

Poland: migrants' perspectives and experiences

Conference at UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 5-6 June.

Draft Abstracts

Katarzyna Andrejuk

[Ukrainian diaspora mobilization in Poland in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine](#)

The presentation will describe the activation of the Ukrainian diaspora in Poland which occurred after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Before February 2022, the Ukrainian migrant community was the largest foreign group residing in Poland. In addition to that, Poland hosts a Ukrainian national minority, i.e. people with Polish citizenship who have lived in Poland for generations but identify themselves as Ukrainians. As a result of the war in Ukraine, both groups have become active and united in the process of achieving common goals. The presentation will focus on the mobilization of the diaspora, which carries out aid activities towards refugees and provides assistance to those fighting in Ukraine. These projects and ventures can be categorized into political, informational, integration and economic (financial support) activities. The narratives of NGOs activists demonstrate that these activities are arranged in a certain hierarchy of importance, where some tasks (e.g. providing assistance to refugees) are more important than others (e.g. political manifestations). At the same time, representatives of Ukrainian organizations in Poland perceive the period after the Russian invasion as a key moment in inspiring and awakening the activity of Ukrainians in civil society in Poland. Immigrants and minority members declare that help provided by the host society in Poland was an important element facilitating diaspora mobilization. The presentation will be based on the results of qualitative research: interviews with the activists of migrant and minority organizations in Poland, conducted in 2022-2023.

Kathy Burrell, Kate Botterill and Anna Key

[Brexit Bureaucracies: Labours and Legacies of the Settled Status Treaty](#)

While prevailing political discourse likes to claim that 'Brexit is done', the bureaucratic and procedural legacies of Brexit for EU mobile citizens in the UK are still unfolding (Barnard et al., 2022; Elfving & Marcinkowska, 2021; Botterill et al., 2020). Based on interviews with over twenty Polish UK residents, asking directly about their experiences of the Settled Status Treaty, this paper will consider two key themes. Firstly, the Settled Status application presented a new bureaucratic regime to be navigated, so people's encounters with this new system will be explored. How did Poles experience this application process (IMA, 2022)? What concerns and difficulties did people have, and what tactics and support were mobilised to cope with these? What kinds of exclusions did the application process entrench (Jablonowski & Pinkowska, 2021)? Secondly, several years after the initial Brexit vote, what legacies are still emerging from this new regime? What does living with Settled Status entail on an everyday basis? When, and where, are these legacies felt? Our interviews have unearthed a wide range of experiences – people who sailed through the application process with few issues, right through to one outright refusal. While the 'smoking gun' of mass disruption and deportations has not materialised, our research illuminates the smaller, more banal and more personal consequences that Settled Status has set in train. Ultimately, our interviews confirm that the vestiges of Brexit for UK based Poles, however large or small, practical or psychological, are certainly not yet universally 'done'.

Könül Cəfərova

The biographical meaning of education in migrants' experiences: the case of high-skilled migrants from Azerbaijan in Poland

Education is a meritocratic determinant which is perceived as the means to go ahead: the higher one's education is, the higher one's social status and income is (should be). The literature in the field is limited in viewing education abroad as the way of accumulating human capital and valorizing on host labor market to gain international career. However, education (abroad) can also entail for life experiences and travels, and "second chance" in success where decision about education abroad is not solely made for sake of education, but also influenced by other social and political factors. This paper sheds light on different meanings and utilization of education (abroad) by high-skilled Azerbaijanis who migrate to Poland. The findings from biographical narrative interviews demonstrate that meanings to education are more complex with no single narrative. Pre-migration education is highly emphasized by both internal and external environment. Yet, within migratory trajectory, education is utilized instrumentally for different purposes, including motive of "escape from" troubles and conflicts in Azerbaijan. This all takes place in the background of specifics of Polish labor market accompanied with economic growth in Poland, as well as efforts of migrants to maintain their social class, while trying to *outsmart* institutional mechanisms.

Agata Chutnik

Paths of young representatives of the Polish minority in Lithuania coming to Poland for educational purposes

When addressing the topic of migration to Poland, we very often have in mind people of a different nationality from the Polish one, who have found themselves in Poland for various reasons. Data on economic migration has been collected for a long time. Nowadays, migrants from Ukraine and other war-torn areas are also a large group being studied. Meanwhile, one of the groups that come to Poland are also representatives of national minorities living in other countries. This group is different from the others in several respects. They have a different connection to Polish culture, a different knowledge of the language and an initial capital that may give them a chance of a successful stay in Poland. In my presentation, I will say a few words about the Polish minority in Lithuania as a whole, and then move on to the group with whom I conducted my research. These were narrative interviews with young representatives of the Polish minority from Lithuania coming to Poland for educational purposes. I will present the most important results of the research, covering both the preparation for their stay in Poland by my interviewees and several types of biographical paths they realised after their arrival, which could be distinguished on the basis of the study. Finally, I will also highlight some of the activities that could have been taken to make their stay in Poland more harmonious and, in some cases, perhaps could have saved some of them from very strong negative emotions.

Karolina Ćwiek-Rogalska

Coming Back Home? Narratives on the “Recovery” in Post-Displacement Poland

The postwar period in Central Europe saw a mass displacement of millions of people. In Poland, newly established within the changed borders, the simultaneous process of expulsion and resettlement took place. After the so-called Recovered Territories, i.e. the formerly German regions were incorporated into Poland, Germans were to be expelled while new settlers were coming from various regions, including the so-called Borderlands, now to be a part of the USSR. These processes were backed up by propaganda, rooted in the interwar vision of Poland shifted westwards and later adopted by the communists. Thus, the idea of “recovery” of inherently Polish lands after years of Germanization was forced upon the individual stories of the settlers. In my presentation, I will focus on local discourses about the “recovery”: based on the fieldwork and archival research in Central Pomerania, I will show how migrants to the Recovered Territories negotiated with the centrally imposed notions, focusing not on the policies which were to incline them to the only possible ideological narration, but on their life stories and how they attempt at justifying their presence in the region. I will analyze the tensions present in these narrations and show how they changed through time, comparing the written sources—memoirs left by the first settlers—with contemporary narrations provided to me by the interview partners during the fieldwork research.

Małgorzata Dziekońska

Place of return and the re-adaptation process: The case of Poles returning from long-term international migration to different locations in the country of origin.

In my presentation, I will focus on the choice of place of return and its role in the process of re-adaptation after returning from long-term international migration. I base the presentation on the results of a study conducted in 2021 in Poland with Polish return migrants. Place as a meaningful context has already been studied since the 1970s, however, rarely has it provided a context for studying return migration. Still, the motivations behind the research participants’ decisions to return to their home country frequently indicated, among other things, a search for a place to belong. I will present the experiences of those who returned to the place in Poland from which they went abroad, and those who returned to a completely different place. The reasons for choosing the place of return and the forms of establishing and maintaining a relationship with that place will be discussed. The results of the study prove that after many years of absence, the place of return is new to the returnees, whether they come from that place or not, and that they practically establish relationships in and with the place anew. The results indicate that the place of return plays a vital role in the re-adaptation of migrants mainly through the combination of the relationships they will develop in/with the place, and the needs it satisfies. The absence of those elements can result in disrupted sense of belonging, alienation and slowing or halting the process of re-adaptation.

Karolina Follis

Infrastructures of health and border control: Ukrainians’ access to healthcare in Poland

This paper is part of a project which considers the position of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as subjects with health needs, entangled on the one hand in systems of border control and enforcement, and on the other seeking and accessing care within national health systems in Europe. Taking as an entry point the recent (2022) mass reception in Poland of Ukrainians fleeing the war, this paper draws attention to the infrastructural aspects of healthcare and border control, showing how they have come to mesh and intersect. I will argue that these intersections reflect a politics of bordering which asserts the primacy of border control over migrants’ and refugees’ other entitlements. Such emerging configurations of healthcare and border infrastructures obstruct

healthcare access for these groups. In the specific case of Polish reception of refugees from Ukraine in early 2022, the ruling Law and Justice party was prepared to make relatively far-reaching legislative changes to facilitate the accommodation of Ukrainians fleeing the invasion, including ensuring their access to healthcare. Based on Polish healthcare data research and reports from stakeholders, this paper shows that even where the rare political will does exist to accommodate a refugee group, existing infrastructures of healthcare and border control have already come to mesh and intersect in ways that are difficult to disentangle. As a result, the intended accommodation has proved challenging, and healthcare access for Ukrainians in Poland remains in doubt.

Katarzyna Górńska, Joanna Kulpińska and Anna Wyrwisz

(Post)pandemic integration strategies of Polish migrants in the UK and Germany

The purpose of the paper is a comparative analysis of the migration strategies of Polish immigrants in the UK and Germany. As part of the presentation, we will try to answer the question of whether and how the adaptation processes of the group under study have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? The time of the pandemic, with its numerous restrictions aimed largely at the mobility opportunities of persons, introduced many changes in the lives and functioning of individuals, especially migrants. The inability to return home or, on the contrary, the necessity to leave the country of emigration, the loss of a job or reduced salary, the lack of or poor access to information, are just a few of the mentioned by the respondents consequences of the restrictions introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These above-mentioned implications, as it were, made it necessary to reintegrate into the host society and the new (post)pandemic reality. The comparative analysis conducted within the framework of the paper presented here is mainly based on evoked data, primarily in-depth interviews, conducted with Polish migrants in the UK and Germany. Its purpose is to obtain a broader comparative context of adaptation strategies in different destinations. Thus, an important variable taken into account in the data analysis will be also the conditions existing in the place of migrant settlement and the changes introduced in their scope as a result of COVID-19.

Elżbieta M. Goździak

Exclusion of Migrant Children in Polish Schools

Religion operates in compelling, competing, and contradictory ways as it shapes the experiences of refugees and migrants, both adults and children. I have been writing about the role of religion since the early 2000s. I mainly looked at religion as a source of resiliency, presenting a positive role of religion and spirituality in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. This paper is a departure from my previous research. In this paper, I look at the role of religion, including religious content in Polish public-school curricula, as an element impeding their integration in classrooms and by extension in the wider community. This paper is based on the analysis of selected Polish school textbooks and several ethnographic interviews with teachers and education experts working with migrant children in Poznań and Wrocław, Poland. Theoretically, I contextualize my analysis within the concepts of othering and belonging. I also place my discussion in the context of pertinent migration and education policies enacted in Poland.

Izabela Grabowska, Ivanna Kyliushyk and Agata Jastrzebowska

Perceived social support embedded in social capital in three groups in Poland: Ukrainian migrants, Polish returnees and non-migrants

Social capital is one of key bonding and bridging component of each society. Polish society for years was diagnosed as having challenges with some parts of social capital such a trust, volunteering, charity involvement. The escalation of the Russian war in Ukraine in February 2022 has uncovered new dimensions of social capital in the society. In this paper we are going to approach social capital as a human resource which can be enhanced during international migration and mirror it with the wider social capital of the Polish society. We formulate a key research question: What is a perceived social support of Ukrainian migrants and returnees in Poland? We hypothesize that both groups: Ukrainian migrants and returnees have similar level of perceived social support because both groups enter Polish society in a new way, both groups have had some earlier social networks in Poland. Of course Ukrainian forced migrants have their experience of war which might impact on their perception of social support but we are also going to take it into account in our analysis. The data is collected via a unique interactive dashboard My Migration (www.mymigration.academy) which is available in Ukrainian, English and Polish and gives an instant feedback to respondents. It uses world validated scales. In relation to social capital we use: The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) and *Civic Engagement Scale* (CES) with additional questions from ESS and own questions. In social sciences we usually take information from our respondents, giving very little in return. By developing this dashboard both technologically and methodologically we wanted to change it and reciprocate our respondents who are in need of knowledge about their resources. Therefore My Migration portal opens avenues for research impact via making this instrument also used by practitioners, e.g. job advisors, NGO experts etc. The process of data collection is ongoing, started in November 2022 which means that fresh results will be presented at the conference.

Anna Horolets

Navigating transnational moral regimes: The pathways to recognition of Polish migrant women working in cleaning and care jobs

The proposed paper grows from the material I have collected during my fieldwork in Chicago in 2014 and 2019 as well as from netnographic research I carried out in 2020-21. While my main research focus has been recreational and leisure pursuits of Polish migrants in Chicago Metropolitan Area, during the fieldwork I came across the significance of work valuation in establishing personal dignity in diaspora. Polish migrants I spoke with considered the fact that their co-ethnics did cleaning or care work problematic. Concomitantly, people who performed this work were usually uncomfortable when they had to admit they did it. I suggest to analyze this attitude through the lens of several cross-cutting transnationally rooted moral regimes. The notion 'moral regime' is proposed here in order emphasize the cultural logic of inequalities that migratory situation re-configures or exacerbates, and to embed the analysis in the broader framework of research on morality that has revived in social sciences, including anthropology, over the past two decades. I suggest to use the notion of moral regimes (and not moral orders, cf. Catedral 2018) to accentuate the unequal balance of power between migrants and the regimes that project them as dignified or stripped of dignity, and offer or deny recognition to the whole ethnic, gender or class group, or to its segments. I will concentrate predominantly on the experience of Polish migrant women working in cleaning and care sector, but will also consider the broader contexts of devaluing care/cleaning jobs and denying dignity/recognition to those who perform them for the Polish community in Chicago.

Mateusz Karolak and Könül Cəfərova

“Essential, cheap or dangerous”? The life and work experiences of migrants in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As in many countries, also in Poland migrants tend to have an inferior position on the labour market compared to natives. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted these inequalities, but at the same time provided an opportunity to highlight the 'essentiality' of the low-paid jobs crucial for maintaining social reproduction. In our paper, we draw on ca. 20 biographical narrative interviews with migrants working in Poland during the COVID-19 pandemic in selected industries, which were considered essential for the survival and reproduction of our societies during the lock-downs, i.e. care, transport/logistics and retail. In particular, we recall and analyse the lived experiences of migrant workers before, during and after the pandemic as well as at the dynamics between overlapping micro-crisis imposed on interviewed migrants culturally, institutionally and structurally. Finally, we look at how our interviewees coped with these unexpected conditions and under what biographical and structural circumstances they manifested resistance, resilience or resignation. The paper presents the preliminary results of a research project "ENDURE: Inequalities, Community Resilience and New Governance Modalities in a Post-Pandemic World" co-funded by the National Science Centre, Poland as a part of the Trans-Atlantic Platform RRR Call 2021.

Weronika Kloc-Nowak and Louise Ryan

Informal care in Polish migrants' families immobilised by Brexit and COVID-19: experiences and implications for future

This paper discusses Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic as new external challenges to transnational family life that can undermine the care arrangements and intentions of the families of Polish post-accession migrants. The pandemic, associated national lockdowns and travel restrictions raise questions about assumed transnationalism (Kloc-Nowak and Ryan, forthcoming), building upon earlier critiques of migrants' assumed cross-national mobility (see Dahinden, 2017).

We draw upon data from eight focus group (FGs) discussions conducted face-to-face in July 2020 and online in March 2021, with Polish grandparents with varied proportions of grandchildren living abroad. The FGs were an opportunity to capture the evolving impact of the pandemic on intergenerational relations with both geographically close and distant kin. The data also point to perceptions of the risk of COVID-19 associated with ethnicised stereotypes and evolving with time, as the people became socialised into living in the pandemic regime. Ethnicisation of the risks of infections and unequally applied restrictions show how easily differences are employed when societies act in fear. The earlier perception of familiarity or similarity, which had facilitated transnational lifestyles within the EU, may be suspended or cancelled when borders, both political and mental, are hardened in reaction to a future crisis. Moreover, Brexit reveals the risks of having one's family life conditional on legal status and other state's decisions. While the pandemic caused temporary restrictions, the full consequences of Brexit will unfold in time, as the parents of the post 2004-accession migrants age and increasing numbers become dependent on personal care.

Aleksandra Lewicki

East-West inequalities and the ambiguous racialisation of 'Eastern Europeans'

A growing scholarly literature suggests that people who moved from Europe's East to its West are racialised. Others argue that the concept racism adds little to our understanding of intra-European mobilities and speak of 'migratization' or 'xenophobia'. Many of these scholarly contributions have in common that they conceive of discrimination as occurring after migration. What is more, they focus on the attitudinal dimension of 'prejudice', as expressed in the media or the narratives of East-West movers themselves. What thereby slips from view is that racism has wider geopolitical-

economic and legal dimensions, and structures life opportunities. This article explores how categories such as 'Eastern European' are deployed, invoked and how they are put to work – via policy or the law. The analysis shows how neoliberal policies – including the precarization of labour, the politics of austerity and the fortification of borders – have attributed a distinctive positionality to 'Eastern Europeans' in West European racial hierarchies. On this basis, I suggest that people from Europe's East are distinctively, yet ambiguously racialised, and discuss various facets of this ambiguity. Most notably, 'Eastern Europe' is inferiorized within Europe, but is often positioned within global racialised categories of 'Europeanness'. This distinctive racialisation, I argue, is not a product of 21st century mobilities but reflects and reproduces the longstanding peripheralization of the region. Of course, racialisation shapes people's everyday lives after migration; yet, it also channels the life opportunities of those born in the East of the EU over the course of generations.

Kasia Narkowicz

The only thing we received was the clapping': experiences of Polish essential workers during Covid

Covid-19 exacerbated existing global inequalities, further deepening the already precarious lives of many migrant workers. For Poles in the UK, the pandemic has negatively impacted on their financial situation and mental health and contributed to an increased sense of discrimination. Consequently, many Poles are either returning to Poland or considering leaving the UK. To better understand the position of Poles in the UK as both Eastern Europeans and as essential workers overrepresented in low-paid, precarious jobs, we draw on work on racialisation and racial capitalism to argue that Eastern Europeans occupy a fragile position both in the UK's racial and labour hierarchies. When compounded, these intersecting positions of precarity contribute to a sense of alienation and exclusion that deepens during times of crisis such as Brexit and Covid-19. Our findings are a result of an ESRC-funded project exploring the health, social, economic and cultural impacts of the pandemic on Polish migrant essential workers in the UK (www.migrantessentialworkers.com, 2020-2023). As part of this work, we conducted an online survey (N=1100) and online semi-structured interviews (N=50) with Polish essential workers in the UK.

Grzegorz Piotrowski

Poles vs. Brexit - challenges and adaptation strategies

The scale of Polish migration to the UK has become a well-known and discussed fact after the EU enlargement in 2004. With around 1 million Poles that moved to the UK, this situation was not only a demographical or social issue, but became also a political one. One of the results of politicization of such claims was the discussion preceding Brexit, where issue of migration became one of key topics discussed. The aim of my presentation is to show how the Brexit process influenced the Polish migrant community, from the rise of hate speech against migrants that swept the UK, to political consequences and migrant activism, that offered self-help networks preparing Polish citizens to obtain the settled status in the UK, and to improve the public image of migrants (mostly Polish) in the UK. The main question is, how precisely the Brexit process affected Polish community in the UK, what was crucial for migrants themselves and what kind of solutions to the identified problems migrants developed. Accompanying question is about the tools used by the migrant community and in particular the cooperation with local groups / organisations (such as migrant organisations, trade unions etc.). The empirical material in my presentation comes from research conducted for the project RADIANT – political activism of Poles in the UK, financed by the Polish National Science Centre (grant no. UMO-OPUS-37-HS6-01748).

Krystyna Slany and Magdalena Ślusarczyk

[Migrant children in a Polish school and their integration during the COVID-19 pandemic. Experiences of children and teachers](#)

Migrant children became a permanent and important element of the Polish school. However, due to their migrant status, cultural difference and family situation, they are a group particularly exposed to various educational risks, school risks, insecurity, isolation or psychological problems. Based on the results of the research project Children Hybrid Integration: Learning Dialogue as a way of upgrading policies of participation (CHILD UP) we would like to present the situation of migrant children - an invisible, undiscussed subject in the context of experiences and challenges of education and inclusion during the pandemic. We propose this topic because the educational problems of migrant children, especially during COVID-19, were crucial for their inclusion, their educational opportunities, their better future. Crucial for us is the voice of the children, who talk openly about their learning failures, fears, peer relationships, digital competences, but also the advantages of learning during the pandemic. The research reveals different experiences in work, learning, school relationships but also children's participation and sense of agency as well as allow them to gain epistemic authority. Based on the results of our research, we also make recommendations on how to better respond to the needs of the pupils and increase their participation in the learning process, which is especially important when currently the number of pupils with a migrant background is increasing significantly as a result of the war in Ukraine.

Aleksandra Szkudlarek

[Coincidence or a conscious choice? British lifestyle migrants in Poland](#)

The topic of Polish migration to Great Britain is often raised by researchers, for instance, due to the scale of this phenomenon. However, reverse mobility usually remains beyond the sphere of scientific interest. Especially the issue of lifestyle-related migration from the UK to Poland has not been addressed so far (except for the small exploratory study, cf. Andrejuk 2017). Although Poland is not a typical destination for lifestyle migrants who tend to choose places with a better climate, more peaceful and relaxed atmosphere, some other factors like the possibility of maximizing capitals or regaining work-life balance attract. Based on the content analysis of YouTube channels created by British migrants residing in Poland and 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews with British lifestyle migrants, my paper investigates factors behind individuals' migration decisions and their choice of destination, the perception of the host country and its inhabitants before and after the move and the changes in the sense of belonging over time of British lifestyle migrants in Poland. The postcolonial perspective will be used to make sense of my findings. Additionally, intersectional approach will be utilized to help to understand migrants' positions on mobility, integration and transnational continuums (White 2022), constituting more comprehensive picture of the Brits residing in Poland. The study fills the gaps in the knowledge of Brits in Poland, contributes to a broader understanding of the phenomenon of migration from Western countries and the application of the concept of lifestyle migration in other geographical and cultural contexts where it has not been previously used.

Dirk Uffelmann

[Poles among Others: Literary Perspectives on Mutual Othering among Polish and Other Migrants in Britain since 2004](#)

Perspectives on the lives of migrants in their host countries tend to be bicultural, which is at odds with the multi-ethnic reality of British industrial cities, especially with London's low-paid sector.

This paper proposes migrant literature as an antidote to bicultural restrictions. It endeavors to provide a comparative reading of writings by Polish migrant authors about interactions with other migrants in Britain and other migrant writers' perceptions of Poles. The corpus consists of post-accession texts. Given that the authors draw on diverse—Polish, British, Ukrainian, Latvian, and other East European—traditions of cultural and/or economic Othering, this paper scrutinizes both the mutual Orientalizing tendencies and the transnationalizing trajectories involved.

Anne White

Polish cities of migration: life in Kalisz, Piła and Płock as experienced by Ukrainians and 'other foreigners' -- Armenian, Australian, Bangladeshi, Belarusian, Italian, Kazakh, Kenyan, Nigerian, Syrian, Russian, Taiwanese, Turkish, Uruguayan and Venezuelan

According to statistics, Poland now has net immigration, and, in terms of self-identification, the biggest cities are 'cities of immigration' rather than 'emigration'. However, smaller cities present a more complex picture. Migration in both directions is significant to their identities. On the one hand, foreigners increasingly arrive to work and settle not just in the biggest Polish cities, but also in smaller places. On the other, despite Poland's overall economic growth in recent decades, smaller cities often maintain identities as 'cities of emigration'. Furthermore, plenty of Polish residents are return or circular migrants: adding to the sense that these are 'cities of migration', places where migration is a familiar and recognised livelihood strategy, where migrants are both 'we' and 'they'. My paper is based on my 2019-22 fieldwork in Kalisz, Piła and Płock with Polish returnees and other migrants. I present the experiences, perceptions and mutual relations of the non-Polish participants, both before and during the 2022 influx of Ukrainian refugees. My interlocutors were economic, family and educational migrants of different ages and from different walks of life. As King et al (1997:3) observed, 'there is no such creature as a net migrant'. 70 were Ukrainians (the more visible minority) while 19 were from other countries (mostly invisible to local residents and often to each other). I argue that despite their labour market shortcomings, smaller cities are attractive because of personal networks and because they are seen as good places to bring up children. Part of this comfort derives from knowing that local attitudes towards migration are pragmatic and non-judgmental. However, both Poles and migrants also engage in ethnic hierarchisation and 'othering' of lower-status individuals, sometimes negating the potential for shared-migrant solidarity.

Katarzyna Winiecka

Migrants' life in Białystok - the example of a (non) homogeneous city of Eastern Poland. The role of intermediary groups?

From the perspective of global and large cities around the world, Białystok in Poland is a sort of homogeneous city. However, from Poland's perspective, Białystok historically has always had one of the most diverse populations in the ethnic and religious context. Currently, Białystok is not a very popular destination for migrants, due to its economic conditions and insufficient migrant infrastructure. Despite this, the migrant population continues to grow - most recently because of the war in Ukraine. We can observe how a two-way adaptation process develops. The main purpose of this paper is to show how the migrants' life and their settlement in a city such as Białystok may look, where the role of intermediary groups (their character, the presence or lack of some of them) has been assessed as important. Intermediary groups are here taken to be more or less organized and institutionalized social circles with varying inside and outside power, performing different functions (in social, cultural, moral, economic, and political terms). The discussion is based on interviews with migrants from Belarus, Crimean Tatars who have quite large related groups, (e.g. national, ethnic, and religious groups), and with the control group - migrants who don't have such groups as other interlocutors (e.g. from Lesotho, Italy). From July 2022 to January 2023, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted in Białystok.