

# THE ATTITUDES OF POLICE OFFICERS IN GDANSK CITY TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS

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## **Abstract**

The migration crisis in Europe has shown the condition of migration policy in individual countries. In recent years local governments have taken over initiative in the issue of immigrant integration which used to be the responsibility of governments. The article analyses the Immigrant Integration Model introduced by the Gdansk authorities, a programme addressed to immigrants living in the city, which is innovative in Polish conditions. The research conducted among officers of the Municipal Police Headquarters is described, in which attitudes and opinions about immigrants residing in Gdansk were checked. Postulates of officers, the implementation of which may improve the safety of immigrants, were analysed.

**Key words:** *migration crisis in Europe, public opinion, police, Gdansk, Immigrant Integration Model*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Migrations have been part of human history since the dawn of civilisation; they have become a key social, economic and political problem of the 21<sup>st</sup> century [Kešel, Sedlák 2018]. Currently, they can be defined as mass, multidirectional and variable phenomena; according to various criteria they can be divided into, e.g. (a) legal and illegal, (b) forced and voluntary and (c) permanent and temporary. There are various reasons for migration, e.g. economic (the need to change living conditions, to find a new, better-paid job), educational or related to ensuring security (escaping threats, acquiring refugee or asylee status). European countries are seen as rich,

guaranteeing rights and freedoms to individuals, where legal regulations regarding foreigners are clearly defined [Wójcik-Żołądek 2014: 12-17].

At present Europe is dealing with a migration crisis caused by a mass influx of immigrants from the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa to the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area. This has been the largest migration wave since World War II. The causes can be found in the civil war in Syria which has lasted since 2011, as a result of which several hundred thousand people have been killed and millions have been forced to leave the country, moreover, increased migration from Libya, caused by the destabilisation of the country after the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. The main migration routes from Afghanistan, Syria or Eritrea lead through the Mediterranean to Spain and Italy, and the overland route passes through Turkey. Migrants use, among others, one of the three migration routes, the first is the Western Mediterranean Route, leading from Morocco to Spain, the second is the Central Mediterranean Route, leading from Libya and Egypt to Italy, and the last is the Eastern Mediterranean Route from Turkey to Greece [Modrzejewski, Raczyński 2019: 2-3].

The migration crisis has caused severe economic, political, cultural and especially security consequences in European countries. It has revealed the weakness of the European Union institutions, as well as of political ties between the Member States [Modrzejewski 2016: 170]. There are acrimonious political disputes on the European Union forum. This uncontrolled influx of migrants has caused particular controversy in the Visegrad Group countries, including Poland [Mihalik, Jankola 2016].

Debates on the migration crisis became more intense in September and October 2015, i.e. during the campaign before the parliamentary elections. At that time, the topic of refugees was politicised, it was used by the rival parties (Civic Platform - PO and Law and Justice - PiS) to mobilise the electorate, which caused strong polarisation of the Polish society as far as the acceptance of refugees was concerned [Raczyński 2018: 319-320]. The topic became dominant, Internet forums were full of hate speech, in autumn 2015 demonstrations of supporters and opponents of refugee admission to Poland marched through the streets of cities. Michał Bilewicz from the Centre for Research on Prejudice at the University of Warsaw claims that “the so-called refugee crisis in Poland is mainly a crisis of attitudes that are much more a result of fears than of a rational calculation of the benefits and costs associated with the inflow of refugees from the Middle East and Africa” [Bilewicz 2015].

Poland does not have much experience in integrating refugees, however, given the growing number of migrants arriving in Europe, the European Commission adopted a programme of the relocation of around 60,000 people, of which Poland was to receive 3,600. In September 2015, the Commission submitted another proposal in which the number of people to be relocated increased twice to 120,000 people, which obliged Poland to accept over 9,200 people, in addition Poland was compelled to accept 5,000 people from Italy and Greece. The Polish government, headed by Ewa Kopacz, agreed to receive 7,000 refugees. Unfortunately, no compromise was reached with opposition groups that fuelled fear of refugees. The government side clearly declared the admission of refugees, not economic emigrants. This decision was met with harsh criticism of the opposition, Law and Justice accused the government of submission to Brussels and insufficient defence of Poland's interests. The Law and Justice party won the elections held on 25 October 2015, and the new government

led by Prime Minister Beata Szydło finally reneged on the pledge made by its predecessors [Raczyński 2018: 319].

Until the migration crisis in 2015, the issue of refugees did not arouse negative emotions in Poles. A survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) in May 2015 showed that Poles demonstrated a significant level of openness to international migration and the presence of foreigners [Kowalczyk 2015: 1-15]. However, already in the second half of 2015 there was a decline in the declared stance and a strong increase in the negative attitude towards refugees. This shift in approach was caused by the way the topic of the migration crisis was presented, it became a political problem. According to a CBOS survey conducted in July 2018, 60% of Poles were against the influx of migrants to Poland. Almost a third of respondents (29%) thought that Poland should accept refugees until they were able to return to their country of origin, and every twentieth (5%) was of the opinion that free arrival and settlement of refugees in Poland should be permitted [Bożewicz 2018: 1-15]. It is important that from May 2015 onwards, respondents participating in cyclical surveys have opposed the plans of the European Commission regarding the relocation of refugees [Łodziński 2017: 84].

Considering the moods accompanying the migration crisis in Europe, I conducted research on the attitude of Polish police officers towards migrants and refugees residing in Poland. The research covered officers working at the City Headquarters in Gdansk. The aim of the study was to demonstrate attitudes of the police force to migrants and refugees, especially to present prejudices and stereotypes occurring in this professional group. It should be borne in mind that Gdansk is a specific place on the map of Poland. It is the first Polish city to create the Immigrant Integration Model, which was developed by a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary task force on the immigrant integration model, which began its work in May 2015, on the initiative of Mayor Paweł Adamowicz [Resolution No. XXVI/673/16 of the Gdansk City Council of 30 June 2016 regarding the adoption of the Immigrant Integration Model in the city of Gdansk]. It is important to get to know the attitudes of police officers because they are an important element in the immigrant integration system. Moreover, the success of activities undertaken in this area depends also on them. Hence, the research has a practical value, it enables diagnosing the needs of the police force in the conditions of the intensification of the immigration phenomenon.

## **1. GDANSK'S IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION MODEL**

The rapid influx of migrants, which Europe has been facing for several years, has resulted in significant radicalisation of far-right parties and anti-immigration movements, which is not conducive to developing solutions in this area. In this difficult moment, European cities have started working on the development of local integration policies [Matusz-Protasiewicz, Kwieciński 2018: 132-133]

Gdansk is the first city in Poland that adopted a document on the integration of immigrants by a resolution of the City Council. It contains areas and directions of activities aimed at establishing an effective city policy on the integration of immigrants and refugees, as well as guidelines for its implementation. Analysing several factors, such as economic development, labour market demand and demography, it can be concluded that the influx of migrants to Poland is inevitable [Matusz-Protasiewicz 2016: 79-80]. The authorities of large cities in Poland have been trying for several years to create their own strategies, mainly due to a large number

of migrants settling in cities, the lack of specific integration activities undertaken by national authorities, they are also a response to the growing anti-immigration sentiment or an attempt to fill a gap in the labour market by encouraging migrants to settle in specific cities [Raczyński 2019: 226-228].

Over the last four years, there has been a significant influx of economic migrants to Gdansk. They are mainly Ukrainian citizens, however, due to differences in the legal status, it is difficult to specify the number of outlanders. According to data from the Office for Foreigners, as of 1 January 2019 372,000 foreigners had a valid residence permit in Poland [<https://udsc.gov.pl/statystyki/raporty-okresowe/raport-roczny-legalizacja-pobytu/2018-2/>, accessed 2020.02.23]. The statistics do not include short-term stays, mainly of Ukrainian citizens who arrive on the basis of a declaration of employment. The increase in the number of foreigners is beyond doubt, despite the difficulty in accurately estimating their numbers in cities.

In 2015, Mayor Paweł Adamowicz justified the creation of the document on the integration of immigrants as follows: “Migration has now become a global challenge. Also for Gdansk. This is why I have established a task force to develop the Immigrant Integration Model. Now is the best time to address the challenges of migration and use its potential” [Fedas, Siciarek, Olech 2017: 2]. *The Immigrant Integration Model* was adopted by a resolution of the City Council in 2016. The document is quite extensive, a lot of space is devoted to definitions and explanation of the complexity of the process and its areas. The basis for the document is the concept of integration, referring to three main areas: legal and political, socio-economic and cultural.

The immigrant integration strategy was developed on the basis of a participatory model, the Gdansk authorities worked closely with a group of immigrants living in Gdansk, NGOs, which, thanks to funds obtained from European projects, could collect data on the needs of individual groups of migrants, in addition, they used the experience of international organisations such as the IOM or the UNHCR or the EUROCIITIES network. Gdansk universities were an important partner for the city authorities, an example of which is the plan for establishing the Centre for Migration Research at the University of Gdansk, which was postulated in the strategy, whose task would be to analyse the local dimension of migration. Work on the document lasted for several months, it was based on numerous meetings with residents, consultations with significant people in Gdansk, study visits, conferences and seminars. Consultations were also held online.

An important element of the consultations was the EUROCIITIES mentoring visit to help Gdansk to become an integrating city, an important goal of this visit was the issue of social communication, establishing contact with residents and the public in the field of migration and integration. EUROCIITIES chose Barcelona and Ghent as well as UK’s MigrationWork organisation to provide mentoring and pay a visit to Gdansk. Representatives of the two cities, a process facilitator from MigrationWork and a migration and integration leader from EUROCIITIES prepared a report with 11 recommendations for Gdansk on building the residents’ perception of diversity. [Fedas, Siciarek, Olech 2017: 14–15].

Originally, the model assumed the introduction of specific solutions for immigrants already staying in Gdansk, so that their problems were solved faster and more efficiently. Such a concept does not preclude work on implementing measures targeted at new immigrants arriving in Gdansk, which facilitated preparation for the anticipated increase in migration in the coming years.

The Immigrant Integration Model indicates the main directions and areas of activities leading to more efficient and effective pursuance of integration policy in the local government.

The overall goal of the Immigrant Integration Model (IIM) assumes “the development of a migration management system in public institutions and social purpose organisations in Gdansk, and the enhancement of the integration of immigrants in the following areas: education, culture, social assistance, housing, counteracting violence and discrimination, local communities, employment, and health” [Fedas, Siciarek, Olech 2017: 43]

All the priorities are presented in detail, tasks and activities, the implementation of which is to contribute to achieving the objectives set, are discussed in the document. Local government entities participating in the integration process are: City Hall, Tax Office, Labour Office, Municipal Family Support Centre, the police, educational institutions, including language schools, NGOs, volunteers.

The implementation of the Immigrant Integration Model is the responsibility of the Immigrant Integration Model Implementation Team, set up by a resolution of 15 May 2017 adopted by the Mayor of the City of Gdansk. The team is to operate on the basis of three entities:

- Steering Committee, composed of representatives of the most important Gdansk institutions and organisations, key for implementation of the IIM.
- Managing Group consisting of leaders of eight thematic areas where the IIM will be implemented, moreover it can be joined by experts in areas not specified in the model.
- Integration and Migration Forum consisting of the largest possible number of institutions, organisations and individuals ready to implement immigrant integration measures in Gdansk. [Resolution 810/17 of the Mayor of the City of Gdansk of 15 May on appointing the Immigrant Integration Model Implementation Team]

The IIM document is the executive implementation plan of the Operational Programmes within the Development Strategy “Gdansk 2030 plus” [Fedas, Siciarek, Olech 2017: 17]. It also provides for making assessments every two years on the basis of hard and soft outcomes specified in the model, which will be a basis for changing and improving the adopted solutions. Funding for the immigrant integration model comes from municipal and external funds which are enumerated in the City Council Resolution, and the most important of them are the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Office for Foreigners Funds or the Regional Operational Programme of the Pomeranian Voivodeship [Resolution No. XXVI/673/16 of the Gdansk City Council of 30 June 2016 on the adoption of the Immigrant Integration Model in the city of Gdansk].

Financing such ambitious integration activities only from the city budget is not possible, which is why projects implemented by non-governmental organisations under various calls for proposals, also from European funds, are important. It is obvious that European funding cannot be regarded as a permanent element of the Immigrant Integration Model, as the uncertainty of their acquisition has a fundamental impact on the continuity of activities assumed therein [Matusz-Protasiewicz, Kwieciński 2018: 137-138].

Cooperation with European institutions was strongly emphasised in the document, already in the early stages of document creation, as mentioned earlier, the experience

of European partners was used, in particular of EUROCITIES, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organisation for Migration. In addition, the strategy provides for strengthening cooperation with public and private institutions in Poland, including cities active on the National Platform of Cooperation for Integration. Showing the possibilities of cooperation and potential stakeholders situates the Gdansk document in the framework of multi-level management [Matusz-Protasiewicz, Kwieciński 2018: 138].

The Immigrant Integration Model is a significant step in implementing local migration policy, but not the only one. The city of Gdansk had previously acted in the area of immigrant integration, an example of such activities is the European Solidarity Center, where in 2014 the Civic Education and Practice Programme for Immigrants Living in Gdansk was implemented [[https://www.ecs.gda.pl/title,Imigranci\\_w\\_Gdansku,pid,67.html](https://www.ecs.gda.pl/title,Imigranci_w_Gdansku,pid,67.html): accessed:2020.02.25]. The programme supported the activation of immigrants in the public sphere, a group often overlooked by the state, local governments or some civic or social programmes, deprived of an opportunity to participate and decide on issues relevant to it. There were also other initiatives, such as: “the programme of volunteering at cultural institutions/organisations as a migrant integration tool, the Foreigner’s Club at the European Solidarity Centre Library, or the conference entitled Code of good practices for business owners willing to hire foreigners: how to put theory into practice, organised as a result of joint efforts of the Employers of Pomerania, the International Organisation for Migration, the District Employment Office in Gdansk, and Work Service S.A. with the support from the Pomorskie Province Office in Gdansk” [Cyboran 2018: 138].

In Poland, migration policy decisions are generally made at the governmental level, they do not translate into decisions in multi-level governance, local governments do not have or have little experience in building migration policy, which is why Gdansk’s initiative is so outstanding. The Immigrant Integration Model is a comprehensive document proposing specific actions at the local level to support immigrants living in Gdansk. Within a few years, the implementation of its stipulations has led to allaying city citizens’ social unrest caused by the phenomenon of migration. The creation of a new policy should launch strategic processes defining the main goals and the way of allocating resources necessary for their attainment, followed by operational processes responsible for effecting the planned activities, and finally learning processes that gradually accustom the environment to the changes that have been started by the first two processes [Cyboran 2018: 137-138].

Migration as a phenomenon presented in a properly prepared public policy can become a new educational platform for a modern citizen, it can shape individuals in acquiring attitudes, skills and knowledge thanks to which they can effectively participate in solving local and other problems related to contemporary public policy [Cyboran 2018: 138].

## **2. THE ATTITUDE OF OFFICERS OF THE GDANSK MUNICIPAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS TO IMMIGRANTS IN THE LIGHT OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

The research was conducted in 2019 at the Municipal Police Headquarters in Gdansk, which employs 194 officers. 62 people took part in the study (32% of officers employed) – 16 women and 46 men, aged 20 to 55, who have direct or indirect contact with immigrants; they are officers working in the Prevention Department, Investigation Department, Operations and Detection Department, Police Staff of the

Municipal Police Headquarters in Gdansk. Participation in the study was voluntary. The research is not representative, although it may indicate a tendency of shaping attitudes among Gdansk police officers [Matuszczak, Matuszczak 2011: 35].

The respondents' task was to complete a questionnaire (which is a type of a written interview, where a categorised questionnaire is filled in by the respondent) consisting of 11 questions prepared by the researcher and based on questionnaires used by the CBOS to survey public opinion on migrants [Kowalczyk 2015:1-15]. The question sheets were anonymous, the questionnaires were not only not signed, but they also did not contain questions that would enable the identification of the respondent on the basis of his/her answers, which is generally conducive to giving honest answers [Chodubski 2013: 153-154]. These were questionnaires in paper form, including single-answer questions and one descriptive query. The survey was a one-time study of the given group, and it took participants 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Before completing the questionnaires, the respondents were familiarised with the research procedure and instructions. During the study, there were no disturbing events that would affect the completion of the question sheets. Each respondent completed the survey by themselves. Finally, 62 correctly filled-in questionnaires were collected.

Moreover, 6 in-depth interviews were carried out with officers from the Intervention Section of the Prevention Department of the Municipal Police Headquarters in Gdansk in order to obtain a more complete picture of the motivation of behaviour and attitudes of police officers. 38 officers are employed in the Intervention Section, these are people who have direct contact with citizens and during the service respond to emergencies reported by the public. The primary goal of the study was to get to know their opinion about immigrants, refugees or in general foreigners staying in Poland, in particular in Gdansk, with whom officers have direct contact during the performance of their duties.

The conducted interviews may enable the acquisition of knowledge that is more comprehensive than individual experiences [Kayle 2012: 79], therefore the aim of the research was also to learn about the social situation and to examine sentiments, define prejudices and stereotypes prevailing among officers of the Municipal Police Headquarters in Gdansk.

The specific goals of the survey were focused on such aspects as:

- The perception of migrants and foreigners residing in Poland by law enforcement officers.
- Police officers' attitudes towards migrants in their immediate, including private surroundings.
- Officers' subjective assessment of the number of crimes and offences committed by migrants.
- Problems encountered in the daily service in connection with migrants.

The first question addressed to the respondents was whether they agree or not with the statement that the presence of foreigners increases cultural diversity and makes people more open to others. Respondents largely agree with this statement, the answer "definitely agree" was given by 24% and "rather agree" by 27% of the respondents. On the other hand, the answer "definitely disagree" was provided by 23% and "rather disagree" by 5% of the respondents. 21% abstained from giving an opinion, choosing "hard to say" or "neither agree nor disagree". The next question was whether free movement of people to other countries to work there was beneficial

for all countries. 74% of replies were positive, 34% strongly agreed with the above statement, and 40% rather agreed. The reply “rather disagree” was given by 13% of the respondents, and 8% were strongly against.

The third question was whether the respondents personally know a foreigner living in Poland. 58% strongly confirmed knowing a foreigner living in Poland, however as many as 36% of the respondents gave a negative answer, and 6% answered “hard to say”.

The most complex question was question number 4, which was broken down into several points. The answer to the question: how would you react if it turned out that a foreigner was to become your child’s childminder, a priest in your parish, your daughter-in-law or son-in-law, boss at work, child’s teacher, doctor, close associate, neighbour are shown in the chart below. The most welcome were foreigners working as a doctor at their clinic (41%), or as their child’s teacher (40%), they would have nothing against a neighbour coming from another country (40%). It should be noted that a significant group of respondents – about 20% – abstained from expressing their opinion, ticking the option: “hard to say” in the case of each question. The respondents also manifested radical attitudes, although in a small percentage, and thus they were the most opposed to a foreigner who would be a priest in their parish (10%) or a childminder of their child (10%). In the remaining questions, 8% of the respondents were against, and in the question about the teacher – 7%.

82% of the respondents admitted that they had neither used paid services rendered by foreigners nor hired them, only 18% confirmed the use of paid services provided by foreigners. The replies to the question whether our country needs more migrants, people who come to Poland to settle down are much more varied. The answers “definitely disagree” (22%) and „rather disagree” were ticked by 40% of the surveyed people. On the other hand, 26% of the respondents gave their consent to the arrival of foreigners, unfortunately 33% chose “hard to say” and “neither agree nor disagree”, avoiding expressing their opinion directly. Serving in the police is associated with frequent contact with people, including foreigners, so when asked whether they had had contact with foreigners during the service, the vast majority stated that they had (95%), 3% had not had such contact during service, and 2% did not remember such a situation. In the next question, the officers were asked to list the nationalities of people they had met during the service, they could name a few, the most frequently mentioned were Ukrainian, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Russian, Belarusian, British, and in several cases Dutch, Lithuanian and Chinese nationalities. In questions 9 and 10 the officers were requested to assess subjectively if foreigners are the perpetrators of crimes and offenses more often than Poles. In the case of crimes, 50% answered “no”, 21% thought “yes” and as many as 29% did not express their opinion. In the question regarding offenses committed by foreigners, the answers were as follows: 32% believe that foreigners commit offenses more frequently than Poles, 40% believe that they do not, and like in the previous question, 28% of the respondents did not express their belief. The last question concerned the integration of foreigners in our country, whether according to the respondents’ opinions, this process is fast. The responses “definitely agree” (3%) and “rather agree” (26%) were selected by a total of 29% of the officers, 25% were against this thesis choosing the answers: “rather disagree” (14%), “definitely disagree” (11%), as many as 46% ticked “hard to say” (23%) and “neither agree nor disagree” (23%).



In the interviews carried out with the officers from the Intervention Section of the Prevention Department of the Municipal Police Headquarters in Gdansk, who have direct contact with the public during their service, the respondents stated that they have a positive perception of expats, who, in their opinion, are needed because of the rapidly growing economy and a labour shortage. They also believe that the state should support their development, but point out that such assistance should be addressed to qualified specialists, otherwise they do not give their consent to state support of economic migration. They point to threats resulting from an excessive influx of migrants, such as deterioration of the labour market, creation of the employers' market, lack of jobs for Poles, increase in the number of hate crimes, spread of diseases transmitted by foreigners, or lack of cultural assimilation. As law enforcement officers, they expect support from state and local government institutions in relation to work with migrants in the form of courses and training for officers to be able to verify the authenticity of documents entitling foreigners to stay and work in Poland, language courses, or interpreter service provided at every police station. Furthermore, they believe that all migrant should receive training in Polish law so that they are aware both of their rights and duties. Such a solution would significantly contribute to reducing the number of crimes and offenses committed by foreigners.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The above data, collected by means of questionnaires and conversations held with police officers working at the Municipal Police Headquarters in Gdansk, show that they generally have a positive attitude towards foreigners. As mentioned earlier, the Gdansk authorities have long pursued policies that support migrants, involving police officers in these activities. The Immigrant Integration Model, initiated by Mayor Paweł Adamowicz, murdered in January 2019, is the next step in these activities. Gdansk universities also care about preventive protection of their students from other countries by organising a series of meetings with the police aimed at familiarising them with our regulations or presenting procedures to follow in situations when they have been victims of a crime or misconduct. In the light of this research, the attitude of Gdansk police officers can be considered uplifting, positively fitting in with the pro-immigration image of the city. As the migration policy of the city of Gdansk is developing, it is also important to gradually satisfy the demands formulated by the police officers, which can translate into an increase in the level of security, especially of immigrants and foreigners residing in the city and the region of Pomerania.

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