Public Perception of Immigration

Uncontrolled migration is one of the internal threats to the state that also manifests itself as a civilization problem. It illustrates the growing lack of social acceptance for this phenomenon. It is the result of not only geopolitical changes, but also the sequence of social dependencies. According to data from the census, over 99.8% are citizens of the Republic of Poland, and persons without citizenship amount to 57 thousand. It should be emphasized that in recent years more and more foreigners have come to Poland in search of a better life. Despite the influx of immigrants, Poland is a country with a negative balance, which proves that more people from Poland emigrate than to come to it. Accurate estimation of the scale of the phenomenon is not easy due to the adoption of the illegal dimension and that the Central Statistical Office and the Office for Foreigners otherwise collect and present information on foreigners. There are lot of intercultural differences connected with religion, tradition, customs and social behaviour. Often the barrier between the world of immigrants and the local society is so great that it creates conflicts in the places where immigrants reside, including anti-refugee protests, inclusive.

KEYWORDS
illegal immigration, refugees, a centre for foreigners

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration has always accompanied mankind. It was once associated with an economically advantageous phenomenon. Even though wandering has always accompanied mankind and had a large share in shaping the world, today it has taken on a different dimension.\(^1\) Although the problem of migration is defined, the variability of its scale is intriguing to consider in social terms. We live in a world where over 200 million people are immigrants and their presence on the territory of a given state is multi-feudal. On the one hand, there is a positive professional mobility, bringing many benefits for specific sectors of the country, for example, the flow of specialists or doctors. On the other hand, it also generates many surprising dangers including the face of the migration crisis. Sources report that more than 60 million people are fleeing from hunger, violence, war or disaster. The migration crisis 2015-2018 has exacerbated the reluctance of citizens of host countries to refugees and related problems. The increase in criminal acts on the part of immigrants has contributed to this, for two re-

\(^1\) S. Castels, M.J. Miller, Migration in the modern world, Scientific Publisher PWN, Warsaw 2011, p.1.
asons: (1) it is a foreign citizen who threatens the territory of native citizens; (2) he is a foreign citizen, of a religious and cultural difference, which sometimes goes against the culture and religion of Europe. In the area of the second reason, Muslim populations are afraid of their lack to understand Polish culture and its customs. This is particularly visible in the cities where centres for foreigners are open. In such cases, there is a clash of civilizations, cultural confrontation and many misunderstandings. Terror, with which the approach to immigrants is connected, is also fuelled by the ever-growing amount. A serious problem in addition to cultural differences is the lack of willingness to work, because migrants are often focused on living at the expense of the host country.

In addition to the typical concerns related to Islam, the issue of supplying the so-called grey area by foreigners comes up. This is at least a strange phenomenon, because often the same society that does not want to accept illegal immigrants employs them “on black” - without a contract of employment, due to much lower rates of pay and lack of benefits paid to the Social Security and Tax Office. This trend usually works among Ukrainian citizens.

Looking at the often mutually exclusive attitudes, immigration education is extremely important for both immigrants, who should be taught to assimilate with the country they came to, as well as native citizens to help them in this assimilation. Understanding the mutual cultural differences and getting to know each other’s customs often limits conflicts. One of the effects of the emergence of cultural differences is the formation of foreigners’ ghettos. Focusing on foreigners with, for example, orthodox religious beliefs may lead to the creation of dangerous regions for native residents. With this type of phenomenon on a smaller scale you can also meet in Poland. One of the examples is Góra Kalwaria, where the Centre for Foreigners in Linin is located. There, foreigners try to impose their cultural principles and behaviour. There is often a misunderstanding with the inhabitants of Góra Kalwaria. The main inspiration for the article was scientific research carried out during the preparation of the diploma thesis in the area of illegal immigration. This study presents a part of these research being the answer to the question: Is mass immigration to Poland, culturally different, not jeopardizing the security of citizens?

In order to fully answer the question, the authors emphasize that since May 2015, the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) regularly conducted surveys in which Poles were asked questions about their attitude to refugees. Both the attitude towards refugees in general and their specific groups were examined - people asking about coming to Poland from Ukraine, the Middle East and Africa were asked. During the year in which the research was carried out, the attitudes of Poles towards refugees changed diametrically. On the one hand, the community needs economic migrants and fear on the other hand. Anxiety is aroused by the cultural diversity of immigrants and the lack of acceptance for diversity.

Reception of immigration by Polish society

Initially, when the Poles first heard about the need to help refugees, the vast majority of them reacted positively. We come from a country that had repeatedly needed help. Currently, immigrants constitute a wide category of foreigners from many countries coming to Poland for...
rious purposes. Those people who came for business or educational purposes seem to be predictable in social roles, while those who came from culturally different countries arouse mistrust of Poles. In the first CBOS surveys, as many as 72% of people declared their support for admitting refugees from countries affected by armed conflicts. There were 21% against (the remaining 7% had no opinion on this). In February 2016, it reached the lowest level - barely 39% of respondents agreed to help. Of these, only 4% were in favour of accepting refugees and allowing them to settle in Poland. 35% approved temporary assistance - until the refugees can return to their countries of origin. As many as 57% of the respondents thought that we should not take refugees at all. The negative attitude of Poles to refugees improved when the polls asked about immigration from Ukraine. In the first survey from 2015, 50% of people supported the admission of refugees from Ukraine, and 38% were against it. Support for refugees in this context quickly increased to 61% and has remained at a similar level since then. The minority voices of opposition to accepting refugees from across the eastern border were associated with the conviction that not refugees are arriving from there, but economic immigrants. To the surprise of the researchers, it turned out that the Poles did not combine the arrival of Ukrainians to Poland with the ongoing Ukrainian-Russian war. For the majority of Poles, the terms “refugee”, “asylum” and “immigrant” are associated primarily with the war in Syria. On this basis, it can be stated that Poles are more likely to accept those arriving for work than those fleeing war disaster. Poles’ views on the possibility of accepting refugees from the Middle East and Africa are completely different than those previously mentioned. Initially, support for the adoption of refugees originating in the South expressed only 33% of those surveyed and 53% were against this. As the migration crisis deepened, this rate dropped to 26%, and the opposition increased to the hostile attitude of 67%. According to the statistics of the Border Guard for several years, the largest group among refugees, that is more than 50% are citizens of Russia of Chechen nationality. The remaining groups in terms of number of applicants are citizens of the republics of the former Soviet Union, i.e. Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine. These are citizens least welcomed by the host countries, and this is associated with “cultural fear”.

During the first negotiations with the European Union, when the Polish government declared its readiness to accept two thousand refugees, Poland was undergoing a wave of international criticism. This was because other countries declared much larger numbers. The response of our society indicated that 36% of respondents thought that it was too much, and 34% felt that it was in line with our capabilities. On the question of whether Poland could accept an additional ten thousand people, 59% of people said that it is definitely too much. Currently, the ruling power in Poland is in favour of ensuring security for its citizens, partly rejecting the relocation programs imposed by the European Commission.

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In connection with the expressed reluctance, the respondents referred to the arguments obtained from the media, referring to the religious and cultural diversity of foreigners, as well as the fear of infectious diseases. Although there is no epidemiological threat in connection with immigration movements, it does not eliminate the fear of society. Poles’ reluctance is directed primarily towards Islam and remains very high in Poland. According to research, the followers of Islam were the least accepted religious group in Poland. This was despite the fact that the vast majority of Poles did not know a single representative of the Muslim minority, either personally or by family or friends. This is due, among other things, to the fact that they constitute a small group of our society and in the case of appearing to be connected to the groups of their culture.

Security is one of the most important needs of every human being. The authors also quote a survey conducted by TNS OBOP in 2015, in the phase of the largest immigration crisis. The study was conducted on 1001 inhabitants of Poland over the age of 15 years. The results of the study allowed to formulate conclusions that 73% of Poles are afraid of refugees due to the increase in unemployment. It is also worth stressing that Poles’ belief in refugees is often based on imaginations and not on their own experiences, hence 68% of respondents pointed to a possible increase in crime. Only a small percentage of respondents did not have a precise opinion on this subject. In the surveys, it turned out that Poles’ research was dependent on their age, political preferences and level of education. Younger people opposed all forms of assistance more often than people over 44 years old. Radical attitudes were taken by representatives of the youngest age group, including people under 24. People with higher education from a different perspective look at this problem without suggesting only images or media messages. Respondents with a lower level of education were more often opposed to receiving refugees.

Local community in the results of researchon immigration

As experts show in September 2016, the threat of terrorism in our country was considered to be 49% real. Terrorist attacks are not always combined with bloody attacks, they can also be attacks on so-called soft goals, for example: Internet networks, tele information systems of government administration. On the map of global terrorism, developed by the Foreign Ministry of the United Kingdom, there are forty most dangerous countries in the world. They show that in Europe several countries have been recognized as being particularly threatened by terrorism, including Turkey and France. Poland belongs to a small group of the safest countries. This risk is treated by statistical data from 2017.

The feeling of threats related to the presence of refugees in Poland is perfectly reflected in the survey carried out in 2008 by the Public Opinion Research Center TNS OBOP on a gro-

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7 CBOS, Komunikat..., p. 40.
up of residents of Warsaw and Góra Kalwaria. Then: Warsaw - 49%, Góra Kalwaria - 46% of respondents claimed that admitting refugees to our country promotes the formation of racial and national conflicts. 46% of the residents of Warsaw and 47% of the inhabitants of Góra Kalwaria believed that the admission of refugees was conducive to the increase in crime. A smaller group of respondents, because Warsaw - 37%, Góra Kalwaria - 30% thought that this situation favoured the increase in unemployment, and 36% of Warsaw residents and 45% of Góra Kalwaria were convinced that assistance for refugees is at the expense of help for Poles. Only Warsaw - 17%, Góra Kalwaria - 8% of respondents believed that migrants threaten our culture and tradition.9

In order to diagnose current relations of citizens to the area described, the authors of the article conducted a survey. They directed them to the inhabitants of Góra Kalwaria, where the Centre for Foreigners in Linin is located in close proximity. About 160 foreigners, mainly Chechens, currently reside in the Centre. The study was carried out three times in October 2018 (01.10, 15.10, 24.10.2018) as a result of which a total of 45 people was examined. The survey was conducted at the local primary school, using the fact of bringing children by parents. The persons participating in the survey acceded to it voluntarily and with full kindness to the interviewer Marzena Pietruniak. Among the respondents only 3 people inquired about the reason for the survey. The questionnaire was used for the study where among the questions for the authors the key aspects were:

- Do refugees live in your city or nearby area?
- Do you have information from which country does Poland accept the most refugees?
- Do you think Poland should accept refugees?
- Do you think that refugees pose a danger to the Republic of Poland?
- What kind of danger do you think may generate refugees?
- Did you experience direct harm to the refugees?
- Do you think that assimilation of Islamic refugees is possible?
- Are you afraid of refugees?

The respondents responded to the above questions according to a catalogue of suggested options, based on the selection of the one most consistent with their beliefs. The following results were obtained in the course of the research.

To the question *Do refugees live in your city or neighbourhood?* 40 respondents answered in the affirmative, 5 surveyed answered in the negative (Pict.1).

To the question *Are you in possession of information from which country does Poland accept the most refugees?* 25 respondents replied that from Ukraine (which is consistent with the actual state), 15 surveyed answered that from Chechnya and former Soviet Republics, 5 people answered that from the Middle East (Pict.2).

To the question *Do you think Poland should accept refugees?* 28 respondents answered that Poland should not accept refugees, 11 surveyed declared their will to accept refugees. Six people, however, said that it was indifferent to them (Pict.3).

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Bezpieczeństwo i obronność

Picture 1. Do refugees live in your city or nearby area?
Source: own study

Picture 2. Do you have information from which country does Poland accept the most refugees?
Source: own study
To the question *Do you think that refugees pose a danger to the Republic of Poland?* 28 respondents answered that refugees pose a danger to the Republic of Poland, 17 surveyed said that they are not a threat. Nobody gave a neutral answer (Pict.4).

When asked *What kind of danger do you think may generate refugees?* 37 respondents were in favour of the terrorist threat, and 8 surveyed are afraid of increased crime. None of the respondents saw any threat to Polish culture and society (Pict.5).

In the question *Did you have any direct harm to the refugees?* related to the direct harm caused to the refugees, no positive response was obtained (Pict.6).

To the question *Do you think that it is possible to assimilate refugees who profess Islam in Poland?* about the assimilation of refugees who profess Islam, 37 respondents considered it impossible, while 8 surveyed gave a positive answer (Pict.7).

Last question *Are you afraid of refugees?* related to the fear of refugees, 34 respondents gave a positive answer, 6 surveyed responded neutrally, 5 people did not take a stand (Pict.8).

The residents’ response is influenced by a functioning centre for foreigners who does not meet their approval. Anxiety causes different cultural conditions, related to, among other things, women wearing other clothing covering completely the figure and face. The different treatment of women and children also does not meet the social acceptance of Europeans. According to the inhabitants of Góra Kalwaria, immigrants have very high social expectations, demand housing and benefits, while none of them wants to take up a job. Under the influence of fear and many fears, the inhabitants of Góra Kalwaria decided to carry out a protest action. [Polsat News] An important event showing the public mood in Góra Kalwaria was the protest, which took place on 24 January 2016 under the slogan...
Picture 4. Do you think that refugees pose a danger to the Republic of Poland?
Source: own study

Picture 5. What kind of danger do you think may generate refugees?
Source: own study
Picture 6. Did you experience direct harm to the refugees?
Source: own study

Picture 7. Do you think that assimilation of refugees who profess Islam is possible in Poland?
Source: own study
“PŁACZĄ NIEMCY, PŁACZE FRANCJA - TAK SIĘ KOŃCZY TOLERANCJA 
(GERMANY IS CRYING, FRANCE IS CRYING – THAT IS HOW TOLERANCE ENDS)”.

The transboundary incidents with the participation of immigrants also certainly had an impact on the result of the survey. One of them occurred on April 23, 2017 at the school in the village of Coniew. One of the students’ mother came into the school grounds with two men. All were residents of the Refugee Centre in Linin. They attacked the bodyguard and the teacher with fists. After the incident, the school and class doors were closed, and the pupils were closed for about two hours. After the police intervention, the situation was stabilized.

Summary

All the results presented clearly showed that the society raises the level of knowledge in the field of migratory movements with simultaneous fear of immigrants. These fears are strongest when they directly affect families, children’s education and public order. In addition, fear of migrants is strengthened by their cultural diversity. However, the fear is two-si-
ded, because it consists in the lack of acceptance of cultures. Slow common education allows for mutual learning of different cultures while maintaining the awareness of their culture.

It is a multifaceted aspect that is used to adapt immigrants, but with minimizing threats to society. This process takes place slowly because of the immigrants’ fear of losing their identity. As a consequence, it can lead to radicalization of immigrants’ behaviour and separation. Good integration must be comprised of comprehensively prepared assumptions for getting to know each other, encouraging both immigrants and local society. Integration must serve to adapt different cultures to imposed legal and moral standards and respect for universal human rights and values. In fulfilling these assumptions, the Ministry of the Interior and Administration has a mechanism to finance migration and integration in 2014-2020. The Fund aims to contribute to the development of a common EU asylum and immigration policy and to strengthen security in the Member States and in cooperation with third countries. The main goal is to broadly strengthen the management of immigration flows and the development of a common asylum policy. The fund is dedicated to persons benefiting from refugee status, in need of subsidiary protection, applicants for international protection and for those enjoying temporary protection. In addition, the Ministry of Interior and Administration has appointed a project to implement compulsory education in centres for foreigners without the necessity of school attendance by minors. The idea allows the municipal authorities to indicate the place of education for immigrant children. From September 2017, schools have the authority to run a preparatory division in which children are preparing for later class activities. The branch can be created even during the school year.12