



---

# INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN POLAND

---

Foundation Bureau of Social Initiative

---

Preliminary Research Report

---

# INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN POLAND – CURRENT SITUATION AND POLICIES

Immigrants constitute only 0,7% of Polish society- which is one of the lowest scores of the share of immigrants in the resident population in the EU. However, since the Poland's accession to the EU, in 2004, the number of immigrants coming to Poland is constantly growing and it is growing fast – over the last 10 years it has increased 5 times.

According to statistics from The Office for Foreigners, as of the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2017, there is 266 218 registered immigrants currently living in Poland. The largest group of immigrants are citizens from: Ukraine (103 457), Germany (23 924), Belarus (11 428), Russia (10 583), Vietnam (10 269), Italy (7 321), China (7 042).

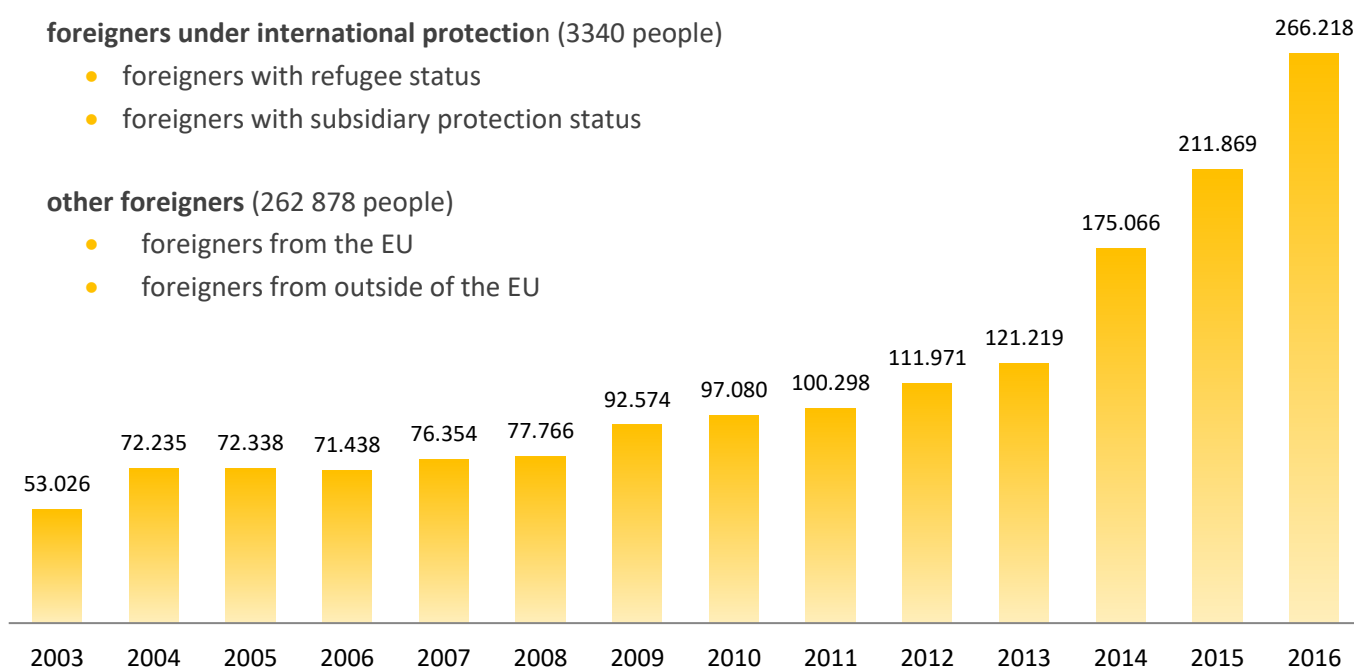
There are two main groups of immigrants distinguished in the Polish documents regarding migration policy:

## **foreigners under international protection** (3340 people)

- foreigners with refugee status
- foreigners with subsidiary protection status

## **other foreigners** (262 878 people)

- foreigners from the EU
- foreigners from outside of the EU



## **NUMBER OF RESIDENCE CARDS ISSUED PER YEAR FOR IMMIGRANTS IN POLAND(data from The Office For Foreigners 1.07.2017: )**

According to the Polish migrant policy, an immigrant is a person who registered his or her stay in Poland and obtained a Residence Card. The Residence Card is a document issued in Poland to foreigner who, have been granted:

- temporary residence permit
- permanent residence permit
- residence permit for EU long-term resident
- residence permit for humanitarian reasons

- international protection

## **POLAND'S IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY**

At the moment Poland has no immigrant integration policy. Two main government documents that were the basis for Poland's immigrant integration policy were abolished by the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs in March of 2017. The official reasons for this decision included the elevation of the refugee and migration crisis, as well as an increase in Ukraine immigrants due to the military conflict with Russia, however decision seems to be mainly political. A new strategic document on immigrant integration policy is currently being developed.

Before the abolition of its main strategic documents, Poland's immigrants integration policy, was not well developed. According to migration researchers Poland's integration policy was fragmented and addressed mainly to foreigners who have been granted international protection (Stefańska, 2015). Government integration support was provided only for immigrants who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection in the form of Individual Integration Programs (IIP) while the task to provide integration support to other groups of foreigners was left to non-governmental organizations.

In practice Poland's integration policy was based largely on integration activities carried out by NGOs relying on external sources and financing - mainly EU funds. The dependence on EU sources – primarily on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund – can be regarded as a characteristic feature of the Polish integration policy till 2017.

### **MAIN FEATURES OF THE POLISH INTEGRATION POLICY TILL 2017:**

- government integration support provided only for foreigners who have been granted international protection,
- most integration activities carried out by non- governmental organizations,
- dependence on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, other EU funds and external sources,
- no legislation governing the issue of immigrant integration; its different aspects were regulated by various legal acts, which usually pertain to both Poles (primarily) and foreigners, such as: the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland.
- complex structure of government institutions responsible for developing integration policy

### **MAIN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY:**

- **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** (developing integration policy)
- **Ministry of the Interior and Administration**(developing integration policy, governing funds from European Integration Fund)
- **The Office for Foreigners** (preintegration of foreigners applying for international protection)
- **Local Poviats Family Support Centers** (implementation of Individual Integration Programs)

## INSTITUTIONS DEALING WITH THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN POLAND

<b>Institutions of the European Union</b>			
<b>President</b>		<b>Parliament (Sejm and Senate)</b>	
<b>Inter-ministerial Committee for Migration, Working Group on Integration of Foreigners</b>			
<b>Ministry of Labour and Social Policy:</b> – Department of Social Assistance and Integration – National Contact Point on Integration of Foreigners – Department of the Labour Market – Department of Coordination of Social Security Schemes		<b>Ministry of the Interior:</b> – Department of Migration Policy – Department of Repatriation and Citizenship	<b>Other ministries:</b> – Ministry of the Economy – Ministry of National Education – Ministry of Science and Higher Education – Ministry of Health – Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Ministry of Finance
<b>Local family support centres</b>	<b>Office for Foreigners</b>	– Schools, educational supervisory bodies, – Universities, – Hospitals, outpatient clinics – Consulates	
<b>Social support centres</b>	<b>Voivodship offices (16)</b>		
<b>Local labour offices</b>	<b>City Halls and commune offices</b>		
<b>NGOs, migrant-led organisations, international organisations</b>			
<b>Ombudsman</b>	<b>Government Attorney for Equal Treatment</b>	<b>National Labour Inspectorate</b>	<b>Courts</b>

Source: Stefańska, 2015.

### MAIN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING IMMIGRANT INTERGRATION:

Polish Migration Forum Foundation	Foundation for Freedom
Foundation “Center for Citizens Education”	The Foundation for Social Diversity (FSD)
The Helsinki Foundation of Human Rights	The Jesuit „W Akcji” Social Center
The Halina Nieć Center of Legal Assistance in Cracow	The Ocalenie Foundation
	The “MultiOcalenie” Foundation

### KEY DOCUMENTS DEFINING INTEGRATION POLICY IN POLAND TILL 2017:

- **“COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR INTEGRATION POLICY”** (November 2004)
- **“POLAND’S MIGRATION POLICY – CURRENT STATE OF PLAY AND FURTHER ACTIONS”** – the main strategic document concerning integration elaborated by the inter-ministerial Committee for Migration in July 2011 and adopted by the Polish government in July 2012
- **“POLISH IMMIGRANTS INTEGRATION POLICY – ASSUMPTIONS AND GUIDELINES”** – an action plan for a “Poland’s Migration Policy” adopted by the Polish government in December 2014, which specifies ways to implement the recommendations concerning integration contained in the document. Most of recommendations was not implemented.

According to the recommendations included in the strategic document “Poland’s Migration Policy”, integration programs, cultural orientation trainings as well as Polish language courses should be available to **all** foreigners willing to take part in them. Moreover, the Polish state should introduce a “system of incentives” that encourages foreigners to participate in such courses (e.g. easier access to Polish citizenship for participants of Polish language courses) (Committee for Migration 2012). These recommendations were never implemented and no integration program or orientation training for immigrants who are not under international protection was developed.

## **EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND TEENS**

An important element of Poland’s integration policy is the support provided to foreigners’ children who are subject to compulsory education. Education is free and compulsory for all foreigners between 6 and 18 years old. The educational support is provided in the form of: additional free Polish language classes at school for at least two hours per week (in the form of group or individual lessons); remedial courses in other subjects (in the form of group or individual lessons), up to two courses five hours per week, including Polish language classes; courses in the language and culture of the child’s country of origin (but only if there are at least seven foreigners willing to take part in them), organized and financed by the diplomatic posts of the child’s country of origin or by cultural and educational associations. In practice availability of these educational support depends on the decision of local authorities and local possibilities.

## **IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

Immigrants under international protection have the same access to labor market as Polish citizens. Other groups of immigrants need to obtain work permit in order to be legally employed. There are many restrictions concerning employment of foreigners who are not under international protection however recently Polish government took some steps towards liberalization of the rules of immigrant employment policy. New regulations prioritize seasonal employment of foreigners and immigration from Eastern Europe, mostly from Ukraine.

### **THE LIBERALIZATION OF THE ACCES TO LABOR MARKET OF FOREIGNERS IN POLAND:**

- legal seasonal employment (up to 6months) without the need to obtain work permit for citizens of 6 countries: Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia or Georgia.
- the same employment rules and conditions as for Poles for foreign students in certain fields and university graduates,
- legal employment without the need to obtain work permit for foreigners with Polish origin who have the Polish Card.

These regulations allowing access to the labor market have, however, not been accompanied with any comprehensive integration policy. From lack of political initiative and a perception of migration as mostly temporary and limited in terms of scale, no systemic integration policy has been implemented in Poland. Migrants encounter numerous barriers to their active participation in the labor market, including insufficient knowledge of the language, legal complications, long procedures and unequal treatment by employers.

Also refugees, despite the equal access to the labour market, encounter many problems with finding a job in Poland. Most of problems are associated with the unavailability of permanent work, a surplus of jobs below qualification and poor command of the language. The access to free language lessons is limited and their quality is often low. At present, state institutions do not organize and finance Polish language courses for refugees despite of the importance of learning of Polish language stated in the main Polish integration document. Access to appropriate housing, housing exclusion or event homelessness remains another important problem.

## **INDIVIDUAL INTEGRATION PROGRAMS FOR IMMIGRANTS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION**

Immigrants under international protection are entitled to government integration assistance in the form of individual integration programs. Assistance is granted for the period of 12 months and is provided at the request of a refugee submitted via the Poviast Family Assistance Center in the place of residence of refugee.

The officially stated goal of individual integration programs is to enable refugees to lead an independent life in a local community without the need for social assistance. The focus is primarily on Polish language learning, which is considered very important for economic integration, then on the labour market and finding accommodation. At present, however, ensuring social security by providing cash benefits seems to be the most important part of the program in practice.

The Individual Integration Program is established in the form of an agreement between a foreigner and the Poviast Family Assistance Center. The program includes:

- financial support for maintaining and covering the costs of living- monthly cash benefits ranging from 446 PLN (around 105 EUR) to 1,175 PLN(around 275EUR) per person for food, clothes, shoes, personal care products, housing expenses and costs related to learning the Polish language
- health insurance (access to free medical care in public facilities),
- support of social worker,
- specialist counseling, including legal advice, psychological and family advice,
- providing information and support in contacts with other institutions, in particular with labor market institutions, with the local community and non-governmental organizations.

The total number of refugees taking part in individual integration programs in 2016 was 515 people (including 151 women and 176 children).

It is worth to mention that very small portion of people who apply for international protection in Poland are granted protection. For example, in 2016, there was more than 12000 asylum seekers in Poland, but only 307 of them have been granted international protection (108 received refugees status , 150 have been granted subsidiary protection, and 49 tolerated stay). The highest number of applications for international protection come from citizens of Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia and Syria. In 2015, 90% of refugees from Russia declared Chechen nationality .