

Foundation “Our Choice” Report

The Impact of Covid-19 on Ukrainian Women Migrants in Poland

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Foundation “Our Choice”
in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll
Foundation in Warsaw



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
WARSAW
Poland

Warsaw 2021

Editorial Information

The Report “The Impact of Covid-19 on Ukrainian Women Migrants in Poland” is published by the Foundation “Our Choice” in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Warsaw.



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ISBN Number

ISBN-978-83-946056-3-6

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Executive Summary

This research documents how Covid-19, and the measures introduced by the Polish state to curb its spread, have impacted on Ukrainian women migrants. The report shows that the pandemic has produced dramatic new twists to problems that Ukrainian women already faced. Covid-19 intensifies the intersectional inequality experienced by Ukrainian women in Poland.

The pandemic also sheds new light on the, often invisible, work of Ukrainian women in Poland. The new risks and responsibilities of migrant women, particularly those working in the care sector, demonstrate the value of their work for society.

The report analyses how Covid-19 has impacted on a series of key issues confronting Ukrainian women in Poland. We signal old problems and their new Covid twists, and make recommendations for actions to be taken by the state, specific institutions and civic organizations.

Key Issues

Legalisation and Lockdown

- All residence permissions were extended to 30 days after the end of the pandemic. However, since permissions to work in Poland are tied to a particular employer, the extensive job loss provoked by lockdown caused problems in registering new permissions, and in particular new unified residence and work permits.
- The notoriously dysfunctional system of obtaining residence permits from Voivodship Offices has grown worse during lockdown, intensifying migrant precarity and leaving many women deprived of the right to social welfare.
- Closing the border at all but three crossings with Ukraine and limiting the visa-free regime has caused

the separation of families and disrupted cyclical migrations of Ukrainian women (e.g. domestic workers).

Precarious Employment

- With lockdown, service, retail and culture sectors closed, causing widespread job loss. These are branches where many Ukrainian women work and informal arrangements dominate. Ukrainian women were left without revenue, access to welfare, family support structures and frequently unable to pay rent.

Entrepreneurs

- Non-EU immigrants can register as self-employed in Poland only with limited kinds of residence permits. The extensive documentation required makes founding a Ltd. company also highly problematic. Obstructions to self-employment restrict women to the grey economy.
- Covid-19 lockdowns brought particular challenges to businesses run by Ukrainian women.

Domestic Work and Care

- Ukrainian domestic workers face intensified responsibility to protect clients (often in high risk groups) and themselves suffer risk of infection. This largely informal and undervalued sector, where union representation is particularly lacking, is important for public health.

Home Schooling and Housework

- The Polish education system fails to adapt schooling to migrant children, and school closures have worsened this problem. Distance education poses special problems for migrant children and their mothers.

Social Integration

- During Covid-19, the social contacts of Ukrainian women are reduced to a minimum. Unclear legal and employment situations and separation from

family networks intensify the psychological repercussions of Covid-19 on Ukrainian women.

- Contact with Polish language and possibilities to learn were drastically reduced by Covid-19. Language is a crucial obstacle in many aspects of Ukrainian migrant women's lives.

Health Care

- Free hospital care is available to Ukrainians for Covid-19. However, information about, and even support during, Covid-19 illness is largely organised through informal Ukrainian networks.
- For many Ukrainian women, access to medical care is limited due to lack of formal employment, lack of awareness of their rights, the unpreparedness of the Polish health service for migrant patients and long queues (which worsened during Covid-19) or costs (in the private sector).
- Foreigners will get free access to the Covid-19 vaccine, but an information campaign is needed to promote this amongst migrant women.

Domestic Violence

- The pandemic has witnessed an increase in domestic violence. Ukrainian migrant women face severe difficulties in leaving abusive or violent relationships, and finding appropriate support in Poland. Emergency services and crisis support agencies do not sufficiently target their assistance to migrant women.

Migrant Labour vs. Key Workers

- "Key Workers", whose work was crucial to the functioning of societies during Covid-19, often turn out to be low-paid migrants. In Poland, the work of Ukrainian women, especially in care, has been an underestimated element of Poland's response.

Key recommendations

Policy / Legislation

- Develop migration and integration policies based on a participatory model, involving various stakeholders, and taking into account the needs of women.
- Issue work permits to foreigners with a right to work not tied to a single employer or an individual sector of the economy.
- Facilitate migrant workers to set up as individual entrepreneurs.
- Implement a comprehensive programme assisting the integration of migrant children in Polish schools and monitor its outcomes.
- Include regular courses of Polish for Ukrainian migrants into a state program of migrant integration and into the integration programs of local authorities available all over the country.

- Facilitate access of migrant workers to medical care through the creation of better systems of formalized employment.
- Provide psychological support directed to migrant women in their own languages.

Institutional Reform

- Improve the system of issuing residence and work permits.
- Enable online applications and improve the e-system for checking the status of applications.
- Develop an institution dedicated to the defence of the rights of foreign employees (e.g. extend the State Labour Inspectorate's remit to include non-standard work arrangements and remove its obligation to transfer information to the Border Guard Service).
- Educate medical services on the rights and needs of Ukrainian patients. Inform migrant women about their health rights.
- Educate emergency services about the rights and difficulties of migrant women suffering domestic violence.
- Include migrants in the pro-vaccine campaign.

NGO Initiatives / Inter-institutional Cooperation

- Inform Ukrainian women workers in precarious jobs about their rights.
- Found a think-tank developing ideas for the provision of social welfare given the feminisation of the economy.
- Support migrant women through women's entrepreneurial incubators: make sure the offers cater for and are promoted amongst migrant women.
- Develop and distribute "model work contracts" for domestic care workers, and cultivate the mobilisation of Ukrainian domestic workers in Poland to establish collective representation.
- Sensitize local councils to the need to facilitate distance learning and the return to schools for migrant children, and demonstrate the advantages of best practices in intercultural education.
- Introduce an emergency line in Ukrainian for those experiencing domestic violence and materials in Ukrainian educating about violence and where to find support. Accompany this with an educational campaign against the taboo nature of domestic violence, and informing Ukrainian women of their rights and the support available in Poland.
- Promote the social value of the work of Ukrainian women migrants during Covid-19, in particular in various activities related to care, as a stimulus to political, economic, social and cultural re-evaluations of their roles.

Introduction

In responding to the threat to public health posed by Covid-19, states introduced a range of unprecedented measures, causing huge disruption to social life and the shutdown of whole sectors of the economy. Our report tracks how these impacted Ukrainian women in Poland.

The Covid-19 crisis comprises specific features, such as loss of low paid jobs in the service sector, risks for care workers, home schooling, social isolation and restrictions on travel. As a result, its impact is disproportionately felt by women (OECD 2020, UN Women 2020, WBG 2020, Korolczuk 2020, Oertelt-Prigione 2020) and migrants (Reis 2020, Fasani 2020, Bales 2020, Winton and Howcroft 2020). Poland lacks a migration policy developed in consultation with various stakeholders that takes into account the needs of women, and ranks poorly on international migrant integration indexes (MIPEX 2020). Ukrainian migrants in Poland also lack coordinated support from the Ukrainian state. As a result, the effect of the pandemic has been to provoke an intensification of the inequality already experienced by Ukrainian women in Poland.

On the other hand, the work of Ukrainian women in Poland, for example in the care sector, takes on new importance in the context of the pandemic (Levitas 2020). The experiences of Ukrainian women demonstrate why and how post-Covid Polish society should be constructed on more socially just and gender equitable terms (ILO 2020, Mundlak and Fudge 2020, De Henau and Himmelweit 2020, Esquivel 2020, Wielgosz 2020).

In this pilot research, our aim is to identify key issues confronting Ukrainian migrant women as a result of the pandemic and, for each of these, develop propositions for action.

Political Context

In attempts to stem the spread of Covid-19, we have witnessed the lockdown not only of many aspects of social, cultural and economic life, but also of nation states. For the first time in 30 years, EU countries closed their borders. Putting the EU to one side, each country developed its own strategy for dealing with the pandemic. For many migrants, this meant uncertainty concerning their legal and economic statuses, their access to healthcare systems and being locked up in their countries of migration with uncertain prospects for employment. Some therefore returned home.

The pandemic, however, also graphically demonstrated the extent to which EU states' economies depend on migrant labour. Nations undertook exceptional measures both initially to bring their own citizens home and then later to enable the arrival of immigrants, who had either left or were unable to enter the country (e.g. in agriculture, care sectors, etc.) (Babakova 2020).

The Polish Government

The Polish government announced a nationwide lockdown on 13th March, and declared that all foreigners residing in Poland would be provided with free medical care for Covid-19. At the same time, the government announced the closing of borders, leaving just a few crossings open (only 3 with Ukraine), and restricted the right to visit Poland to a select group of foreigners, including labour migrants (Ministra Zdrowia 2020); this list would later be expanded. The legal status of foreigners whose residence or work documents expired during lockdown was left unspecified. As a result of lobbying by employers, civic organizations and the media, the first "Anti-Crisis Shield" Legislation of March 31st extended the validity of all foreigners' residence and work permits for up to 30 days after the end of the epidemic (Tarcza 2020a). This law also provided

for an extension of the legal stay of foreigners residing in Poland on the basis of visas. The situation of foreigners who came to Poland on the basis of visa-free movement was left unspecified. The latter group is mainly comprised of Ukrainians, who since 2017 have used this possibility to come to Poland for temporary work. It required a next wave of lobbying for an extension of legal residence for this group to be included in the second "Anti-Crisis Shield" of April 16th (Tarcza 2020b).

The initially undefined status of foreigners, the closing of borders, a lack of information, unexpected unemployment, and as a result, problems with housing caused chaos and a feeling of instability among migrants. Approximately 160,000 Ukrainians left the country during the first two months of spring 2020.

The Ukrainian Government

The Ukrainian authorities closed the borders two days after their Polish counterparts, on 17th March. Flight, bus and train communication was terminated, so it was only possible to cross the border in private cars. In addition, President Volodymyr Zelenskyi first announced that all Ukrainians should return before 17th March when borders would be closed, and then on 26th March stated that all borders would be closed starting from 28th March (Lb.ua 2020, Ukrinform 2020, Babakova 2020). However, it was in fact planned that three crossings on the Polish-Ukrainian border would continue to function. The queues of thousands witnessed at the border were exacerbated by this informational chaos.

Once EU states realized how dependent their economies are on migrant work, they started to organize transports of Ukrainian workers. The Ukrainian government again acted unpredictably: first allowing special charter flights and later prohibiting them. Prime Minister Denys Shmygal stated that qualified Ukrainian migrants are an asset for Ukraine and should work at home. The government even discussed issuing permits for Ukrainians to leave, in order to enable state control over migration flows. Such ideas were accused of violating the Ukrainian Constitution, with the media comparing them to state enforced serfdom (Europeiska Pravda 2020).

At various points in the summer, Ukrainian and Polish governments changed their Covid classification systems and each other's status in these systems, complicating travel plans of migrants through the unexpected imposition of quarantine.

Current Situation

In late December 2020, both Ukrainian and Polish governments announced new lockdowns. This complicated holiday plans for Polish and Ukrainian migrants for

whom traditional trips home are especially important this year, as many, on account of movement restrictions, have not been home for a long time.

Fluctuating decisions and announcements made at the last moment still impact on migrants, raising their uncertainty about the future and exacerbating the economic and psychological instability of their situations.

Methodology

The research was conducted from November to mid-December 2020, and covered the period from March 2020 to December 2020.

Desk research included study of relevant literature, data and reports; analysis of media coverage related to the situation of migrants in Poland during the pandemic; the collection of statistical data and requests for information to state institutions and organizations (Border Guards and the Social Security Institution, Feminoteka, the Women's Rights Centre and the Blue Line of the Polish Emergency Service of the Association for the Prevention of Violence in Families); and analysis of the content of Ukrainian women's groups in social media.

On this basis, we defined major themes and sought to recruit migrant women with relevant experiences for IDIs (Individual In-Depth Interviews). Due to its activity in supporting migrants from Ukraine, the Foundation "Our Choice" has a broad network of contacts, which we used in finding interviewees. We conducted 12 IDIs. Most were conducted online, using the platforms Zoom and Messenger, while one IDI was conducted in the Ukrainian House in Warsaw. The languages used were Ukrainian, Russian and Polish. We pay tribute to the resourcefulness of our interviewees and their openness in discussing with us.

The research covered women residing in Warsaw and surrounding towns, and Wroclaw in November-December. The women we talked to came from all regions in Ukraine, and both major cities and the countryside. Their ages ranged from 25 to 56 and their biographies, as well as their experiences of Covid-19 are diverse. The women work in Poland in such sectors as the health service, culture, domestic care, cosmetics, house cleaning, childcare, retail, gastronomy, entrepreneurship, real estate, finances and schooling.

We also conducted structured interviews with experts in women's and migrant issues. We performed online interviews with: consultants at the Consultation Centre in the Ukrainian House in Warsaw; a representative of a legal firm dealing with migrant legalisation;

a Ukrainian legal representative advising on legalisation procedures and animating an online migrant support group; representatives of three NGOs supporting victims of domestic violence; a representative of temporary work agencies and an intercultural assistant for migrant children.

In total, we conducted 20 interviews with migrant women and experts. The report also includes comments and recommendations offered during a roundtable presenting the results of the research organized in December.

As a result of the research, we offer a series of propositions for actions. While NGO initiatives have an important part to play, political will and state investment are required to enable the problems diagnosed in this report to be systematically addressed.

Statistics

Ukrainians in Poland

In January 2019, in Poland there were 1 270 398 Ukrainian citizens (about 3.5% of the population of Poland). Overall, about 44% of Ukrainians are women (558 975),

but in big cities women are the majority (53%). Ukrainian migrants are mostly of working age: 21-30 - 38%, 31-40 - 29%, 41-50 less than 15%, above 51 - only 7% (Selectiv 2020).

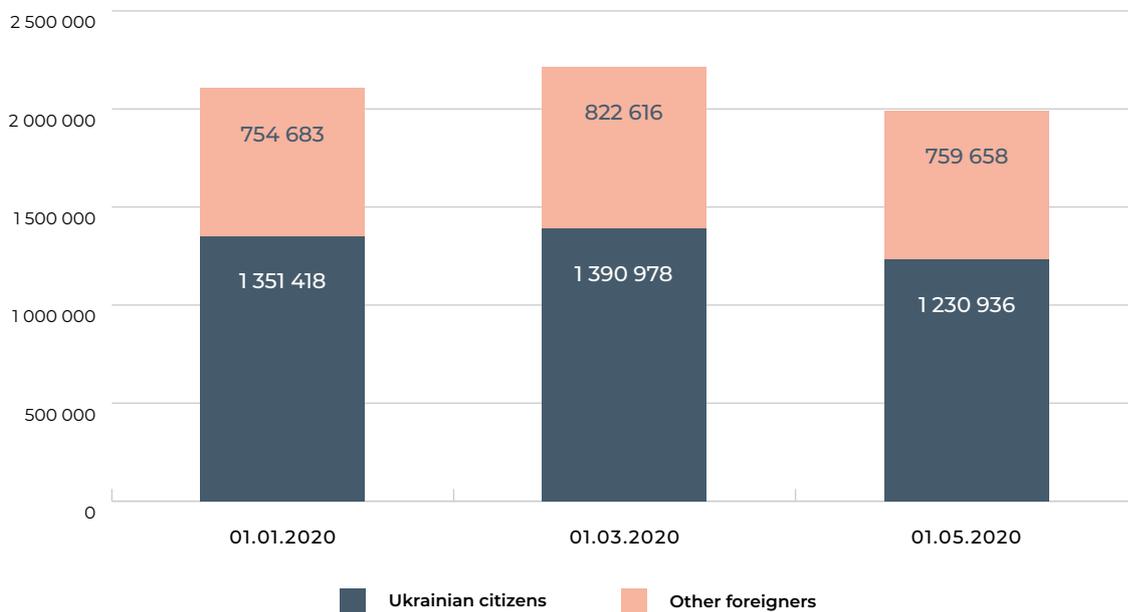
At the end of 2019 there were 2 106 101 foreigners in Poland, of which 1 351 418 were Ukrainians (GUS 2020).

The events of 2014-15, the war and the worsening economic situation in Ukraine that followed have increased migration and changed its principal direction. In 2008, 48% of migrants went to Russia and only 8% to Poland, whereas in 2017 26% of labour migrants travelled to Russia, whereas 42% came to Poland.¹

A number of the women we talked to were de facto refugees from Ukraine's eastern territories, with one war widow. The inclusion of women in the war effort is also challenging patriarchal family roles in Ukraine.

The dynamics of migration underwent significant changes in 2020. By the end of February, the number of Ukrainians in Poland had risen to 1 390 978 (GUS 2020). In the course of March and April, however, this number dropped by 160 042 to 1 230 936, a fall of 11.5% from February.

Number of Foreigners in Poland



Source: Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny)

¹ Звіт щодо організації проведення, методології та результатів модульного вибіркового обстеження з питань трудової міграції в Україні. – К.: Міжнародна організація праці, Державна служба статистики України, Інститут демографії та соціальних досліджень НАНУ, 2012. – 96 с.; Зовнішня трудова міграція (за результатами модульного вибіркового обстеження). Статистичний бюлетень. – К.: Державна служба статистики України, 2017. – 36 с.

Residence Permits (Zezwolenia na pobyt)

On 16th December 2020, 458 409 foreigners had residence permits (all types of karta pobytu), of which 245 011 were Ukrainians. Of these, 109 572 were women (Migracje 2020). Of the total number of permits, 80% (196 972) were for temporary residence. 40 985 Ukrainians have permanent residence permits, and only 5802 long term EU residence permits. 93 Ukrainians have refugee status. In addition, 194 093 Ukrainians are in the process of applying for residence permits, of which 84 351 were women.

The vast majority of Ukrainians (over 1 100 000 people) reside in Poland on the basis of visas, visa-free movement or are in the process of applying for residence permits. Ukrainians residing on these bases do not qualify for a range of rights or social welfare.

Work Permissions

Over the period 2013-18, Ukrainians contributed an average increase of 0.8% to the Polish workforce annually. Over these years, the contribution of Ukrainians to growth in GDP is estimated at an average 0.5% annually. Since 2014 the Polish economy has grown by 22%, of which at least 2.5% is due to the contribution of Ukrainian workers (Strzelecki et al. 2020).

Ukrainians most often work on the basis of Certificates of Delegating Work to a Foreigner (oświadczenie o powierzeniu wykonywania pracy cudzoziemcowi - hereafter Work Certificates) or Work Permits. Most Work Permits are given in the following professions: industrial and craft workers, workers performing tasks not requiring qualifications, machine and equipment operators and repairers, service workers and sales personnel, technicians and other associate professionals.

The number of Work Permits given to Ukrainians has risen annually since 2014, but this changed with the onset of Covid-19 (MRPiPS 2020a).

Work Permits			
	Total	Ukrainians	Ukrainian women
First half of 2019	217 297	162 421	45 539
First half of 2020	198 301	145 067	44 220

Source: Labour Market Department of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland (Departament Rynku Pracy MRPiPS).

A big drop can also be witnessed in the number of Work Certificates (oświadczenie o powierzeniu wykonywania pracy cudzoziemcowi) issued:

Certificates of Delegating Work to a Foreigner			
	Total	Ukrainians	Ukrainian women
First half of 2019	845 929	764 759	277 555
First half of 2020	611 727	542 591	204 955

Source: Labour Market Department of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland (Departament Rynku Pracy MRPiPS).

The biggest fall in the number of Work Certificates in relation to the previous year happened in: March (-30%, from 127 359 to 89 340), April (-70%, from 130 980 to 39 432) and May (-53%, from 131 161 to 61 683).

Some of the drop in the quantity of work documents issued, as with those of border crossings, should be attributed to the automatic extension of residence rights included in anti-Covid Shield legislation. However, the closure of many businesses during lockdowns is also undoubtedly a factor. In the overall context of a fall in work permits, it is worth noting a small rise in those for domestic workers and health care and social assistance.

Border Crossings

The pandemic also led to a fall in the number of people crossing borders (SG 2020).

Border Crossings			
	Poland-Ukraine Border Crossings (% of all Polish Border Crossings)	From Poland	To Poland
First half of 2019	10 018 614 (40%)	4 815 797	5 202 817
First half of 2020	4 743 469 (43%)	2 287 834	2 455 635
Fall %	-53%	-52%	-53%

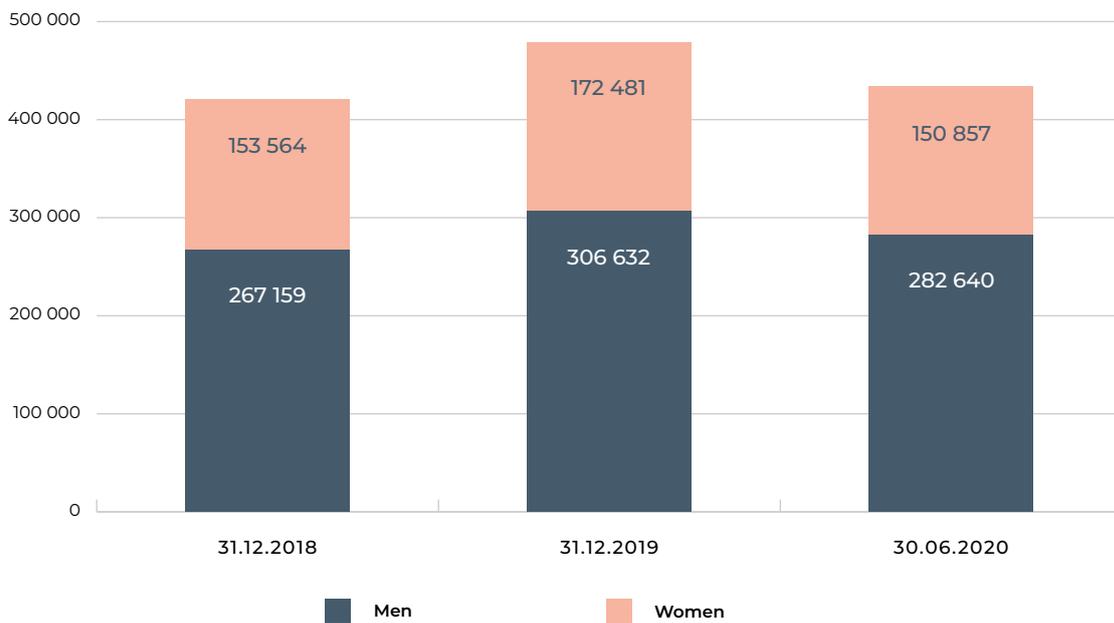
Source: Polish Border Guard (Straż Graniczna)

Social Insurance Contributions

On 31st December 2019, 613 910 people from outside the EU made social insurance (ZUS) contributions, of which the majority (479 113) were Ukrainians, of whom 36% (172 481) were women. This number of Ukrainians making social insurance contributions is 29 times bigger than 2005, and 5 times bigger than 2015. The main sections of the economy where Ukrainians make social insurance contributions are: administration and support activities (i.e. agency work) 24.7%, industrial food production 17.4%, construction, transport and logistics 14.4%.

As a result of the pandemic the number of foreigners with social insurance fell. At the end of end of June 2020: 433 497 Ukrainians were still making social insurance contributions, of which 34.8% (150 857) were women (ZUS 2020). Thus, at the time of the Covid-19 crisis, over 40 000 Ukrainians lost jobs with work or freelance contracts. In addition, we note that only about a third of the Ukrainians living in Poland make social insurance contributions.

Ukrainians Making Social Insurance Contributions



Source: Central Register of the Social Insurance Institution (Centralny Rejestr Ubezpieczonych ZUS)

1. Legalisation and Lockdown

Poland's migration laws and practices promote the temporary work and residence of migrants, and obstruct longer term residence and work.

The process of seeking to obtain a Residence Permit (karta pobytu) is for foreigners a Gordian Knot, which demands both a root-and-branch reorganisation of the system and political acknowledgement of this problem.

Old Problems

The system of obtaining Residence Permits from the Voivodship Offices is notoriously dysfunctional. In most cases, when processing foreigners' applications the Offices contravene State Administrative Law (KPA) to the detriment of the applicants, as demonstrated in a 2019 Report of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK 2019).

As a result, foreigners become locked in a many year residence application cycle in which they are continuously required to submit documentation: as the procedures are chronically protracted, migrants' documents can become invalid during a single application and they are therefore required to submit new ones. This situation encourages the activities of various, legal and illegal, mediators. The impossibility of obtaining the necessary permissions in time, or even in a foreseeable future, causes frustration and problems for migrants. Migrants in the process of applications are required to stay in the country, as departure would mean beginning a new process of making visas in order to be able to return to Poland.

All permissions to work in Poland are given for a specific job for a particular employer. This means that foreign workers are dependent on their employers not just for work, but also for legal residence (given the dysfunctional system mentioned above, changing job is par-

ticularly problematic for those with Unified Work and Residence Permits). In cases where housing is also provided by employers, workers are dependent on employers for work, legal residence and housing. This situation impinges on workers' ability to exercise their labour rights (Keryk 2018).

This situation is made more problematic by the fact that Poland lacks institutions to protect the rights of foreign workers independent of their residence status. The State Labour Inspectorate (PIP) could be such an institution, but its competence only extends to assisting workers on Work Contracts. Many migrant labourers work on the basis of civil agreements or in the grey economy. In the case of foreigners, PIP is obliged to declare to the Border Guard Service (SG) any foreigners who do not have a valid work permit, regardless of whose fault this is. Foreigners are punished with deportation and a ban on entry to the country, or are unable to defend their case as the procedures are complicated and they lack appropriate support.

Prior to Covid-19, we highlight the following problems related to legalization of work and residence:

- Lack of transparency of procedures and delays in processing applications.
- Impossibility of getting information while an application is being processed.
- The e-system for checking the status of applications does not fulfil its role. It does not allow the submission of applications or additional documents, contact with the office or checking decisions.
- Deadlines for submitting documents are not compatible with deadlines for issuing documents from other state institutions.
- Only migrants with residence permits are eligible for social benefits. Delays in processing applications deprive migrants of this right.
- Unified Work and Residence Permits have proved to

be impractical, since losing job means losing right to residence.

- Tying workers to employers heightens the risk of worker exploitation.

Covid Twists

Legalisation Revolution

After a series of acts of legislation, the validity of the residence and work documents of all foreigners in Poland was extended until 30 days after the end of the epidemic. As a result, we are currently in an unprecedented state of extension of residence and work permits.

Sudden Loss of Work

As a result of lockdowns, many Ukrainians lost their jobs. This is visible in the drop in Ukrainians insured in ZUS; equally, the majority of women interviewed for the research lost their jobs in spring 2020. This also provoked bureaucratic burdens.

Those with Unified Work and Residence Permits, instead of applying for a new work permit for a new job, were forced to apply for both a work and residence permit. As described, this procedure is complicated, costly, and time and emotionally consuming. As a result, migrants were plunged at the moment of the outbreak of the pandemic into a precarious position, which pushes them toward the grey economy.

Those with work permits have to obtain new permits on changing job. With the outbreak of Covid-19, the timeframe for receiving new permits grew and migrants were left without access to legal work for lengthy periods

Even Longer Waiting Periods

Applications for residence permits grew even longer during the pandemic. After the announcement of the state of epidemiological threat on 16th March, Voivodship Offices stopped receiving applicants in person. Thus, access to the offices became virtually impossible. Offices renewed their work at the end of May, but some offices renewed receiving clients only at the end of July. It was still possible to send documents by post, but offices (e.g. the Mazowieckie Office) informed that the waiting time for the initial meeting to begin applications was about three months!

Impossible Timelines for Additional Documentation

Demands to supply extra documents, whose quantity increased during the pandemic to include certificates from the Social Insurance Office (ZUS), are not compatible with the work of the institutions in question. In general, applicants have 7-14 days to submit additional documents to Voivodship Offices, while other state offices take much longer to supply the required certificates.

Obstructions to Long Term Residency

Applying for the status of Long Term EU Resident, which gives free access to the labour market, requires passing the State Polish Language exam. Covid related organisational issues meant that only a very limited number of foreigners could take the exam.

Changes in Border Regimes

Travel Restrictions

During the pandemic only some categories of migrants could cross the border with Poland, principally labour migrants or students. Restrictions to visa-free movement divided families (for instance, mothers could not bring their children to Poland) and caused many Ukrainians to be stuck in Poland for the duration of the pandemic.

Interrupted Cyclical Migration

The combination of loss of work and anxiety about future border regimes at the outbreak of the epidemic in Poland led a number of migrants to return to Ukraine. Restrictions to visa-free travel have made it difficult for women who worked in the grey zone and travelled to Poland visa-free to return. As a result, cyclical rhythms of work migration (e.g. six months in Poland and six at home in alternation with a colleague in domestic care and cleaning) have been broken.

Uncertainty

Many Ukrainians resigned from travelling to Ukraine for fear of difficulties in returning and the need to undergo quarantine (which frequently requires finding a suitable place for quarantine).

Covid Stories

IDI1

IDI1, trained as an economist and market analyst in Ukraine, a single mother of two children of 7 and 13, came to Poland in August 2019. In March 2020, she knew that her work contract in a fast-food chain would not be renewed, so she found work at the meat counter of a supermarket chain. However, it took 4 months for the registration documents enabling her change of employer to be processed. During this time, and during the first lockdown, IDI1 and her family were no longer able to pay for their accommodation, so they had to find temporary accommodation with Ukrainian friends in Warsaw.

IDI4

IDI4 came to Poland from Berdiansk in 2018. Her 5 year old daughter joined her in Sep-

tember 2020. Her husband died in the war in October 2019. In Ukraine, she studied accounting, and had various jobs in retail and administration. In Poland, she studied medical care in a training college and now works as a cleaner in a surgical block at a hospital.

Her visa ended in March and she left her job in order to return to Ukraine to fix new papers. However, Covid-19 struck and she decided to stay in Poland. When the visa-waiver legislation was announced, thanks to a good relation with the head of staff on her ward she was able to return to her old job.

After this, she made an application for a unified Residency and Work Permit in March, but as of November had received no reply. This means she is ineligible for 500+ or single mother benefits. As a result of Covid-19 travel restrictions, she did not see her daughter from January-August, at which point she was finally able to bring her from Ukraine on the basis of getting her registered at playschool.

While most of the hospital cleaners are agency workers, ID14 has a work contract directly with the hospital. As a single mother she is permitted to work 5 days a week, 7.5 hours a day. At the hospital, there are now thorough procedures, a great amount of protective equipment that needs to be worn and changed, regular tests and repeated training sessions to ensure cleanliness. She feels responsible and takes care to clean thoroughly before travelling home. She receives a 250PLN Covid bonus.

Her daughter goes to playschool while she is at work, but accompanies her in extra-cleaning work at a doctor friend's house, where the daughter plays with his children while she cleans.

Propositions

Policy / Legislation

1. Abandon Unified Residence and Work Permits, and enable migrants in case of job loss, to apply just for a work permit at labour offices.
2. Work permissions, including Work Certificates, should not be connected to a particular employer.

Institutional Reform

1. The chronic systemic problems and delays in processing residency applications need to be addressed.
2. Enable application for residency permits online.
3. Improve the e-system for checking the status of applications: enable contact with the officer responsible for one's case, the online submission of documents and receiving information about the decision.
4. Simplify the list of documents required for residence permits, eliminating those not required by the "Law on Foreigners".
5. Create an info-line to inform applicants on how their case is progressing.

2. Precarious Sectors in Economic Downturn

Old Problems

The majority of Ukrainians in Poland work in a range of non-standard employment agreements (temporary work contracts, civil contracts, temporary work agreements, gig economy agreements and the informal economy). While this concerns both men and women, women's work, in such branches as cleaning, informal care, gastronomy and tourism, is frequently low paid work on an informal basis, as indicated by the lower percentage of Ukrainian women making social insurance payments (ZUS 2020).

Ukrainian women's work in Poland is part of a global growth in work marked by heightened labour insecurity (Fudge and Strauss 2013, Drakohoupil 2015) that particularly impacts on women (Vosko et al. 2009, Majewska 2015). Precarious modes of employment in Poland have grown particularly in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis (Maciejewska and Mrozowski 2016) and are accompanied by low levels (3 – 5%) of union representation (Sutowski 2020).

In the case of Ukrainian migrants in Poland, the prevalence of precarious work is connected to legislative issues: the difficulties and delays in obtaining residence and work permits, compared to the ease of temporary work arrangements, encourage work in non-standard employment (Keryk 2018, Józwiak 2020). This deprives women of social welfare, and encourages a reliance on work agencies that specialise in legalising work (Cope and Keryk 2019, Jones 2014) or informal contacts. Informal and part-time work is seen by migrant women as having advantages: it is easy to access, enables combining jobs, and thus maximising earnings through extending working hours, or combining work with other responsibilities, primarily care of children.

Covid Twists

The rise in unemployment caused by the pandemic in Poland, to 6.2% in September 2020 (against 5% a year earlier) is not as serious as feared. One of the reasons cited for this is a greater proportion of the workforce employed in production than in other service-dominated European economies (Malinowska 2020). However, another explanation proposed is that the statistics fail to reflect the impact of lockdowns on sectors of the economy where informal work dominates (Sutowski 2020). A survey by the Foundation Sukces Pisany Szminką (Krzeska 2020) showed that 12% of women had already lost their jobs, while a further 10% were fearful that this could happen in the immediate future. This report mentions tourism, beauty, gastronomy and the event industry as areas where many women work on freelance and specific task contracts, and where women have been especially hard hit.

Beyond the 20 000 Ukrainian women who stopped contributing to social insurance, it is difficult to calculate the full extent of the unemployment that lockdown provoked. The women we talked to frequently noted loss of work at the beginning of lockdown, which left them without revenue. After a spring scraping by, most found new work or clients, although the overall economic climate remained difficult. Work agencies proved adept at switching workers from one closed production site or sector to another where new workforce was needed, and still viewed the labour market as one with a deficit of migrant labour.

The overall extent of the impact on the labour market of Covid-19 is as yet uncertain. However, on the basis of the experiences of Ukrainian women, we can state that Covid-19 lays bare inherent flaws in con-

temporary work relations (ILO 2020) and risks further exacerbating growing social inequalities (Bales 2020, Blundel et al. 2020).

With regard to Ukrainian women in Poland, we especially note:

- lockdown related job loss left many Ukrainian women without revenue or social welfare. For example, in a cycle of investigative journalist reports Michulska (2020) describes the dramas experienced by domestic workers who, with the outbreak of Covid-19, were abandoned by clients who had previously said they treated them as family.
- migrant women lack wider family support structures in Poland or often are the main breadwinners in families, supporting other family members (e.g. children) in Poland or sending remittances to Ukraine. Tolstokorova (2012) describes sending remittances as key to migrant mothers being seen as fulfilling family obligations: the interruption to remittances caused by Covid-19 damaged family relations (see domestic violence).
- migrant women frequently were not paid their last salary.
- the costs of renting accommodation often were not reduced (this varied dependent on landlords) and women could not maintain rent payments.
- Anti-Covid legislation made it possible for employers to worsen employment conditions than those state on Work Certificates; previously, the conditions in the Work Certificate had to be respected. However, it is also common for migrants not to have read work agreements, or to have signed agreements for different jobs than those they are doing, and this also enabled exploitation during Covid.

Covid Stories

IDI7 - Gastronomy

IDI7 came to Poland in 2016, initially working in the construction of plywood furniture, and now lives with her 26 year old daughter. She has worked in restaurants, sanatoria and an ice cream parlour, jobs which she sometimes found through work agencies or through her own contacts. She had good relations with the owners of the ice cream parlour and had been working there for two months without a formal contract, when a failure to close a freezer led to the owners demanding she pay half the costs of the ruined ice cream. As she had previously warned about difficulties with the freezers, she left without receiving her salary, but without paying damages.

When we talked she was trying to get in touch with her contact at a work agency about new propositions. She was in the process of an appeal against a negative residence decision, and in a more competitive post-Covid work environment this was making her search for a job more difficult.

IDI3 – Nanny / Informal Education

IDI3 had worked in Ukraine as a teacher, before coming to Poland in 2016. In Poland, she had studied child-care in a training college, and worked as a nanny and giving informal lessons. She considered working in formal early education, but decided better earnings were available in private informal education or nanny work.

Prior to the pandemic, her main work was as nanny for a wealthy couple. She worked until Easter, but when the parents started to work from home she stopped. They continued to pay her, about which she felt embarrassed. She returned in May, but when the mother in the family again became pregnant, they parted on mutual consent. Now it is difficult to find jobs as parents have less money.

She received a residence permit in June, but is afraid to visit Ukraine as she lives with 5 other young Ukrainians and would have nowhere to do quarantine on her return.

IDI6 - Culture

IDI6 came to Poland in 2014, having previously studied at an art academy in Ukraine, and did a masters in Art Mediation at Art School. For her degree project, she had a grant to curate an exhibition of artists from Ukraine.

On arriving in Warsaw, she was unable to find work in a gallery. She worked in an antiques shop, which provided stable income and allowed time to develop other side projects. She was offered a 6 month no salary training post as the assistant to a well-known contemporary artist, but declined after learning that this post had to be full time.

At the start of lockdown, she was working in an Art Foundation on a "specific task contract" (umowa o dzieło). When lockdown started, she was made redundant despite the Foundation not seeking to economise in other respects. She now works part-time in the archive of a modernist female artist and offers drawing lessons. She was despondent about the future of culture, given that it will not be a priority in public funding, but saw evidence and potential in certain bottom up acts of artist solidarity.

Propositions

NGO Initiatives / Inter-institutional Cooperation

1. In cooperation with state institutions and trade unions, develop and distribute information to Ukrainian women about their rights when working in sectors where precarious jobs are prevalent.
2. Launching a working group (connecting migrant women with feminist economists) on how to reorganise social welfare in the context of women's mass experience of precarious work arrangements (Conaghan 2020).

Institutional Reform

1. Develop an institution specifically to defend the rights of foreign employees. This can be done by extending the remit of the Labour Inspectorate to non-formal work relations, and ending the need to transmit information to the Border Guard Service.

Policy / Legislation

1. Facilitate migrant workers to set up as individual entrepreneurs.

3. Uncertain Entrepreneurs

Migrant women who run their own business in Poland face numerous challenges that became more visible during the pandemic. Nevertheless, Ukrainian women open businesses and many plan or would like to do so. We therefore see a need to simplify the procedures through which migrants can register as entrepreneurs.

Old Problems

Obstructions to Registering as Self-employed

Self-employment of non-EU foreigners in Poland is limited to those having certain types of residence, and excludes the majority of migrants who do not have the permanent residence or specific types of temporary residence documents required.²

There are dangers attached to self-employment, due to its exploitation as a way to disguise work relations and cut costs, and in that it shifts responsibility for welfare provision to the worker. However, the impossibility of legal self-employment, especially in such service sectors as beauty, cleaning, etc., leads migrant women into the grey economy.

Obstructions to Registering a Limited Company (spółka z o.o.)

Non-EU foreigners regardless of their type of residence permit can establish a Ltd Company. This requires an initial capital investment and ties legal residence to this company. Foreigners have to prove their company is profitable, even at the beginning of its activity, and submit an extensive list of documents which is difficult to collect.

² The non-EU citizens who have the necessary legal residence status to register for self-employment are listed in: Art. 4 ust. 2 ustawy z dnia 6 marca 2018 r. o zasadach uczestnictwa przedsiębiorców zagranicznych i innych osób zagranicznych w obrocie gospodarczym na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (Dz. U. z 2018 r. poz. 649).

Such exorbitant requirements result in negative decisions. In the first quarter of 2019, 68% of migrants who applied to Voivodship Offices for residence permits based on running a Ltd. company received a negative decision, with only 11% positive and the rest dropped, a failure rate similar to previous years.³

Everyday Obstacles

Ukrainian women lack necessary linguistic and local administrative knowledge to start a business, and the network of contacts to develop a client-base. They also face the non-recognition of qualifications (the difficulty of converting their cultural capital to a new Polish context), which forces many women to work beneath their qualifications. Ukrainian women also often lack time for learning, and for establishing and running a business due, for example, to the lack of a wider family to take care of children.

Warsaw City Council provides support for women entrepreneurs, but many migrants do not perceive existing offers as addressed to them (Warsaw City 2020).

Entrepreneurial Spirit

The women we talked to demonstrated considerable entrepreneurial ingenuity in building their work biographies, and many had ambitions to found their own businesses.

Covid Twists

Covid-19 and lockdowns have brought new challenges and risks to many businesses, including those of migrant women. While government support in the first lockdown was vital, the current situation is uncer-

³ Response of the PR Manager of the Office for Foreigners to the Foundation "Our Choice," 11.04.2019.

tain as more businesses are open but still running at a loss. During the autumn-winter 2020 lockdown, the Polish government offers support for some businesses, but this is limited to certain branches, especially those closed due to lockdown.⁴ Such branches as beauty will not receive support, despite suffering substantial loss of income.

Covid-19 enforced isolation intensifies the challenges of building a network of clients and potential partners for business.

⁴ Ustawa z dnia 9 grudnia 2020 r. o zmianie ustawy o szczególnych rozwiązaniach związanych z zapobieganiem, przeciwdziałaniem i zwalczaniem Covid-19, innych chorób zakaźnych oraz wywołanych nimi sytuacji kryzysowych oraz niektórych innych ustaw. (Dz.U. 2020 poz. 2255).

Covid Stories

ID111 - Restaurants

ID111 came to Poland from the Donbas region in 2016, after her daughter of student age and followed by her husband a year later. She had worked as vice-director to the chief of an important state institution in a major Ukrainian city, presently under Russian occupation. When she came to Poland, she had a bag and 100\$. She started work according to her qualification, but realised that she didn't have the contacts to progress in this profession here.

She started studying cosmetics at a training college and unofficially selling some of the herbal cosmetics that she made as a hobby in Ukraine. Suffered from discrimination at the college, and didn't finish her diploma. Is now studying at a cosmetics institute.

Building on the network she had built up through selling her cosmetics, she set up her own business treating clients in a small room rented at a hairdressers. She was able to do this, because she had a residence permit on the basis of "joining up with family." When the hairdressers' closed, in 2017 she started her own cosmetics salon. The reduced rates of tax for the first two years of self-employment were a great help. Not having a degree was not a problem, as most important was being trusted by clients.

In the first lockdown, she was one of the first to shut. She faced problems of having already bought cosmetics with a limited date of use and how to pay rent. During the first lockdown, government support, including an extra bonus if she kept her business open post-lockdown, was a great help, allowing her to cover costs and buy disinfection equipment. A visit from the Hygiene Board (Sanepid) inspecting her premises after her move from the hairdresser was helpful in establishing new, Covid-safe procedures.

In summer, clients returned, but in October, especially her Polish clients disappeared. Whereas she used to have up

to 8 clients per day, now she has 5/6 per month. It is difficult to cover costs and she hopes that despite not full lockdown, the government will provide support, at least with rent remission.

It's important to listen to clients. Previously, most clients had no problems with having their eyes closed, but now she tends to avoid this as many express fear. During the war she used to have to go to work with explosions around, so doesn't fear anything. She's happy to talk about her hometown up until the war – the war is still too painful. Says that her strongest advice to entrepreneurs is to keep ordered documentation. Students come to her for the volunteer practical training sessions they must do as part of their studies. However, they are mostly not able to open their own businesses, as they are on temporary residence permits.

She thought that some kind of self-organisation of migrant entrepreneurs in this and similar branches (e.g. hairdressers) could be useful.

Propositions

Policy / Legislation

1. Enable migrants to set up as self-employed regardless of residence permit types.
2. Provide the possibility to legalize residence in Poland based on self-employment, but not to restrict legal residence to continued self-employment.
3. Migrants wishing to set up a Limited Company should have the documentation requirements simplified. In addition, their legal residence should not be connected to the success of the company.

NGO Initiatives / Inter-institutional Cooperation

1. Support migrant women through women's entrepreneurial incubators, such as those provided by Warsaw City Council. Make sure the offers cater for migrant women and promote these offers amongst migrant women.
2. The Ukrainian Women's Club at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw was an example of the development of personal and business capabilities amongst migrant women.⁵ This kind of activity needs to be made permanent, and connected with entrepreneurial assistance for Polish women.

⁵ Klub Ukraińskich Kobiet: <https://www.facebook.com/KlubUkrainok>; About the project: <http://www.ngofund.org.pl/project/?project=E1/2420>.

4. Domestic Work and Care

Old Problems

The Domestic Work and Care sector covers a range of jobs, which may be distinct or which may blur into one another: from cleaning, through care for children or of the elderly, to acting as assistants in the everyday running of households. In Poland, it is a growth sector in which a large number of Ukrainian migrant women work, with a number of specific features.

Care / Work

Care, the conscientious performance of work or doing work “with love” is a particular feature in this sector (Keryk 2010). This is a source of pride for workers, but it also creates difficulties in adequately rewarding or regulating the work. The work is frequently underestimated or not treated seriously: a consequence of women doing the bulk of unpaid or care work in homes. Formal qualifications are generally not required for this work, which facilitates entry into the sector but leads to a lack of a path of career development.⁶

Informality

Both employers and employees accept informality. The costs and bureaucracy of formalising work relations between migrant domestic workers and their employers appear prohibitive to both parties, and the work is often outside the realm of a regulated workday (whether part time or longer working hours). As a result, workers are left without adequate protection of their labour rights or social welfare. Cost of accommodation and food are frequently deducted from salaries, and there is a lack of protection from injuries (e.g. when lifting elderly clients). The informal and personal nature of the work means that abuses of various kinds are widespread.

⁶ For a comprehensive overview of this sector in 2016, see Kindler et al. 2016. For a long duree analysis of domestic work in Poland, see Kordasiewicz 2016.

Living with One’s Employer

Living in the house of one’s employer is an arrangement that is particularly common amongst recent migrants. While this solves the problem and costs of finding accommodation, it means that the worker can be expected to provide 24 hour availability and is particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Lack of Worker Representation

Domestic workers are not traditionally associated with union movements and tend to work in isolation in the homes of their employers, thus making difficult mobilisation or mutual support. Gig economy digital platforms have also entered this sector, serving as effective mediators of the relations between workers and clients, but detaching workers from their clients and each other (Keryk and Cope 2019). The International Labour Organisation’s 2011 Domestic Workers’ convention (No. 189) serves as a blueprint for protecting the rights of domestic workers, but is not ratified in Poland. Likewise, the International Domestic Workers Federation is a union representing the globally massive workforce of domestic workers, including a large number of women migrants, currently with no representation in Poland.⁷

Growth Sector

Although the unofficial nature of this work makes it difficult to estimate how many migrants work in this sector, it is one in which a large number of migrant women work and which can be predicted to grow further in the future (as a result of an economic, demographic and cultural factors in Poland).

⁷ <https://idwfed.org/en>. See also the Dom Equal research project on domestic worker mobilisation: <https://domequal.eu>.

Covid Twists

In the context of the pandemic, the importance and the risks of work in this sector appear in a new light, leading to new threats and possibilities.

Risks and Responsibilities

Domestic workers have an intensified responsibility to protect their clients (often in high risk groups) and themselves, because of their work in domestic environments, suffer high risk of infection. New safety procedures and equipment make domestic care work more difficult. Clients can place new demands on employees, such as limiting contacts outside the home. Workers moving between households try to balance their judgement of risk with the requirements of particular clients. In the context of Covid-19, the domestic care sector becomes important in preserving public health.

Growth Field

In a context of the overall Covid-related reduction in Work Certificates for Ukrainians, domestic care is one field where demand is growing. Despite the drops of some families' incomes, the concern for old people's health and fear of public old people's homes generated by Covid means that the demand for domestic care of the elderly is likely to keep increasing. Ukrainian migrant workers providing domestic care of the elderly are a key part of Poland's health care system (Levitas 2020).

Mobilisation

Covid-19 has brought to light the stark contradictions between the responsibilities, risks and rewards of work in the domestic care sector. This has led to calls for wide-ranging rethinking of the role of care in our societies (De Henau and Himmelweit 2020, Wielgosz 2020) and to campaigns, for example by the International Domestic Workers Federation, to protect domestic workers.

Covid Stories

IDI2

IDI2 trained in Ukraine as an economist and worked as a councillor in a town near Lviv. Came to Poland 10 years ago after the breakdown of her marriage, and had a variety of jobs. She now has a child studying at a private lyceum in Warsaw, and a second husband, a Pole, with whom she is building a house in Łomianki.

IDI2 started caring for a 95 year old Professor with diabetes 6 months before the outbreak of Covid-19. Although she had no formal training in care work, she had done some First Aid and Natural Remedy courses, and emphasised the importance of carrying out her work in a conscientious and caring way. She lived in his large flat and provided a wide range of services: supervising his medical treatment, looking after his finances, taking him for walks, reading to him, etc. The Professor described her work as priceless. His two children lived abroad. She worked on the basis of a Freelance Contract (umowa zlecenia) with specific conditions; but in fact she was on hand whenever needed. She received less than the amount stated in the contract, as social insurance payments (ZUS) were deducted.

When Covid-19 started, the children warned her to be careful and requested she go out less. She went to shop early to avoid queues and spent the rest of the time in the large flat. Her son was not allowed to visit her, and this mirrored a previous painful experience at another care job when she had not been allowed to return to Ukraine when her mother died.

She and the Professor were infected with Covid by his daughter when she came to visit. After a week the Professor was taken to hospital and IDI2 was left to look after herself. Some Ukrainian friends contacted a Polish volunteer who delivered food. After two weeks of feeling sick, a Ukrainian doctor she contacted advised her to go to hospital and she walked there.

When in hospital, the daughter repeatedly phoned her, accusing her of going to the hospital to incriminate the family and that

she had deliberately timed her stay in hospital to coincide with the Professor's release. She threatened not to pay wages, but in the end these were paid. A doctor in the hospital noticed these abusive calls and expressed sympathy.

When she came out of hospital, she went back to the family, but injured her shoulder trying to lift the now bedridden Professor. Relations with the family became so toxic that she requested to terminate the contract. This happened, but she had to sign documents agreeing that she would not start legal proceedings against the family. She was refused money to cover the costs of treating her injured shoulder.

In November, she was still physically and psychologically recovering.

Propositions

NGO Initiatives / Inter-institutional Cooperation

- 1. Establish and Broadcast "Model Work Contracts"**

Kinder et al. (2016) outline a number of recommendations that are even more relevant in the light of Covid. In particular, we second their call for the development and distribution of model work contracts (which they refer to as "entry protocols" (Kinder et al. 2016, 38)). This should be developed through workshops with migrant domestic workers, and draw on the model for domestic work agreements provided in ILO Convention 189. These should then be distributed through the channels of the Foundation "Our Choice" and other NGOs.
- 2. Mobilising Migrant Domestic Workers in Poland**

Foundation "Our Choice" proposes to act as a forum to bring together different actors (migrant domestic workers, international domestic worker union representatives, the ILO, trade union representatives in Poland, academics and feminist activists) to promote collective forms of worker organisation amongst migrant domestic workers in Poland. This will draw on the mobilisation experiences of, for example, Polish domestic workers in the USA and seek to generate conditions for collective representation of domestic workers in Poland. Migrant domestic workers in Poland tend to be independent and entrepreneurial, and resistant to unions or collective endeavours. However, the women we talked to repeatedly cited the value of discussing problems with colleagues by phone during Covid. The aim of such a mobilisation would also be to use Covid-19 to reassert the value of such work.

5. Home Schooling and Housework

Old Problems

A Supreme Audit Office report (NIK 2019) on “The Education of the Children of Parents’ Returning to the Country and Immigrants” notes a rapid rise in the number of children from abroad attending Polish schools over the last five years (from 9944 in 2015 to 41 724 in 2019), with migrant children now attending one third of all Polish schools. 75% of these children are Ukrainians and the numbers are expected to keep rising. For Ukrainian parents, having their children attend Polish schools represents a key element in their integration into Polish society and hope for a better future. However, the long hours they frequently work, poor knowledge of Polish language and the different educational programme studied in Polish schools present serious challenges for Ukrainian mothers. NIK (2019) and MIPEX (2020) both criticise the Polish education system for failing to cater to migrant children.

Systemic Failings

NIK (2019) notes the importance of a suitably adapted education system in making the most of the social capital of incoming populations. Although the Ministry of Education has acknowledged the rise in pupils from abroad by adding extra financing to local councils for extra Polish and special adaptation lessons (oddziały przygotowawcze) (NIK 2019, 6), the NIK Report is critical of the Ministry for its failure to monitor, analyse and coordinate the education of pupils from abroad. The report notes that directors of schools fail to create adaptive programmes, based on an assessment of migrant children’s psychoeducational needs, or provide extra training for teachers for working with migrant children (9).

Sporadic Initiatives

The sporadic nature of help offered to migrant children mentioned in the NIK Report was corroborated

in interview with an Intercultural Assistant to Migrant Children. In his view, there are not enough assistants and children are connected with assistants only on the personal initiative of a teacher. There are interesting local initiatives in migrant children education, such as those coordinated by the Centre for Learning Improvement in Poznań⁸ – for example, consisting of developing migrant teacher teams in schools, producing welcome packs to a local school and community, diagnosis of needs on arrival, team based teaching, etc. – as well as European Projects, such as Sirius or MaMLISE.⁹

School Nearby

A further practical problem for migrant parents is that in order to have automatic access to a school near one’s place of residence, parents need to have a “registered address” (zameldowanie). Landlords do not always agree to register migrant tenants.

Covid Twists

The closure of schools has meant that parents have become responsible for providing an environment and equipment for children to learn, and have been required to supervise and engage in schooling. The gender gaps in the performance of unpaid work in the home and in levels of pay in the labour market mean that it is more likely to be women who take on this extra burden (OECD 2020, UN2020). This return of responsibility for education from the state to mothers is seen as a threat to women’s rights (Topping 2020), although the pandemic has also witnessed a growth in cases where the father becomes the preliminary carer (Hupkau and Petrolongo 2020). Both in the

⁸ <https://odnpoznan.pl/sub.pl/wsparcie-uczniow-z-doswiadczeniem-migracji.html>.

⁹ <https://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org> and <https://amu.edu.pl/uniwerytet/z-zycia-uniwerytetu/newsy/mamlise-wyszkoli-nauczycieli>.

UK (Weale 2020) and Poland (Ambroziak 2020, Marczewski 2020) distanced schooling is diagnosed as accentuating class education inequalities. Some of the points we note with regard to migrant children during distance learning also concern Polish children, particularly those from poorer families. Our intention in focussing on migrant children is that addressing their needs can function as a spur for wider educational innovation.

Home schooling, which has now been operating in Poland for almost a whole academic year, is a particular challenge for migrant women and children:

- The long hours of work of migrant parents, especially migrant mothers, result in migrant children frequently being left on their own during school days. In such cases, elder siblings may take on quasi-parental roles, also with regard to technical support. Migrant women attempt to assist with and check schoolwork when they return from work. These challenges are especially severe in the case of single mothers.
- Language difficulties become more problematic in a distance environment. Teachers face difficulties of how to communicate with migrant children and their parents in a distance environment, and children confront difficulties in understanding instructions and a lack of feedback from teachers.
- In particular, migrant children lack the social and learning benefits of contact with their Polish speaking peers.
- Cramped living conditions and inadequate technological infrastructure exacerbate the difficulties of distance schooling.
- As a result of Covid-19 changes to the border regime, a problem that had been cured by the introduction of visa-free movement in 2017 returned: it was again necessary to have a certificate from a school or playschool in order to bring a child to Poland. In the case of two women, this requirement and Covid-19 related work/housing difficulties led to their children being stuck in Ukraine for several months.
- Given the rapid rise in migrant children at Polish schools, many are in the early stages of their Polish school career. Children who started Polish school in 2019 have spent most of their school life studying online and thus face particular difficulties.
- The informational chaos and economic uncertainty provoked by Covid-19 intensified an overall feeling of precariousness among migrants. The pandemic induced some migrants to return to Ukraine and others to consider returning, negatively impacting on their children's motivation for learning.
- Some teachers are developing an imaginative approach to including migrant children in online teaching, for instance through film assignments or producing "virtual guides" to their home towns.

Covid Stories

IDI12

IDI12 from the Cherkassy Region came to Poland with her husband and two children in August 2018, but had previously frequently been on temporary visits. In Ukraine she had worked as an accountant at a pension fund. Her husband works as a floor layer. Her son is now in his last year of lyceum, and her daughter is 9. In Poland, she works as a part-time assistant to a self-employed accountant who has been a great help to her. For this accountancy work, she earns a minimal salary, but has legal residence papers. In order to earn for the family, she works as a cleaner.

In March, all work stopped. Although she had known most of her clients for a long time, only 2 continued to pay her. She was very grateful to these. Some clients never recontacted her, but she now has some new clients. During the spring lockdown, she didn't get rebate for rent, as her landlord said he also had economic problems. 500+ was a great help.

Her elder son does not allow her to help with lessons. He speaks Polish, but is a bit ashamed and reclusive: he had a difficult experience with his teacher during the first year and now preparations for his school leaving exam (matura) are disrupted by distance education. During the first lockdown, as her cleaning work stopped, she was able to help her daughter with lessons. Now she can only check the daughter's schoolwork when she gets home after work. This adds to her fatigue and lack of time to relax with family. They have a computer for their son, and when IDI12 is cleaning her daughter uses her work laptop; but when she is working at the accounts, the daughter studies on a telephone. They also bought a printer as there were a lot of materials to be printed at the start of distance schooling.

Not all teachers use video. Some use it to good effect, and both children enjoyed video-making assignments. She encountered problems in communicating with teachers about homework. IDI12 also complained about problems of screen addiction and

concentration amongst her children, and of the children finding appropriate space to talk in on-line sessions.

At the start of Covid-19 her husband left to apply for a residence permit and for some time got stuck in Ukraine. After applying he has received no reply, so now cannot leave Poland. She worries about going to visit elderly parents for Christmas for fear of changing border regimes and quarantine. ID12 misses the dance classes she and the children used to go to at home, and the time they had for leisure. She hopes that her children will appreciate their sacrifice, and will study and be able to travel in Europe, but imagines that after her children have left home, she will go back to Ukraine.

IDI9

Came in July 2020, but had been here often before on short trips. Trained as a teacher. Works from home in her husband's small development firm, and also gives Ukrainian lessons. Her eldest son is studying in Germany, and her younger teenage son is at an English Speaking School in Warsaw.

IDI9 does not speak English and so cannot help her son with lessons. She sees lots of problems in distance learning. Her son's lessons have been shortened and he now has no contact with peers. Teachers do not provide feedback or correct work, they just give marks. If there are questions, there is no chance to ask the teacher: they are expected to search for information on the internet. She also fears her child's gadget addiction, and resultant difficulties in real life communication. She regrets both her son's and her own cocooning from the Polish language and Polish society.

Propositions

Policy / Legislation

1. A comprehensive programme of monitoring and providing for the needs of migrant children in Polish schools needs to be applied. The Ministry of Education should react to the particular difficulties faced by migrant children during Covid-19.

Institutional Reform

1. Directors of schools and teachers should take into account the particular difficulties faced by migrant children during lockdown. When schools reopen, it will be important for teachers to perform psychological and linguistic assessments of the needs of migrant children and initiate measures to assist their (re-)adaptation into schools.

NGO Initiatives / Inter-institutional Cooperation

1. NGOs should lobby local councils about the difficulties faced by migrant mothers and children during lockdown, and encourage them to adopt best practices in intercultural education. The number of intercultural assistants should be increased, and city councils should aid in promoting contact between school directors, teachers and intercultural assistants. Additionally, cities should provide platforms for sharing innovative solutions with regard to migrant education and consult with NGOs about how to develop synergies between different institutions in cities around intercultural education.

6. Social Integration

Old Problems

The integration needs of Ukrainian migrants are often overlooked by state authorities and employers due to a perceived cultural and linguistic closeness. Poland's mediocre result on the MIPEX (2020) migrant integration ranking (40/100) was classified as "Equality on paper": in other words, migrants have formal rights, but these are not backed up with active support in migrant integration.

An intersectional approach to including women and migrants is now being promoted by the European Commission (Grubanov-Boskovic, Tintori and Biagi 2020) and by Warsaw City Council (Warsaw City Report 2020). Thus at international and local political levels, there is increasing engagement in addressing the needs of migrant women.

There are great differences between the levels and paths of integration of Ukrainian women dependent on class, age, education, family status, how long they have been in Poland, on what type of residence documents, etc. While acknowledging these differences, we draw attention to the following integration difficulties frequently encountered by women.

The Language Barrier

Ukrainian women who come to Poland tend to study Polish by themselves, only sometimes attending Polish courses. They therefore lack language competence in written Polish on a level which would allow them to read official letters addressed to them by state institutions, to work according to their qualifications or to advance at work.¹⁰

¹⁰ More on the importance of language competences in advance on the labour market in: "Imigranci o wysokich kwalifikacjach na polskim rynku pracy, Raport z badań 2014-2015" pod red. Joanna Konieczna-Salamatin. Warszawa 2015.

The Polish authorities (on central and local levels) often overlook the integration needs of this group, because they believe that they will manage by themselves. A representative of a non-governmental organization supporting women in situations of home violence stated that they manage to communicate with Ukrainian women in Polish. Especially in such difficult situations, language is a crucial barrier.

Limited Contacts Outside the Group

Women's contacts are concentrated on acquaintances from their home community via whom they search for jobs, information, support in everyday problems and help in legal issues. Their contacts with Polish society are limited to employers, work colleagues, parents from a child's school and on occasion to Polish friends (MIPEX 2020, Mikulska and Patzer 2012).

Psychological Stress

The process of migration is a stressful experience, because of building a new life in another country, searching for a job and accommodation, often including a need to work informally, and on-going processes of residence legalization. Women often leave their families in Ukraine, which intensifies loneliness.

Lack of Time

Due to extended working hours, combining several jobs (and childcare in cases when children are in Poland) migrant women are often overloaded with responsibilities. Sometimes their free time is limited to time spent in public transport while commuting from one job to another or back home. More free time emerges in cases when women have regular, full time jobs.

Hobbies Left in Ukraine

As financial security is often the principal motivation for migration, migrant women tend to sacrifice hobbies or interests from Ukraine as being cost or time prohibitive.

Maximising remittances sent to family tends to be privileged over developing one's own interests or path of emancipation from traditional family models (Tolstokorova 2012, Urbańska 2020). This situation varies according to social and family status.

Housing Discrimination

Women face discrimination on the housing market. Single mothers have particular problems with finding housing. One of the migrant women mentioned that in the case of a migrant single mother, flat owners charge a double price.

Covid Twists

During Covid-19, these difficulties are intensified:

- Everyday contacts are further reduced to those of work/home and to online groups of one's own community.
- Everyday contacts with Polish language are reduced to a minimum.
- Cramped living conditions and lack of technological equipment make it difficult to follow online Polish courses.
- Women face greater time pressures due to extended working hours, online schooling and domestic obligations.
- The changing social situation increases psychological stress and makes it more difficult to find people to talk to.

Covid Stories

IDI8

Came in 2012 with husband and 3 children. After different jobs, now works as a self-employed entrepreneur cooperating with a firm selling real estate. Also animates a support group in social media. She obtained citizenship through presidential assent at the end of Komorowski's term, when this was easier.

She repeated that you cannot overestimate the importance of contacts. For the first two years, she and her family studied hard, especially Polish language, and tried to meet people: for instance, by carol singing (kolędownie) accompanied by her double-bass playing child to their neighbours. In life you need to meet a

hundred people to get the two that are valuable to you.

Sees the problem of integration as a special barrier for Ukrainian women. Firstly, Ukrainian women are closed in on themselves: thus, basic networking is needed. However, once you get migrant women talking, they are often unable to stop. Thus, secondly, before you start networking in business terms, you need to have found yourself: to have something you can present.

By pushing interaction online Covid presents a double problem. Firstly, social media groups are a place to complain: she encourages migrant women to write positive posts about how they succeeded in basic accomplishments that can be useful for others: for instance, taking a child to the dentist. Members of the group find this difficult. Secondly, social media forces you to present your successes. This leads to people being afraid to accept or analyse their failures.

On schooling, she said that Ukrainian mothers tend to over-invest in the schooling of their children. She argues that it is important for children to develop their own personalities and interests, and regrets that because her own children did not repeat a year on arriving in Poland they are constantly trying to catch up. She thinks Covid will accelerate a rethinking of schooling, which should be more based on real-life success stories.

All the women we talked to, in one way or another referred to the problem of the intensification of obstacles to social integration and increased psychological stress posed by Covid-19. This will have further consequences beyond the end of the pandemic.

Propositions

Policy

1. The regular provision of courses of Polish aiming at the integration into society and the labour market of Ukrainian migrants. Courses should be included in a state program of migrant integration and into the integration programs of local authorities, and be available all over the country.
2. Provide psychological support directed to migrant women in their own languages.

NGO Initiatives / Inter-institutional Cooperation

1. Establish support groups and integration projects directed to Ukrainian migrant women.

7. Health Care

Old Problems

Foreigners' access to medical care in Poland depends mainly on formal employment status. Some migrants have tourist insurance, but this does not allow medical treatment in case of illness. Migrants with precarious legal and employment status are excluded from free medical care (Levitas 2020a). According to ZUS at the end of June 2020: 433 497 Ukrainians (34,8% women: 150 857) were insured (ZUS 2020). Taking into account that there are approx. 1,3 mln. Ukrainians in Poland, this means that more than 2/3 of Ukrainians have no insurance in Poland.

Inaccessible Medical Care

For migrant women, the main obstacles to health-care are: informal employment and uncertainty over rights to free health care; long queues to free medical care; the perception of the health care system in Poland as of low quality and (in the case of private services) expensive. Migrant women (especially circular migrants) plan visits to doctors during stays in Ukraine (Warsaw City Council 2020).

The healthcare system is not prepared for migrant patients. Health services and policies do not address foreign patients' needs, medical workers often are unaware of cultural differences, information to patients is almost exclusively in Polish and addressed to Poles (MIPEX 2020; online discussion after the presentation of the research).

Language Barrier

For Ukrainian women, language is a crucial obstacle to medical care. Poor knowledge of Polish causes problems in: communication with doctors, calling emergency services or understanding how the healthcare system works. They tend to search for

doctors speaking Ukrainian or Russian in private clinics, even if they are entitled to free public medical care. Some private clinics now employ doctors from Ukraine to provide such services.

Discrimination

Migrant women meet with cases of discrimination from medical workers. Cases were reported to us when emergency services failed to react to serious conditions of Ukrainian patients because of their country of origin.

Covid Twists

- Free hospital care was made available to Ukrainians for Covid-19 conditions, but not all Ukrainians knew about this. For other health conditions, it becomes even more difficult to access doctors.
- The Polish government has just announced that Covid-19 vaccines will be available for foreigners free of charge. However, migrants have not yet been included in the discussion about vaccines and there exists a problem of overcoming an anti-vaccine attitude among Ukrainian migrants.
- In the light of shortages of medical workers (doctors, nurses, etc.) during the pandemic, the Polish authorities have just passed a law allowing foreign medical workers access to the Polish labour market without some pre-Covid requirements: e.g. nostrification of degrees, approval of post-diploma internships and medical exams. Associations of Polish medical workers opposed this law, citing that there will be no mechanisms for verifying the qualifications of foreign medical workers.

Covid Stories

IDI2

When IDI2, the Domestic Care Worker and her client were infected by his daughter, she tried for 3-4 hours a day to phone the sanitary inspection (Sanepid). Only after a week, her client was taken to hospital and the doctor who came to visit asked how she was, but nothing more. After being left alone by her employers, she organised support through a network of Ukrainian associates. It was via these that a Polish volunteer delivered food while she was in quarantine. It was also a Ukrainian doctor who advised that she would be accepted for treatment at a Warsaw hospital.

Once she made it to the hospital, she was accepted without problem and pleased by the care she received. However, when, after returning to the family after Covid, she injured herself lifting her now bedridden client, she decided to get treatment privately, because she did not want to wait the half year necessary if you went public.

Propositions

Policy

1. Facilitate access of migrant workers to medical care, by creation of better systems of formal work, especially in sectors where informal employment prevails.

Institutional Reform

1. Education amongst medical and emergency services on the cultural diversity of foreign patients and what rights they have in term of access to medical care.
2. Information materials on health care, especially those available in public health institutions, should also be addressed to foreigners (translated into foreign languages).
3. Include migrants in the debate on vaccines, especially given that anti-vaccine movements are widespread among migrants.

NGO Initiatives / Inter-institutional Cooperation

1. Inform migrants about their health rights.

8. Domestic Violence

The lockdowns implemented to inhibit the spread of Covid-19 have led to an increase in cases of domestic violence (Women's Aid 2020, Neetu et al. 2020, Krytyka Polityczna ed. 2020, Brzeska 2020). Domestic violence has a cyclical character comprised of three phases: rising tension, violence and then a honeymoon period in which the aggressor promises that all will be different. Covid-19 does not cause violence: however, by closing many women in the same space as their aggressors, during a time of widespread tensions, lockdowns risk accelerating and intensifying its cycles. Furthermore, women are cut off from other social contacts and channels for seeking support.

Even outside the pandemic, migrant women in abusive relationships face considerable challenges in finding help. The current dearth of resources to support Ukrainians experiencing domestic violence is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Old Problems

Migrant women face numerous difficulties in leaving abusive or violent relationships, and finding access to support.

Patriarchal Family Structures

The patriarchal structure of relations within nuclear and extended families, and social attitudes in Ukraine encourage a tolerance towards domestic violence. Ukrainian society treats victims with ambivalence, often accusing them of provoking violence, and defending the actions of the abuser. There are still insufficient social projects dealing with domestic violence in Ukraine.

Lack of Support Networks

Migrant women who fall victim to domestic violence are in an especially difficult situation, because they are

far from friends and family. They have no family support network and nowhere to go if violence erupts.

Lack of Knowledge

Migrant women can be victims of different kinds of violence (physical, psychological, institutional, economic, sexual) and can also enact violence on others (e.g. children). Ukrainian women often lack knowledge about violence, so they may not recognise it.

Lack of Materials About Violence and Crisis Lines in Ukrainian

There is a paucity of information for migrant women in Ukrainian about domestic violence. Only one organisation supporting victims of domestic violence, the Centre for Women's Rights in Gdansk, coordinates a local info-line in Ukrainian. The Blue Line of the Polish Emergency Service of the Association for the Prevention of Violence in Families offers a consultant in Russian one night a week. Each of the 3 NGOs supporting victims of domestic violence that we interviewed said they had calls from Ukrainians, but not many. Each organisation saw a need to publish materials about violence dedicated to migrants and in Ukrainian.

The language barrier is a problem in this regard. It means migrant women tend to think that the offers of organisations are not addressed to them and that because they are in Poland they cannot count on support.

Victims' Fear of Residence Status

Women are able to come to Poland on the basis of "being reunited with their family". Such women who are supported by their husbands, but look after children are in a difficult situation because their legal residence is dependent on their husband. A violent husband can threaten his wife that should she leave him she will lose legal residence status.

Women in mixed marriages, where the husband is Polish, face similar difficulties. The husband can threaten his Ukrainian wife on the basis that her residence permit, obtained through marriage, will become invalid should she leave him.

Access to Women's Shelters

Access to some women's shelters is possible only if you have a residence permit. One women's shelter encourages a short-term stay, but requires finding employment before leaving. This is difficult for migrant women given the legislation barriers to registering work.

Systemic Barriers

Police, who face difficulties in general in intervening in domestic violence, can be particularly reluctant if they detect a foreign accent. The recent introduction of the Anti-Violence Law of November 30th 2020 requiring the abuser to leave home is a statement of political intent in this regard.

Violence as Taboo for Migrant Women

Migrant women, who feel a need to live up to the model of a good mother, may be reluctant to leave abusive relationships or speak openly about their problems. Animators of migrant women's support groups said that violence was as common in highly successful migrant couples, as those facing difficulties. A revealing story was that of a meeting about domestic violence which received huge interest in social media, but to which nobody came. This is indicative of the need for and difficulties in finding appropriate modes to speak about domestic violence.

Covid Twists

- The pandemic has witnessed increased media coverage, attention to and financial support for NGOs assisting victims of domestic violence. However, this has not been extended to migrant women.
- Intensification of stress and increased time at home during Covid-19, accelerates cycles of domestic violence and makes finding support more difficult. This is also true of migrant women.
- The worsening of family economic situations can trigger abusive reactions.
- The work of law courts has been obstructed, leading to delays in divorce decisions.
- The limiting of border crossing and obligatory quarantine make returning to Ukraine more difficult for victims of violence.

Covid Stories

IDI5

From a village in the Tarnopol Region, came to Poland in May 2018 with her husband and son who is now 4.

Both she and her husband came from families with histories of drink related family conflicts. She had worked to cover the costs of treating her sick child and her husband resented this. Just before coming to Poland they had been living with different friends, some of whom drank, and he had beaten her for the first time. But promised that all would be better.

In Poland, after a time the situation got worse. He accused her of getting him into this situation, of changing his relations with his family, etc. He acted out terrible violence on her in front of her child. For the last half year, they had separate fridges and he hurt the child for touching his fridge. Once he beat her so hard that she lost consciousness, but he then performed life support. This incident convinced her that she had to get him to leave.

She felt that she had nowhere to turn. She had no bruises from his beatings and therefore could not contact the police. Two neighbours intervened, but said it was a family matter. She did not feel she could return home, as her big family living in a small house would resent her taking up space. In October 2019, she forced him to leave by constantly phoning his relatives. Only a month later did her child start sleeping normally. Later, she saw a post on a facebook group about a woman with similar experiences and the existence of shelters.

After her husband left, IDI5 started work as a cleaning lady in a hotel, and her child was in a private playschool. Her parents came and took her child back to Ukraine. At the hotel, like other Ukrainians working there, she experienced mobbing. Because she refused to give in, her treatment was worse. She fell sick, because of psycho-physical stress, but was told she had to come to work next day. A doctor gave her two weeks leave, but when she returned

to work an agreement to terminate the work contract by mutual consent had already been prepared. She refused to sign, but was subject to such harassment that an hour later she signed. This was 21st Feb 2020.

When Covid hit, IDI5 had just lost her job at the hotel and could send less money home: as a result her family started mistreating her child and showing this on video calls. The child threatened to walk to Poland, complained of almost drowning with the family, etc. In the summer, she got a job at KFC, where a boss sympathetic to her difficult situation gave her a work contract assisting her in obtaining legal residence for both herself and her child. When she was at last able to go to Ukraine, her family refused to tell her where her child was, claiming that she was not fulfilling her maternal responsibilities in Poland. She finally managed to find her child and provide him with the dental treatment he needed.

Additionally during the summer, a chance test led to her being diagnosed with cervical cancer. Feeling that she had no rights, she paid for private tests and diagnoses, but had an operation on the National Health Service. She didn't feel the cancer, but after the operation felt very weak.

For the last two months, things are better. She has her child with her in Poland and thanks to a sympathetic director managed to get him enrolled in a playschool. She has a problem, because although she has no contact with her husband, she is still officially married to him and so his earnings count when applying for public help. 500+ and the generosity of her landlord, who lowered her rent during the lockdown, found her temporary work and allowed her to take in a subtenant have been a great help. Her son is hyperactive and earlier had help from a child psychologist, but now no one is answering. She acutely feels the lack of group activities due to Covid.

She has learned that it is better to speak openly about your problems. If you do so, it

is possible that people will be sympathetic to your story. Her advice to women is not to be tolerant or suffer, or listen to promises that abusive partners will change.

Propositions

Institutional Reform

1. Educational campaign amongst emergency services of problems faced by migrant women victims of domestic violence.
2. Intensify cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian institutions and organisations in the field of supporting those experiencing violence.

NGO Initiatives / Institutional Cooperation

1. Through cooperation with existing emergency support institutions to introduce an emergency line in Ukrainian and prepare materials in Ukrainian educating about violence and where to find support.
2. An educational campaign directed to migrants against the taboo nature of domestic violence and informing them of their rights, the offers of help available in Poland and about how to ensure accountability of law enforcement agencies.

9. Migrant Workers vs. Key Workers

Old Problems

Ukrainian women migrants' work suffers from the double discrimination of being performed by migrants and women (Conaghan 2020). Despite the difficulties and importance of this work, and despite the fact that it is often performed by Ukrainian women who are highly qualified but are forced to work outside their qualifications, migrant women working in sectors such as child care or care of the elderly are frequently described as doing unskilled or unqualified (McGovern 2020) work, and rewarded with low pay (Hughes 2020). As much of this work is informal, the work is largely invisible to economic statistics, as though its status as work was in question.

Covid Twists

During lockdowns, the term "key workers" or "essential workers" was invented to refer to those workers whose continued physical presence at work, even during lockdown, was crucial to the continued functioning of society. It turned out that this work in a range of sectors (agriculture, health services, care, retail, logistics, cleaning, public services, etc.) largely consisted of the low-paid work of migrants, previously frequently battling with political discrimination (Fasani 2020, Dobbins 2020, Babakova 2020, Rogozanu and Gabor 2020).

While the term has not really caught on in Poland, a number of the women we talked to, in fields such as retail, cleaners of hospital operating blocks, doctors, and care of the elderly had worked right through the pandemic and their work in different ways constituted an important part of Poland's response to the crisis. The women described the extra precautions that they had to take at work and the extra responsibilities they now feel. For a number of them, Covid-19 has led to an

extension of working hours and obligations. However, these workers did not perceive a change in the social recognition of the value of their work, and any extra financial rewards were seen as inadequate.¹¹

On the one hand, Covid-19 threatens simply to exacerbate the inequalities inherent in the current system (Winton and Howcroft 2020; Fisher et al. 2020). It has intensified existing problems for Ukrainian women migrants in Poland. On the other hand, recognising the contribution of Ukrainian women to essential services in Poland during Covid demonstrates a need for a wider rethinking of the value of work and its relation to society (OECD 2019, Mundlak and Fudge 2020). Covid-19 and the extraordinary government decisions taken in response to it demonstrate that the value of work is a social convention rather than economic fact, and that the horizons of possibility for new forms of social organisation are more open than previously imagined. The Women's Budget Group, for example, argues that it is economically, as well as socially, more profitable to invest in care as a driver of post-crisis growth than in construction, the usual target for public funding (De Henau and Himmelweit 2020). In the Polish context, Wielgosz (2020) also sees in a changed appreciation of care resulting from Covid-19 a possibility to change social and political attitudes about the nature of work. The recognition of the contribution of Ukrainian women to Poland's Covid-19 should play an important part in this re-evaluation.

¹¹ A webinar on the ambivalence of the notion of essential workers: www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wydarzenia/four-months-on-essential-workers-and-the-pandemic-2/. During this seminar, Kamila Fiałkowska discussed the sector of agricultural workers. It would be fruitful to include Ukrainian women in Polish agriculture in future research.

Covid Stories

IDI10

IDI10 came in 1999 and at once transferred her degree qualifications (before this became more difficult) and now works as an anaesthetist. Has two children and a husband.

There is a need for more Ukrainian doctors, but sees a problem that exams are EU-wide, so is not sure how this could be achieved. There are now more Ukrainian doctors, but still not many, no Ukrainian nurses that she knows of (she does not know why) and many Ukrainian hospital cleaners. This cleaning work is mostly outsourced, but as long as training is adequate, this seems ok to her.

She works on contract at 6 different hospitals. She prefers the flexibility, better pay and the fact that she is then her own boss. She works on different wards: from nativity, to eye surgery to Covid wards.

After work, she goes to the family's nearby second flat, to clean before going home. When she had Covid, she stayed in this flat, separate from her family. Many doctors are getting sick. Everywhere there is a lack of personnel, but she has seen nowhere that was no longer able to function. When families ring to ask doctors about Covid patients, doctors are so stretched that they cannot remember who is who. She has no extra pay and does not feel her work is more appreciated now.

Has to deal with more deaths, so is not sure how this stress will play out in the future. Stress is part of the work of an anaesthetist, so there is nowhere to turn for extra psychological support.

There were great problems of schooling their 7 and 8 year old children during the first lockdown. Her husband took up the strain, but it was a lot of work. He celebrated the end of the spring term more ecstatically than his children. Only just learned that school provides on-site schooling for medical workers.

Propositions

NGO Initiatives / Institutional Cooperation

1. Highlighting the social value of the work of Ukrainian women migrants during Covid-19, in particular but not only in various activities related to care, as a stimulus to change political, economic, social and cultural evaluations of this work. Facilitating the legal work of women in these sectors should be a priority.

Main Conclusions / Call for Action

The pandemic has brought a series of dramatic new twists to unsolved old problems. Our aim in analysing these has been to stimulate an awareness of the need for action and to offer propositions for the forms this can take. We conclude by reiterating a call for action in the fields of:

Legalisation of Residence

Long lasting, over-complicated, non-transparent procedures of legalization of residence via Voivodship Offices are a core problem. These procedures became even more complicated and time consuming during the pandemic: new documents were introduced (not required by law), and institutions terminated personal contact and limited applications. Such procedures, with almost non-existing feedback on the state of applicants' cases, even via online platforms, left Ukrainian women in uncertainty, in psychological stress and denied them the welfare support connected to a residence permit. This is particularly the case for single mothers, who were cut from support for single parents and from 500+ support for children, which was crucial in the period of the pandemic as a result of sudden unemployment.

Precarisation of Work

Even though Covid has revealed that their work is often both challenging and important for society, many migrant women do precarious jobs. Uncertainty at work is produced by low pay, lack of social welfare, uncertain legal status (for instance when engaged in application procedures and thus with no right to work; when legal residence is dependent on a job that has been lost; when legal residence is dependent on a husband with whom a woman wants to divorce, etc.), health risks, etc. This precariousness was brutally exposed by Covid through the shock of sudden unemployment that ran through professions where many migrant women work in non-standard work arrangements, and through the new risks and obligations experienced by women in professions required to keep working throughout the crisis.

Social Integration

The pandemic greatly reduces the possibilities for migrant women to study Polish. This obstacle, often underestimated by many Polish experts on account of the closeness of cultures and languages between Poland and Ukraine, is a crucial obstacle in many aspects of Ukrainian women's lives in Poland: from work advancement to seeking help in cases of domestic violence. During Covid, a lack of possibilities to learn Polish combines with a radical limiting of migrant women's social contacts and the difficulties that migrant women experience because of home schooling. As a result, the pandemic is causing a regression in the social integration of migrant women and their children with unknown future consequences.

Psychological Support

The need to talk and the experience of difficult, but uplifting conversations were a key component of this research. Isolation is both a physical reality of lockdown, but also a product of the ways in which Ukrainian women during Covid are victims of numerous dimensions of intersectional inequality: legislative, economic, family, cultural, etc. While most glaringly true in cases of domestic violence, for many the pandemic heightens difficulties in reaching out for help and the need to do so. Caught between a patriarchal home culture and the precariousness of migration, Ukrainian migrants in Poland often stick to their group of acquaintances from home and reproduce the traditional roles required to live up to the "Berehynia" archetype.¹² However, responding to the challenges of migration also opens up paths of emancipation, independence or self-fulfilment for Ukrainian women which need to be cultivated by Polish society.

¹² The image of the Slav goddess Berehynia is an ideal Ukrainian woman, the spirit of the Ukrainian home, the ideal mother who played a significant role in the history of Ukraine, the guardian of the language and national identity (Pavlychko 1996, Rubchak 2001). Today, Berehynia has become an integral part of Ukrainian nationalism and feminism. A sculpture of her stands on a column on Independence Square in Kiev. This image is also used in the context of women-migrants, both to condemn their failure to fulfill maternal duties, or to praise their dedication in fulfilling those duties.

Appendix 1. List of interviewees - Ukrainian migrant women

1. IDI 1, single mother, working in a supermarket, interview conducted online on 12.11.2020.
2. IDI 2, care worker, mother, interview conducted at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw on 13.11.2020.
3. IDI 3, nanny, interview conducted online on 20.11.2020.
4. IDI 4, single mother and widow, hospital cleaner, interview conducted online on 21.11.2020.
5. IDI 5, gastronomy, single mother, interview conducted online on 22.11.2020.
6. IDI 6, artist and curator, interview conducted online on 22.11.2020.
7. IDI 7, gastronomy, single mother, interview conducted online on 23.11.2020.
8. IDI 8, entrepreneur, real estate agent, mother, interview conducted online on 27.11.2020.
9. IDI 9, teacher and real estate agent, mother, interview conducted online on 27.11.2020.
10. IDI 10, doctor, mother, interview conducted online on 27.11.2020.
11. IDI 11, beauty salon owner, mother, interview conducted online on 28.11.2020.
12. IDI 12, accountant assistant and cleaner, mother, interview conducted online on 10.12.2020.

Appendix 2. List of interviewed experts

No.	Name of organization and function	Name of person	Type of organization	Date of the Interview
1.	Intercultural assistant at the Foundation "Polish Migration Forum" and coordinator of the Ukrainian Saturday School at the Foundation "Our Choice"	Oleksandr Pustoyvi	NGO	18.11.2020
2.	Consultants at the Consultation Point for Foreigners at the Ukrainian House in Warsaw, Foundation "Our Choice"	Olga Derlicka, Oksana Pestrykova	NGO	24.11.2020
3.	Ansatt - CEO, company dealing with legal assistance to foreigners. She deals with legalization of foreigners.	Iryna Yurchak	Business	26.11.2020
4.	"Blue Line" (Niebieska Linia) of the Polish Emergency Service of the Association for the Prevention of Violence in Families	Iana Lisna-Nozykowska	NGO	30.11.2020
5.	Anti-Assault Hotline for women, Foundation Feminoteka	Jolanta Gawęda	NGO	01.12.2020
6.	Women's Rights Centre	Justyna Kułakowska	NGO	11.12.2020
7.	MS Kancelaria Radcowska	Ismena Saadi	Legal company	4.12.2020
8.	Association of Employment Agencies (SAZ), Vice President of the Board	Michał Podulski	TWA, business	14.12.2020

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Fundacja “Nasz Wybór” / Foundation “Our Choice”

The “Fundacja Nasz Wybór” (FNW, or in English “Foundation Our Choice”), formed in 2009, is run by immigrants from Ukraine. This civic organization specialises in supporting the integration of migrants into Polish society by offering legal assistance, distributing information and opposing the exclusion and discrimination of foreigners. A further key aim of our activities is to build bridges between Poles and Ukrainians and to disabuse negative stereotypes.

FNW runs the Ukrainian House in Warsaw, a multi-functional consultation, meeting, workshop and cultural space for Ukrainians, and also a site for the presentation and discussion of issues relating to Ukraine. From 2011, FNW publishes a free monthly magazine in Ukrainian, “Nasz Wybór”, distributed in over 80 locations in Poland. FNW also runs a Polish-Ukrainian web portal, www.naszwybor.pl, and publishes handbooks on specific issues (such as legalisation of residence and work, defence of workers’ rights, education and health protection) for Ukrainian citizens.

FNW monitors acts of intolerance and hate speech towards immigrants; supports foreign workers in their battles for their labour rights and in countering exploitation; acts to support groups threatened with social exclusion and is an active partner in the creation of multicultural Warsaw. Research at FNW focuses on the situation of foreigners on the Polish labour market, on the violation of their rights and promotion of their social integration. FNW participates in international research projects, and publishes reports, organises debates with key actors and makes appearances in the media to draw attention to the situation of foreign workers.

FNW is also a member of the consortium of civic organizations supporting refugees and migrants.

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Heinrich Böll Foundation

The Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung foundation is a non-profit political foundation affiliated with the German Green Party.

The Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in Warsaw leads projects related to International and European Politics with a special focus on Eastern policy, Energy & Climate, European Agricultural Policy, and Democracy & Human Rights.

The Foundation's goal is to promote open dialogue between the worlds of politics, business, academia and society by strengthening democracy and human rights, increasing civic participation, protecting the climate and the ecosystem, and promoting equal opportunities and rights regardless of gender, orientation, origins, and such. The thread that runs through and binds all our regional activities is our shared European values.

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