, unequal treatment, and workload (Zyzik et al. 2023), as well as reluctance of Polish employers who refrain from employing FDPs to avoid additional burdens or because they fear short-term nature of the employment (“sometimes the employer has never hired a foreigner before so they are afraid that they will have to do who knows how many additional things”, “Unfortunately employers repeat that Ukrainian citizens are not permanent employees, they are people who change jobs very often”, LM_SLB_PL)
- **unfavourable attitudes of other employees and/or Polish people in general** - growing resentment towards Ukrainian migrants (“[frequent changes in employment] very often also result from communication problems at work, with other employees, or the resentment of other employees, because unfortunately this resentment is growing in Poland”, LM_SLB_PL), some of which is anchored in Polish employees’ concerns, e.g., fear of losing their jobs to Ukrainians (Sadura & Sierakowski, 2022) or fears of slowdown in wage growth (Banyś, 2025)

- **disinformation** within Ukrainian networks of self-help and other informal channels – outdated information or fake news distributed mainly via social media (“either they do not have all the information [...], or they have incorrect information and do not know about many things that they could benefit from”, LM_SLB_PL)
- **complicated and lengthy procedure for legalising residence** (“it is outstanding that it takes 1.5 to 2 years to issue a residence permit card” (LM_SLB_PL, (HOU_CSO_PL)

Opportunities:

- **labour demand** - in line with the demographic forecasts Poland will need significantly more migrants in the coming years than the current number of Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland (Wpływ napływu, 2025: 4)
- **high qualifications, high level of education** (“those FDPs with higher education seem to have a broader perspective, are often better informed, and come here with much more knowledge about how to get around in Poland”, LM_SLB_PL)
- **favourable attitudes of the Polish people:** seeing the presence of Ukrainians as an opportunity for the development of the Polish economy
- **increasing self-reliance of FDPs** (“We can definitely see that FDPs are increasingly managing on their own. We very rarely encounter people who have just arrived”, LM_SLB_PL)

Policies and outcomes on housing and settlement

Access to housing prior to registration for the TPD

Overall, housing in Poland is characterised by the key challenges typical of the CEE region: a dominance of owner-occupied housing, a growing rental market, and a diminished social housing sector due to post-communist privatization. These structural issues, compounded by inflation and raising energy costs have made access to housing particularly problematic, both financially and in terms of available resources (Csoba et al., 2025). In the initial phase of the full-scale invasion, the housing for Ukrainian FDPs was provided mostly through informal emergency responses.

Polish citizens opened their homes, while CSOs, religious institutions and local/regional governments rapidly mobilised temporary shelters and collective accommodation in vacant facilities, such as sports halls and hostels. During this phase, accommodation was typically free of charge and with limited regulation, its provision coordinated in pop-up welcome centres and through telephone helplines and dedicated websites. A share of FDPs relied on their own personal contacts and social networks among the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland. The situation was highly dynamic, marked by an urgent need to provide safe shelter rather than long-term housing solutions.

Access to housing after implementation of the TPD

Following the implementation of TPD, the reception of the Ukrainian FDPs continued to be managed rather bottom-up. According to results of a survey conducted at the end of April 2022 among holders of PESEL-UKR in 12 largest Polish cities, the largest group of FDPs (38%) were offered accommodation by Polish hosts, either in a shared accommodation (20%) or on their own (18%), while 23% of respondents found shelter with friends or family from Ukraine (Wojdat et al., 2022). Among all of them, 43% paid for their accommodation at that time.

As CSO and private actors continued to play a vital role in the provision of accommodation to the FDPs, article 13 of the Special Act introduced financial compensation mechanisms reimbursing private individuals and institutions hosting them (see Table 2). Until 30 June 2024, host families and institutions could apply for a reimbursement of 40 PLN per day, up to 60 days, with later adjustments (extension to 120 days and exceptions for the most vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, people with disabilities, carers of children under 1 year of age, large families, etc.). This helped to increase the number of offers available on the market, even if some landlords did not adhere to the rules and charged extra rent (HOU_CS0_PL). Over time, FDPs were encouraged to move toward self-reliance, using social assistance (such as housing allowances available to all eligible residents), child benefits (800+) and employment income to cover housing costs. No dedicated long-term housing subsidy programme was introduced meaning that this group has access to the same support mechanisms as Polish residents.

Key trends and changes in the initial phase

- **Gradual shift away from the emergency model** – the scope of the reimbursement was reduced over time and the temporary mass shelter was scaled down (Janowska 2024).
- **Increasing (although still relatively small) role of municipalities as key actors for integration and housing** (it is, however, worth noting that the increasing responsibilities are not matched with the increase of adequate funding from the central government) – they co-manage the remaining temporary shelter accommodation (with regional authorities), provide social assistance and integration support, some of them launched local programmes for housing assistance (such as rental subsidies, mediation with landlords and access to municipal housing).
- **Increasing reliance of FDPs on the rental market** – although rising rents and housing shortages have made this transition difficult for many families. By the end of 2024, 61% of FDPs rented their accommodation in the open market (as compared to only 3% in collective accommodation shelters (Regional Refugee, 2025).
- **A shift in the official narrative of the government from emergency response toward long term integration** (instead of focusing on ad-hoc, state-driven housing provision, the response switched to more sustainable integration measures which would make migrants more self-reliant and able to provide housing for themselves on the free market, e.g., via enrolment to language courses, or offering assistance with employment and childcare).

Current situation

In comparison with the initial phase, by 2025 the housing situation of FDPs stabilised (Długosz & Izdebska-Długosz, 2024). This has been confirmed by the interviewed experts, according to whom, overall, housing is no longer among the key topics of concern:

There were certain stages to this assistance. And we know that at that initial moment, these housing needs were actually the priority, one of the first needs, (...) but later on these needs changed (HOU_SLB_PL).

Nevertheless, this issue remains problematic in view of the short supply of public accommodation and the restricted availability of the rental market options, a situation that is especially challenging for the most vulnerable demographics.:

There are no offers specifically for people from Ukraine, there is no such thing, (...) so we are opening up the internet and looking at what is available to rent depending on the size of our wallet and the number of people who want to rent it. It is basically an open market, there is no division between people from Ukraine and the rest. (HOU_CSO_PL)

Prices are very high, (...) the situation is more difficult especially among older people who receive small benefits and also have to use the social assistance system, and [similar situation applies to] people who are ill or disabled, even if they are eligible for receiving our benefits, it doesn't really solve the situation, and it also creates a sense of uncertainty and [raises questions] 'what next?' (HOU_SLB_PL)

Lack of representative data makes it difficult to provide any reliable statistics. There is some information on the level of the country and esp. larger cities, but it is fragmented and uneven, as no single national monitoring system comprehensively tracks housing situations of Ukrainian FDPs over time in Poland. As far as any clear trends are concerned, initially, FDPs were concentrated in the largest cities, but later spread to smaller centres (Wpływ napływu, 2025). There is a lack of data on the level of neighbourhoods in cities.

There is evidence for overcrowding – many flats are shared between several families to decrease the costs of rent. However, our local expert's insight is that this should not be perceived as a key problem:

FDPs often live in groups. It is not usually one family, but two or three families, sometimes a few friends with children, or a multi-generational family. It is very rare for there to be only one family in one flat, as the costs are shared. They definitely most often choose districts where rental costs are significantly lower, and in Gdynia, renting is expensive, so they decide to rent somewhere further away, very often a little afraid to take jobs somewhere further from home (LM_SLB_PL).

A series of meetings at various levels made us Poles realise that uncomfortable conditions often mean something different for us than for this group. And I am referring even to the standard of living or the standard number of people in a room in their country of origin (HOU_CSO_PL).

Specific initiatives for housing career on the local level

Apart from the right for the housing allowance (available to all eligible residents), some specific initiatives emerged, but not too many and mostly in larger cities. For instance, public-private partnerships were set up by Habitat for Humanity Poland (Habitat dla Ukrainy, n.d.) and numerous private companies. Moreover, many NGOs (e.g., Fundacja Ocalenie or Fundacja Widzialne) and informal civic groups were engaged in providing informal housing brokerage, helping FDPs in finding private rentals (see for example: Rental of Apartments and Rooms, 2025; Wynajem Czterech Lokali, 2025).

Tendencies to independent living and financing own housing

Even though there are some tendencies to independent living and financing own housing, as noted above, it is a rather precarious housing independence. According to existing data only 2.7% of real estate transactions in Poland in 2023 were carried out by Ukrainians (Wpływ napływu, 2025).

Main barriers and opportunities

Barriers:

- **low income of FDPs working in low-paid sectors** esp. in the case of single-parent households and mothers taking care of small children (Janowska, 2024)
- **affordability** - high (and increasing) costs of accommodation (esp. within two months after the invasion the inflow of FDPs caused an increase in housing rents in largest cities due a positive demand shock; Gluszak & Trojanek, 2025)
- **increased risk of homelessness due to unstable employment** (“there are situations where contracts have already been terminated, [...] or there are situations where someone has lost their job, lost the ability to pay for their flat, and in fact these are often people employed on a contract basis – when they lose such employment, it is clear that they have no source of income”, HOU_SLB_PL)
- **uncertainty in terms of future social care regulations** (“I don't know what the regulations will look like, what the laws will be, how it will all work out, but I don't know if there will be [places] in social care homes, providing care in general”, LM_SLB_PL)
- **unfavourable attitudes of the Polish people:** e.g., discrimination of FDPs by landlords (Kleininger-Wanik & Wanke, 2024; Sarafian et al., 2025), animadversion towards FDPs based on the competition in the reduced access to housing resources (Babińska et al., 2022)
- **very complicated and lengthy procedure for legalising residence** (LM_SLB_PL)
- **demanding bureaucratic procedure when applying for council flats** (“we help them fill in the applications, which in my opinion are very unclear and difficult to fill in without making mistakes, (...) They are only in Polish, which is understandable, but they contain double negatives, and even for us, I am talking about the Polish team working in the office, it is sometimes unclear how to answer, (...) these applications are simply intellectually difficult. (...) these questions should be shorter... much simpler, we even reported this once, but these are just some bureaucratic oversights”, HOU_CSO_PL)

- **specific limitations regarding the purchase of real estate by FDPs in the Tricity agglomeration** - since it is located within the border zone, in order to purchase real estate, Ukrainian citizens (like any other foreigners) must obtain a permit from the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration (MSWiA) and more strict rules apply than in hinterland Poland (conditions: the purchase must not threaten national security, public order, or social policy, and the buyer demonstrates a real connection with Poland; duration of the procedure: should be up to two months but in reality usually lasts longer and involves quite a lot paperwork) (Uzyskaj zezwolenie 2023)

Opportunities

- **dense informal networks among Ukrainians in Poland, which facilitate housing** (“Ukrainian citizens ask relatively fewer questions about [housing], because they have very strong support groups”, HOU_CS0_PL)
- **good cooperation between public and civil society institutions established following the full-scale invasion, which continues today** (“it was also a time of getting to know each other, and for us, these acquaintances are now paying off and it is easier to cooperate”, HOU_SLB_PL)

Policies and outcomes on education of adults and children

Access to the education

In Poland, Ukrainian children have the legal right to education up to the age of 18, which includes full access to early childhood education and primary schools. The Polish government and educational institutions follow an integration model, according to which children of Ukrainian FDPs attend schools alongside Polish pupils, allowing for age-appropriate class placement (Nazaruk et al., 2024). Ukrainian pupils are provided with essential language support for up to three years (2021-2024: 6 hours a week; from 2024: 4 hours a week). One of our experts explained that at the moment, Ukrainian pupils do not need much language support:

Children learn within two years and then they are no longer entitled to additional hours, and that's right. Because they already know how to speak. We are talking about Slavic children... Two years is enough for Slavic children. And they already speak the language so well that they can cope at school at every level (EDU_SLB_PL).

Before September 2024, children of the Ukrainian FDPs could attend Ukrainian online schools. From 1 September 2024 all children of Ukrainian FDPs in Poland must attend Polish schools to meet the compulsory education requirement. Online education programs provided by the Ukrainian system are not recognized as fulfilling the education requirement in Poland, as those entities are separate from the Polish school system. The only exception is for students who, during the 2024/2025 school year, are in their final year of the Ukrainian system and are studying remotely to prepare for and take the Ukrainian matriculation examination in 2025 (Najczęściej zadawane, 2024).

At the secondary education level, Ukrainian students also face pathways to integration, though some challenges remain. Research indicates that approximately 40% of Ukrainian students are not enrolled in schools (Herbst & Sitek, 2023; Weir, 2024). Vocational schools present an option for those seeking practical skills that could enhance their employability in Poland's labour market (Weir, 2024). The educational landscape is still evolving, with ongoing adjustments in educational policy aimed at better accommodating the needs of FDPs and facilitating their adjustment (Herbst & Sitek, 2023).

Many Polish universities have introduced programs that acknowledge students' prior education and skills (Franczak & Lutz, 2024). These universities are providing resources for language acquisition and cultural orientation to help integrate these students academically and socially (Weir, 2024).

Access to the child-care

The children of the Ukrainian FDPs have the same access to child-care as the Polish children. The “active in nursery” benefit, introduced on 1 October 2024, provides support for parents of children under the age of 3. Ukrainian citizens who arrived in Poland after 24 February 2022 may apply for it, but under certain conditions. They must have been legally residing in Poland as persons with ‘UKR’ status for at least 365 days (Świadczenie Aktywnie, 2024).

Financing of higher education

Higher education is free for Ukrainians, just as it is for domestic students. FDPs can continue their studies in Poland, even if they don't have any documents confirming their grades, etc.

Language courses for adults

Municipalities have initiated community-based language courses to help integrate Ukrainian FDPs into the local labour market and society (Duszczuk et al., 2023; Walawender et al., 2023). For example, free language courses are being organized through local community centres, reflecting a strategy that prioritizes immediate linguistic needs to foster social inclusion (Domaradzki et al., 2022). Organizations such as the Polish Red Cross and various local charities have been instrumental in offering free or subsidized language classes specifically designed for Ukrainian adults. These programs often utilize culturally sensitive methodologies, enhancing effective learning and participation among FDPs (Prusaczyk et al., 2023). Many churches in Poland, especially those with significant Ukrainian congregations, offer informal language classes as part of their outreach initiatives. These classes serve not only as a means of instruction but also as community-building spaces, facilitating cultural exchange (Duszczuk et al., 2023, Kopeć, 2023).

Descriptive statistics

Specific quantitative data on language acquisition levels is limited, due to the absence of centralized language assessment programs.

Research findings suggest that many adult Ukrainian FDPs have acquired a basic level of Polish proficiency, which may be categorized as "satisfactory," enabling them to navigate essential activities such as interacting with healthcare providers and engaging in community services (Duszczuk et al., 2023).

However, a more advanced level of proficiency, which is required for skilled employment, may still pose difficulties for many, particularly those who lacked prior educational opportunities or face psychological barriers stemming from their displacement experiences (Kovács et al., 2023).

Specific initiatives for further or re-qualifications to facilitate the access to the education and labour market

The European Social Fund (ESF) resources toward initiatives designed for educational and vocational training and intensive language courses have been developed, specifically focusing on vocational Polish, which is crucial for entering various employment sectors (Duszczek et al., 2023).

Work placement programs have been implemented to provide Ukrainian FDPs with practical experience in the labour market. These programs are often coordinated through collaborations between local governments and private businesses that seek to fill labour shortages while offering FDPs a pathway to gain valuable work experience (Struk, 2023). Internships have also been integrated into these frameworks, allowing Ukrainians to assimilate into the Polish work culture and showcase their skills to potential employers, thereby easing their transition into permanent employment (Working towards, 2023).

An essential component of these initiatives is early skills assessment programs, which aim to identify the qualifications and competencies of Ukrainian FDPs. This assessment helps tailor re-qualification programs according to individual needs and facilitates the validation of previous education and professional experiences (Duszczek et al., 2023).

Tendencies to up or down educational mobility or opportunities structures

Adolescents and young adults who are students in higher education or transitioning into vocational training often find the recognition of their previous qualifications to be a significant barrier. Reports indicate that a considerable number of these young people possess high education levels yet struggle with bureaucratic hurdles in formalizing their academic credentials in Poland, leading to stagnation in their educational mobility (Working towards, 2023; Struk, 2023). The system is adopting, but there are still challenges.

Main barriers and opportunities Barriers:

- Navigating bureaucratic processes and potential language challenges, which can hinder their access to educational opportunities (Herbst & Sitek, 2023).
- Persistence of disparities in educational experiences continues due to limited resources, varying regional support, and infrastructural constraints within the Polish educational framework (Weir, 2024; Duszczyk et al., 2023).

Opportunities:

- Similarity of the Polish and Ukrainian language

While Ukrainian FDPs in Poland are granted access to education across all levels, there are many factors that restrict that access in practice.

Conclusion

Best practices in the field of labour market, housing and education:

- Effective cooperation between different actors and adequate sharing of responsibilities
- Courses for employees tailored to the specific nature of the services they provide, but also tailored with regard to the identified gaps to be filled
- Psychological support for employees to prevent professional burn-out
- employment of cultural assistants with the knowledge of the languages of the FDPs and cultural differences

Emerging responses to the ending of TPD

By mid-October 2025, no decisions have been made. In general, despite the decreasing support for Ukrainian FDPs staying in the country the situation is complex. On the one hand, there is a growing social discontent about the social transfers to FDPs (CBOSNews, 2025), but on the other hand, a part of the Polish society appreciates the FDPs contribution to the Polish economy and that they are filling the critical demographic gap ('Should Ukrainian Refugees', 2025). According to our knowledge there are no specific policies focusing on the future of FDPs in Poland, either on the national or local level.

Interrelation between the key areas of social integration in Poland

There are many interrelations between these areas. For instance, better language competency increases the chance of getting a better job, which in turn translates into better accommodation options. Conversely, some FDPs are prevented from taking up better paid jobs, because of long commutes from their current places of residence, which are more affordable because of the peripheral location. Another example is the recognition of diplomas, which impacts job opportunities.

The experts' reasoning about their own role in reception of the FDPs

They seem to try to manage on their own, not expecting any external support. Some of them value adequate training, esp. those who have not dealt with immigrants/foreigners in their profession before. The experts were not too vocal about it but between the lines, their accounts indicated that these issues play a considerable role in their work.

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