

Declaration of Mayors on cooperation of Cities of the Union of Polish Metropolises on internal and external migration

We – representatives of metropolises in Poland – understand the importance of migration for development of our metropolises. For centuries Poland used to be a multiethnic and multicultural country receiving newcomers, open to people of different nationalities, race or religions.

Both when Poland was under communism and after the 1989 transformation, Polish cities – even the largest ones – experienced a rather intense emigration of their citizens, whose main destinations were Western Europe, North America and Australia. Yet with economic growth and the advent of the free market, particularly its broad offer of jobs in the public services and business sectors, large cities recorded an influx of people from other parts of Poland. The number of external immigrants and foreigners also grew, filling the urban tissue in a more or less natural manner.

Migration is an ongoing phenomenon. These processes are dynamic, universal, and – as demonstrated by global history – inevitable. In view of Poland's social and demographic situation, they should even be seen as beneficial. The surge of migration engenders challenges and obligations for local communities as well as public, private and social entities. Polish metropolises have been open to migratory processes for many years, disseminating the idea of diversity among their citizens.

Despite the fact that key decisions on migration flows/management are being taken at the central level, in practice, the integration capacity impacting conditions and quality of life of newcomers depends on local integration policy, in particular in metropolises. The activities (clients' service in the public institutions, finding a flat, employment opportunities, access to education and healthcare, language learning and cultural orientation) at the local level are crucial for newcomers for their integration but for their daily life as well. It is so –called a good reception. .

Consequently, internal and international mobility have to be monitored, and this process has to be managed skilfully and more comprehensively than before in order to harness the human, economic and cultural potential of foreign nationals and ensure equal access to public services for all citizens, irrespective of their status.

To this end, local and central government bodies, non-governmental organizations, religious associations, higher education establishments, cultural institutions and the labour market have to work together.

It is in our broadly understood common interests to manage local migration in a responsible and safe manner so as to create cities that are as socially cohesive as possible, at the same time minimizing the risks of ghettoization, disintegration, separation, poverty and exclusion of the new citizens, particularly foreigners who are especially threatened by these processes.

In this context, on the basis of the multicultural Polish heritage and Polish hospitality, the signatories of this declaration announce stronger cooperation between cities and metropolitan areas in the scope of managing local migration.

We declare cooperation through the exchange of experience and good practices in order to secure a high quality of life to all citizens, in the spirit of solidarity and responsibility for the community we create together with immigrants, including foreigners, who want to live here in dignity and security.

We hereby establish a working team for migration and integration, which will rely on the specialist knowledge of two key organizations: the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The team will be tasked with the exchange of information, knowledge and experience of cities in the scope of integrating foreigners as well as managing local migration.

At the same time, we declare our openness and willingness to engage in partnership with government administration bodies, non-governmental organizations and religious associations in the scope of creating and implementing Poland's migration policy based on safe migration management. Together we are able to elaborate appropriate culture of receiving migrants, our cities make open and integrating, thus more innovative and competitive.

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