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The case of Poland
&

Empirical Report: Outcomes of the Interviews conducted in Poland

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1 National Report DIVPOL. The case of Poland

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 How important is the topic of political participation of immigrants and/or TCNs in the media, the public and in political parties?

The topic of political participations of immigrants still waits to find its place in the public debate generally and in/among political parties specifically. There are some reasons explaining such a situation. Firstly, the number of immigrants in Poland is very low. Secondly, according to the Constitution, Polish nationality is a precondition for active participation in political life in Poland. Therefore, if the media show examples of naturalized politicians, it is to point out the extraordinary situation rather than to promote diversity in political parties or, more generally, in political life.

Examples of naturalized politicians who succeeded in Polish elections to the Lower Chamber of the Parliament are presented as proofs of the openness of the Polish society as well as the political party to which an immigrant belongs. In the media, their example is used to initiate a discussion about everyday relations between the vast Polish majority and those who arrived in Poland from distant regions or about MPs' possible engagement in international relations between Poland and their countries of origin¹. The element of political participation of immigrants as a certain category of residents of Poland is not present in the media at all.

Due to the legal limitation for political participation of immigrants, which will be described in further parts of this paper, research coverage of the topic is rather weak. The existing studies concentrate on civic participation of immigrants, and usually, it is not the main subject of the projects. At this point, however, it is worth recalling the findings² of the report by Kaźmierkiewicz and Frelak (2011). According to the publication, politicians, in general, considered citizenship as a prerequisite for full political participation. Furthermore, the interviewed MPs noted "the tendency to perceive immigrants as *guests*, especially among local level politicians and officials, who preferred to *solve local matters on our own*. Politicians of the Civic Platform saw the national level as more promising for the inclusion of naturalized immigrants into political life" [Kaźmierkiewicz and Frelak 2011: 15]. What is interesting in the context of the DivPol Project, the interviewed politicians did not consider the need to open membership in political parties to non-naturalized foreigners.

1.1.2 Short introduction to the immigration history, the population and the current issues of immigration/integration

In recent times, immigration to Poland has not been on a significant scale. The year 1989 brought a dramatic change onto the immigration scene in Poland. It was mainly related to the political changes

¹ Quite recently, this Black MP is recalled in the context of his conservative opinions against partnerships as well as bringing up children by homosexual couples or strict methods of upbringing.

² They are based on interviews conducted in April 2011 with three representatives of the governing coalition (one MP and senator from the Civic Platform/Platforma Obywatelska and one MP from the Polish People's Party/Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe).



in the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern European countries. After decades of restrictive policy, their citizens finally gained freedom to travel abroad. Due to previously concluded agreements (though practically inactive until 1989), Poland was one of just a few countries where those people could easily be admitted. The number of entries of foreign citizens to Poland quickly grew to tens of millions a year. For instance, in the case of citizens of the former-USSR states alone, it increased from less than three million in 1989 to 14 million in 1997 [Iglicka 2001].

Immigration policy of Poland – in general – can be described as relatively restrictive and it is rather addressed towards non-EU citizens, mostly from the neighbouring Eastern European countries. Labour immigration was regulated by the work permits system. A permit had to be obtained prior to entering Poland. Apart from exceptional, numerically small categories (e.g. academics) this was until very recently the only way for a foreign, temporary resident to gain legal employment in Poland. The number of work permits granted each year has steadily increased over time: from an initial 3,000 work permits issued in 1990 to 25,000 in 2002. In the peak year 2011, 41,000 work permits were issued, in 2012 slightly fewer – approx. 40,000. Regardless of their total number in any given year, most immigrants come from the same countries, which, with comparably significant shares, can be easily divided into three regional groups. The first group comprises three countries of Eastern Europe: Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, the second one – five Western countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the United States and Italy, and the third one – five Asian countries: Vietnam, China, Turkey, India and South Korea. For years, a burdensome procedure and a substantial fee related to granting a work permit discouraged both employers and potential immigrant workers from applying. Instead, many foreigners were clandestinely employed. Various estimates throughout the 1990s suggested that, annually, hundreds of thousands of foreigners might have been involved in irregular work in Poland (Maroukis, Iglicka & Gmaj 2011).

Starting from mid-2007, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy simplified the rules for short-term employment. An initially pilot programme was steadily prolonged and covered all sectors of economy. Finally, it is applicable in the case of the citizens of Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. They have the right to work for six months during a year without a work permit. They only need declarations of the Polish employers. Each year, the Ukrainians constitute the vast majority (more than 90%) of foreigners for whom the declarations were given on the basis of this procedure. In 2012 employers issued almost 250,000 such declarations.

The influx of asylum seekers began in 1990. Initially, until 1995, the inflow was rather small: except for 1990, when their number exceeded 1,000, the applicants numbered about 500 to 850 a year. Refugee seekers were geographically diversified. Many came from Africa and Asia, but the majority hailed from South-Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Romania). Most of them turned out to be 'false' refugees who soon left Poland illegally and went to the West. A little more than 500, however, were granted a refugee status and went on to settle in Poland [Iglicka & Ziolk 2010]. From 1996 to 1999, the inflow of asylum seekers reached a much higher level than was recorded in preceding years (3,000-3,500 a year). The predominant majority of the newly arriving individuals were from Asia and the Middle East – Armenia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iraq. In 2000, with the arrival of a large group of Chechens (officially, citizens of the Russian Federation), a sharply rising trend was initiated. This trend stabilised in 2003, with the number of asylum seekers consistently ranging between 7,000 and 8,000 in subsequent years. After 2004, only individuals from the Russian Federation (in 2009 also the citizens of Georgia) were



statistically significant within the Polish refugee administration. It is worth noting that, during this period of relatively high influxes of asylum seekers, i.e. 1996-2006, only 3.5 per cent applicants gained the refugee status, the rest usually received other forms of international protection [Iglicka 2007].

As far as integration is concerned, Poland still lags behind other EU countries in implementing a comprehensive integration policy. In fact, Poland has not defined the contents of immigrants' integration in any legal document to date [Smoter 2006]. Until recently, integration focused only on those with refugee status and returning Polish emigrants, known as repatriates.

Under the Act on repatriation³, repatriates are entitled to reimbursement of the cost of transportation, education in Poland for minor children, a settlement and maintenance grant and a free course in the Polish language; the government will also reimburse their Polish employer for bonuses, social insurance, equipment and vocational training.

Poland's first integration programmes regarding the foreigners, in the early 1990s, targeted refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Since then, it has been within the competence of local regional governors to coordinate the measures for integration of refugees in their regions. The main unit responsible for immigrant integration management at the national level is the Department of Social Assistance and Integration in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The unit determines the whole area of social assistance. Therefore, immigrant integration is only a small part of its many activities.

Integration programmes are restricted to those who are granted international protection. The Individual Integration Programme, which the County Centres of Family Support run, does not exceed one calendar year. During that year, participants receive cash benefits for living expenses and Polish-language classes. The money also covers contributions to health insurance and the costs of specialized guidance services, finding accommodation and social work activities. In March 2008, these provisions were extended to those with subsidiary-protection status⁴.

Because the County Centres of Family Support are understaffed, a question is asked how well the agencies can serve immigrants. However, the County Centres have started collaborating and partnering some integration-oriented non-profit organisations to expand their capacity. Also, the European Union's European Refugee Fund supports many of the County Centres' integration measures.

The government has shown strong support for civil society and non-governmental organizations that aim to help immigrants, such as Polish Humanitarian Action and the Polish Red Cross, which have

³ Journal of Laws, 2004, No. 53, item 532

⁴ Law of 18 March 2008 amending the Act on the protection of foreign citizens, Journal of Laws, 2008, No.70, item 416



done integration work for many years. In addition, since 2008, money from the European Union's European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals has made a recent boom in new programmes and integration measures possible.

Policymakers have recently become slightly more interested in integrating groups beyond refugees. In 2007, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration established a Working Group on the Integration of Foreigners as part of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Migration, established in the same year. So far, the group activities were mainly passing opinions on programmes implementing the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals and monitoring relevant programmes pursued in the EU.

To conclude, the lack of an integration strategy for non-EU residents is reflected in low MIPEX scores granted to Poland in most areas. Although, since 2007, some minor improvements have been registered, Poland is still far away from other countries.

Since, as it was written above, according to the Constitution, Polish nationality is a precondition for active participation in political life in Poland, we decided to emphasise some recent changes in the legislation concerning naturalisation. Till quite recently, the law originating from 1962 regulated access to Polish citizenship. The new Bill on Polish citizenship (the Act of 2 April 2009 on Polish citizenship, which entered into force in August 2012) responded to an urgent need to develop new procedures and adjust them to the new reality as well as the EU and international liabilities that Poland has. The new law provides a clearer path to citizenship. It can be acquired in two ways:

- by applying for citizenship to be granted by the President (5-year residence in Poland on the basis of a permanent residence permit is required);
- by applying for Polish citizenship acknowledgement by the governor of the region under conditions of 3-year residence in Poland on the basis of a permanent residence permit, possession of accommodation and maintenance means and the knowledge of the Polish language confirmed by a state certificate (the last one is a completely new requirement).

1.1.3 Demographic development and current migration situation in Poland

The most important turning point in the field of migration policy in Poland over a few past years has been the adoption of the strategic document entitled 'The Polish Migration Policy: current state of play and further actions', which took place in 2011. The document sets a frame within which diverse activities of the government are supposed to stimulate the inflow of immigrants. It also lists the premises that make an increase in immigration a preferable trend if not a must, among them a necessity to compensate for the post-accession outflow of Poles, which in turn caused significant changes in the Polish labour market (e.g. a growing demand for immigrant workers). However, the document does not take the long view and fails to consider the immigration-related implications of shrinking Poland's population and its rapid ageing in decades to come. Experts argue that, from the demographic angle, it is a short-sighted policy and it might encourage circular mobility (short-time flows of migrants) rather than (demographically much more favourable) long-term immigration.



Over the two recent decades, Poland has been systematically penetrated by various flows of migrants arriving for diverse purposes and originating from a variety of different countries. Large niches have been created where these migrants have established their living spaces. Nevertheless, the stock of immigrants has remained very low. According to the recent National Census (2011), foreign residents constitute only 0.2 % of the Polish population. The number of naturalized persons is also low. In the years 1992-2009, Polish citizenship has been granted to 22,233 foreigners (the Ministry of the Interior data).

On the other hand, the permanently low fertility rate, negative birth rate and prolonged average life expectancy are inevitably leading to a decrease in population and an acceleration of the aging of the Polish population. One of the critical factors inducing the population drop is the post-2004 increase in emigration to Western Europe. According to the 2011 Census, the number of Polish emigrants residing abroad for over one year (“foreign residents”) was 1.5 million. The same data also show that 200,000 Polish residents living in foreign states are children aged up to 14, which indicates that we actually observe migration of whole families. Is it justified to expect that immigrants will replace these families? At the moment, it is rather doubtful. Instead of attracting immigrants whose strategy would include settlement and integration into the Polish society, Poland receives and hosts migrants who enter the shadow economy and prefer short-term visits, a transitory status and flexibility. As a result, continuously growing number of temporary or circular migrants has little impact on the changes in the stock of foreign residents. As far as the media debate on demography and immigration is concerned, we can observe a harbinger of changes, especially in some recent cover stories as e.g. the cover story by the Rzeczpospolita daily⁵ expressing the need for permanent immigrants because of the dramatic demographic trends (<http://fakty.interia.pl/polska/news-rzeczpospolita-polska-skazana-naimigrantow,nld,939446>).

1.2 *Research overview*

1.2.1 *Existence of research with regard to the national situation*

Up to the moment, in Poland, no in-depth study has been conducted that could show how immigrants benefit from political freedom. The available studies concentrate on different ethnic groups or categories of immigrants and, furthermore, the issue of their associations is only a part of particular research projects. In this context, it is worth recalling the results of surveys on participation in associations⁶ and organizations conducted among Ukrainians and the Vietnamese settled in Poland. It turned out that only 15% of Ukrainians belong to any type of organizations. Among them,

⁵ Rzeczpospolita is one of the leading quality newspapers in Poland.

⁶ Freedom of association is a constitutional guarantee. It is regulated by the Law on associations (1989), which defines an association as a “voluntary, self-governed and permanent organization, set up for non-profit purposes” (Article 2(1)). As long as an association’s statute allows, all foreigners may join existing associations. However, only permanent residents of Poland may set up such associations. This restriction does not apply in cases of foundations, which may be formed by all persons, regardless of their residence status, but they have to be located in Poland.



the majority are members of trade unions⁷ (Grzymala-Kazłowska2007). This can be interpreted in terms of the individualistic attitudes dominating Ukrainians: they are rarely members of any organizations and if they are, it is connected with their individual interests' protection. Due to the short linguistic and cultural distance to the Polish majority, Ukrainians settled in Poland do not need support of ethnic organizations [Stefańska 2008]. On the contrary, the Vietnamese settled in Poland due to the sense of alienation, which is a result of both cultural and linguistic distance and a different look in the very homogenous Polish society, are much more likely to get organized. More than 1/3 of the respondents belonged to the Vietnamese associations, nearly half of them to more than one. Three-quarters of the respondents said that they had participated in the events organized by Vietnamese organizations during the last 12 months preceding the survey [Grzymala-Kazłowska 2007].

Political challenges arising from migration-related diversity were covered by one of the working packages of EMILIE research project⁸. The analysis concentrated on the voting rights and civic participation. Taking into account the fact that voting rights are limited to Polish nationals, five models of immigrants' political participation have been elaborated. The first one refers to immigrants' cooperation with historical ethnic/national minorities. Those immigrants who are co-ethnics of old minorities recognized in Poland might rely on old minorities' support also including political channels such as old minority members, who are e.g. members of the mainstream parties. The second model refers to Muslim immigrants, who are a religious and not ethnic/national minority. In this case, we observe a process following the western pattern of political representation. It is embodied by the Muslim League, which relies on the support of converts, who seemed to replace the old minority Muslims. The third model is based on seeking allies among Polish politicians in order to create a platform consisting of immigrants visually different from the Polish majority. The aim is to present a vision of integration from the perspective of the person who stands out from the Polish homogeneous majority. The fourth model is represented by the arrivals from socialist Vietnam. They are trying to be invisible in the political sphere. They focus their activities on self-support and maintaining their ethnic identity and culture. Finally, the fifth model is characteristic of immigrants focused on the political situation in the country of their origin. It refers to Chechens, Belarusian and Vietnamese dissidents or the Palestinians [Gmaj 2011].

The report *Political participation of third country nationals on a national and local level* [Kaźmierkiewicz, Frelak 2011] is based on secondary data and small-scale research – seven interviews with both politicians and immigrants. It concentrates on the institutional framework (opportunities and constrains) for immigrants' civic and political participation. Among its main findings that should be recalled in the DivPol report, there is a tendency noted by the interviewees to perceive immigrants as “guests”. This tendency is especially strong among local-level politicians and officials. Another crucial conclusion is an opinion of the representatives of migrant organizations on Polish authorities. Immigrants do not observe their will to promote immigrants' activism. In their opinion,

⁷ Article 59 of the Polish Constitution (1997) guarantees freedom of membership in trade unions and employers' associations. Statutory law other than in cases dictated by international commitments must not limit the scope of this guarantee. Another act regulating membership in trade unions is the Act on trade unions (1991).

⁸ A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship: Legal, political and educational challenges - EMILIE was a three-year research project funded by the European Commission Research DG, Sixth Framework Programme (2006-2009).



the authorities are not interested in issues related to integration but in controlling access to the labour market and the Polish territory.

1.3 Legal prerequisites and regulations within the political system and parties

1.3.1 Legal prerequisites to vote (at local, regional, national and the EU level)

With regard to active and passive voting rights, till 2004 they were restricted only to Polish citizens. However, due to the requirements that Poland had to fulfil joining the European Union, amendments to the Law on local elections have extended these rights in local council elections to citizens of the EU Member States residing permanently in the given district. The EU nationals residing in Poland can also take part in elections to the European Parliament. It is regulated by the Act on elections to the European Parliament (2004). Still, in national elections, both active and passive rights are restricted to Polish citizens exclusively. The rest of foreigners residing in Poland cannot benefit from any voting rights since Poland has not ratified the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.

1.3.2 Who is allowed to join a political party?

According to the literal wording of Article 11 of the Polish Constitution (1997), the freedom of association in political parties is reserved for Polish citizens.

“Article 11. Par. 1. The Republic of Poland shall ensure freedom for the creation and functioning of political parties. Political parties shall be founded on the principle of voluntariness and upon the equality of Polish citizens, and their purpose shall be to influence the formulation of the policy of the State by democratic means”. [The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997]

This limitation is also present in the Act on political parties (1997).

“Article 2. 1. Citizens of the Republic of Poland who have reached the age of 18 years may join a political party as its members.” [Act on political parties, 1997].

Such an approach is justified by interpretation *a contrario*. It is also indicated that the right of association in political parties belongs to rights and freedoms inherently related to national sovereignty, its independence and it is unacceptable that foreigners benefit from them [Opinia z 14 września 2012 r. dot. interpretacji art. 11 Konstytucji Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i możliwości ewentualnej nowelizacji ustawy z dnia 27 czerwca 1997 r. o partiach politycznych [Opinion of 14 September 2012 on the interpretation of Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland and the possibility of amending the Act of 27 June 1997 on political parties]].

However, the European Commission called on Poland to change the existing law (16 April 2012). The Commission’s request referred to membership but also to the right of establishing a political party. The Commission called on Poland to provide these opportunities to citizens of other EU Member States residing in Poland.

The Ministry of Administration and Digitization and the Ministry of the Interior take two opposite positions on this call. The former is convinced that the European Commission’s request is legitimate and that amendments should be made to the Act on political parties. The Ministry of the Interior



does not accept the EC's allegations and suggests a further dialogue. Finally, the Government Legislation Centre (GLC) recommended "a modification of the Act on political parties". It stated that extending the possibility of membership in political parties for the EU citizens would ensure fuller implementation of their voting rights in Poland. Therefore, a potential conflict between the national law and the EU law would be eliminated. According to the GLC, the modification of the Act on political parties does not affect the scope of Polish sovereignty since the national level is still an exclusive domain of Polish citizens. Other EU nationals associated in political parties will not be able to take active and passive part in elections to the Lower and Upper Chambers of the Parliament as well as in the Presidential election. They will not be able to candidate for positions such as the Ombudsman and the President of the National Bank of Poland. What is more, it is inappropriate to claim that granting certain rights to Polish citizens is tantamount to banning non-citizens from using these rights. Therefore, based on other constitutional values, it is possible to extend the opportunity of membership and establish political parties for those who are not Polish citizens in order to allow them to influence local government policies and the policies of the European Union [Opinia z 14 września 2012 r. dot. interpretacji art. 11 Konstytucji Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i możliwości ewentualnej nowelizacji ustawy z dnia 27 czerwca 1997 r. o partiach politycznych [Opinion of 14 September 2012 on the interpretation of Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland and the possibility of amending the Act of 27 June 1997 on political parties]].

In conclusion, non-Polish citizens are currently excluded from the membership of any political party in Poland.

1.4 Actual state of representation in the major political parties

Since membership in political parties is restricted to Polish nationals, in this paper, we will refer to naturalized immigrants only⁹. Unfortunately, there are no data on the political participation of naturalized persons, which could justify strong statements on their entire population. Besides, the stock of such people is low in absolute numbers, as well as in rates (4 naturalized persons per 100,000 Poles). Available information refers to particular - still rare - immigrants politically active at local and national level.

1.4.1 Current data on how many migrants and/or TCNs are currently sitting in the Parliament as representatives of their parties

So far, three naturalized immigrants have been elected to the Polish Parliament¹⁰. The first one is Hubert Ranjan Costa (member of Self-Defence/Samoobrona, the 5th term of the Parliament - 2005-

⁹As far as statistical data are concerned, after a significant increase in 2005 and a drop in 2006, the number of acquisitions of Polish citizenship was 1,528 in 2007, 1,054 in 2008, 2,503 in 2009 and 2,926 in 2010. The main recipients were citizens of the former USSR: Ukrainians (992 persons in 2010), Belarusians (418), Russians (215) and Armenians (101). The Vietnamese and German citizens constituted further major groups (97 and 92, respectively).

¹⁰ It is worth mentioning another case of a naturalized MP - Nelli Rokita - who sat in the Polish Parliament; she is German, who moved as a child from the USSR to Germany (1976). In 1994 she married a Polish politician -



2007), who originated from Bangladesh. The second one is John Abraham Godson originating from Nigeria (member of Civic Platform/Platforma Obywatelska, in December 2010 he replaced another MP, who was elected for President of one of the Polish cities, and therefore had to resign from her mandate. Godson was re-elected in 2011). The third one – Killion Munyama originating from Zambia – is also a member of Civic Platform/Platforma Obywatelska. He was elected in 2011. All the three politicians had been working as councillors at the local level.

The recalled MPs do not raise claims on behalf of the immigrants and do not refer to immigrants as potential supporters because immigrants' votes cannot provide political victory to naturalised candidates. To be elected, they have to appeal to Polish electorate for their support. Both Hubert Ranjan Costa and John Abraham Godson entered the Parliament as representatives of the mainstream parties¹¹. They do not perform as representatives of immigrants but rather as representatives of their party and/or region.

1.4.2 How many migrants and/or TCNs are currently sitting in regional and local parliaments?

The data that can help to answer this question are not collected. There have been a few cases of naturalized councillors and even a commune leader (a village leader). The latter originated from Yemen; before his election for a commune leader he had been offered to run for the councillor position, but he refused. "I have never imagined myself in the role of a politician. A commune leader is different. He has to act and not to conduct public debates." [Gazeta Współczesna, 23 March 2007]

1.5 Description of the actual discussion and approach to the issue within political parties

As it has been already mentioned, the issue of political participation of immigrants is not on the agenda in Poland yet. In this context, it is also worth saying a few words about Polish peculiarity. Unfortunately, twenty years of democracy have not brought significant promulgation of political participation among Poles. Political preoccupation oscillates from 40 to 50 %, and only 15% of citizens declare a deep interest [Raciborski 2011:122]. Universality of anti-party resentment is a crucial obstacle for the creation of a full democratic citizenship in Poland. There are varied proofs for Polish reluctance towards political parties. The rate of identification with political parties is low. It reached its peak in 1997 (64%) and then it dropped. According to Raciborski's estimation, only 30% of all entitled citizens systematically participate in parliamentary elections. Those who never vote constitute 20% of the total [Raciborski 2011: 134-136]. These general features of political life in Poland somehow influence political activity of immigrants and a general interest in their political participation.

Jan Rokita. However, this example does not fit in the Project Framework since Nelli Rokita was a German citizen before she became a Polish citizen.

¹¹ Representatives of historical minorities follow a similar strategy. They enter the Parliament as members of the mainstream parties. Germans are the only minority succeeding in passing their representatives to the Parliament, thanks to: (1) their spatial/regional concentration and (2) the special regulation for national minorities (they do not have to achieve a 5% threshold that is obligatory in the elections to the Polish Parliament). The rest of minorities are too dispersed territorially.



The already existing material on political parties' approach to the topic is really scarce. At this point one can recall the results of the project EMILIE¹². The question raised by the researchers referred to voting rights for non-citizens in elections at the local level. The conclusion from this research was that the issue is not on the agenda of any political party and one should not expect this topic to be on the agenda soon [Gmaj 2009]. First of all, foreigners do not raise such a claim. Secondly, it would require changes in many existing legal regulations and Acts, which is an extremely complex process. Thirdly, in Poland the numbers of foreigners/immigrants are too low to count them as potential voters so they do not attract political parties' attention. Fourthly, there are many issues that are to be promptly attended to.

Interestingly, the same conclusion is presented in the report on active participation of third country immigrants in Poland released in 2005 [Iglicka]. This situation has not changed significantly until now. However, as a result of various NGOs' suggestions, in a strategic document adopted by the Polish government in the middle of 2012, the necessity of a debate on voting rights in local elections is recommended. This recommendation is limited to foreigners possessing a permit to settle in Poland. Such a permit is granted for an unlimited period of time [MSWiA 2012:74].

In the report by Kaźmierkiewicz and Frelak [2011], it is stressed that an assessment of the openness of political parties to political participation of immigrants is very limited due to the total exclusion of immigrants (third-country nationals) from participation in elections. In the same report, it is also stated that political elite perceive citizenship as a prerequisite for full political participation. As a result, one observes a *vicious circle* situation.

1.6 Awareness within the political parties and prospects

The reader of our report will be left with the feeling that the question of voting rights for non-citizens or the question of the right of membership in political parties for non-citizens are not attracting Polish politicians' attention. They appear on the agenda as a result of the European level discussion or the EU requirements rather than a reflection at the national level. Nevertheless, it shows a huge potential for the DivPol project and the recommendations stemming from the research.

¹² Political challenges arising from migration-related diversity were one of the topics covered by the project. During the field study (October 2008 – January 2009) in Poland, thirteen interviews were conducted with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (Departments in charge of migration policy, religious denominations and national and ethnic minorities); City Councils (Centre for Social Communication), two MPs (Civic Platform and Democratic Left Alliance/ Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) - minority members; immigrants (three of them are naturalised, three of them do not have Polish citizenship) and national and religious minority members (the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, the Friends of Armenian Culture Society, the Muslim League in Poland, the Muslim Religious Union of the Republic of Poland).



2 Empirical Report Empirical Report: Outcomes of the Interviews conducted in Poland

2.1 Description of the empirical phase - general information on the interviews and interviewees

Materials analysed in this report were collected in April-July 2013. They were mainly face-to-face interviews; only two were conducted on Skype. All of them were recorded. There were two focused interviews with migrant organisations (NGO1; NGO2¹³), with four and five people respectively. We talked to the members of seven political parties individually (18 persons - for short profiles of the parties involved in the interviews see Annex 2, p.25)¹⁴, one former party member¹⁵ and two non-party councillors¹⁶. Furthermore, we interviewed three experts – Professors of Law¹⁷. All, except the last three above-mentioned interviews, were based on the list of questions designed for the DivPol project and adjusted to the Polish situation and to the situation of a particular interview. Only one interview with a migrant organisation was in English, the rest was in Polish. All in all, 33 persons were interviewed. The detailed table is attached in Annex 1 (p.24).

It was an extremely challenging task to encourage politicians to discuss the topic of immigrants' political participation in Poland. Because of that, whenever it was possible, we asked questions designed for different modules during one interview. For example, an interviewee first responded to questions designed for an outreach, campaign or lobbying staff within the party, and then he answered questions for the module for a politician without an immigrant background. As a result, we can present the following list:

- Politicians with a migrant background (individual interviews with four persons, including three party members and one non-associated councillor)
- Politicians without an immigrant background (thirteen individual interviews)
- Outreach, campaign or lobbying staff within the party (six individual interviews)
- Inner-party gate-keeping personnel (three individual interviews)
- Migrant organization representatives (two organisations focus groups, nine persons interviewed)

¹³ The abbreviations are used when we quote interviewees.

¹⁴ We label them PP1_1 – PP7_1, which can be explained as: the first party, the first interviewee; the seventh party, the first interviewee. The list of parties: PJN (Polska jest Najważniejsza/ Poland Comes First); PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość/Law and Justice); PO (Platforma Obywatelska/Civic Platform); PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe/Polish People's Party); SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/Democratic Left Alliance); PPP (Polska Partia Pracy/ Polish Labour Party); Ruch Palikota (Polikot's Movement).

¹⁵ Labelled FP_1

¹⁶ Labelled NP_1 and NP_2. The NP_2 used to be a party member.

¹⁷ Labelled: E1, E2, E3 respectively.



It should also be pointed out that in the meantime – between collecting interviews and writing the report - some changes occurred in the Polish political landscape. They affected our interviewees' affiliation. However, in order to avoid confusion, in the description of the empirical phase, we have decided to recall the current state of the phase of collecting interviews.

In short, one of the parties changed its name; another one was incorporated into a newly emerged party¹⁸. One of our interviewees was excluded from his former party and later he was one of the founders of a newly emerged formation.

2.2 Access and entry into a party:

2.2.1 Reasons for joining and ways of entering a political party

Our four interviewees classified as politicians with a migrant background were asked about their motivation for their political engagement in Poland. What shall be stressed at this point is that all of them are very well educated. They are graduates of Polish universities, although they also have some academic experience from abroad. We can find academics, a respected doctor among them. That makes them outstanding. Yet, before having started their political career and having been later elected representatives, they had already been well established (including professional and family life) in Poland and recognised in their local communities.

What is interesting, political party membership is not a precondition for their success at communal/municipal elections. Some present members of the Lower Chamber of the Parliament (the Sejm) had been elected at municipal level still before joining a political party. It is also worth recalling an example of a village councillor, who consciously avoids entering any political party. He is convinced that at the commune level political affiliation can be a disadvantageous factor influencing relationships among neighbours:

...So that at that stage, so that politics, let's say, does not cause quite a few raised eyebrows in the neighbourhood and further, let's say, a disadvantage in contacts e.g. between a councillor and the community residents. (NP_1)

A non-migrant councillor recalled concerns of a different nature:

¹⁸ Ruch Palikota (Polikot's Movement) became Twój Ruch (Your Move) and PJN (Polska jest Najważniejsza/Poland Comes First) was incorporated into Polska Razem Jarosława Gowina (Jarosław Gowin's Poland Together).



I've really seen "breaking on the wheel", breaking conscience. I saw councillors who got a sudden stomach pain just because they wanted to leave the session, because they knew that they could not vote for something, and they were forced to do so. They were late hoping that something had been already voted on. They did not want to participate in the session because they were afraid of different types of sanctions for their lack of subordination to the party. They were forced to vote against their beliefs and against the residents they represented. This is a huge drawback in the way of functioning of a local government. A local government is closest to citizens and it should represent their interests, the expectations of residents. (...) However, I observe that it is not a rare case that councillors vote against the interests of their constituents because they follow their party line. Unfortunately, partisanship prevails over self-government in Poland. The idea of self-government is recalled on the occasion of local elections every fourth year. (NP_2)

The above-mentioned arguments point out some reasons why our interviewees have resigned from joining a political party although they are working for their local communities' benefit. Some people being active at the local level do not accept the idea of transferring the national level conflicts to their local communities. Their diagnosis of Polish contemporary self-governance system is not positive. It can be described in short – too much politics, too little care about constituency needs. Our interviewee, labelling himself "an idealist", explained:

And despite various proposals, I have decided to become an independent councillor (...) no connections with opposition or coalition reduces the chance of implementation of various motions. It is obvious. But on the other hand, it is very big comfort – firstly, psychological, and secondly, you can actually represent the interests of residents, your constituency. (NP_2)

What are the reasons for joining a political party pointed out by our migrant interviewees? They joined a political party when they realised that in order to implement their social visions, it is better to be a part of a bigger structure.

Without politics and engagement in a party that has a real impact on social life I would be just one of many doctors who are not heard. Thanks to politics, I manage to implement at least a tiny part of my plan. (PP5_3)

Still in 2001, I wanted to join [name of the party] but my application was not treated seriously (...) they did not respond so I left that idea aside for a moment. Then, [name of the party] turned to me. They wanted me to candidate for a councillor in a county. But at that moment, I was not convinced that this was what I really wanted to do. (PP3_1)

Finally, he has come to the conclusion that being a member of a political party, he can achieve more of his social aims. He submitted his application to the Civic Platform and it was accepted.

A decision on joining a political party can be undertaken when a politician thinks about a political career at a higher level.



I became a party member before Regional Assembly elections. I made the decision then as it is much more difficult to be elected at this level being outside a party. (PP3_2)

In the case of a person who has already been experienced as a councillor in a county, joining a party half a year before the election is reasonable both from his point of view and the political party efficiency.

I cannot deny that they were looking for a potential candidate to the Regional Assembly, a candidate who can overcome other candidates. So it was also a political party initiative. (PP3_2)

To conclude, in the case of the so-called elected politicians with a migration background, the motivation for becoming politically active in a party appeared when they were recognised by local communities due to their professional position and social activities. Joining a political party is like a subsequent step in their mature life. This conclusion is not astonishing since, according to the literal wording of Article 11 of the Polish Constitution (1997), the freedom of association in political parties is reserved for the Polish citizens. This limitation is also present in the Act on political parties (1997). The recalled examples of politicians belong to the first generation immigrants. They were naturalized in Poland. What is also characteristic of them - they did not arrive in Poland as typical labour or settlement migrants. They came to Poland for educational reasons; there is also a missionary among them. All of them met their wives in Poland and started a family here.

Being recognized due to their professional position, engagement in social life and local community predating party membership is not something unique for politicians with a migrant background. The same trait is also observable among other politicians.

I was non-party, independent, active in the local government structures (...) Local governments are strong. If they are cohesive and unitary as it is in [name of the city] people do not fight against each other, you know, there is a competition...but...in short words, local circles decided that I should be an MP. And they took care of that and finally, I've become an MP. (PP3_4)

However, it seems that in the case of politicians without a migration background, a more typical political career starts after graduating from secondary school, usually at university, therefore still at the beginning of their professional life.

At the university. I was always interested in politics. It was an interesting time (...) I wanted to take part in these changes. In the case of a young man, engagement in politics is a way to observe and to change the reality. (...) I made a calculation - which party programme suits me best (...). (FP_1)



The moment I decided to work in the public or political domain or in general in this area of activity was after secondary school graduation. So it was the period between finishing school and beginning studies at university. (PP2_2)

I began to observe my own hometown. More and more things began to bother me (...) in fact most of the people of the older generation assumed that it was no use bothering and acting since it would bring no good result anyway. It is such a typical stereotypical way of thinking. I started my adventure with politics from creating a youth branch of one of the small opposition parties. I was too young to join a political party. (...) With some first successes (...) I became even more motivated. And then in 2006, I think, one of the MPs asked me to be a candidate in the local elections. At the beginning, I was very sceptical, but then I realized that it could be the next step aiming at implementation of these very small or bigger things for my local community. I was a candidate as a member of the party. (NP_2)

2.2.2 Individual motivation for becoming politically active in a party

With regard to motivation for becoming politically active in a party, it can be said that there are at least a few causes, as it has been already shown above. Firstly, our interviewees pointed out a desire to make a real impact on social life at different levels, starting at a commune and finishing at a national one. Secondly, they recalled a pragmatic conclusion that outside the party system it is much more difficult to have this impact. Therefore, they chose a membership in a party but *politics is only a tool to fulfil* [their] *plans and aims*. Thirdly, the interviewees mentioned that during their previous activities they had experienced a tight cooperation with a certain party so their decision on their formal access seemed to be a formalisation of an actual situation and a kind of manifestation of their loyalty, e.g.:

I was not a party member and I was invited to candidate from the PO ticket (list of candidates). I became an MP, I was a member of the party club in the Parliament so after a year I came to a conclusion that formal accession to the party was in a good taste and it was a manifestation of loyalty. Especially as I was the candidate of the party and I share its views. (PP3_4)

Fourthly, activities undertaken in a party can be an area where creative potential of interviewees is employed: *Everything was so fresh and spontaneous. It was just cool. We had a great time establishing this party. At the beginning, we had a great time. We made friends. (PP7_1)* Earlier, our interviewee made an attempt to join one of the already existing parties. However, she was deterred by its “numbness”. A new party appearance was the best moment for her to start her activities in a political party.



Motivations for being politically active pointed out above were our interviewees' motivations. The list is for sure neither exhaustive nor complete. First of all, we have managed to reach a limited number of interlocutors. Secondly, from a psychological point of view, it is not astonishing that interviewees wanted to make a good impression on the researchers both as individuals and party members. Nevertheless, it is also worth presenting a more overall picture shown by one of former party members who decided to continue his activities at the local level, but without any party affiliation:

In the last few years I have seen many motivations to be a candidate for local elections. People were motivated because their wives could lose a job or "I have to because I got fired" or because "I need money". I started with the assumption that I did not have to, but I could and I wanted. So when it is possible, I am engaged in the local government. But I also have other options for my life – I can work as a scientist. (NP_2)

2.2.3 Topics of interests of TCN politicians/politicians with a migrant background

On the basis of our interviews, it can be said that in the case of politicians with a migrant background, their topics of interest elaborated in the party are determined by their professional profile, e.g.:

I have seen the effects of a lack of medical care or its low quality. Therefore, this area of activity is the most important for me. (PP5_3)

First of all, I am an economist and I specialize in international finance. I have been always interested in finance and public finance in general, including local government finance. This was the area that interested me most. Besides, there is also international cooperation, economic cooperation between a region in Poland and regions abroad. (...) The party utilizes this potential. (PP3_2)

Since citizenship is a precondition of party membership, immigrants who joined political parties had a good position in their professional domain. They did not start their activities in a party as young people who are at the earliest stages of their professional career. They have been already recognized in their communities as specialists, active in public domain. Nevertheless, even in the case of new party members who are highly skilled professionals, some obstacles may appear. These obstacles are related to the resistance of party members with a longer practice to those who are fresh.

When it comes to obstacles, these are little things, mainly based on the fact that despite one's knowledge, a new member is treated as not much qualified just because he is new in the party or he is new in certain party activities. (...) The older members think that a new member knows less and his opinion is disregarded. (...) In my case, it did not take long to change this attitude. I knew what I wanted and I expressed it, which is obviously important for the



functioning of the organization and I think...I do not know, it took three months, six months... (PP3_2)

2.2.4 “Welcoming cultures” of parties (outreach activities, campaigns, etc.)

It seems purposeful to provide readers with some more general information on the peculiarities of the Polish political parties. In Poland, we do not have mass-scale parties, except the biggest one - PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe/Polish People’s Party) - that has approximately 140,000 members. The currently ruling PO (Platforma Obywatelska/ Civic Platform) has about 43,000 members and the biggest oppositional parties, SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/Democratic Left Alliance) and PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość/Law and Justice) have about 40,000 and 20,000 members respectively. Two other parties, PJN (Polska jest Najważniejsza/ Poland Comes First) and Ruch Palikota (Polikot’s Movement), whose members we interviewed, have more than 2,000 and 6,000 members respectively.

How can we explain such low numbers of people participating in political parties in a country with the population of approximately 38 million? Briefly, such a situation is a heritage of the 45 years of the post-war, communist period. As one of the politicians concludes, *we have not learnt how to act in democracy, yet. (...) For us, entering a party is like marriage. It is treated as a sacramental union, which is reminded in different situations. If someone had been a member of three different parties, it is treated as a huge disadvantage. Party membership and, a promotion within a party structure have very bad connotations. It is a heritage of communism; (...) a political party means bad. On the linguistic level, a party is equal to corruption, power and terror.* (PP1_1).

Unfortunately, twenty years of democracy have not brought significant promulgation of political participation among Poles. Political preoccupation oscillates from 40% to 50 % and only 15% of citizens declare a deep interest [Raciborski 2011:122]. Universality of anti-party resentment is a crucial obstacle for a creation of full democratic citizenship in Poland. There are varied proofs of Polish reluctance towards political parties. The rate of identification with political parties is low. It reached its peak in 1997 (64%) and then it dropped.

The most recent survey shows that a vast majority of Poles are not satisfied with the existing parties’ offer. 69% of eligible voters claim that none of the political parties meet their expectations and deserve their votes. Only a one in four respondent sees such a party. What is more, the majority of respondents (52%) are opposed to expanding the existing range of parties. A little more than one-third of those entitled to vote (37%) would accept the creation of a new party [CBOS, September 2013].



In the case of Poland, due to the reluctance to an active party membership, it seems that political parties are concentrated on attracting potential voters rather than potential party members. As a result, *in practice, political parties act as pressure groups rather than mass structures and this is a weakness of our political life. Well, there are massive structures, representing mass membership and treating it more seriously, for example PSL and SLD.* (E1) However, as opinion polls show, parties are perceived as primarily living their own lives, their own problems and struggles, which has nothing to do with citizens' everyday life concerns.

Summing up, party membership is rather rare in Poland. People registered in political parties, not mentioning active members, do not reach even one per cent of eligible voters. Except one or two parties, it is also difficult to talk about mass-scale parties having a longer history. None of our interviewees could point out any particular programme or procedure that introduces new party members into the political party activities. They were convinced that the structures existing in the parties and interpersonal relations allow new members to get accustomed to the party activities.

Political parties have different kind of wings or units within the organization, more or less formal ones that group people who share particular problems. I mean youth wings of political parties, groups constituted due to a profession or certain topics. They function very well. They help to adapt more consciously to the party's activities and to find one's own place in a given formation. It is based on a personal contact and exchange of ideas with people who are in a similar situation or who face similar problems. People share experiences and jointly develop some models of cooperation or even patterns of action. They design common goals. (PP4_2)

If there is a need expressed, we run special courses. We offer a great range of such activities. These classes are designed, for example, with regard to age. We run a summer school for leaders; each year about 100 people who want to be political activists participate in it. (...) Secondly, before the local elections, we always conduct regional training (...) how candidates should prepare for these local elections. We present information about legal issues, but also we train them in... social engineering or marketing, which give them chances to win in the elections. (PP5_1)

I was directed...I mean I preferred a party circle Widzew Łódź – linked to the district of the city in which I am residing. I think it was not because of my profession – an academic teacher – but the question of the person who recommended me – there were different factions within [the party] – belonged to the faction that at that time was not present in this local unit that I preferred. And he wanted to have me on his side that is in an academic unit. . At that time, I didn't realise that...I realised that later. (PP3_1)

2.2.5 Networks of parties and migrant organisations



Discussion on the networks of parties and migrant organisations is rather impossible in the case of Poland. None of our interviewees could point out any examples of it. It is better to talk about cooperation of individual politicians with migrants, as it is in the case of one of our interviewees who keeps more or less formal relations with Vietnamese and Syrian groups living in Poland; or in the case of a representative of the old Ukrainian minority¹⁹, who is more aware of immigrants' problems since he has an affection for his co-ethnics arriving in Poland from Ukraine. One can also observe some attempts of African immigrants to initiate some kind of cooperation with politicians; however, the results are still far from satisfactory as we learned from the representatives of a migrant organisation.

One should be aware that migrants' organisations are still very "fresh" in Poland and they are not strong enough to be recognised as partners by political parties. The year 2007 was a turning point for migrants' organisations. Then the financial support from the EFI was introduced to Poland. The EFI is still the main source of support for immigrants' organisations in Poland. Thanks to it, they work on the project basis but their activities chiefly depend on winning or failing in the EFI calls. It is a significant obstacle for their professionalization.

2.3 Internal party structures – nominations, careers and experiences

2.3.1 Internal nomination processes in parties and political careers

During our interviews we learnt that nomination processes in parties are regulated in a political party statute. The politicians we interviewed were not eager to express their disappointment in this area or to unveil any secrets, which is not a surprise. With the only exception of an interlocutor who used to be a party member, but who finally decided to avoid further involvement in political parties:

Soon after I was elected as chairman of the city council, my club [that was in opposition] deprived me of the club membership. They use a very odd argument: I was elected by the whole coalition plus non-affiliated councillors. For my party colleagues, this did not fit in their understanding of self-government, of local government. According to them, it was wrong that another club voted for me. It was, somehow, a reason for my separation [from the club and from the party]. (NP_2)

Due to the number of conducted interviews and the number of parties covered by the research, we cannot present justified conclusions on political careers in Poland, in general. We have pointed out

¹⁹Old national and ethnic minorities recognized by the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages of 2005 are as follows: national minorities - Armenian, Belarusian, Czech, German, Jewish, Lithuanian, Russian, Slovak and Ukrainian; ethnic minorities: Karaim, Lemko, Roma, and Tatar.



some factors, which do not constitute a comprehensive list that might influence the development of political careers.

We can attempt to make some remarks on the development of individual political careers within the parties. First of all, it is shaped by the age of a politician accessing a party or more precisely, the professional capital, previous experience in the public domain of a given person that can be employed in the party activities or for the party benefit. It also depends on the political party size and the stage of institutional development of a given party, in other words on the development of its structures on the local and national level. The relations between different factions within a party also shape it. With regard to the local and national elections, the place received by a candidate on the party ticket depends on the evaluation of potential chances for the party conducted by the party members in charge. Although an element of contribution into political parties' activities as a factor taken into consideration was also pointed out, it is especially important in the case of small parties that often depend on voluntary work.

The political party system in Poland is neither old (well established) nor predictable. Parties are created and dissolved. Quite recently, over the last few months, we have witnessed spectacular resignations from party membership (that is also a case of our migrant interviewee that will be discussed in the further sections). The majority of citizens perceive political parties as primarily living their own lives, their own problems and struggles. Even among respondents who declared their participation in elections, more than half do not see any party fully deserving their votes. Only slightly more than one-third has a different opinion on this matter. A sense of a lack of political representation dominates the electorates of all major parties except PiS (Law and Justice) [CBOS, September 2013]. Recently, we have witnessed personal changes in the regional and national headquarters. However, in the framework of this report, due to the scale and the aim of our research, an in-depth investigation or analysis of the current situation is not possible.

2.3.2 Role of a migration background in politics: advantageous/disadvantageous aspects for a party as a whole and for the political career of an individual

Since political party members with a migration background are still rare and the numbers of naturalised immigrants are low²⁰, it seems that it is too early to make strong statements on the role of a migration background in politics, its advantageous and disadvantageous aspects for a party and for the political career of an individual. Nevertheless, we would like to share some research findings, with one stipulation that we unveil only a part of the picture that we have managed to reach during

²⁰ In the years 1992-2009, Polish citizenship has been granted to 22 233 foreigners. After a significant increase in 2005 and a drop in 2006, the number of acquisitions of Polish citizenship was 1,528 in 2007, 1,054 in 2008, 2,503 in 2009 and 2,926 in 2010. The main recipients were citizens of the former USSR: Ukrainians (992 persons in 2010), Belarusians (418), Russians (215), Armenians (101). The Vietnamese and German citizens constituted further major groups (97 and 92, respectively).



the DivPol research. The topic is still not a subject of debate run in Polish political parties.

Other party members are aware of their party colleagues' immigrant background, but first of all, naturalised party members are valuable for the organization since they are professionally well established in their local communities and they have good access to electorate. Their provenience is noticed but not crucial. This is how a politician without a migration background describes his party-associate: *it is a very important person with regard to taking voters over or the relationship with the society; that is due to competencies. But of course, everybody in our circle knows that these people are immigrants.* (PP5_2)

Some time after his accession to the party, one of our interviewees realized that accepting him as a member could have had a 'false bottom': *I think that the sudden emergence of a Black person might be predicted [by the man who recommended the interviewee as a candidate to the party] somehow as a good PR action. At least, after a while I realized that it was very important.* (PP3_1)

We learnt about a situation when a naturalized politician experienced that his immigration background had been pointed out as a disadvantage: *For example, when there are conflicts, someone suggests that you "remember that you were not born here, so you should just sit quietly". For example, one of my colleagues said: „John Godson aims to be the Prime Minister of our country." "In our country", a little detail, but if we analyse this sentence, we can see that John Godson is from the outside, right? "In our country", this is our country, right? And N. who says: "you should sit quietly" and so on (...) When we are in the media, I rebuke him, I just think that some words should not have been said by a politician, a professor. I do not approve of this manner of speaking. This is, in my opinion, unacceptable. I do not accept it. I believe that everyone can be different; everyone can have their own opinions, but we respect each other.* (PP3_1)

In order to place this quotation in a broader context, we should add that our interviewee represents strict conservative values. That influences his opinions on in vitro fertilization and civil partnership. He is also a supporter of stricter abortion law. Consequently, his opinions situated him in conflict with more liberal members of his party. In his letter to the party members posted on Twitter, Godson wrote that he was disappointed by the attitude of the party authorities "who practise party rigour to members who openly express their views and opinions, especially in matters of conscience and belief." [PAP, 27.08.2013²¹] Recently, despite the fact that his party is currently in power, together with his two party colleagues he broke the Parliamentary Club rigour, voting against the government's amendment to the Public Finance Act. Finally, at the end of August 2013, he resigned from the party membership. He said that his decision had been undertaken "mostly due to the dissonance when it comes to particular worldviews and different pressures." [PAP, 27.08.2013] He declared his willingness to cooperate with PO, in those cases, in which he shares the party's views. At the beginning of December 2013, Godson was among the founders of a new political party - Polska

²¹ <http://biznes.pap.pl/NSE/pl/news/pap/info/855271,godson-odszedl-z-po--politycy-po-na-ogol-nie-sa-zaskoczeni-%28synteza%29>



Razem Jarosława Gowina (Jarosław Gowin's Poland Together). This new political formation has incorporated PJN (Polska jest Najważniejsza/Poland Comes First) to which three of our non-migrant interviewees belonged. Therefore, it is also a dramatic turn in their political career. It will be a third political party to which they belong. Two of the parties were established within three years' time. It is an indicator of the Polish political scene dynamics.

It could be summed up that Godson belonged to the most conservative minority within the Civic Platform (PO). It has definitely influenced his experiences within this party. Nevertheless, his party colleague recalled his immigration background, as he noticed (and the report's authors share his view), instrumentally in order to stop him from expressing his opinions, which is unacceptable. Another naturalised MP, the same party member, belonging to the party liberal mainstream, did not mention similar experiences. On the contrary, he stated that *we become party members when we are Polish citizens so it is not important where you are from or whether you are different.* (PP3_2)

2.3.3 Inner-party networks, measures and programmes supporting (or obstructing) politicians with a migration background

Our interviewees do not expect any special treatment in the party due to their immigration background. One of the interviewees pointed out that such a treatment is useless since in our party, everyone who wants it can develop one's career (PP5_3). It seems that such a statement is a kind of declaration on the party openness for all citizens who share its ideology regardless of their provenance. However, in order to verify it, an in-depth research conducted on party structures is necessary. On the other hand, the interviewee's example proves that it is possible for an immigrant to build a political career in Poland. Nevertheless, thanks to his cultural capital and high position in the community, still before starting his political career, his example is outstanding rather than typical.

2.4 Immigrants as elected/appointed representatives of political parties (representation and participation)

2.4.1 Assessment of general political involvement of migrants

When we discuss the issue of political involvement of migrants in a narrow context used in the DivPol project as a membership in political parties and passive and active participation in elections, we should stress once again that in Poland it is limited only to naturalized persons. Unfortunately, there is no data on the political participation of naturalized persons, which could justify strong statements



on their entire population. Besides, the absolute number of such people is low, as well as the ratio (4 naturalized persons per 100,000 Poles).

2.4.1.1 Membership in political parties

According to the literal wording of Article 11 of the Polish Constitution (1997), the freedom of association in political parties is reserved for Polish citizens. This limitation is also present in the Act on political parties (1997).

Political parties reached in our research do not collect data on their members or candidates for membership that could constitute a party's immigrants database. So our research also cannot provide hard data on this area. Among our interviewees there are opinions that questions about one's immigration background are not crucial with regard to sharing political attitudes or party convictions. What is more, equally to questions about one's confession or ethnic belonging, they are treated as confidential and should not be asked.

On the one hand, a mode of gathering and elaborating socio-demographic data on candidates and party members employed by political parties can be labelled as an "HR approach". Let us recall the concise words of a politician and inner party employee: *these are rather basic data on age, education and profession. We try to treat members as a potential staff, so we can turn to them for assistance in creating our political programmes. Therefore, we rather concentrate on their interests, professions and educational attainments.* (PP5_2). On the other hand, these data are elaborated for organizational issues like mailing, meetings, etc. They are also a base for assessments of potential preferences, trends, problems or challenges shared by people engaged in a given political party. Finally, they are collected *in order to know what party we are* (PP1_1), in other words, to find out who is supporting a given party in terms of age, sex, level of education and place of settlement, which is especially important in the case of small-scale parties that have been established in the recent few years.

The interviewed politicians agree that political participation of immigrants is influenced by an attitude prevailing in the Polish society:

The majority [of Poles] would like to be an adherent to a party, not its direct actor meaning a party member. (...) The reluctance to engage directly, not in political, but in party life; this is the reason why in many communities we observe the development of electoral, but non-political, committees. It is better not to be perceived as someone connected to a particular political party (...) unfortunately, party membership once helpful another time can be disadvantageous. Just to be on the safe side, it is better to be outside a party but have particular political preferences. So if the Polish society is so wary, immigrants are even more wary. (PP3_3)



The above-mentioned wary can be further interpreted from a very down-to-earth approach, particularly, at the local community level. It is related to the development and successful implementation of very concrete solutions for problems experienced by residents in their everyday life. Let us recall the words of a naturalised independent (non-party) councillor:

At this level, stressing the political affiliation, a political accent, is not good because these are local issues and they don't need big politics; (...) that national level politics dominate these relations; because, it can usually lead to distaste in neighbourhood relationships, or further problems in contacts between a councillor and local residents. Yes. Therefore, when I speak to people, I do not expose my political sympathy" (NP_1)

Regrettably, it seems that at least some of the immigrants share not only a wary but also a discouragement of Polish politicians: *Shouting among them, they are criticizing among them and loosing their time. That is why I said I hate politics. Because a politician is supposed to do something for the people, because they elect him, they support him. So he must do something for the people and I do not think that the Polish MPs (...) do something good for the people. Even the Polish people are already fed up with these politicians in the government (...) because they do not see any improvements (...) They have the same mentality, in all the parties they have the same mentalities, even if they have a lot of, as they call, intellectual people, but most are not intellectuals and do not even want to improve (...) to consult other people. (NGO_1)*

2.4.1.2 Passive and active participation in elections

With regard to active and passive voting rights till 2004, they were restricted only to Polish citizens. However, due to the requirements that Poland had to fulfil joining the European Union, amendments to the Law on local elections have extended these rights in local council elections to citizens of the EU Member States residing permanently in a given district. The EU nationals residing in Poland can also take part in elections to the European Parliament. It is regulated in the Act on elections to the European Parliament (2004). Still in national elections, both active and passive rights are restricted to Polish citizens exclusively. The rest of foreigners residing in Poland cannot benefit from any voting rights since Poland has not ratified the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.

This exclusion of non-citizens from voting rights is accompanied by their indifference to the current political situation of Poland: *no one has anything like that so if immigrants are not a part of the political environment, political life of the country, and if you contact many migrants, they are not interested in Polish politics. Many even do not know which is PO, which is PiS, which is SLD (...) I think also immigrants will not be, I don't think they will be interested in politics unless the politicians show their interest in them. (NGO_1).*



What is worth mentioning, there are two opposite perceptions of this exclusion from voting rights among the naturalized politicians interviewed by us. One approach accepts the current situation giving arguments justifying the existing procedures:

We do not know what the final destination of a non-citizen is, even in the nearest future. Right? If he stayed in the country, he would experience consequences of his decisions. However, his decisions would influence the citizens, even when he were already abroad. If someone leaves in six months or one-two years, he should not decide on your behalf. So personally, I would not contribute to a solution that allows people who do not have the citizenship to participate in parties or elections (...) Regardless of the level [local or national] in my opinion. I think it would be just a perversion, right? (...) Permanent residents shall wait for citizenship. (PP3_2)

A naturalised politician representing a left wing party shares the above-mentioned opinion: *for political life transparency, it seems that citizenship is a good condition for being a participant of the political life in a country. Of course, you know, it does not refer to the EU citizens since the EU countries are a different case. I am speaking about immigrants from – let's call them – Latin America or Middle East countries. I think citizenship is a reasonable condition in that case. (PP5_3)*

According to the opposite approach, it is desirable to broaden non-citizens rights: *in some countries, immigrants have the voting rights and they can be candidates at least at the local level and they are allowed to vote, yes. In Poland an immigrant without the citizenship does not even vote. There is a proposal from one of the immigration organizations to change it. I do support such a change that increases the activity of immigrants - social activities, civic activities. I hope that it will happen. (PP3_1)*

Regarding the passive and active political rights performance, it is not justified to raise any general claims on the population of naturalized citizens in Poland. So far, there were three naturalized immigrants elected to the Polish Parliament²². The first one is Hubert Ranjan Costa (member of Self-Defence/Samoobrona, the 5th term of the Parliament - 2005-2007), who originated from Bangladesh. The second one is John Abraham Godson originating from Nigeria (former member of the Civic Platform/Platforma Obywatelska - PO, in December 2010 he replaced another MP, who was elected for President of one of the Polish cities, and therefore had to resign from her mandate. Godson was re-elected in 2011; at the time when of writing this report, his withdrawal from the party was accepted by PO authorities. Currently, he is one of the founders of a new political formation Jarosław Gowin's Poland Together – Polska Razem Jarosława Gowina). The third one - Killion Munyama originating from Zambia - is also a member of the Civic Platform/Platforma Obywatelska. He was elected in 2011.

²²It is worth mentioning another case of a naturalized MP - Nelli Rokita - who sat in the Polish Parliament; she is German, who moved as a child from the USSR to Germany (1976). In 1994 she married a Polish politician - Jan Rokita. However, this example does not fit in the Project Framework since Nelli Rokita was a German citizen before she became a Polish citizen.



All the three above-mentioned politicians had been working as councillors at the local level. It is possible to find more cases of naturalized councillors, but it is hardly possible to find precise, in statistical sense, data on their actual numbers. However, in the DivPol research, we confirmed other studies' findings that such cases are exceptions rather than a rule.

Considering the performance of active rights, it is even more difficult to write something that is a well-founded statement. We can base our conclusions on the opinions presented by our interviewees: [The Vietnamese] *vote, they said that they voted for me. I issued my electoral notices in Vietnamese magazines.* (PP5_4). A naturalised politician about other immigrants, who belong to his social circle: *These people are not isolated. They are university graduates. So they show their interest. So even when they are not active individually, they do not take a decision in their local communities, they at least know when and for whom they shall vote.* (PP3_2)

In conclusion, we recall an observation of a politician who used to be an MP and who had formal and informal relations with immigrants. He is convinced that the immigration policy, which is still a weak point in Poland, is a precondition of claims and actual establishment of immigrants' political representation. At present, immigrants are not numerous and they pursue their interests in a means alternative to the political ones:

All minorities are characterized by something that in China is called a "red envelopes culture". I think that they all know that in Poland, if you give a bribe, and they know how to do it, everything can be arranged. Therefore, they do not articulate their interests, especially the collective ones, because they do not want to. Instead, they want to handle their individual interests. They focus on reaching proper authorities and giving bribes if necessary. So they have no need of political representation. In the case of the Vietnamese, for their Vietnamese identity, it is more important to have good relations with the Embassy and the [Polish-Vietnamese] parliamentary group (...) Besides, they know how to use attorneys, and they are better than Chinese in it, and in less serious situations they use "red envelopes". (PP5_4)

2.4.2 Political parties' interest in involving people with migration background

Since currently in Poland non-Polish citizens are excluded from the membership of any political party, the rest of this subchapter refers only to naturalized immigrants. The only political party mentioned by our interviewees from immigrant organizations that has shown any interest in promoting membership among immigrants is SLD (Democratic Left Alliance). However, even this party cannot be described as the one that developed a strategy targeting immigrants as potential members and voters. SLD does not have numerous members with an immigration background; they are rather single cases:



There were some attempts, however, the oldest generation want to remain silent (...) and the younger ones are in business or think about emigration to other European countries. (...) I encouraged the second generation, many times, just to try to candidate as representatives of my party – What was their reaction? – ‘Yes, it is a good idea but no, thank you’. (PP5_4)

Eventually, those who have become party members are still exceptional. *In Eastern Poland, for example, in the Lublin Province (...), an immigrant is a member of our party; he is our activist. In Lower Silesia we have an activist from Africa (...), who has been our activist for years. So those who have arrived in Poland for educational reasons and stayed here, they appear in the party structure. (PP5_2).*

Naturalized citizens can be also found in other parties. John Godson has received a proposition of collaboration from PSL (Polish People's Party) – *earlier PSL invited me to candidate to the county board in Choszczno, but I was a priest and I thought that it was not for me (PP3_1)*. Although at that time he was not interested, later he joined PO. From a former PSL politician, currently a sympathizer, we have learnt that: *From PSL perspective, which I know, in local structures they search for active people regardless of whether someone is or is not an immigrant. It is considered whether the candidate for local election shares the PSL values. (...) Even Godson, MP, said that the first offer, when he had still lived in a small town near Łódź, had come from PSL. He was invited because he was locally recognized as a charity person. (FP_1)*. Other interviewees – PSL members – who were classified as the inner-party personnel have confirmed this party strategy.

It is impossible to find a special initiative targeted on naturalised immigrants in the rest of parties covered by the DivPol research. What we have learnt from two MPs currently sitting in the Lower Chamber of the Parliament, PO (Civic Platform) attracted them because it operated as a platform where diverse views were presented and accepted. Due to it, both naturalized politicians have found this party worth joining. PO politicians without an immigrant background share the same arguments. *PO was a friendly, open and broad platform accepting diverse opinions and my opinions are specific. Besides, Donald Tusk and Jan Maria Rokita were in a position of great trust. (PP3_1) First of all, its ideology was simply the closest to my views. In my opinion, it was the most liberal party, and I have liberal views, this is the reason why I have chosen PO. (PP3_2)*

During our research we managed to interview three party members who are naturalised immigrants. It would be an exaggeration to make generalizations on this basis. Nevertheless, during our talks we did not hear that actions encouraging immigrants to join political parties are something desired. A decision on accession to a party is perceived as a consequence of someone's life trajectories, his/her devotion to the common good or to improving some spheres of life they are experts in. We can interpret it in the categories of our interviewees' own experience. At a certain moment, they came to a conclusion that party membership could be helpful to make their activities more efficient.

Not really, I would not look for any contrived way to encourage immigrants to be active in political parties. (...) I would encourage them to vote in elections. So that they don't remain at



home, because the decisions they take ... I mean voters at the time when they vote, they affect all citizens in the country. So it is important simply to encourage them to participate in the elections. Not necessarily in political parties. But I think that if someone feels adventurous and so on, he may simply participate in a party, right? (PP3_2)

Summing up, the materials gathered within the DivPol research on naturalised immigrants who are members of political parties refer to particular - still rare – examples rather than a certain category of political party members. Party membership of immigrants is rather exceptional. However, one should take into consideration that Poles are also reluctant to join political organizations and naturalized immigrants, since only citizens can belong to parties in Poland, are still not significant in numbers to create an important group in Polish parties. Since numbers of naturalized immigrants are low, they are not counted as potential members or voters who could change the results of elections. Consequently, they do not attract political parties' attention.

2.4.3 Representation of migrant voters' interests and migrants' interests in general

The issue of political participation of immigrants is not on the agenda in Poland yet. Therefore, we have just confirmed previous research findings. Our non-migrant interviewees, usually treated immigration as a future challenge for Poland²³. They pointed out that immigrants' numbers in Poland were low. They compared Polish situation to other European countries that struggled with social tensions due to immigration.

I have to make some reservations when it comes to the issue of migration and comparing Polish society and Poland to Western societies. I know something about it because immigration is on the EU agenda and on the European Party agenda, which we belong to. There is a big debate on immigration and challenges related to it. But these societies have faced these challenges for long. They have different solutions for social tensions. These European parties have quite an extensive range of programmes. The European Left wing parties treat this issue as one of key objectives, in fact. In Poland and in the CEE countries, I think, it is not a key issue yet. It is not raised in public debate, unfortunately. (PP5_2)

The issue of immigration to Poland was situated in an economic and demographic context. Politicians and policy makers have recently become more aware of consequences of the demographic crisis in Poland, which we will face in the coming decades. This is the reason why the question of immigration as one of the means to reduce these consequences for the Polish economy steadily finds its place in public discourse. This approach places emphasis on the Polish economy interest, not on migrants' interests.

²³ According to the recent National Census (2011), foreign residents constitute only 0,2 % of the Polish population.



As you know, we are one of a few parties that include a need of immigration to Poland in their programme. We are not afraid of immigrants; we believe that they should arrive in Poland. We conduct studies what type of immigrants we need. I think that it certainly would not be good if immigrants were the majority of any Polish party because such a party would have trouble gaining votes. However, I think that when we develop, one of our specialties will be openness to immigrants. (PP1_3)

We cannot avoid it [immigration]. It will happen for sure, absolutely. So far, we are at this initial stage when immigrants come. Their problems are not yet in the public agenda. Immigrants are not yet organized, they do not push strong enough to attract parties' attention. (...) We turned [our attention] to them, but we should not exaggerate our commitment to this. As for the Vietnamese minority, yes, it's true we turned our attention to them. But they are still not so numerous in Poland, yet. I think this topic will appear. Poland needs immigrants and will need them in future. Sensible people know that the process of a demographic decline affects us and it certainly can be solved with the use of a pro-family policy, etc. But of course Poland will need immigrants and that will affect political parties. They will turn their attention to immigrants. Immigrants will have a bigger impact on parties' decisions, programmes and the removal of barriers, etc. This process lies ahead. (PP5_2)

As a result of the situation presented above, the interviewees from immigrant organisations could not point out any political party that represents immigrants' interests. Trying to explain this lack of attention, our interviewees with an immigrant background gave similar arguments to those given by non-migrants:

I think that in Poland, there is no party that represents immigrants' interests. The reason is simple: the number of immigrants is not as high as in Western Europe. Secondly, in some countries, immigrants have voting rights at least at the level of local self-government. In Poland, a non-citizen immigrant cannot even participate in elections. (...) Immigrants, in terms of politics and economy, are not powerful enough to attract attention. This topic appears in the context of xenophobia, in the case of radical parties that want to build some political capital. Nevertheless, Poland is not Germany or France, or Brussels. Immigrants do not overturn cars, do not set shops on fire...(...) Do not demand civil rights. (NGO_2)

Even the political parties, the government are not giving, are not showing any interest in immigrants when it comes to politics. The political parties' heads are not showing any interest in immigrants. (...) We are not narrowing down to African immigrants only. There are so many immigrants in Poland, but there is very little representation. And those who are immigrants, who are in the Parliament, really work hard there, but not on the immigrant platform but on the Polish platform (NGO_1)

This last remark made by an interviewee touches a significant issue. The recalled MPs with a migration background do not raise claims on behalf of immigrants and do not refer to immigrants as



potential supporters. It can be easily explained: immigrants' votes cannot provide political victory to naturalised candidates. To be elected, they have to appeal to Polish electorate for their support. They entered the Parliament as representatives of the mainstream parties²⁴. They do not perform as representatives of immigrants but rather as representatives of their party and/or region. The same can be said about councillors with a migration background and other local level politicians. On the basis of the interviews conducted both with migrant organizations and naturalized elected representatives on the national and local level, one can conclude that naturalized politicians do not constitute representation of migrant voters' interests and, in general, migrants' interests. They are established in their constituency and as one interviewee noticed:

I think with that two MPs (...) they do not represent Africans, they represent their constituency and what their main interest is. They do it as they feel that is the rule. (NGO_1)

Ukrainian immigrants can somehow rely on the representatives of the old Ukrainian minority recognised in Poland. Co-ethnics' support includes political channels such as minority members, who are members of the mainstream parties and MPs. They use procedures and institutions created for national and ethnic minorities in order to articulate issues crucial from the point of view of immigrants. The case of the last abolition for illegal immigrants is a good example. An initiative of immigrants has been supported in the Parliament, among others by Miron Sycz (PO – Civic Platform), who raised this question several times. He introduced the topic in the parliamentary National and Ethnic Minorities Commission, which deals with minorities' issues (focusing on their cultural heritage maintenance and their rights protection), not immigrants' ones.

As it is explained by another interviewed TCN originating from Ukraine: they [naturalised politicians] *want to be Poles and maybe the fact that they are immigrants is important for them because such a story is appealing. However, they really want to be Polish. (NGO_2)*. An African immigrant makes analogous observation: *I think one of them is feeling that he is a native Polish; that is Godson. (NGO_1)* In a similar mode a Polish politician refers to his party-colleague case: *he is an example of a Syrian who is a Pole. (PP5_4)*

Such an opinion is not a surprise when we interpret it in the Polish demographic and institutional context. Firstly, it is hardly imaginable to built any electorate based on immigrants since their numbers are so scarce both on the national and even local level (although, as we have already explained, immigrants tend to concentrate in the Polish capital and its surrounding areas). Secondly, to be a voter, one should have Polish citizenship (with some exceptions for the EU citizens that were discussed in the earlier part of the report), which makes the number of immigrant electorate even less significant:

²⁴ Representatives of historical minorities follow a similar strategy. They enter the Parliament as members of the mainstream parties. Germans are the only minority succeeding in passing their representatives to the Parliament, thanks to: (1) their spatial/regional concentration and (2) the special regulation for national minorities (they do not have to achieve 5% threshold that is obligatory in the elections to the Polish Parliament). The rest of the minorities are too dispersed territorially.



We are individual persons; we are not a community gathered on one side. But the parties, PO, PiS and others, are groups, they have their own visions, they are looking for supporters, they are involving, they are going to all cities, all villages, any place to get more supporters, that's it. But were the parties, are they interested in getting the votes of the immigrants? Did they even think about making a policy to get to those people, to have contact with them? Our feeling and not our feeling, what we have seen over the last 20 years, we have never seen any party, who is interested. Except for, as I said, SLD sometimes. (NGO_1)

There is also another aspect that deserves consideration. All elected representatives that we have succeeded to reach or we have heard about in the interviews are spouses of ethnic Poles. The majority of them have been settled in Poland for decades. All of them have children born in Poland. In their adaptation and integration to the Polish society, a Polish family and its surrounding are an important factor that should be recognized in the process of their identity formation, which can be a topic for future in-depth research. In our report, we can only indicate this area as remarkable for further studies.

2.5 Summary

Since political party members with a migration background are still rare and the numbers of naturalised immigrants are low, it seems that it is too early to make strong statements on the role of a migration background in politics.

It is impossible to find any special initiative of any political party targeted on naturalised immigrants. The elected politicians with a migration background, regardless of the levels, local or national, do not raise claims on behalf of immigrants and do not refer to immigrants as potential supporters. Since citizenship is a precondition of party membership, immigrants who joined political parties had a good position in their professional domain. They did not start their activities in the party as young people, who are at the earliest stages of their professional career. They have been already recognized in their communities as specialists, active in the public domain. Therefore, naturalised party members are valuable for an organization since they are professionally well established in their local communities and they have good access to the electorate. Their provenience is noticed but not crucial.

According to the report by Kaźmierkiewicz and Frelak (2011), the MPs interviewed by them noted “the tendency to perceive immigrants as *guests*, especially among local level politicians and officials, who preferred to *solve local matters on our own*. The examples of politicians with a migration background interviewed within the DivPol project seem to put this conclusion into question. For sure, they prove the need of future research devoted to that topic. All of our interviewees started their political career at the local level and they are well respected in their local communities with or without a party affiliation.



The issue of immigration to Poland is situated in the economic and demographic context. Politicians and policy makers have recently become more aware of the consequences of the demographic crisis in Poland, which we will face in the coming decades. This is the reason why the question of immigration is raised as one of the means to reduce these consequences. This approach places emphasis on the Polish economic interest, not on migrants' interests.

The question of voting rights for non-citizens or the question of the right of membership in political parties for non-citizens has not attracted Polish politicians' attention yet. This topic appears on the agenda rather as a result of the European level discussion.

Our interviewees, both migrant and non-migrant ones, have mixed attitudes towards expanding political rights for non-citizens. It seems that citizenship is still treated as a prerequisite for full political participation. It is a predominating attitude. However, steadily, one can find some signs of demand (on the immigrant side) and acceptance (on the Polish side) for the introduction of voting rights for TCNs at the level of local communities.

2.6 Factors hindering or facilitating political engagement of persons with a migrant background

Factors hindering or facilitating political engagement of persons with a migrant background, understood in the narrow sense used in the DivPol project as party-political participation and voting rights, can be divided into formal and informal ones. We will use this distinction in the further parts of this section but first we would like to present the general context of migration policy of Poland, including the issue of integration.

2.6.1 General context – migration policy including the issue of integration

The migration policy of Poland – in general – can be described as relatively restrictive and it is rather addressed towards non-EU citizens, mostly those from the neighbouring Eastern European countries. Labour migration was regulated by the work permits system. A permit had to be obtained prior to entering Poland. Apart from exceptional, numerically small categories (e.g. academics), this was until very recently the only way for a foreign, a temporary resident to gain legal employment in Poland. The number of work permits granted each year has steadily increased over time: from an initial 3,000 work permits issued in 1990 to 25,000 in 2002. In the peak year, 2011, 41,000 work permits were issued. In 2012, slightly fewer: approx. 40,000. Regardless of their total number in any given year, most migrants arrive from the same countries, which, with comparably significant shares, can be easily divided into three regional groups. The first group comprises three countries of Eastern



Europe: Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, the second one – five Western countries: Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the United States and Italy, and the third one – five Asian countries: Vietnam, China, Turkey, India and South Korea. For years, a burdensome procedure and a substantial fee related to granting a work permit discouraged both employers and potential migrant workers from applying. Instead, many foreigners were clandestinely employed. Various estimates throughout the 1990s suggested that, annually, hundreds of thousands of foreigners might have been involved in irregular work in Poland [Maroukis, Iglicka & Gmaj 2011].

In mid-2007, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy started to simplify the rules for short-term employment. An initially pilot programme was continually prolonged and covered all sectors of the economy. Finally, it applies in the case of the citizens of Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. They have the right to work for six months per year without a work permit. They only need the declarations of Polish employers. Each year the Ukrainians constitute a vast majority (more than 90%) of foreigners for whom the declarations are given on the basis of this procedure. In 2012, employers issued almost 250,000 such declarations.

Up to now, the issue of immigration to Poland has been situated in the economic and demographic context. Politicians and policy makers have recently become more aware of the consequences of the demographic crisis in Poland, which we will face in the coming decades. This is the reason why the question of immigration as one of the means to reduce these consequences for the Polish economy steadily finds its place in public discourse. This approach places emphasis on the Polish economic interest, not on migrants' interests. The topic of political participation of migrants still waits to find its place in public debate generally and in/among the political parties specifically. It appears on the agenda as a result of the European level discussion or the EU requirements rather than a reflection on the national level.

As far as integration is concerned, Poland still lags behind other EU countries in implementing comprehensive integration policies. In fact, Poland has not defined the contents of immigrants' integration in any legal document up to date [Smoter 2006]. Until recently, integration focused only on those with a refugee status and returning Polish emigrants, known as repatriates. Policymakers have recently become slightly more interested in integrating different groups. In 2007, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration established a Working Group on the Integration of Foreigners as part of the Inter-Ministry Committee for Migration established in the same year. So far, the group activities have been mainly passing opinions on programmes implementing the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals and monitoring relevant programmes pursued in the EU. The lack of an integration strategy for non-EU residents is reflected in low MIPEX scores granted to Poland in most areas. Although, since 2007, some minor improvements have been registered, Poland is still far behind other countries.



2.6.2 Legislation as the main and formal factor hindering political participation of immigrants – TCNs

In Poland, TCNs (and stateless persons) do not have either active or passive political rights. They cannot participate in elections (even if they have a permanent residence permit). Those possessing a temporary residence permit or a settlement permit have the right to associate on the same basis as Polish citizens²⁵. Those without a residence permit can join a trade union²⁶ if its charter allows them to do so.

It can be said that legislation is the main and formal factor hindering political participation of immigrants – TCNs.

2.6.2.1 Legal prerequisites to vote

With regard to active and passive voting rights till 2004, they were restricted only to Polish citizens. However, due to the requirements that Poland had to fulfil joining the European Union, amendments to the Law on local elections have extended these rights in local council elections to citizens of the EU Member States residing permanently in the given district. The EU nationals residing in Poland can also take part in elections to the European Parliament. It is regulated by the Act on elections to the European Parliament (2004). Still in national elections, both active and passive rights are restricted to Polish citizens exclusively. The rest of foreigners residing in Poland cannot benefit from any voting rights since Poland has not ratified the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.

2.6.2.2 Membership in political parties

According to the literal wording of Article 11 of the Polish Constitution (1997), freedom of association in political parties is reserved for Polish citizens.

“Article 11. Par.1. The Republic of Poland shall ensure freedom for the creation and functioning of political parties. Political parties shall be founded on the principle of voluntariness and upon the equality of Polish citizens, and their purpose shall be to influence

²⁵Freedom of association is a constitutional guarantee. It is regulated by the Law on associations (1989), which defines an association as a “voluntary, self-governed and permanent organization, set up for non-profit purposes” (Article 2(1)). As long as an association’s statute allows, all foreigners may join existing associations. However, only permanent residents of Poland may set up such associations. This restriction does not apply in cases of foundations, which may be formed by all persons, regardless of their residence status, but they have to be located in Poland.

²⁶Freedom of membership in trade unions and employers’ associations is guaranteed by Article 59 of the Polish Constitution (1997). Statutory law other than in the cases dictated by international commitments must not limit the scope of this guarantee. Another act regulating membership in trade unions is the Act on trade unions (1991).



the formulation of the policy of the State by democratic means”. [The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, 1997]

This limitation is also present in the Act on Political Parties (1997).

“Article 2. 1. Citizens of the Republic of Poland who have reached the age of 18 years may join a political party as its members.” [Act on political parties, 1997]

Such an approach is justified by interpretation *a contrario*. It is also indicated that the right of association in political parties belongs to rights and freedoms inherently related to national sovereignty, its independence and it is unacceptable that foreigners benefit from them (Opinia z 14 września 2012 r. dot. interpretacji art. 11 Konstytucji Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i możliwości ewentualnej nowelizacji ustawy z dnia 27 czerwca 1997 r. o partiach politycznych [Opinion of 14 September 2012 on the interpretation of Article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland and the possibility of amending the Act of 27 June 1997 on political parties]).

2.6.2.3 Naturalisation

According to the Constitution, Polish nationality is a precondition to active participation in political life understood in a narrow sense used in the DivPol project. With regard to naturalisation, some changes have been introduced in the legislation. Until quite recently access to Polish citizenship was regulated by the law originating from 1962²⁷. The new Bill on Polish citizenship (Act of 2 April 2009 on Polish citizenship, that entered into force in August 2012) responded to an urgent need to develop new procedures and adjust them to the new reality as well as the EU and international liabilities that Poland has. The new law provides a clearer path to citizenship. It can be acquired in two ways:

- by applying for citizenship to be granted by the President (5-year residence in Poland on the basis of a permanent residence permit is required);
- by applying for Polish citizen acknowledgement by the governor of the region under conditions of 3-year residence in Poland on the basis of a permanent residence permit, possession of accommodation and maintenance means and the knowledge of the Polish language confirmed by a state certificate (the last one is a completely new requirement).

From the formal point of view, non-citizens are excluded from participation in elections and political party membership. Taking into consideration low numbers of naturalised citizens in Poland

²⁷ As far as statistical data are concerned after a significant increase in 2005 and a drop in 2006, the number of acquisitions of Polish citizenship was 1,528 in 2007, 1,054 in 2008, 2,503 in 2009 and 2,926 in 2010. The main recipients were citizens of the former USSR: Ukrainians (992 persons in 2010), Belarusians (418), Russians (215), Armenians (101). The Vietnamese and German citizens constituted further major groups (97 and 92, respectively). The number of naturalized persons is low in absolute value; their presence is also low when expressed in rates (4 naturalized persons per 100,000 Poles).



and the fact that naturalised politicians are still rare cases, it seems that it is too early to speak about diversity in political parties.

2.6.3 Informal unfavourable factors hindering political participation of immigrants – TCNs

The issue of voting rights for non-citizens has not attracted Polish politicians' attention. It is also not present in a broader public discourse. Taking into consideration current economic and political situation in Poland, bringing this topic on the agenda seems to be a real challenge. Regarding the pace of the creation of the migration policy of Poland and attention accompanying that process, we are still far away from introducing political rights to non-citizens.

Well, either I'm a careless observer of our political scene, although I am trying to live on it, or at the moment there is no debate on that topic. The question of openness to others appears in the debate in the context of cheap labour force that can be used in the areas that we expect to be affected by the demographic deficit. Till now, I have not met any institutional actor touching these issues. Maybe they appear in some social or demographic doctrines, they may appear, but they do not attract society's attention. (E_3)

It seems that citizenship is generally treated as a prerequisite for full political participation. And it is not only an opinion of politicians without a migration background but also those who are naturalised in Poland. Therefore, it seems that one cannot expect politicians with a migration background to devote their attention to the topic.

Immigrants do not constitute a group that is perceived by politicians as a significant one in terms of potential voters (low numbers). Immigrants do not raise such a demand that seems to be related to the economic character of migration and quite harsh, in comparison to other EU countries, economic situation in Poland. Immigrants are focusing on earning a living rather than on party-political participation.

I think that, today, immigrants come to Poland for economic reasons and they rather think about the accumulation of money or about travelling somewhere else, or coming back home. I do not see too many immigrants who would be candidates for political actors to discuss these issues seriously. I do not see too many members of this political participation that can be a political category. (E_3)

This topic is not significant enough for the organization and I think that for the immigrant community, either. This is the reason why it has not been picked up on yet. (NGO_2) (...)

I personally think I want immigrants to have voting rights; at least those who are residents, at least them. (NGO_2)

Poland is still in the process of creating a civic society. Many Poles are passive in political life. Reluctance to active party membership characteristic of Poles might have an impact on immigrants'



behaviours. Moreover, the majority of settlement migrants in Poland originate from the former USSR countries, where politicians and political parties, similarly to Poland, do not gain broad social respect. Another significant group originates from Vietnam and in general they do not want to be engaged in politics. They concentrate on other issues, e.g. earning money – as much as possible, children’s education, etc. They search for ways of expressing and satisfying their interests other than political channels.

Regarding the Polish side, it should be taken into consideration that Polish society might be unprepared for broadening political rights for immigrants, e.g. in the context of historical experiences. Therefore, even residents, who are interested in politics in Poland and who would like to vote at a local level have mixed feelings about that. Undoubtedly, the introduction of a broader scope of political rights for non-citizens in Poland should be preceded by a social campaign.

They will think Ukrainian immigrants constitute the largest group in fact. So who would get the political rights? Ukrainians - those, who came from Volhyn, who killed our people, and now they get political rights. I am not saying that this will be the main theme of the whole campaign, but it might appear. (NGO_2)

Radicalization can be quite a danger. Foreigners living in Poland now do not have voting rights or political rights and Poles tolerate them as those who live and work here and pay taxes. However, political parties may use foreigners to radicalise voters, to make them feel unsafe, pointing out that immigrants with political rights might be dangerous. Such a situation may change positive attitudes of Poles to hostile ones towards immigrants just because of the perception of such a threat. (NGO_2)

2.6.4 Informal favourable factors supporting political participation of immigrants – TCNs

However, one can find some signs of potential party openness in future if/when the law is changed:

There is no such a category as citizen/non-citizen in discussions, simply because all the members of the party are Polish citizens, but ... we are a party tightly related to self-government. We are a mass party. The crucial thing for us is the role, the function that local communities could have in the country. And consequently, for someone who does good and useful things and feels related to their local community, there is always place in PSL. (PP4_2)

Among immigrants to Poland we can distinguish a category of students originating from the Eastern neighbouring countries. They show interest in the Polish political and legal order and they are searching for opportunities for collaboration with organisations involved in the public domain like foundations, think-tank organisation and universities:



I can see that my students from the East know how the Polish state institutions work better than their Polish peers (...) It is a proof of their determination and their thirst for knowledge. They are interested in these issues. (NP_2)

**Annex 1: List of interviews**

Abbreviation/Label	Political Party/Organisation	Migration background	Type of interview
PP1_1	PJN (Polska jest Najważniejsza/Poland Comes First)	No	Individual interview
PP1_2	PJN (Polska jest Najważniejsza/Poland Comes First)	No	Individual interview
PP1_3	PJN (Polska jest Najważniejsza/Poland Comes First)	No	Individual interview
PP2_1	PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość/Peace and Justice)	No	Individual interview
PP2_2	PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość/Peace and Justice)	No	Individual interview
PP3_1	PO (Platforma Obywatelska/Civic Platform)	Yes	Individual interview
PP3_2	PO (Platforma Obywatelska/Civic Platform)	Yes	Individual interview
PP3_3	PO (Platforma Obywatelska/Civic Platform)	No	Individual interview
PP3_4	PO (Platforma Obywatelska/Civic Platform)	No	Individual interview
PP3_5	PO (Platforma Obywatelska/Civic Platform)	No	Individual interview
PP4_1	PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe/Polish People's Party);	No	Individual interview
PP4_2	PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe/Polish People's Party);	No	Individual interview
PP5_1	SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/Democratic	No	Individual interview



	Left Alliance)		
PP5_2	SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/Democratic Left Alliance)	No	Individual interview
PP5_3	SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/Democratic Left Alliance)	Yes	Individual interview
PP5_4	SLD (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej/Democratic Left Alliance)	No	Individual interview
PP6_1	PPP (Polska Partia Pracy/ Polish Labour Party)	No	Individual interview
PP7_1	Ruch Palikota (Polikot's Movement).	No	Individual interview
FP_1	Former party's member	No	Individual interview
NP_1	Non-party councillor	Yes	Individual interview
NP_2	Non-party councillor (Former party member)	No	Individual interview
E_1	Expert	No	Individual interview
E_2	Expert	No	Individual interview
E_3	Expert	No	Individual interview
NGO_1	Fundacja dla Somalii (Foundation for Somalia)	Yes	Focused interview - 4 persons
NGO_2	Fundacja Nasz Wybór ("Our Choice" Foundation)	Yes	Focused interview - 5 persons

Annex 2: The names and profiles of the parties involved in the interviews

Polish People's Party (PSL - Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe) a centrist, agrarian and Christian democratic political party, which offers a "third path", a system of social market economy that seeks to correct the disadvantageous consequences of the functioning of market mechanisms so as to create equal opportunities for all citizens. It has its origins yet at the end of the nineteenth century.



After a period of persecution, finally in 1949, it was renamed for United People's Party (Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe) and was legally acting under communist rule. The present day PSL was established at the Congress of People's Unity Movement (5 May 1990), It Refers to the achievements of peasant parties of the interwar period and the resistance movement during the Nazi occupation. It is the direct successor of the PSL created by Vincent Witos and Stanislaw Mikolajczyk in 1945. Currently, PSL belongs to the ruling coalition (with Civic Platform) (<http://www.psl.org.pl/historia/>)

Democratic Left Alliance (SLD – Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) is a Polish left-wing political party established on 15 April 1999 (registered in court on 17 May 1999) by activists of the majority of organizations forming and SLD coalition. In the years 2001-2005 the party formed the government (up to 2003 majority government, in coalition with Polish People's Party (PSL) and Labour Union (UP); since 2003 minority government with some left-wing parties). The SLD had the following Prime Ministers: Leszek Miller (2001-2004) and Marek Belka (2004-2005). Since 2005 the party has been in opposition. The SLD is a member of the Socialist International. In the European Parliament it belongs to the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D Group). The party's ideology is social democracy. (<http://www.sld.org.pl/strony/40-english.html>)

Civic Platform (PO - Platforma Obywatelska) is a centre-right political party. The party was formed in 2001 as a split from Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS - Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność), under the leadership of Andrzej Olechowski and Maciej Płażyński, with Donald Tusk of the Freedom Union (UW – Unia Wolności). It has been the major coalition partner in Poland's government since the 2007 general election. PO is the largest party in the Polish Parliament. (<http://www.platforma.org.pl/platforma/>)

Law and Justice (PiS – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) - is a national conservative political party in Poland. It was founded in 2001 by the Kaczyński twins, Lech and Jarosław, It was formed from part of the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS - Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność), with the Christian democratic centre Agreement (PC – Porozumienie Centrum) forming the new party's core. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_and_Justice-cite_note-no_Christian_Democracy_in_Poland-17 The party won the 2005 election. Since 2007 election it is in opposition. It is the second-largest party in the Polish Parliament. (<http://www.pis.org.pl/main.php>)

Palikot Movement (RP - Ruch Palikota) - a liberal party founded by Janusz Palikot, who decided to leave PO, resigned from being an MP and created a movement of his own. In October 2010, he organised the first congress for his supporters and in the middle of 2011, he registered Ruch Palikota as a political party and became its leader. Ruch Palikota entered the Polish Parliament as the third most popular party in Poland. Since October 2013 under the name of Twój Ruch (Your Move)

Poland Comes First (PjN - Polska jest Najważniejsza) - is a centre right, conservative liberal, political party in Poland. It was formed as a breakaway group from Law and Justice (PiS) in 2011. The party failed to win any Sejm or Senate seats in the October 2011 Parliamentary election, but it has its representatives in the European Parliament. In December 2013, the party was incorporated into Polska Razem Jarosława Gowina (Jarosław Gowin's Poland Together). (<http://www.stronapjn.pl/>)



Polish Labour Party – August 80 (PPP – Sierpień 80, Polska Partia Pracy – Sierpień 80) – is a socialist party, founded as Alternative – Labour Party at the First Congress, conducted on 11 November 2001. Polish Labour Party is associated with the Free Trade Union "August 80" (Wolny Związek Zawodowym "Sierpień 80"). The Confederation gathers also people formerly associated with the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS – Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność), (<http://www.partiapracy.pl/>)



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