

Research project: 'Invisible Poles' and the new prominence of Polish people in UK society since Poland's EU accession

Participant Information Sheet



If you are

- aged over 25
- not born in Poland, but with some Polish roots (which may be quite distant)
- someone who was not active in Polish community organisations before 2004, except perhaps as a child, but who has found themselves doing more 'Polish' things in recent years, and/or had more contact with Poles in your everyday life in the UK

we invite you to participate in the project Invisible Poles. We are looking for 30-40 interviewees willing to share their thoughts on how their life has been influenced by more Poles coming to live in the UK, and to tell their stories about becoming 'more Polish' since 2004. Extracts from these stories, edited and anonymised, will be published on the University College London SSEES Library website.

Background

In the mid-1990s, Keith Sword, author of *Identity in Flux: The Polish Community in Britain* (London: SSEES, 1996), predicted that the Polish community would soon disappear. Despite the strong Polish identity of the 1940s refugees, by the 1990s their descendants and other British people of Polish origin often felt little connectedness to Poland. Unless they had Polish names they were not easily identifiable as 'Polish', and invisible within the wider British society.

Since Poland joined the EU the situation has changed dramatically. Poles now form the largest group of foreign nationals in the UK, and Polish is the most widely spoken minority language. Opportunities to visit Poland have multiplied, and Polish food can be bought in most British supermarkets. At the same time, Polish migration has become highly politicised.

The Invisible Poles project

In the 1980s and 1990s Dr Keith Sword interviewed first- and second-generation Polish migrants for his Polish Migration Project. SSEES Library holds an archive of his work. Invisible Poles is a follow-up project which will create a publicly accessible web resource located at the Library. This will consist of edited long extracts from the interviews. The full transcripts will also be archived in SSEES Library and available to researchers. In addition, articles based on the research will be published in academic journals.

The research has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee and is funded by the European Commission under the auspices of the University College London European Institute Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence.

How to participate

Please email Anne White anne.white@ucl.ac.uk for further information. If you decide to volunteer for an interview, we will agree on a mutually convenient time and place. If necessary, the interview can be conducted by Skype. Interviews will last about one hour and will be conducted by Anne or by Dr Kinga Goodwin, the project Research Officer.

You can choose to adopt a pseudonym and additionally anonymise your story in other ways, for example by changing details like your occupation or the name of your town. As soon as the transcript is ready we will send you the edited version with sections for publication highlighted, so you can approve or deny permission for the material to be used.

Participation in the project is entirely voluntary and you can change your mind and withdraw at any time. All the recordings will be deleted. After you have communicated whether you want your interview to be included in the project, your contact details will also be deleted, unless you request otherwise. Data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

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