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## FROM THE EDITORS

In **Volume 6, No. 2** – *TRANSBORDER ECONOMICS International Journal on Transborder Economics, Politics and Statistics*, we would like to draw the readers' attention to cross-border issues related to human rights aspects and the migration situation in the face of global conflict. Topics concerning new technologies and their impact on young consumers are also covered. The authors also highlighted the importance of artificial intelligence in the changing economic environment.

The article by Mateusz Bieniasz and Anne Czekay entitled *Legal and social perspectives on the mass influx of displaced Ukrainian war refugees in Germany and Poland* address and discuss the problem of circumstances surrounding the mass influx of war migrants from the territories of Ukraine involved in armed conflict from a legal and social perspective, with a particular focus on the simplified procedure for accessing the labor market, as well as the social welfare and education system.

Aleksandra Czapczyk and Aleksandra Kudyba paper *Situation of the Ukrainian citizens in the Polish labor market – challenges and opportunities* investigate the employment of Ukrainian citizens in Poland in the light of recent influx caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The article introduces the historical labor migrations of Ukrainians to Poland and focuses on the increase in migration following the outbreak of war. The purpose of this study is to analyze legal frameworks, especially the special act designed to facilitate the employment of Ukrainians.

The paper by Nina Kurpios examines the *Mediation as a tool for alternative dispute resolution in the legal system*. In this article, the author wants to present mediation as an alternative to the court process. In today's society, where conflicts are an inseparable part of our lives, there is a growing need for effective methods of dispute resolution. In this context, mediation as a tool for alternative dispute resolution in the legal system is gaining more and more popularity. Mediation is a process in which an independent and neutral person – the mediator – helps the parties to the conflict to find a solution that meets their needs and interests.

In the paper *The impact of Instagram Reels on the content preferences and purchasing decisions of young adults in Poland and Lithuania* Paulina Pasierb, Magdalena Golec, Mateusz Malecki, Przemysław Bujak, Ineta Pažusytė and Vakarė Bagdonaitė discuss the influence of Instagram Reels on content preferences and

purchasing decisions among young adults in Poland and Lithuania. Despite similarities in platform usage, the two countries exhibit distinct patterns of engagement. Polish users are usually active on Instagram Reels, frequently liking, sharing, and searching for products featured in the content. In contrast, Lithuanian users engage less often but put their focus on product reviews and influencer-driven content. This research offers valuable guidance for brands seeking to optimize their social media strategies in Poland and Lithuania.

Paulina Pasierb, Magdalena Golec, Michał Markowicz, Ainoras Kriukelis and Emilis Zilbergas in their article *Exploring AI awareness and its role in internet marketing among students in Lithuania and Poland* investigates the awareness and role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in internet marketing among students in Lithuania and Poland. AI has revolutionized digital marketing by enabling personalized content, enhancing user experiences, and optimizing marketing strategies through machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics. This research contributes valuable insights into the dual role of AI in personalizing content and addressing privacy concerns, offering actionable recommendations for leveraging AI in ethical and effective ways.

**Prof. Elżbieta Feret**  
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## LEGAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE MASS INFLUX OF DISPLACED UKRAINIAN WAR REFUGEES IN GERMANY AND POLAND

Mateusz Bieniasz<sup>1</sup>, Anne Czekay<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the following paper is to present few of the more important circumstances surrounding the mass influx of war migrants from the territories of Ukraine involved in armed conflict from a legal and social perspective, with a particular focus on the simplified procedure for accessing the labour market, as well as the social welfare and education system. Described applied solutions exist in a framework which seems to support the assumptions of the following thesis: state-based institutions shifted into a collective approach provided by EU regulations. This change is desirable, because it redefines asylum from political benefit bestowed by the host state to a human right invoked and accessed by individuals from Ukraine irrespective of their mode of entry<sup>3</sup>. It will be explored further how, according to the authors, since when and why mass influx is handled this way in both Germany and Poland. The emergence of the temporary protection mechanism in Europe is a precedent, as until now there was no real need for it (i.e. in a situation of mass influx of migrants). Therefore, it was not present in the EU legal system until February 2022

**Key words:** migration, mass-influx, fleeing, Ukraine, refugees, refugee status, EU, armed conflict, asylum, human Rights, labor, law.

JEL: A12, A13, A14.

### 1. Introduction

The objective of the publication is to present in a coherent way the **socio-legal aspects of mass influx of refugees in both Germany and Poland with special emphasis placed on employment and labor market**. Sovereign and independent, democratic, social, law-based state of Ukraine, as it is stated in Article 1 of

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<sup>2</sup> University of Rzeszów, Faculty of Law and Administration, Poland.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Leach and Fethi Mansouri, *Lives in Limbo: Voices of Refugees Under Temporary Protection*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004, p. 126.

its Constitution, impacted by the unfortunate realities in which tens of thousands of civil people are essentially forced to abandon their homeland due to wartime deserve recognition of their rights by virtue of an unprecedented character<sup>4</sup>. In search of possibilities to lead normal lives in the times of hardship, in between chaos caused by armed conflict. Articles 3, 6, 22, 25, 28 of **UDHR** are among those of engaging attention, because they are believed by authors to express the spirit of human rights in circumstances handled by temporary protection regulations for those fleeing Ukraine.

**Salus rei publicae suprema lex esto** – Litterally, health of the state (subject of, in and to international law) or rather health of the public matter in which state functions is the highest law and the public entities in administrative structure are of major importance. Quoted Latin proverb – legal paremia – is basically what governs (or rather should govern) the introduction of any emergency state via authorized public authorities within their power to mitigate negative consequences arising from negligence or inaction. In this case, appropriate steps have been undertaken. The Common Union efforts to this day help wartime escapees find shelter – the only thing they need to enter is their passport or any other issued document allowing valid identification. There is no need to apply for a visa, residence permit. Similarly, any refugee have not to prove available funds, insurance or invitation of another in-state citizen or long-term resident. Spouses without Ukrainian citizenship and their children have also been recently granted the right, on conditions anticipated for Ukrainian citizens only, to enter EU borders in Poland (Amendment in effect as of July 1 2024)<sup>5</sup>.

The law may be perceived as an art of engineering social processes and structure. Their outcome is represented in the data and the data can be used to either criticize or appraise the applied solutions. Here comes the question of how things are made. In the Polish perspective that was a challenge for almost all political powers involved. At the very beginning, there were voices suggesting that the Polish state ought to raise a state of emergency<sup>6</sup>. Management during a state of emergency is an activity of public administrative institutions which is an element of maneuvering national safety in order to prevent emergency situations, becoming ready, reacting to outbursts, removing left over consequences and renewing critical resources and infrastructure. Whereas state of emergency is a situation negatively influencing human safety, property of considerable value or the environment, and **finally causing the administrative bodies who are to be properly**

<sup>4</sup> Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC, and having the effect of introducing temporary protection.

<sup>5</sup> Nowelizacja ustawy o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa – Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców – Portal Gov.pl, [www.gov.pl/web/udsc/novelizacja-ustawy-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy-w-zwiazku-z-konfliktem-zbrojnym-na-terytorium-tego-panstwa2](http://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/novelizacja-ustawy-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy-w-zwiazku-z-konfliktem-zbrojnym-na-terytorium-tego-panstwa2).

<sup>6</sup> Journal of Modern Science 1/2023, Vol. 50, p. 38.

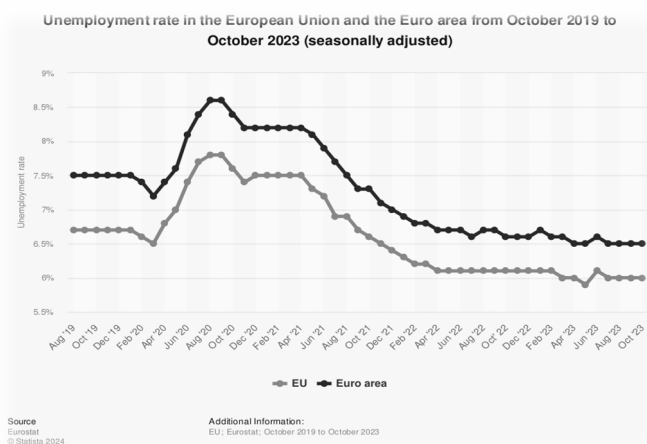


**adequate in dealing with certain aspects unable to do so because the capacity and available personnel is not enough<sup>7</sup>.**

The Council of the EU issued a decision based on a proposal from the Commission formally notifying that indeed there is a confirmed mass influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries (Ukraine) posing an overload threat to national state-led asylum systems upon arrival. Due to the establishment of an immediate and temporary protection regardless of the date of arrival on current-day or near-to-be current day. It was implemented for the first time since the directive introduction in 2001 following troubling difficulty surrounding conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

## 2. Access to labor market

Why are labor and employment so important in the context of incoming foreigners? The legal provision of work in the country of arrival is the basis for the parallel acquisition of social rights. In practice, it should approach them as close as possible to the citizens of the state which is the temporary protection state for them. Ultimately, this will allow the newcomers to live in dignity and ensure the protection of their families fleeing war. It is the duty of the state to respect human rights on its territory, ensure their attainment to individuals and eliminate the risks they face.

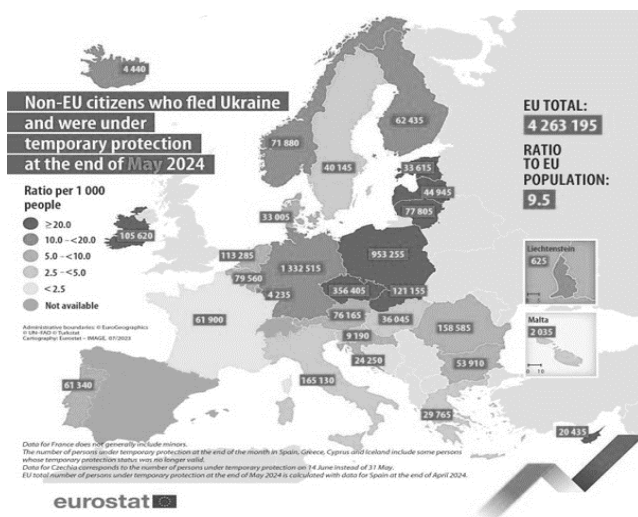


**Figure 1.** Unemployment Rate in the European Union and the Euro Area (October 2019 to October 2023)

Source: EU: Monthly unemployment rate 2019–2023 | Statista.

<sup>7</sup> Act of 26 April 2007 on crisis management J. Law 2007, No. 89, item 590, as amended.

Economic struggles in a post pandemic world - recovering from the hit which left many jobless people is a fact portrayed by an increase in unemployment during the period universal to all major EU states. Societies of Germany and Poland are now under pressure from problems their migrant reception state institutions face. Authors refer to the fact that there is a common direction provided by EU regulations being a part of a broader trend in which administrative law becomes common, e.g. the process of Europeanisation, even so a difference in perspective still remains. The law is somewhat homogeneous because solutions are being adopted in virtually identical spheres - regulations regarding foreigners. Acting of the law differs each country because every single sovereign nation within the EU community has its country-specific legal ramifications resulting from organizational differences in inner-state institution systems. There are structural distinctions between organization of the legal system in these two countries. It is quite a task to all state-led systems in Europe to distribute welfare and provide employment to around 6.3 million people who remained abroad (data as of end of 2023), fleeing the war as refugees and asylum-seekers, according to UNHCR data<sup>8</sup>. This challenge has been solved in a completely different way in Germany and Poland in reference to accommodation of Ukrainian refugees in spite of common EU agenda.



**Figure 2.** Number of Ukrainian Refugees Under Temporary Protection in EU Member States

Source: Eurostat.

<sup>8</sup> Ukraine situation | Global Focus (unhcr.org) Source: UNHCR (as of end of 2023) Estimated, number of internally displaced people in Ukraine (After: IOM).

### 3. Access to labor market in Germany

Since this article focuses on refugees coming from Ukraine, it should be highlighted that Ukrainian refugees are classified refugees under temporary protection according to the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive, which was implemented in February of 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine<sup>9</sup>.

People under temporary protection are entitled to various benefits, such as receiving a residence permit for the entire duration of their protection<sup>10</sup> or being allowed to seek employment<sup>11</sup>. The member states of the European Union are mandated to ensure that those under temporary protection have access to these benefits. Consequently, Germany is also required to provide these benefits to Ukrainian refugees.

To be allowed to work and gain access to the labor market, Ukrainian refugees need a residence permit. It is therefore important to understand the process by which they can acquire this permit.

Upon first arriving in Germany and deciding to stay for more than 90 days, Ukrainians must undergo an initial registration. Following this step, they are assigned a place to live. Once they have arrived in the assigned city or municipality, they then need to officially register at the local registration office. This step is necessary to be able to apply for a residence permit<sup>12</sup>.

According to the Section 24 of the Residence Act, foreigners are granted a temporary residence permit when being granted temporary protection<sup>13</sup>. While this step may be more procedural for Ukrainian refugees, it is evidently important, because the residence permit is a requirement to receive access to the labor market.

This provisional residence document must include the words “gainful employment permitted” („Erwerbstätigkeit erlaubt”). As long as Ukrainian refugees possess this document, they are entitled to choose any kind of employment in Germany, while still respecting entry restrictions certain professions may have<sup>14</sup>.

### 4. Access to labor market in Poland

Legal basis for entering labor market in Poland and specific conditions defined for temporary protection for people fleeing Ukraine lasting until 30 September 2025 has been described in Article 22 of Act on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in relation to armed conflict on its territory Act (Polish: *Ustawa o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa*<sup>15</sup>). The act defines stay conditions, work eligibility, general set-up provisions

<sup>9</sup> see Council Directive 2001/55/EC (2001), pp. 12–23.

<sup>10</sup> see *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> see *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> see BAMF, “Registration, residence permit and asylum”.

<sup>13</sup> see Section 24, Residence Act.

<sup>14</sup> see BMAS, “Labour law (Arbeitsrecht)”.

<sup>15</sup> Dz.U. 2022, poz. 583, ze zm.

and application procedures for both the incoming displaced persons and employers.

The applied solution distinguishes itself from general foreigner employment rules due to the fact that ability and entitlement to exercise the right to work is granted *de iure* without the need for an extensive administrative procedure leading to a positive decision in the form of a work permit.

There are 8 border crossings at the Polish-Ukrainian border. In every voivodeship there is at least one reception point – 24 in total (as of July 2024). At the end of 2024 the most important and active border crossings are railway junctions which offload the two-way transborder migration of war refugees. These are: Medyka, from where trains are coming through Przemyśl all the way from or to the Krakow Main Station (Line number 91) and Dorohusk, where trains are coming through Lublin all the way to or from the Warsaw East Rail Station (Line number 7)<sup>16</sup>.

The registration and admission are possible after the incoming foreigner will be assigned a PESEL number. The institutions responsible for these actions are municipal offices and/or border crossing guard offices. Firstly, the newcomers are recognized through Ministerial grade attestation, which is issued on behalf of the Minister of Foreigners by subordinate directors and under their authority by in-field officers. Attestation is based on an immediate PESEL number application and assignment – either by the border crossing guard office or the refugee himself in any selected municipal office. Voivodship Governors are responsible for notifying foreigners in case of changing their status. The governors are also a second-instance authority in the administrative procedure for assigning a PESEL number.

The term for an employer to report employment of Ukrainian refugees is 7 days from the day of work beginning which is stated in a contract underlying the employment relationship. Remuneration for work corresponds to the minimum wage identical to the one received by Poles and Polish citizens. Private entities should adhere to the laws in order to avoid embezzlement and exploitation.

The employer formal obligation has some strict requirements also listed under the aforementioned article. The regulation states general work conditions policy guidelines. Failure to meet legal standards in labor law usually concerns: minimum wage requirements, maximum weekly hour work time, safety measures imposed by OSHA (Polish BHP). Another may include: failure to meet technical norms or environmental protection infringement<sup>17</sup>. The job offers are published locally at employment offices in a traditional form preferred by management of

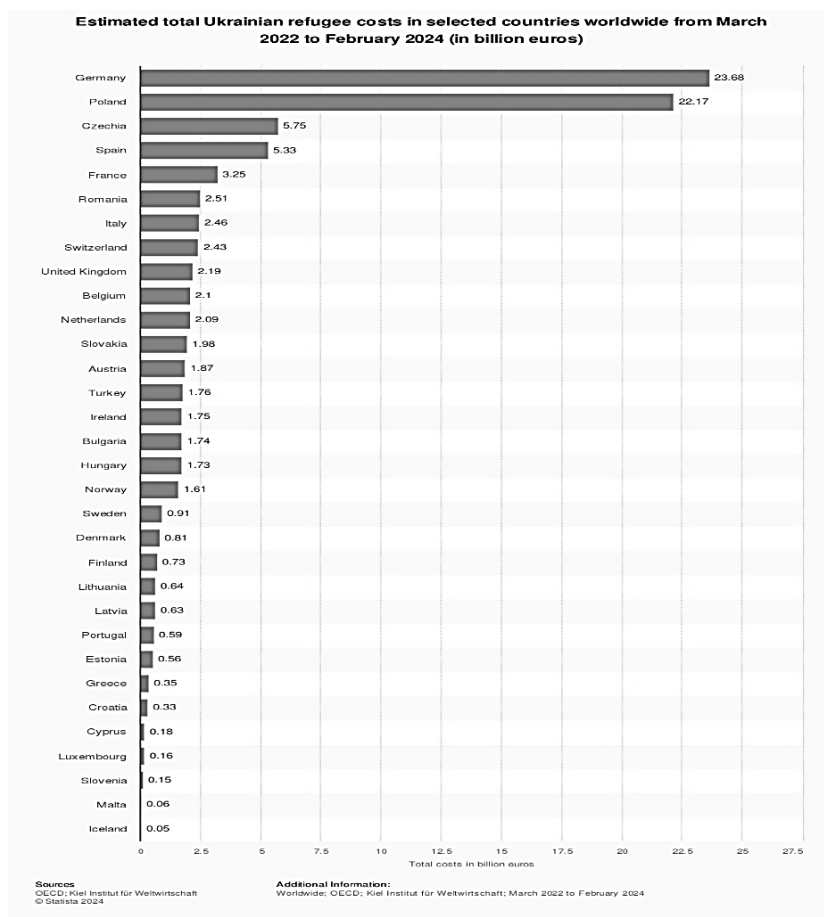
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<sup>16</sup> Source: Database of Railway Lines/Railway Atlas Of Central Europe At. <https://www.atlaskolejowy.net/infra/?id=linie-pl>.

<sup>17</sup> J. Fundowicz, K. Łapiński, B. Wyżnikiewicz, “Szara Strefa 2023”, First Ed. Institute for Economic Forecasting and Analysis. p. 6.

the district administrative division unit or online through internet registers available under [www.praca.gov.pl](http://www.praca.gov.pl) as well as <https://pomagamukrainie.gov.pl/>.

According to article 65 the officers of Police, State Fire Guard, Border Guard, Customs Office, Internal Security Agency and State Protection Service may collaborate directly to tackle tasks that concern people fleeing from Ukraine. Their collaboration lasts 40 hours per week and additionally compensated for any overtime.



**Figure 3.** Estimated Total Ukrainian Refugee Costs in Selected Countries Worldwide (March 2022 – February 2024, in Billion Euros)

Source: OECD | Statista.

The German economy is approximately 5.5 times larger than Polish (2023 World Bank Data) There is estimated that the contribution of Ukrainian citizens the Polish GDP is within 0.7–1.1% GDP.

It is not therefore surprising that public spending is of considerable order of magnitude – declining population, vital importance of foreigners for keeping up the growth of the economy and percentage of foreigners working in the overall economy on an upward trend approaching 7% of whom 67% (December 2023) are Ukrainians.

Poland's population is steadily declining and the figures indicate that between November 2023 and April 2024 it fell by 72 000 people according to Statistics Poland calculations. What is more, 2024 January data show that the birth rate was the lowest since records began. In this context the mass influx of refugees may be perceived as a positive information. The express pace of the introduction of elaborated regulations adapted to the requirements of European law is not surprising. Only 5 days have elapsed from the submission of the draft by the Prime Minister on 07.03.2023 to its announcement in the Journal of Laws and entry into force on 12.03.2023 as a result of the legislative initiative vested in the Council of Ministers on the basis of Article 118(1) of the Polish Constitution. Prior works on the draft project at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration supervised by the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration were conducted under the direction of the respective secretary of state at the ministry. The act itself involved Ministry of the Internal Affairs and Administration leading following Ministries cooperating in the works: Ministry of the Family and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education and Science<sup>18</sup>. The proposed law was intended from the outset to be an extraordinary law (*lex specialis*), supporting legal act, alongside the existing legal acts in the area of migration and asylum, in particular the Act of December 12, 2013 on foreigners, in accordance with the requirements of temporary protection set out by the EU. As a rule, the regulations have retroactive effect from 24 February 2022. From the date of enactment, Ukrainian citizens may legally reside in Poland (18 months initially). Refugees have been given the right to work in our country, as well as granted access to the national health care and education system. Those who have decided to host Ukrainian citizens in their homes also receive financial support.

## 5. Education

Official figures recently published claim that 134 000<sup>19</sup> children of Ukrainian refugees are participating in the Polish education system. It poses a challenge for cultural assimilation and raises a question whether to teach incoming minors in their national language only, adjust the existing program to fit their linguistic needs or teach them Polish from a level of beginners. The selected solution

<sup>18</sup> 9th Legislature Gov. Draft, Parliamentary Print, No. 2069.

<sup>19</sup> Poland: Refugee students from Ukraine in the Polish education system | European Website on Integration (europa.eu: [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/poland-refugee-students-ukraine-polish-education-system\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/poland-refugee-students-ukraine-polish-education-system_en)).

concentrates on offering Polish classes for interpersonal interaction between students and growth of their intellectual abilities but children are allowed to enter and acquire the second spoken language (Polish) up to their preferred pace.

As of amendment introduced 15 May 2024 in effect since the first of July 2024, participation in the national education system is mandatory beginning the new 2024/2025 school year on September 1, 2024. Compulsory schooling for children is inextricably linked to the eligibility to receive monthly parental social security child welfare checks.

## 6. Unprecedented character

Recent developments have not had equivalents so far, even though EU countries do have immigration experience related to migratory pressures. Collective temporary protection regulations were adopted willingly for the first time. Temporary protection serves rather as specific complementary background solution than general state-based foreigners law. It is a less formal and more agile way to accommodate numerous waves of refugees in situation when administrative systems will face an obviously resource-intensive nature, which could exceed the forces and resources of the State. At the same time, the adopted remedies were planned to be temporary (maximum of 3 years divided into two one and a half year periods). Afterwards, they are prepared to be transformed into national instruments of temporary residence rather than temporary protection.

## 7. Conclusions

Simplified procedures for accessing the labor market, social welfare, and education systems in both countries indicate the leading role of EU regulations in shaping national responses to crises. The activation of the **Temporary Protection Directive (2001)** for the first time in EU history provided a framework for granting immediate protection to Ukrainian refugees, allowing them to access residence permits, employment, and social benefits without overly lengthy bureaucratic processes. In Poland's case, the positive opportunity and impact is potentially heightened by growing demographic concerns, whereas in the Germany's instance, the economy has absorbed Ukrainian refugees more easily, with their labor contributing to economic growth. As of late 2024 (November), the Federal Employment Agency reported that approximately 296,000<sup>20</sup> Ukrainian refugees held socially insured jobs in Germany, a significant increase from 214,000 reported the previous year. The influx has helped mitigate labor

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de/presse/2025-07-knapp-300000-menschen-aus-der-ukraine-gehen-in-deutschland-einer-arbeit-nach> – Federal Employment Agency Feb 19, 2025 | Press release No. 7.

shortages in many particular sectors, namely healthcare, manufacturing, logistics and construction. The challenge for Poland, one may argue, was mainly administrative, due to a lack of prior experience in dealing with the mass inflow of people. In Germany, solutions were simply added on top of the existing act i.e. section 24, to make Ukrainian asylum-seekers qualify for help in particular federal states. Holders of a residence permit for temporary protection under Section 24 of Residence Act amounted 941,559 until February 2024<sup>21</sup>.

Poland created a whole new act dedicated towards dealing with emergency in Ukraine – armed conflict on the state's territory aimed at its citizens who look for shelter abroad, within European Union borders. As of February 2025, active UKR PESEL status citizens amount for 992,643 people<sup>22</sup>. Current-day geopolitical tensions pose an increasingly higher risk of mass displacement and refuge, highlighting the need for agile and collective approaches to manage future influxes of refugees while upholding human rights and ensuring socio-economic integration. Despite the administrative differences, the experience of waves of migration and the rising number of foreigners in relation to the total population of the country allows for conclusion that well-developed consistent common practices may exist in both countries. They provide also reliable access to social security through efficient use of affluence available to each state – means of transportation, population records, legal instruments of administrative authorities to handle the reception of refugees in large numbers.

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<sup>21</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AIDA-DE\\_Temporary-Protection\\_2023.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/AIDA-DE_Temporary-Protection_2023.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Detailed statistics on persons registered in the register of citizens of Ukraine and members of their families. Otwarte Dane: <https://dane.gov.pl/en/dataset/2715>, zarejestrowane-wnioski-onadanie-statusu-ukr/resource/64533/table.



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Council Directive 2001/55/EC on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, (2001). *Official Journal*, L212, pp. 12–23.



## **SITUATION OF UKRAINIAN CITIZENS IN THE POLISH LABOR MARKET – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article investigates the employment of Ukrainian citizens in Poland in the light of recent influx caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The article introduces the historical labor migrations of Ukrainians to Poland and focuses on the increase in migration following the outbreak of war. The purpose of this study is to analyze legal frameworks, especially the special act designed to facilitate the employment of Ukrainians and underscores the significance of these measures for both the Polish economy and administrative efficiency. The article aims to contextualize the challenges and opportunities presented by the integration of Ukrainian workers into the Polish labor market amidst a humanitarian crisis

**Key words:** Ukrainian migration, Polish labor market, temporary protection, employment facilitation.

### **1. Introduction**

The outbreak of war in Ukraine was of geopolitical significance and triggered a massive influx of displaced persons that has not been observed in Poland in the past decades. While a stream of migration from Ukraine existed in past years, the war reshaped its dynamics in unprecedented ways. The main purpose of this article is to analyze the situation of Ukrainian citizens who came to Poland due to the ongoing armed conflict on the territory of this country, on the Polish labor market. Using data from official sources and registries, the study explores how the conflict has reshaped employment dynamics, highlighting the effects of this unprecedented migration on the Polish labor market. It is argued that while the

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war-induced influx has provided Poland with a larger labor force, it has also introduced complexities regarding their legal status, access to employment, and the introduction of adequate administrative proceedings. This paper contributes to understanding these evolving employment patterns and their broader implications for how Poland may address future migration crises, highlighting opportunities for administrative adaptation and potential legislative reforms.

## **2. Pre-war Background**

Before the outbreak of war on 24 February 2022, Poland was a popular destination for many migrating Ukrainians. A notable event that fuelled a visible wave of migration was the year 2014. The first reason behind this was establishing the European Union – Ukraine Association Agreement that resulted in visa-free movement between Member States of the European Union and Ukraine. The provision came into power on 11 June 2017 and allowed traveling without a visa in all Schengen member countries. Poland, as a neighboring country, was a very popular choice – either as a transit as a destination country (E. Łaźniewska, D. Trojczak, K. Prytula, 2023).

On the other hand, after Poland accession to the EU, many Poles left their homeland to perform work in other countries, mainly due to higher salaries. In the following years, a phenomenon of substitution could be observed, where migration politics focused on attracting foreigners to supplement domestic labor resources. Most branches that needed employees were the ones with no specific qualifications needed like infrastructure, hospitality, and recreation. However, vacancies were also available in other branches, for qualified workers, such as IT, administration or finance, and insurance (A. Gorny *et al.*, 2018, p. 18). This shift in migration patterns emphasizes the role of labor migration as a key component in balancing workforce supply and demand in Poland, where foreign workers have increasingly filled gaps across various sectors, both low-skilled and highly specialized, contributing significantly to the country's economic development.

Another factor contributing to higher numbers of migrating people was the military conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine which included annexation of Crimea by the Russian forces. Considering the economic and political situation, many Ukrainians decided to leave the country. In the years 2014–2021, a trend of increasing immigration from Ukraine was observed. For many Ukrainians, the main purpose of arriving was employment. This phenomenon is well reflected in the number of issued work permits for citizens of Ukraine. For seven years before outbreak of the war, they have remained most common work permit holders. Also, the number of issued work permits has grown significantly during the years. Considering just the number of issued work permits for Ukrainians, there was a 1236% increase from 2014 to 2021.

**Table 1.** Number of Polish work permits issued for Ukrainians in the years 2014-2021

Specification	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of issued work permits for Ukrainian citizens	26 315	50 465	106 223	192 547	238 334	330 495	295 272	325 213
Percent of general number of work permits issued	60%	77%	83%	82%	73%	74%	73%	65%

Source: Developed by the Authors based on data accessed on: Zezwolenia na pracę cudzoziemca wydane w latach 2015–2021.

In a study “*The population of foreigners in Poland during COVID-19*”, conducted by Statistics Poland in 2020, Ukrainians were the biggest migrant in Poland, consisting of 1 351 418 people living there as of 31 of December 2019. This number was estimated by analyzing various registries existing in Poland and not considering whether they held residence documents or not. (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Populacja cudzoziemców w Polsce w czasie COVID-19, 2020).

### 3. Impact of the 2022 War

The outbreak of Russo-Ukrainian war on 24 February 2022 created an unprecedented massive influx of people fleeing Ukraine. According to the data published by Polish Border Guards (Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej, 2022), just in the first quarter of 2022, around 3 million Ukrainians arrived in Poland, mainly by land border. To provide context, in the same quarter of 2021, less than a million Ukrainian people crossed the border during that time. Overall, during 2022, 9,5 million citizens of Ukraine had at some point arrived in Poland. In 2023, numbers were very similar and oscillated around 9,5 million people again (Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej, 2023). It is worth mentioning that according to Border Guards, this is not the number of individuals who crossed the border, but individuals who arrived. This is not necessarily reflected in the later collected data of people enrolled to the National Security System or other registries, as for many the situation in Ukraine was very uncertain and temporary enough to travel back and not necessarily have the need to settle down in Poland.

Ukrainian citizens arriving in Poland due to the Russian military invasion of Ukraine represent the first such large group migrating to the Republic of Poland in search of refuge due to escalating armed conflict. The sudden influx of such a

large population into Polish territory has highlighted the main shortcomings of the country's existing migration policy. The reception of several million Ukrainian citizens, along with the support they received from the Polish population, has led to the spontaneous, not observed before, integration policy. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the factors influencing both social behaviors and political decisions, as these play a significant role in shaping the country's evolving migration policy.

Despite initial shock and rapid situation development, many Ukrainians ended their migration route in Poland and decided to stay there. This may occur for various reasons: geographical closeness, similar culture, or already well-established Ukrainian society due to large subpopulation of Ukrainian citizens. With a high number of people arriving for several consecutive months, this created a challenge never seen before in Polish policymaking – accommodating and integrating into Polish life, especially the labor market, massive influx of foreigners fleeing a country at war. As expected in such critical situations, many administrative procedures known before fail and prove to be ineffective with high volumes, thus blocking necessary processes of – in this case – fast introduction and integration of masses of displaced persons into daily life aspects, and most importantly, labor market, which allows for economic personal freedom.

#### **4. Government Reaction**

Massive migration since 24 February 2022 proved to be challenging not only at the operational but also at the administrative level. The first systemic reaction came from the Council of the European Union, which adopted the Implementing Decision of the Council of the European Union UE 2022/382. This was the first time when the mechanism of temporary protection was implemented since adopting the Council Directive 2001/55/EC. The document covered mechanisms of proceeding with a massive influx of displaced persons and minimum standards of temporary protection. Parallely, to ensure fast resolution of most pressing issues such as the legality of stay, work, and social allowance, Polish legislative bodies adopted a special act on 12 of March 2022 (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa. Dz.U. 2022, No. 583.) that covered all those issues for those who arrived and stayed in Poland fleeing Ukraine. As a country, most affected and hosting the majority of displaced Ukrainians, the act was considered important and praised by the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy (V. Diachenko, 2024).

The Act on Assistance for Ukrainian Citizens due to Armed Conflict in Ukraine (also known as a special act – *specustawa*) has high importance not only due to the rapid processing time but most importantly the complexity and coverage of all most important issues that allow quick reception of masses of displaced people. First thing ensured was legal stay. Equally important was also

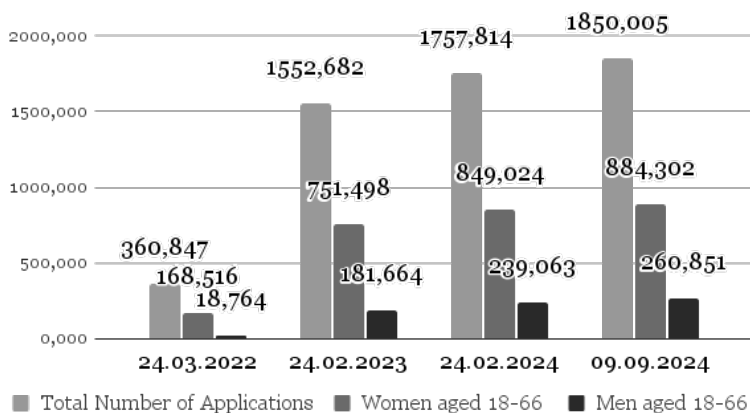
the need to create a system that would swiftly legalize employment and ensure that such a large social group arriving in Poland could become professionally active as soon as possible. By facilitating rapid access to the labor market, the act aimed to prevent administrative bottlenecks and promote economic integration, may enable Ukrainian refugees in contribution to the Polish economy immediately after their arrival.

#### 4.1. Legalization of Stay

The Act on Assistance for Ukrainian Citizens due to Armed Conflict in Ukraine grants UKR status which is equivalent to temporary protection status. The procedure is designed for citizens of Ukraine and members of their families who meet all the conditions, such as arriving to Poland after February 24, 2022, in connection with the ongoing armed conflict in the territory of Ukraine and declaring their intention to stay in Poland. The initial period of legal stay on the territory of Poland provided for Ukrainian citizens was planned for 18 months (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa. Dz.U. 2022, No. 583). This was designed for persons who arrived on 24 February 2022 or later. Holders of regular residence permits issued before that date were not meant to be the recipients of support covered by this statute. However, if their residence permit validity expired during these 18 months, they could still remain legally even if they did not submit a renewal application on time.

The procedure of registering the people was handled in a very effective manner – the fact of entry was registered by the Security Guards, but the fact of registering for stay and applying for PESEL with the annotation “UKR” was delegated to municipal offices. As Poland has almost 2500 municipal offices, this allowed for less pressure on already overburdened voivodship offices. The fast and time-effective procedure of assigning a PESEL UKR number allowed us, firstly, to have the information and statistics of Ukrainians arriving after 24 February, and secondly, was designed to give them access to necessary systemic solutions of aid.

Based on the data presented above, it can be observed that since the beginning of the war, approximately 50% of individuals applying for temporary protection status have been women aged 18 to 66. On the other hand, due to the mobilization of Ukrainian forces and the restricted ability of men of conscription age to leave the country, applications for temporary protection submitted by men aged 18 to 66 constituted only 5.2% of all applications in the first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine. As of September 9, 2024, the number of applications submitted by this demographic has more than doubled, currently accounting for 14.1% of all applications. The remaining applications are submitted on behalf of minors and individuals over the age of 66.



**Figure 1.** Registered Applications for Temporary Protection (UKR Status) in Poland

Source: Ministry of Digital Affairs, Statistical data on applications for UKR foreigner status in connection with the conflict in Ukraine.

Considering that the responsibility for ensuring the safety of migrating children and the elderly has largely fallen on Ukrainian women, any analysis of employment-related issues concerning Ukrainian citizens in Poland must take into account the burden of unpaid caregiving work, which is primarily borne by the largest group seeking refuge in Poland. The situation of Ukrainian migrant women simultaneously assumes sole responsibility for caring for children and the elderly and presents challenges for both employers and the national government. A key priority in employment activation policies for social groups particularly burdened by unpaid caregiving work should be increasing access to childcare facilities, such as nurseries and preschools, as well as enhancing the flexibility of working hours.

Given this, it was also crucial to ensure access to social benefits that would support these incoming groups, particularly children who are unable to earn a livelihood independently. Providing such support, including family benefits and social assistance programs, was a key part of the act to secure the well-being of vulnerable groups, ensuring that they had the necessary resources for a stable and safe life in Poland.

In this vein, PESEL UKR gave access to family benefits such as the 800+ program providing monthly funds for every child in the family, access to public healthcare, partial financing for nursery costs, and benefits from social assistance, or exemption from tuition fees for university students. Beside fast proceeding,

the act covered the most important issues and gave the displaced Ukrainians a sense of safety and stability after fleeing their homeland. This wide variety of solutions allowed many to quickly start living independently. Legal employment and protection of stay helped to avoid a situation with masses of displaced people forced to stay in temporary reception camps with less prospects for integrating with the society and remaining in both factual and legal situations.



With the passing of time and the need to address different situations, legal acts also were amended to match the current reality. Firstly, the Council of the European Union prolonged the temporary protection for Ukrainians all around Europe till 4 March 2026 in an Implementing Decision 2024/1836 from 25 June 2024 (Official Journal of the European Union, L 167, 26.06.2024). It is estimated that 4.19 million displaced persons from Ukraine are benefitting from the protection given by the EU. The Council also reported that despite numbers staying on a stable level, a further upward trend cannot be excluded as the situation in Ukraine remains unstable, including repetitive air attacks by the Russians targeted at civilians in the whole country.

The Polish Act on Assistance for Ukrainian Citizens due to Armed Conflict in Ukraine had also undergone a few amendments with time. The most recent came into power on 1 July 2024 (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa. Dz.U. 2022, No. 583, as amended by Dz.U. 2024, No.167). The most important change is the possibility to convert the temporary protection into temporary residence, which was previously known from the Act on Foreigners. Application for temporary residence permit for Ukrainians with temporary protection status is more simplified comparing to standard procedure for third country citizens. PESEL UKR holders have an open way to apply for temporary residence permit in a new manner of application which is supposed to be processed fully online. Bearing in mind the duration of war in Ukraine and the uncertainty of the future, providing ability to apply for residence permit is another step in establishing administrative solutions that can help those who plan to stay for a longer time and settle down in Poland. The possibility of applications also covers children. Although the procedure has yet not been introduced in practice by the authorities reviewing and issuing the residence documents, it has been a solution awaited by many refugees. The massive influx of people arriving to Poland and later on, staying there, proved that the administration needs digitalization as a necessary tool to avoid overburdened administration and lengthy processes, which are also costly and simply inefficient in uncertain times.

Due to the lowering trend in influx of people arriving to Poland every day, like it was in February 2022, the focus has been shifted from reception of Ukrainians to daily life regulations like legalizing whole families stays or schooling of children. The special law was amended in terms of the statute and changed some of the provisions such as access to 800+ program. As of 1 September 2024, every parent who wishes to receive benefits for their children, must ensure that the child is enrolled in a Polish educational entity. In reference to employment, access to the labor market remained unchanged with some minor amendments regarding the content of notification of employment such as minimum monthly or hourly wage. The purpose of the amendment of the act was

to identify and erase potential loopholes as well as provide solutions for displaced persons but now require procedures allowing them to build a stable legal situation in Poland, while their country is still at war (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa. Dz.U. 2022, No. 583, as amended by Dz.U. 2024, No. 167).

While we are still observing how the procedures are working and some more time is required to assess whether they proved effective because the act remains a very complex tool in managing the massive influx of displaced persons. Multiple amendments may provide an impression that the act has many faults and loopholes, at the same time, bearing in mind the speed of processing and dynamic situation, yet on the other hand, stays up to date with the current need to provide protection and introduction of systemic solutions allowing handling such influx.

#### 4.2. Legalization of Work

Before the war, as the numbers of Ukrainians coming to Poland started to grow systematically, the government noticed the need to create procedures allowing smooth legalization of employment. One of procedures was introduced in the 2018 Declaration of entrusting work to a foreigner in Polish called *Oświadczenie o powierzeniu wykonywania pracy cudzoziemcowi* (Ustawa o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy, Dz.U. 2004 No. 99, item 1001). This procedure was designed to ease the pressure on Provincial Offices and allow District Labor Offices (*Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy, PUP*) to issue documents legalizing work for citizens of particular countries, which generated the majority of work permit applications. The procedure was designed to be less time-consuming and require less documentation. The Ministry of Labor is in power to assign citizens from particular countries that are permitted to use this track of work legalization. Ukraine has remained on the list of benefitting countries since the beginning.

After the outbreak of war in 2022, due the influx of people that appears on the Polish labor market at the same time, the need for even more efficient solutions to legalize employment and integrate the rapidly growing population of Ukrainian refugees into the labor market became critical. The special act from 2022 simplified the process even further, ensuring that displaced Ukrainians could enter the labor market rapidly and address the pressing economic challenges. This act allowed Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war to start working without needing a work permit, provided their employer notified the relevant District Labor Office (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa. Dz.U. 2022, No. 583). This immediate access to the labor market ensured that displaced Ukrainians could become economically active as soon as possible, addressing both humanitarian and economic needs.

Following this, the labor market was fully opened without restrictions for all Ukrainian citizens who have a legal stay in Poland. The process required employers to notify the relevant labor office via the [praca.gov.pl](https://praca.gov.pl) system, allowing the foreign national to be employed for up to 24 months. With an amendment to the Law on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine, the notification deadline was shortened from 14 to 7 days, further speeding up the integration of displaced Ukrainians into the Polish workforce (Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2022 r. o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa. Dz.U. 2022, No. 583, as amended by Dz.U. 2024, No.167). There is no option in the online form to select a retroactive date beyond the time allowed by the legislature to make the notification which imposes fast action on the employer to legalize the work of a foreigner and reduces the possibility of illegal employment.

In the case of failure to fulfill the obligation to submit a notification of the employment of a foreign citizen within the statutory deadline, the foreigner is considered to be employed illegally. Typically, in cases of illegal employment, both the employer and the employee are subject to a fine. However, the legislator, in order to provide additional protection to Ukrainian citizens who arrived in Poland due to the armed conflict, excludes criminal liability for illegal employment in relation to employees. Nevertheless, employers who fail to meet the obligation to notify the district labor office remain subject to a fine ranging from 1,000 to 30,000 PLN.

The described procedure is fast, intuitive, and conducted fully online. By following this procedure, there is no need to go through the lengthy procedure of obtaining a work permit. The notification process for employing a Ukrainian citizen requires detailed information about both the employer and the employee. Notification is available only in the Polish language version which may be a difficulty and barrier for non-Polish speakers. Employers, referred to as the entities entrusting work, must provide specific details that allow for their identification, including the entity's full name, address, contact details, tax identification number (NIP), number from the National Official Business Register (REGON) or PESEL number, and the classification of the activity conducted by the entity (PKD). In addition, personal data of the Ukrainian citizen to whom the work is being entrusted must be provided. Crucially, the notification must include comprehensive details regarding the terms of employment. This involves specifying the type of contract between the employer and the Ukrainian worker (e.g. employment contract or civil law contract), the working hours, the job position or type of work being assigned, the monthly or hourly remuneration, and the designated place of work. Moreover, the employer is required to disclose the number of individuals employed under both employment contracts and civil law

contracts as of February 23, 2022, and the number of such employees at the time the notification is submitted. This information is crucial for maintaining transparency and ensuring accurate tracking of the workforce, especially in relation to the employment of foreign workers.

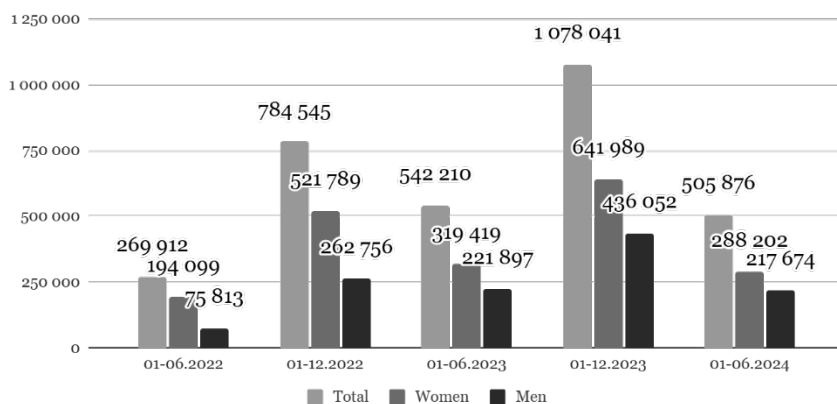
The collected data is shared with several institutions as necessary for the execution of their statutory duties, including the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund (Kasa Rolniczego Ubezpieczenia Społecznego), the National Labor Inspectorate (Państwowa Inspekcja Pracy), the Head of the National Revenue Administration (Szef Krajowej Administracji Skarbowej), the Border Guard (Straż Graniczna), the Social Insurance Institution (Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych), and the Central Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). This exchange of information ensures that the government can effectively fulfill responsibilities related to labor regulations, tax administration, social security, and statistical reporting.

From the enactment of the Act of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Citizens of Ukraine in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of that State (Journal of Laws 2022, item 583) until the end of 2022, 784,545 notifications of employment offer to Ukrainian citizens were recorded. Of these, 521,789 notifications concerned jobs offered to Ukrainian women, and 262,756 to Ukrainian men. This dramatic increase is likely due to the mass migration of Ukrainian citizens following the Russian aggression and the introduction of the special act, which facilitated the rapid employment of Ukrainians in Poland.

The first half of 2023 saw a lower increase with 542,210 notifications, but the total reached 1,078,041 by the end of 2023 of which 641,989 concerned women starting work and 436,052 concerned men, showing continuous integration of Ukrainians into the Polish labor market.

Women consistently outnumbered men in the employment notifications across all periods. This can be linked to the fact that a significant number of men stayed in Ukraine due to conscription rules and a willingness to defend the country, leaving women as the primary group migrating for work. Men's employment notifications showed an increase as well but at a slower pace compared to women. By the end of 2023, men represented 40.5% of employment notifications, showing a growing participation in the labor market as the situation evolved.

In the first half of 2024, the total dropped to 505,876 notifications, which is a decrease of 7% compared to the previous year, indicating a potential stabilization or decline in new employment registrations, which could suggest that a large portion of the workforce has already been absorbed into the market or that fewer people are choosing Poland as a country of refuge during this period.



**Figure 2.** Number of Notifications on the Employment of Ukrainian Citizens in Poland

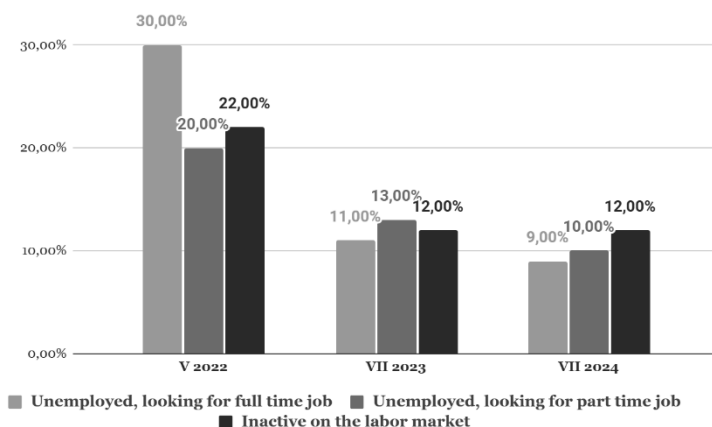
*Source:* Department of Labor Market, Notification on the Entrustment of Work to a Ukrainian Citizen.

However, it is important to note that the number of notifications submitted does not fully reflect the number of Ukrainian citizens entering employment. Due to the inability to edit or correct a submitted notification, in the event of an error, the correction can only be made by resubmitting the notification to the office. There is also no mechanism to report the termination of employment. In cases of promotion or change in position, employers are required to submit a new notification. Similarly, when a foreign worker changes employers, the new employer is obliged to notify the authorities about the employment of the Ukrainian citizen. Given the limitations of the system, there may be a discrepancy between the number of employment notifications submitted and the actual number of Ukrainian citizens in the Polish labor market.

However, it is worth to mention that even with simplified procedures for the Ukrainians to participate in a Polish labor market, significant amount of refugees is struggling with finding employment. Report of the Questionnaire Survey conducted by the National Bank of Poland shows that the position of Ukrainian refugees in the labor market in Poland is much more complicated than of Ukrainian people who arrived in Poland before the outbreak of the war in 2022 (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2024). In May 2022, a significant portion of Ukrainians who arrived to Poland after the war (30%) were unemployed – looking for full-time job. Another 20% were unemployed – looking for part-time work and 22% remained inactive on the labor market (mostly due to the caring duties performed for family members). In July 2023 percentage of unemployed refugees from Ukraine in Poland dropped to 11% of people looking for a full-time job and 13% of those looking for part time job. At the same time number of refugees inactive on the labor market dropped to 12%. This number remained the same next year,

in July 2024, however the number of unemployed refugees dropped to 9% of those looking for full time job and 10% that was looking for part time employment (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2024).

Through the time, refugees who came to Poland after outbreak of the war in 2022 became more integrated into the labor market. However, still percentage of people looking actively for job is a much higher than the average unemployment rate in Poland. At the same time, Ukrainians who already had work experience in Poland from before February 2022, are more likely to be employed in full-time jobs and receive better, stable offers. According to the Report of the Questionnaire Survey conducted by the National Bank of Poland employment rate among the immigrants who came to Poland before the outbreak of the war was 93% whereas the refugee's employment was 68% (Narodowy Bank Polski, 2024).



**Figure 3.** Labor activity of war refugees from Ukraine in Poland

Source: Narodowy Bank Polski, *Sytuacja życiowa i ekonomiczna migrantów z Ukrainy w Polsce w 2024 r.: Raport z badania ankietowego*.

## 5. Conclusion - Challenges and Opportunities

Although Ukrainian citizens already formed a significant group migrating to Poland before the war, the shift in the nature of migration – from voluntary, mostly for economic reasons, to forced migration due to the ongoing conflict, and the scale of people who began arriving en masse presented a major challenge for the Polish government.

It might seem that the administrative mechanisms we described above, such as legalizing the stay of Ukrainian citizens through the granting of temporary protection and introducing an easy procedure for notifying district labor offices about the employment of a Ukrainian citizen, would ensure an efficient system

facilitating participation in social life in Poland. However, the complexity of the issue is much greater and requires in-depth legislative intervention. For this reason, the Act on Assistance for Ukrainian Citizens due to Armed Conflict in Ukraine attempts to cover topics related to integrity, education, social, and welfare policies while also focusing on creating opportunities to use the skills and work experience of refugees or providing them with tools for professional retraining.

After more than two and a half years after the outbreak of the war, it is time for the Polish government to restructure their migration policy. Facing the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine providing temporary protection and ad hoc solutions might not be enough for the new reality with which we have come to face. As the Russian occupation continues, uncertainty is growing among groups of people who have left the country in connection with it. It is crucial to focus more on long-term solutions that would allow refugees to rebuild their stability in host countries. Focus on integration of arriving individuals who plan long-time stay at the territory of Poland combined with making residence legalization procedures more effective and transparent might be crucial. Switching from temporary to long-term solutions might be crucial to create opportunities for Ukrainians to have a meaningful impact on the economy and labor market.

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## **MEDIATION AS A TOOL FOR ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM**

**Nina Kurpios<sup>1</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

In today's society, where conflicts are an inseparable part of our lives, there is a growing need for effective methods of dispute resolution. In this context, mediation as a tool for alternative dispute resolution in the legal system is gaining more and more popularity. Mediation is a process in which an independent and neutral person – the mediator – helps the parties to the conflict to find a solution that meets their needs and interests. Unlike traditional court proceedings, mediation focuses on cooperation and dialogue between the parties, rather than on confrontation and resolution of the case by the court. It is a voluntary process that allows parties to independently and actively participate in solving their problems. Mediation is a voluntary, confidential form of conflict resolution in which the parties, with the help of an impartial, neutral third party, called a mediator, reach a compromise on their own. The concept of mediation comes from the Roman law *mediare*, it was understood as "to be in the middle" or "to mediate" and was closely related to the concept of "*conflictus*", i.e. events. Roman lawyers rightly noticed that in order to talk about mediation, there must be a conflict that needs to be resolved. Mediation was seen as a process where a neutral person, called a mediator, appeared between the parties to a conflict to help them find a mutual solution. In this article, the author wants to present mediation as an alternative to the court process.

**Key words:** mediator, law, court process, communication.

### **1. Introduction**

Mediation is possible in any case, as long as the law allows for a settlement, while the issues addressed during mediation depend on the will of the parties to the dispute. The subject of agreement can be any matter, e.g. agreement on the terms of separation, terms of termination of employment. Mediation can be conducted before the action is filed with the court or after the commencement of

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the court proceedings. Each party, regardless of the stage of the proceedings, has the right to submit a request for mediation, but the consent of the other party to the conflict is always a prerequisite. Upon receipt of a request for mediation, the mediator shall immediately contact the parties to the conflict to set the date and place of the mediation meeting<sup>2</sup>. The mediation meeting may be held with the participation of both parties at the same time, or the mediator may conduct the dialogue separately. The mediator is obliged to prepare a protocol of the mediation. Importantly, the protocol does not contain any assessments or positions of the parties, but only the result of the mediation proceedings conducted. The result of the mediation may be the conclusion of a settlement between the parties, or leave the dispute without an amicable solution and refer it to an independent, autonomous court for resolution. Importantly, if no settlement is reached, neither the parties nor the court are bound by the proposals made during the mediation. If, on the other hand, the parties conclude a settlement agreement, and the case goes to mediation after the opening of the court proceedings, then the settlement agreement is appended to the minutes, and the mediator is obliged to inform the parties that the moment they sign the settlement agreement is the same as agreeing to apply to the court for its approval. The mediator shall forward the protocol together with the settlement to the competent court and serve the parties with a copy of the protocol. The court shall, without undue delay, conduct proceedings to approve the settlement, to grant an enforceability clause for the concluded settlement, or to refuse to approve the settlement or to grant an enforceability clause in whole or in part. The court has the right to refuse to recognize a settlement worked out during mediation if the settlement is contrary to the law or principles of social intercourse, if it is aimed at circumventing the law, is incomprehensible or contains contradictions.

## **2. Universal principles of mediation**

Mediation proceedings have their own established rules, which are a kind of instruction for both the mediator and the mediation participants, "mediation is a voluntary, confidential process, during which an independent and impartial person with professional training assists the parties in resolving a difficult, conflictual situation. Its purpose is to determine the issues in dispute, reduce communication barriers, jointly prepare proposals for solutions and optimally conclude an agreement that satisfies the parties to the conflict. The basis for the success of mediation is, in addition to the will of the parties themselves, the correct action of the mediator<sup>3</sup>".

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<sup>2</sup> The place of the mediation meeting.

<sup>3</sup> Decision of the WSA in Poznań of 27.11.2018, III SA/Po 336/18, LEX No. 2595635.

First of all, mediation should always be voluntary. This follows directly from the provisions of the applicable law (including Article 183<sup>1</sup> § 1 of the Code of Civil Procedure<sup>4</sup>, Article 96a § 2 of the Code of Administrative Procedure<sup>5</sup>). This means that regardless of the type of case in which mediation is to be conducted, there is no legal possibility to coerce potential participants to participate in mediation proceedings. At the first meeting between the mediator and the participants in the mediation proceedings, the mediator is required to collect consent from the participants to mediate. It should be emphasized that consent to mediation can be withdrawn at any stage of the mediation proceedings by any participant. In addition, in the Polish legal system there is no possibility of coercing the participants to conclude a settlement agreement, "voluntariness also applies to the conclusion of a settlement agreement: each party has the right to refuse to sign it, despite the fact that he previously agreed to all its provisions"<sup>6</sup>.

Second, the mediation proceedings and all the terms of the settlement are kept secret<sup>7</sup>. This means that only the participants in the mediation proceedings and the mediator know what issues were raised during the mediation proceedings, and they are obliged to keep this information confidential. In practice, this means that when a settlement is not reached in the event of a court proceeding, they cannot refer to the arrangements that were proposed in mediation, as this will be ineffective, "the court does not examine the content of the mediation arrangements, because according to Article 183<sup>4</sup> § 1 of the Code of Civil Procedure, mediation proceedings are not public"<sup>8</sup>. In addition, the mediator may not be questioned by the court on the circumstances arising during the mediation proceedings, "the mediator is obliged to keep secret the facts he learned in connection with the mediation"<sup>9</sup> nor disclose to the other participants in the mediation proceedings the facts he learned in the course of individual discussions or to any other persons unrelated to the mediation proceedings in question, "it should be considered prohibited not only to disclose the information to a third party, but also to use it in one's own or someone else's interest, in particular in connection with other activities conducted by the mediator or a third party"<sup>10</sup>. The exclusion of the

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<sup>4</sup> Article 183<sup>1</sup> § 1 of the Act of November 17, 1964, Code of Civil Procedure (i.e. Dz. U. of 2021, item 1805, as amended; hereinafter: the "Code of Civil Procedure"), "mediation is voluntary".

<sup>5</sup> 96a § 2 of June 14, 1960, Administrative Procedure Code (i.e., Dz. U. of 2023, item 775, as amended; hereinafter: the "Administrative Procedure Code"), "mediation is voluntary".

<sup>6</sup> Jurewicz-Bakun K., *Mediation as one of the forms of resolving individual disputes in labor law*, PiZS 2021, No. 3, pp. 41–49.

<sup>7</sup> This is stipulated by the provisions of, among others, Article 96j § 1 of the Code of Administrative Procedure "mediation is not public", Article 183<sup>4</sup> § 1 of the Code of Civil Procedure "mediation proceedings are not public".

<sup>8</sup> Judgment of the SR in Lodz of 23.12.2020, XIII GC 1820/20, LEX No. 3189034.

<sup>9</sup> Judgment of the SA in Gdansk of 15.10.2018, V ACa 398/18, LEX No. 2634970.

<sup>10</sup> Koszowski M., *Legal and ethical aspects of exercising the profession of mediator taking into account European standards*, St.Pr.-Ek. 2008, No. 77, pp. 29–47.

openness of the mediation proceedings reinforces in the participants a sense of security and allows for greater sincerity of claims, and thus can lead to a satisfactory settlement from the point of view of all participants. This is an unquestionable advantage of mediation over court proceedings, which, in accordance with Article 45(1) of the Constitution<sup>11</sup> as a rule, are open to the public, and consequently all issues raised during the trial can be publicly available, which undoubtedly affects the privacy of the parties to the proceedings.

Thirdly, the mediator has a duty of impartiality<sup>12</sup>. The principle of impartiality is a guarantee for the participants in the mediation proceedings that the mediator does not advocate for any of the participants, equally supports each of them in resolving the conflict. The mediator is obliged to take care of the comfort of each participant in the mediation proceedings individually and collectively. The mediator does not subject the views, behavior or claims of the parties to judgment; he is only supposed to help the participants work out a compromise that satisfies each of them. The mediator also must not allow his personal views to influence his perception of the conflict, and thus, in accordance with his own beliefs, persuade the parties to a solution that is in accordance with his conscience, "the mediator shall endeavor to ensure that his views, beliefs or prejudices do not influence his perception of the subject of the dispute and do not determine his attitude towards possible solutions<sup>13</sup>". The mediator is obliged to promptly disclose circumstances that potentially impinge on his impartiality<sup>14</sup>.

### **3. Advantages of mediation in economic terms**

One of the main advantages of mediation is the speed. Unlike lengthy litigation, mediation can be conducted in a short period of time, often with only a few meetings being enough to find a satisfactory solution. According to

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<sup>11</sup> Article 45(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997 (Journal of Laws, No. 78, item 483, as amended; hereinafter: "the Constitution") "everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing without undue delay by a competent, independent, impartial and independent court."

<sup>12</sup> This is stipulated by the provisions of, among others, Article 183<sup>3</sup> § 1 of the Code of Civil Procedure "the mediator should maintain impartiality when conducting mediation," Article 96g § 1 of the Code of Administrative Procedure "the mediator should maintain impartiality when conducting mediation and immediately disclose circumstances that could raise doubts about his impartiality, including, respectively, the circumstances referred to in Article 24 § 1 and 2."

<sup>13</sup> Journal of Laws, item 921.

<sup>14</sup> This is stipulated in the provisions of, among others, Article 183<sup>3</sup> § 2 of the Code of Civil Procedure "the mediator shall immediately disclose to the parties the circumstances that could raise doubts about his impartiality", Article 96g § 2 of the Code of Administrative Procedure "the mediator shall refuse to conduct mediation in case of doubts about his impartiality and shall immediately notify the mediation participants and the public administration body if he is not a mediation participant".

a report by the mediation center, on average, mediation takes up to 42 days, while a trial takes an average of 480 days<sup>15</sup>.

As a rule, mediation is paid for, but its costs are much lower than the costs of litigation. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Justice of June 20, 2016 on the amount of remuneration and reimbursable expenses of the mediator in civil proceedings<sup>16</sup>, in cases for property rights the mediator's remuneration is 1% of the value of the subject of the dispute, but not less than PLN 150 and not more than PLN 2,000 for the entire mediation proceedings. In cases involving property rights, where the value of the subject matter of the dispute cannot be determined, and in cases involving non-property rights, the mediator's remuneration for conducting mediation proceedings is PLN 150 for the first session, and PLN 100 for each subsequent session, not more than PLN 450 in total. On the other hand, litigation costs in civil cases are regulated by the Law of July 28, 2005 on court costs in civil cases<sup>17</sup>. In cases involving property rights, a fixed fee is charged for the writings, determined according to the value of the subject of the dispute or the value of the subject of the appeal, which is:

- 1) up to PLN 500 – in the amount of PLN 30;
- 2) over PLN 500 to PLN 1500 zlotys – in the amount of PLN 100;
- 3) over PLN 1,500 to PLN 4,000 – in the amount of PLN 200;
- 4) over PLN 4,000 to PLN 7,500 – in the amount of PLN 400;
- 5) over PLN 7,500 to PLN 10,000 – in the amount of PLN 500;
- 6) more than PLN 10,000 to PLN 15,000 – in the amount of PLN 750;
- 7) more than PLN 15,000 to PLN 20,000 – in the amount of PLN 1,000.

In cases involving property rights, if the value of the subject matter of the dispute or the value of the subject matter of the appeal exceeds PLN 20,000, a relative fee of 5% of this value is charged on the letter, but not more than PLN 200,000. The costs of mediation in administrative cases are similar. According to the Decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of June 2, 2017 on the amount of remuneration and reimbursable expenses of the mediator in administrative proceedings<sup>18</sup>, in cases of monetary dues, the mediator's remuneration is 1% of the value of such dues, but not less than PLN 150 and not more than PLN 2,000 for the entire mediation proceedings. However, in cases concerning:

- 1) concessions, permits or business licenses,
- 2) construction and architecture,
- 3) land use,
- 4) environmental and nature protection,

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.centrummediacji.sadowych.pl/wpis/5,sredni-czas-postepowan-mediacyjnych-oraz-sadowych-w-polsce> [accessed 27.06.2023].

<sup>16</sup> Journal of Laws, item 921.

<sup>17</sup> i.e. Dz. U. of 2022, item 1125, as amended.

<sup>18</sup> Journal of Laws, item 1088.

- 5) water management,
- 6) real estate,
- 7) agriculture and forestry,
- 8) industrial property

The mediator's fee is PLN 150 for the first meeting, and PLN 100 for each subsequent meeting, not more than PLN 2,000 in total. For comparison, according to the Decree of the Council of Ministers of December 16, 2003 on the amount and detailed rules for collecting entry fees in proceedings before administrative courts<sup>19</sup>. The relative entry fee depends on the amount of the monetary claim covered by the challenged act and amounts to:

- 1) up to PLN 10,000 – 4% of the value of the object of the appeal, but no less than PLN 100;
- 2) over 10,000 zlotys to 50,000 zlotys – 3% of the value of the subject of the appeal, but no less than 400 zlotys;
- 3) over 50,000 zlotys to 100,000 zlotys – 2% of the value of the subject of the appeal, but no less than 1,500 zlotys;
- 4) over 100,000 zlotys – 1% of the value of the object of appeal, but not less than 2,000 zlotys and not more than 100,000 zlotys.

In contrast, regardless of the subject matter of the challenged act or action fixed entries exemplarily amount to:

- 1) complaints against decisions issued in administrative, enforcement and security proceedings – PLN 100;
- 2) complaints against acts or actions of public administration concerning powers or duties under the law – PLN 200;
- 3) complaints against acts of local law of local government bodies and local government administration bodies – PLN 300;
- 4) complaints against acts of local self-government bodies and their unions, other than acts of local law, undertaken in matters of public administration – PLN 300;
- 5) complaints against acts of supervision over the activities of local government bodies – PLN 300;
- 6) complaints about the inaction of public administration bodies – PLN 100.

The fixed entry in cases of complaints concerning licenses, permits or permits to conduct business activities in the field of, amount to, in particular examples:

- 1) construction and operation of toll highways and expressways – PLN 10,000;
- 2) energy – PLN 10,000;
- 3) air, rail and sea transport – PLN 10,000;
- 4) radio and television – PLN 10,000;

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<sup>19</sup> OJ. U. of 2021, item 535.

- 5) public securities trading – PLN 10,000;
- 6) banking activities – PLN 10,000;
- 7) manufacture of spirits and tobacco products – PLN 8,000.

Fixed entry in cases of complaints, not covered by the relative entry, from the scope of the example is:

- 1) construction and architecture – PLN 500;
- 2) spatial development – PLN 500;
- 3) environmental and nature protection – PLN 200;
- 4) water management – PLN 300;
- 5) real estate – PLN 200;
- 6) agriculture and forestry – PLN 200;
- 7) industrial property – PLN 1,000.

Again, mediation compares much more favorably in financial terms. In mediation in criminal cases, according to Article 618 § 1(8)<sup>20</sup> and Article 619 § 2<sup>21</sup> of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the state treasury bears the cost.

#### 4. Advantages of mediation in social terms

In mediation proceedings, the parties have more control over the outcome, as they make their own decisions on how to resolve the dispute. The mediator acts as a neutral intermediary who helps the parties identify problems, discover common interests, and find creative and lasting solutions. In mediation proceedings, the parties have the opportunity to actively participate and express their needs, concerns and priorities. The mediator supports them in communication, helps them to develop an agreement and stimulates dialogue based on mutual understanding. The parties are in control of what solution is most satisfactory to them and consistent with their needs. Unlike the court process, where a judge makes the final decisions, mediation gives the parties the opportunity to jointly develop a solution that takes into account their individual interests. The mediator helps them identify common points of convergence and seek *win-win* solutions that satisfy the needs of both parties.

Another benefit of mediation proceedings is the opportunity to rebuild relationships between the parties. The mediation process promotes openness,

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<sup>20</sup> Article 618 § 1(8) of the Act of June 6, 1997, the Code of Criminal Procedure (i.e., Dz.U. of 2022, item 1375, as amended; hereinafter: the "Code of Criminal Procedure") "the expenses of the State Treasury include, in particular, payments made for: mediation proceedings."

<sup>21</sup> Article 619 § 2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure "the costs of mediation proceedings shall be borne by the State Treasury."

respect and cooperation, which fosters a better relationship between the parties. The parties have the opportunity to listen to each other, express their emotions and come up with solutions that take their perspectives into account. This is often impossible during litigation, which often leads to deepening divisions and tensions between the parties. Mediation proceedings also have beneficial effects for the legal system as a whole. It reduces the burden on the courts, allowing them to focus on more complex cases. In addition, mediation proceedings promote dialogue and cooperation between the parties, which fosters a more cohesive and harmonious society.

## 5. Summary

In conclusion, in the author's opinion, mediation as a tool for alternative dispute resolution in the legal system has many advantages. It is an effective, faster, cheaper and more flexible method of conflict resolution compared to the traditional court process, which gives the parties more control over the outcome and enables them to rebuild relationships. The introduction of mediation as a common practice can improve the efficiency and accessibility of the legal system, reduce the burden on courts, and promote solutions based on dialogue and cooperation. According to the author, it is worth investing in promoting awareness and educating the public about mediation in order to increase awareness and confidence in the process. In the author's opinion, it is also crucial to involve the state and administrative bodies in promoting mediation as an alternative dispute resolution tool. The government can introduce financial incentives, such as tax exemptions or subsidies, to encourage parties to use mediation. It can also introduce legislation that recognizes agreements reached through mediation as legally binding and enforceable. Finally, it is important that mediation be conducted by qualified and experienced mediators. Those acting as mediators should have adequate communication skills, empathy, conflict resolution skills and neutrality. Regular training and certification for mediators is essential to ensure the highest possible quality of service.

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Act of July 28, 2005 on court costs in civil cases (i.e., *Journal of Laws 2022*, item 1125, as amended).

Ordinance of the Minister of Justice of June 20, 2016 on the amount of remuneration and reimbursable expenses of a mediator in civil proceedings (*Journal of Laws*, item 921).

Ordinance of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of June 2, 2017 on the amount of remuneration and reimbursable expenses of a mediator in administrative proceedings (*Journal of Laws*, item 1088).

Decree of the Council of Ministers of December 16, 2003 on the amount and detailed rules for collecting entry fees in proceedings before administrative courts (i.e., *Journal of Laws 2021*, item 535).



## **THE IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM REELS ON THE CONTENT PREFERENCES AND PURCHASING DECISIONS OF YOUNG ADULTS IN POLAND AND LITHUANIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the influence of Instagram Reels on content preferences and purchasing decisions among young adults in Poland and Lithuania. Despite similarities in platform usage, the two countries exhibit distinct patterns of engagement. Polish users are usually active on Instagram Reels, frequently liking, sharing, and searching for products featured in the content. In contrast, Lithuanian users engage less often but put their focus on product reviews and influencer-driven content. Both groups value creative and authentic content equally, although Polish users tend to enjoy entertainment-based themes, while Lithuanians prioritize content featuring products and celebrities. The study finds that Instagram Reels has a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Lithuanians are more likely to save Reels for future reference or visit brand profiles, while Polish users are directly searching for products online. Additionally, Lithuanian users demonstrate a higher consistency in content creation, with many regularly producing Reels, unlike Polish users who participate less frequently in content creation. The findings suggest that to increase engagement, brands targeting Polish consumers should focus on

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dynamic, entertaining content, while those targeting Lithuanian audiences should prioritize product-centric and influencer-led campaigns. Across both markets, authenticity and credibility remain crucial factors in capturing user attention and building brand trust. These researches offer valuable guidance for brands seeking to optimize their social media strategies in Poland and Lithuania.

**Key words:** social media, Instagram Reels, Lithuania, Poland.

## 1. Introduction

Instagram Reels, launched in 2020, has rapidly transformed the landscape of short-form video content, becoming a prominent feature of the platform's ecosystem. This feature enables users to create, share, and consume engaging videos, blending creativity, entertainment, and discoverability. Among younger demographics in Lithuania and Poland, Instagram Reels has gained considerable popularity, serving as both a medium for personal expression and a powerful tool for brand engagement. This research aims to analyze the trends, behaviors, and cultural nuances associated with Instagram Reels usage in these two countries, providing valuable insights for marketers and content creators. This study is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), which explains the motivations driving media consumption, including entertainment, information-seeking, and social interaction. Additionally, Kaplan and Haenlein (2020) emphasize the significance of social media platforms in shaping consumer behaviour, fostering community engagement, and enhancing brand loyalty. The increasing prominence of short-form video content, as high-lighted by Phua et al. (2021), underscores its role in influencing audience behaviour and driving brand awareness. These theoretical foundations provide a lens through which the impact of Instagram Reels on user engagement and cross-cultural differences may be explored.

The primary goal of this research is to investigate how young adults in Lithuania and Poland interact with Instagram Reels, with a focus on motivations, engagement patterns, and brand-related behaviours. Specific objectives include identifying the key factors that drive user engagement with Instagram Reels, exploring the role of Instagram Reels in influencing brand perceptions and purchase decisions, and comparing cultural and behavioural differences in Instagram Reels usage between Lithuanian and Polish users. Based on preliminary findings, the hypothesis suggests that Polish users exhibit higher levels of engagement with Instagram Reels compared to their Lithuanian counterparts. This variation is attributed to differences in digital adoption, cultural preferences, and content consumption habits. The purpose of this research is to provide actionable insights for brands, marketers, and content creators seeking to optimize their strategies on Instagram Reels. By understanding the cultural and behavioural dynamics of users in Lithuania and Poland, businesses can craft more

targeted and effective campaigns. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader academic discourse on digital media and cross-cultural social media usage, offering a nuanced perspective on the interplay between technology and user behaviour. As Instagram Reels continues to evolve as a dominant platform for digital engagement, this research highlights its potential as a tool for fostering meaningful connections between users and brands. By bridging the gap between user expectations and content delivery, the findings aim to empower businesses to thrive in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

## 2. Analysis of original research

The research sample consisted of 360 people, coming from Lithuania (180 people) and Poland (180 people). In terms of gender, the majority of participants were women: 226 persons (62.8% of the sample), of which 98 women were from Lithuania and 128 from Poland. Men accounted for 130 persons (36.1% of the sample), including 79 from Lithuania and 51 from Poland. Additionally, 4 people (1.1% of the sample) declared a different gender - 3 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland.

The age of respondents ranged from 19 to over 25 years. Among women, the largest age group was 21–23 years old (107 women, including 36 from Lithuania and 71 from Poland), and the smallest group was over 25 years old (16 women, including 7 from Lithuania and 9 from Poland). Men were also dominated by those aged 21–23 (62 participants, including 37 from Lithuania and 25 from Poland), while the least numerous group was men over 25 (9 participants, including 6 from Lithuania and 3 from Poland). People of a different gender were mainly participants aged 24–25 (3 people: 2 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland), and one person over 25 (from Lithuania).

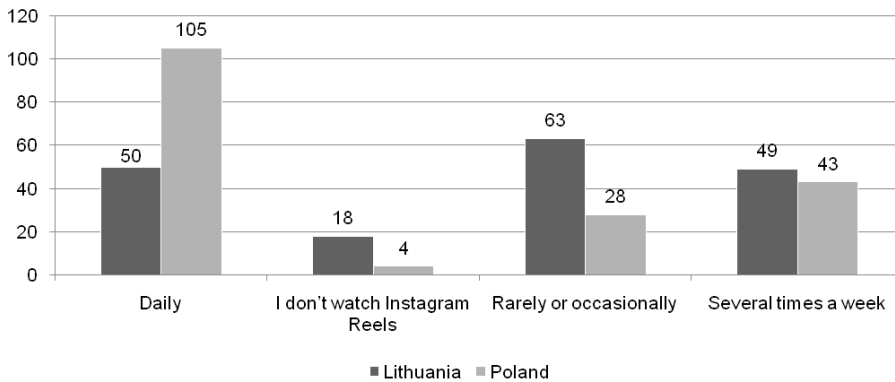
Respondents also differed in terms of educational level. Among women, the largest group were third-year university students (69 people, including 23 from Lithuania and 46 from Poland), and the smallest group were students at master's/postgraduate level (10 people, 5 from each country). Among men, third-year students were the most numerous (42 persons, including 25 from Lithuania and 17 from Poland) and the least numerous were students at master's/postgraduate level (4 persons, including 3 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland). Those declaring a different gender were mainly fourth-year students (2 persons: 1 from Lithuania and 1 from Poland).

The survey was conducted remotely using a Google Form, which allowed to effectively reach a wide range of respondents from Lithuania and Poland. The data collection process started in November 2024 and ended in December 2024. The chosen research method ensured the anonymity of the participants and enabled the collection of responses at a convenient time for the participants, which increases the reliability and representativeness of the results.

The results of the research provide valuable information that can be useful for brands and marketers looking to optimise their activities on Instagram. The results show differences in the preferences of Polish and Lithuanian users, as well as their different way of using Reels. The study can form the basis for further analysis to better understand how social media content influences the behaviour of young adults in both countries.

## 2.1. Frequency of use and involvement

Usage frequency and user engagement are two important indicators of the popularity of social media platforms. Instagram, as one of the most frequently used applications, is characterized by its wide reach, easy accessibility, and usability, which makes it an important communication tool in the social space (Chobot, 2019). This section focuses on the analysis of the frequency of viewing Instagram Reels to better understand how intensively users engage with this content format. The research results provide valuable information on users' habits in the context of everyday use of the platform.

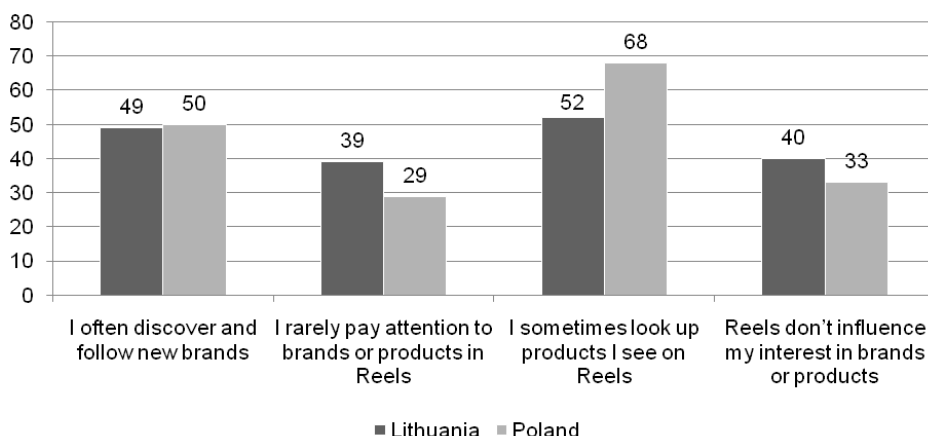


**Figure 1.** How often do you watch Instagram Reels?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The graph shows the frequency of viewing Instagram Reels in two countries - Lithuania (darker bars) and Poland (lighter bars). When analysing the similarities and differences between Lithuania and Poland, it can be seen that in both countries a small percentage of people do not use the Instagram Reels feature (18 in Lithuania and 4 in Poland). Also, the number of people viewing Reels several times a week is similar (49 in Lithuania and 43 in Poland). The biggest differences concern daily use – in Poland as many as 105 people watch Reels daily, while in Lithuania it is only 50. Lithuanians, on the other hand, are much more likely to use this feature rarely or occasionally (63 people), which contrasts with the result in Poland (28 people).

In summary, Poles are more involved in using Instagram Reels on a daily basis, which may reflect a greater interest in the feature or a higher level of engagement with social media. Lithuanians, on the other hand, are more likely to treat Reels as an occasional source of entertainment, indicating differences in digital habits between the two countries.



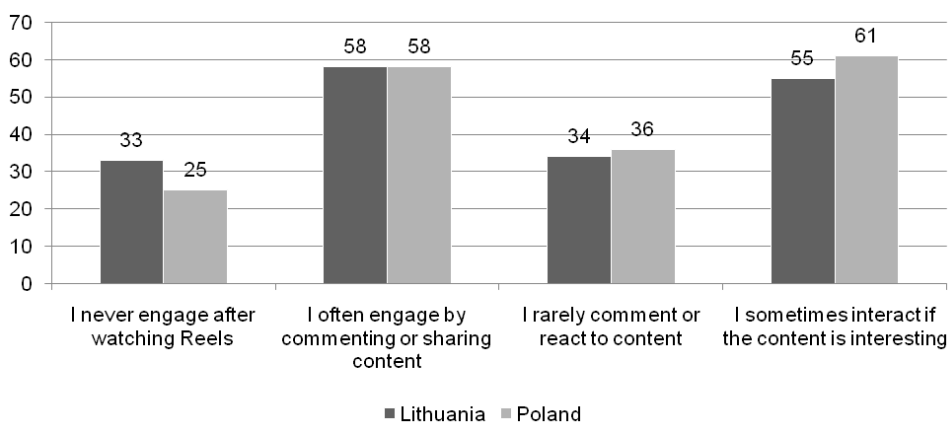
**Figure 2.** How do Instagram Reels influence your engagement with brands or products?  
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The graph illustrates the impact of Instagram Reels on user engagement with brands or products in two countries - Lithuania and Poland. Analysis of the results shows both similarities and differences in user behaviour from these countries. In Lithuania, 49 people declare that they often discover and follow new brands thanks to Instagram Reels, a result similar to Poland, where 50 people indicated so. In Lithuania, on the other hand, 39 people admit that they rarely pay attention to brands or products on Reels, while in Poland this answer was selected by 29 people, indicating a greater interest in products among Polish users.

One of the more prominent categories is the search for products seen on Instagram Reels. In Poland, as many as 68 people admit that they sometimes search for information about products they have seen on Reels, which is the highest result in this group. By comparison, in Lithuania, 52 people chose such a response, indicating less engagement in this aspect. Regarding the lack of impact of Reels on interest in brands, 40 people in Lithuania said that this feature does not affect their interest in brands or products, while in Poland this opinion was expressed by 33 people.

In summary, in both countries Instagram Reels helps users discover new brands, which shows a similar level of interest in the feature. However, Poles are much more likely to use Reels as a source of inspiration to find products, while Lithuanians are more reserved in this regard. The results suggest that Instagram

Reels plays a more important role in building user engagement in Poland than in Lithuania, which may be due to cultural differences or the level of social media use in both countries.



**Figure 3.** How encouraged do you feel to interact (e.g., comment, like, share) after watching Instagram Reels?

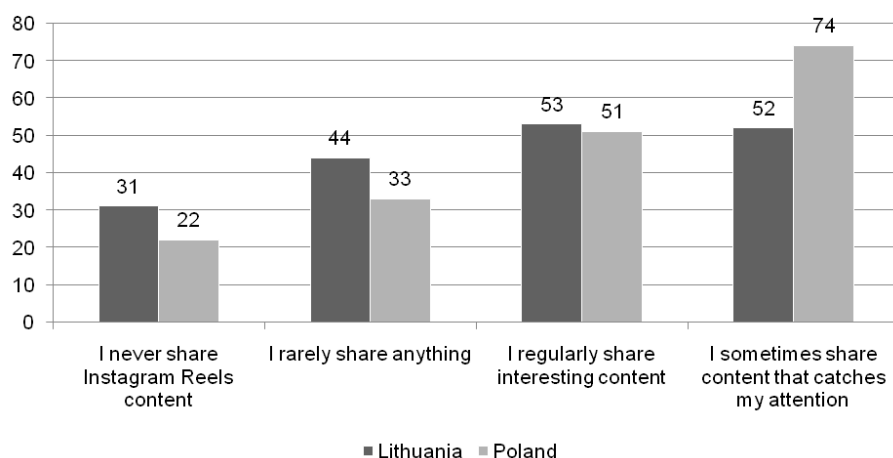
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The graph shows the extent to which Lithuanian and Polish users engage in interaction after viewing Instagram Reels, such as by commenting, liking or sharing content. In Lithuania, 33 people declare that they never engage after viewing Reels, while in Poland, such a response was selected by 25 people, indicating greater reticence on the part of Lithuanians. The most popular category in both countries is 'I often engage by commenting or sharing content', with 58 people in both Lithuania and Poland selecting this answer each, showing a similar attitude to this form of interaction.

As for those who rarely comment or respond to content, in Lithuania this answer was selected by 34 people, while in Poland the number was 36, indicating a very similar level of engagement in this category. On the other hand, for those who sometimes interact if the content is interesting, Poles are more active – 61 people in Poland compared to 55 people in Lithuania. This suggests that Poles are more likely to respond to attractive content, while Lithuanians are slightly more reserved.

In summary, both user groups show similar patterns in commenting on and sharing content, but differ when it comes to not reacting or responding to interesting content. Poles seem to be more engaged on the Instagram platform, especially when the content is attractive to them, while Lithuanians are more passive in their activity.





**Figure 4.** How often do you share Instagram Reels content with your friends or on social media?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The next graph shows how often Lithuanian and Polish users share content from Instagram Reels with friends or on social media. Among Lithuanians, 31 people declare that they never share content from Instagram Reels, compared to 22 people in Poland, suggesting that Poles are more likely to share material. Rare sharing was declared by 44 people from Lithuania and 33 people from Poland, which also indicates that Poles are more active in this aspect.

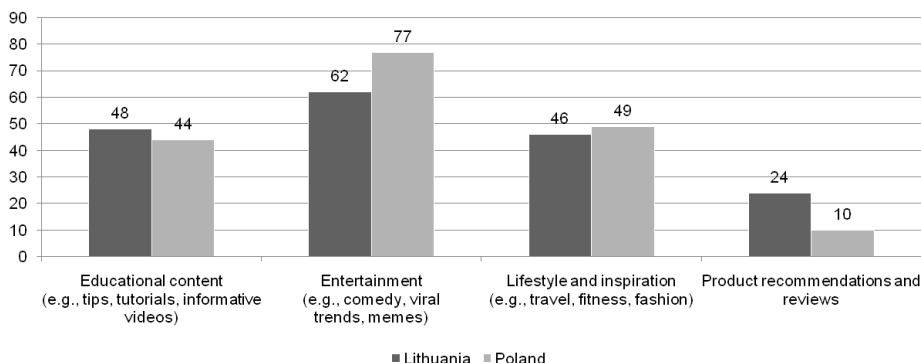
Regular sharing of interesting content is equally popular in both countries - this answer was selected by 53 people from Lithuania and 51 people from Poland, which indicates similar habits of users in this category. On the other hand, the biggest difference can be seen in the case of people who occasionally share content that catches their attention. In Poland, such an answer was indicated by 74 people, while in Lithuania the number was 52, which shows a much higher propensity of Poles to spontaneously share interesting material.

In summary, Poles are generally more active in sharing content from Instagram Reels, especially in situations where the content seems interesting. Lithuanians, on the other hand, are more likely to report a lack of engagement in sharing content. Nonetheless, in terms of regularly sharing interesting material, the differences between the two countries are minimal, suggesting some similarities in the habits of social media users.

## 2.2. Content preferences and their impact on purchasing decisions

Content preferences are key to the impact of social media on consumer decisions. Instagram Reels, as a dynamic and engaging form of communication, are playing an increasingly important role in shaping users' purchasing choices.

This section examines three key aspects related to the reception and impact of this content format. Respondents were asked about their favourite types of Instagram Reels content, their assessment of its impact on purchasing decisions, and the features that distinguish this format from others. The results will allow us to understand how Instagram Reels fit into consumer habits and brands' marketing strategies.



**Figure 5.** What type of content do you enjoy most on Instagram Reels?

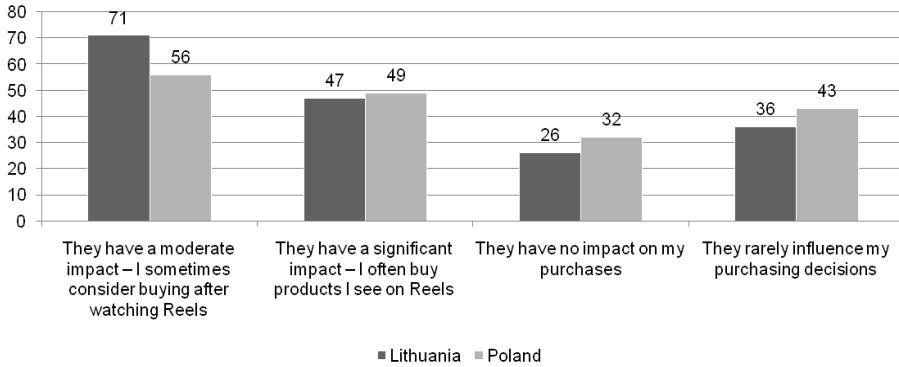
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The fifth chart shows the preferences of Lithuanian and Polish users for the type of content on Instagram Reels that they enjoy the most. In the category of educational content, such as tips, tutorials or informational videos, similar results were achieved by Lithuanians (48 people) and Poles (44 people), indicating a similar interest in this type of material in both countries.

When it comes to entertainment, including comedy, memes or viral trends, Poles show much more interest - as many as 77 people from Poland compared to 62 people from Lithuania chose this category. Entertainment seems to be definitely more popular among Polish users.

In the category of lifestyle and inspiration, such as travel, fitness or fashion, the results are similar – 46 Lithuanians and 49 Poles prefer this type of content, indicating little difference between the countries. The biggest difference can be seen in the case of product recommendations and reviews. In this category, 24 people from Lithuania declared that they like this type of content, while only 10 people in Poland chose it, suggesting that Lithuanians are more likely to look for such content on Instagram Reels.

In summary, the biggest differences between Lithuania and Poland are in entertainment content, which is more popular in Poland, and content related to product reviews, which Lithuanians prefer. In other categories, such as educational and inspirational content, users from both countries show similar interest.



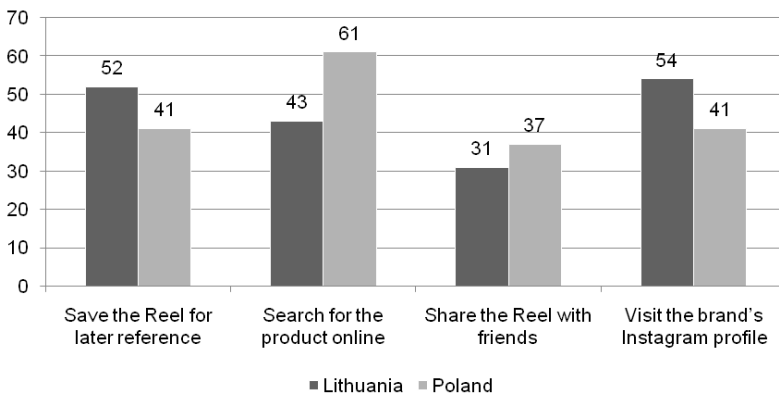
**Figure 6.** To what extent do Instagram Reels influence your purchasing decisions?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The sixth chart compares the reactions of Lithuanian and Polish young adults after viewing a product on Instagram Reels. The most common reaction, “moderate impact,” was chosen by 71 Lithuanians and 56 Poles, showing a higher tendency among Lithuanians to consider purchases.

For “significant impact,” results were similar, with 47 Lithuanians and 49 Poles indicating frequent purchases influenced by Reels.

In contrast, 26 Lithuanians and 32 Poles reported no impact on their buying decisions, while 36 Lithuanians and 43 Poles said Reels rarely influence their purchases.



**Figure 7.** What is the most common reaction from young adults after viewing a product in an Instagram Reel?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

In summary, the chart reveals that Lithuanians are slightly more inclined to consider purchases based on Instagram Reels, with higher numbers in the

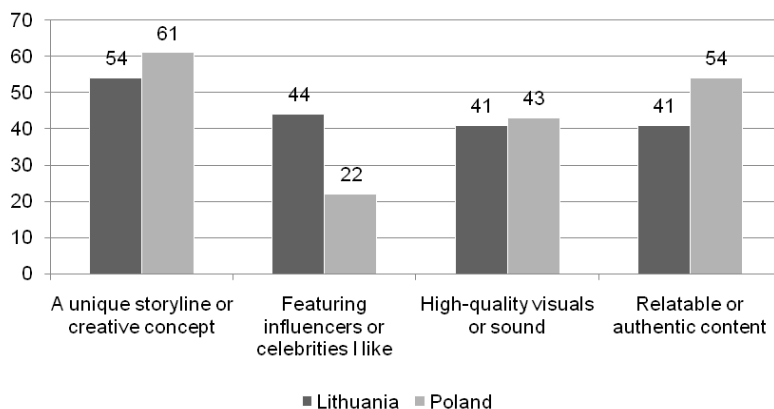
moderate impact category. On the other hand, Poles show a slightly higher tendency to report no or minimal impact on their purchasing decisions. Overall, the data highlights varying degrees of influence that Instagram Reels have on young adults in both countries, with differences in preferences and purchasing behavior.

The graph shows the most common reactions of young adults from Lithuania and Poland after seeing a product on Instagram Reels. For Lithuanians, the most popular reaction is to save Reels for later – 52 people chose this response, compared to 41 people in Poland.

Poles are more likely than Lithuanians to search for products online after seeing them in Reels – 61 people from Poland declare this action, compared to 43 people from Lithuania. When it comes to sharing Reels with friends, Poles also lead the way, although the difference is not large – 37 people in Poland share content with friends, compared to 31 people in Lithuania.

Visiting a brand's profile on Instagram is a more popular response among Lithuanians, with 54 people indicating this response, compared to 41 people in Poland.

In summary, Poles are more likely to engage in searching for products online and sharing content with friends, while Lithuanians are more likely to save Reels for later and visit brand profiles on Instagram. Both groups show various approaches to responding to product content, which may be due to different consumption habits and preferences.



**Figure 8.** What makes an Instagram Reel stand out to you?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The chart shows the factors that make Instagram Reel stand out in the eyes of Lithuanian and Polish users. For Lithuanians, a unique scenario or creative idea is most important – 54 people indicated this factor, compared to 61 in Poland, making it the most popular in this group as well.

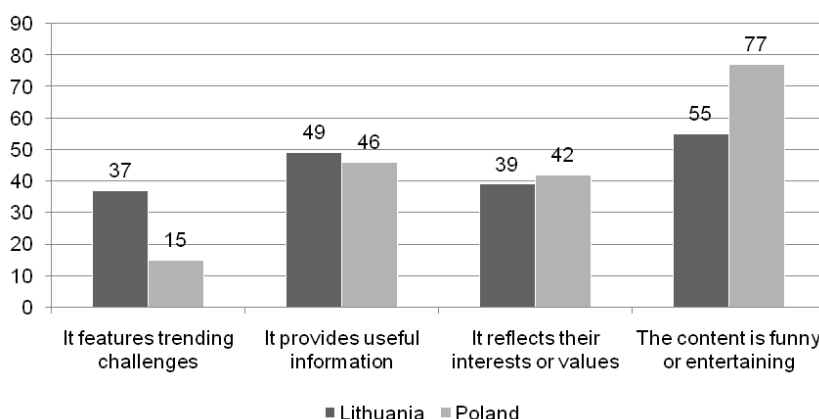
The presence of influencers or celebrities that users like is more important for Lithuanians – 44 people indicated this answer, compared to only 22 people from Poland, showing a clear difference in preference between the two countries.

Reel visual or audio quality plays a similar role in both countries – in both Lithuania and Poland, this answer was selected by 41 and 43 people respectively. Content that is relatable or authentic is equally important to both groups – 54 people in Lithuania and 41 people in Poland consider it important.

In summary, Poles value creative ideas more, while Lithuanians show more interest in content featuring influencers or celebrities. Both countries place a high value on visual quality and authenticity, indicating universal values in the reception of content on Instagram.

### 2.3. Motivations for sharing and authenticity

The motivations for sharing content on social media, especially on platforms such as Instagram, are extremely complex and diverse. Users are often driven by the need to belong, the desire to be accepted, and the desire to express themselves in an authentic way. Contemporary social media provide a space where individuals can not only present their lives, but also build and maintain social relationships. Authenticity plays a key role in this process, as it influences how users are perceived by their communities. As Filipek (2023) notes, sharing on social media combines the individual dimension with broader cultural and social contexts, making it an important element of contemporary communication practices. Analyzing questions about young adults' motivations for sharing content and their approach to authenticity will allow us to better understand what values and needs drive their actions on Instagram.



**Figure 9.** What motivates young adults to share Instagram Reels with their network?

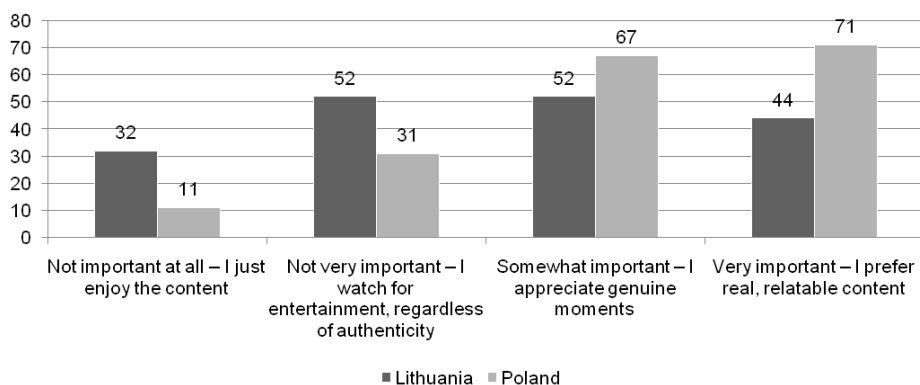
*Source: Own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The ninth graph illustrates the factors motivating young adults from Lithuania and Poland to share Instagram Reels on their social networks. Among Lithuanians, 37 people indicated that they share Reels if they contain popular challenges, while in Poland only 15 people selected this option, showing less interest in this type of content in Poland.

Content providing useful information is important to 49 people from Lithuania and 46 people from Poland, making it one of the more popular motivations in both countries. Reels reflecting users' interests or values received almost comparable support in both countries – indicated by 39 people from Lithuania and 42 from Poland.

The biggest differences can be seen for fun or entertainment content, which is the main motivation for 77 people from Poland, while it was indicated by 55 people in Lithuania. This factor is by far the most important for both groups, although it is clearly more popular in Poland.

In summary, while both Lithuanians and Poles value useful and entertaining content, Poles clearly prefer humorous content, while Lithuanians are more likely to respond to challenges and practical information.



**Figure 10.** How important is authenticity in Instagram Reels to you?

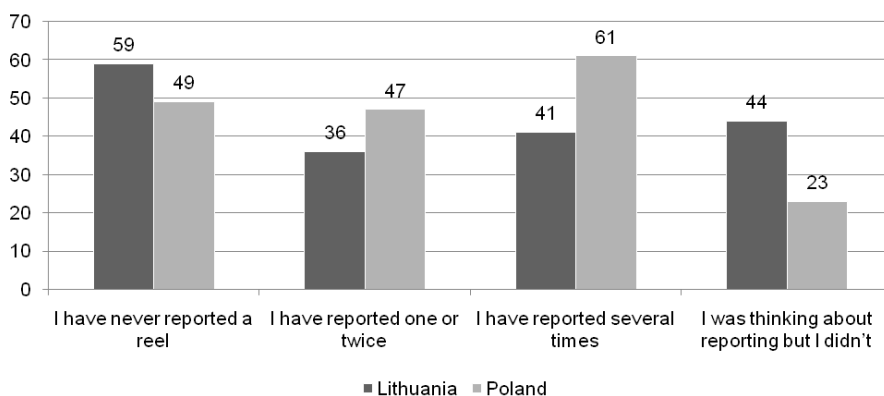
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data on the importance of authenticity of content on Instagram Reels shows the different attitudes of Lithuanians and Poles. 32 people from Lithuania and 11 people from Poland said that authenticity does not matter - all that matters to them is the enjoyment of the content. In contrast, 52 people from Lithuania and 31 people from Poland said that authenticity is not particularly important to them, as they watch Reels mainly for entertainment.

However, the largest number of users from both countries believe that authenticity is moderately important, with 52 people from Lithuania and 67 people

from Poland appreciating content that depicts real moments. In contrast, authenticity is of particular importance to 44 people from Lithuania and 71 people from Poland, who prefer real and relatable content.

The results indicate that Poles attach more importance to the authenticity of content than Lithuanians, who are more divided in their preferences. For Poles, real and relatable content is key, while Lithuanians are more likely to treat authenticity as a secondary element, focusing more on entertainment.



**Figure 11.** Have you ever reported Instagram Reels?

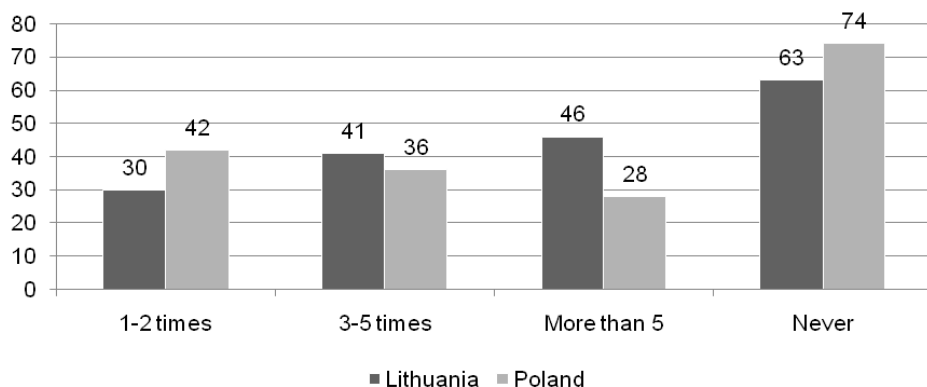
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data on reporting content on Instagram Reels highlights interesting behavioral differences between users in Lithuania and Poland, as reflected in the numerical responses. A notable proportion of users from both countries have never reported a video, with 59 people in Lithuania and 49 in Poland falling into this category. However, when it comes to occasional reporting, 36 Lithuanians and 47 Poles admitted to reporting content once or twice, suggesting that Polish users are slightly more inclined to act in such cases.

The contrast becomes more pronounced with users who report content more frequently. Here, 41 Lithuanians compared to 61 Poles indicated they had reported several times, showing that Poles are significantly more proactive in addressing content they find problematic. Conversely, hesitation to report was more common among Lithuanian users, with 44 Lithuanians saying they thought about reporting but didn't, compared to just 23 Poles who expressed similar hesitation.

In conclusion, the data reflects a clear pattern where Polish users are more active and decisive in reporting content on Instagram Reels, while Lithuanian users show greater hesitation and are less likely to engage in regular reporting. These trends suggest distinct regional attitudes toward content moderation and

highlight opportunities for platforms to tailor their user education and engagement strategies accordingly.



**Figure 12.** Have you every created Instagram Reels?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data on the creation of Instagram Reels shows some interesting differences between Lithuanian and Polish users. Firstly, there is noticeably more activity among Lithuanians in creating Reels on a regular basis. 46 people from Lithuania created more than 5 Reels, compared to only 28 people from Poland. This suggests that Lithuanians are more engaged in creating content on this platform, which may be due to greater creativity, a need to share their lives, or better familiarity with Reels' features.

In contrast, among Poles, a higher proportion of users have never tried to create Reels – 74 people compared to 63 in Lithuania. This may indicate that the format is less popular in Poland, that users are less confident in creating such content, or that there are cultural differences in the approach to social media.

An interesting phenomenon is the similar result in the '3–5 times' category, where the difference between Lithuania (41 people) and Poland (36 people) is small. This means that the moderation of Reels creation activity is quite similar in both countries.

Finally, the group of people who have created Reels only 1–2 times also differs – in Poland it is 42 people, while in Lithuania it is 30 people. This may suggest that Poles experiment with the format more often, but do not develop this activity on a wider scale.

In summary, Lithuanians appear to be more regular users of the Reels feature, while Poles are more likely to be among the group that has never developed it or has only experimented with the format. These differences may be due to technological factors, demographics or cultural preferences.



### 3. Conclusions

Instagram Reels has a significant impact on young adults in Poland and Lithuania, although their usage habits differ. Polish users are very active, often liking, sharing, and searching for products discovered on Reels. Lithuanian users, on the other hand, engage less often but show a greater interest in product reviews and influencer-inspired content. While both groups value creative and authentic content, Poles tend to gravitate towards entertainment-themed content, while Lithuanians prioritize content featuring products and celebrities. The impact of Reels on purchasing decisions is moderate in both countries. Lithuanians often save Reels for later or visit brand profiles, while Poles are more proactive in searching for products online. Furthermore, Lithuanians are more consistent content creators on the platform, with many of them regularly creating Reels compared to Polish users who have less experience creating this type of content.

To increase engagement, brands targeting Polish audiences should prioritize entertaining and visually dynamic content, while campaigns in Lithuania should focus on product-centric and influencer-led strategies. In both markets, authenticity and credibility remain key factors in capturing user attention and building trust.

### Acknowledgement

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## **EXPLORING AI AWARENESS AND ITS ROLE IN INTERNET MARKETING AMONG STUDENTS IN LITHUANIA AND POLAND**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the awareness and role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in internet marketing among students in Lithuania and Poland. AI has revolutionized digital marketing by enabling personalized content, enhancing user experiences, and optimizing marketing strategies through machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics. The research involved a sample of 400 students, equally divided between Lithuania and Poland, with varied demographics in terms of gender, age, and educational level. The survey, conducted remotely via Google Forms, revealed that while there is a foundational awareness of AI's application in marketing, significant differences exist in the levels of understanding and engagement between the two countries. The findings indicate that AI-driven personalization is recognized but also raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding data privacy and security. Despite these concerns, there is a general acceptance of AI's potential to enhance marketing effectiveness. The study underscores the need for businesses to educate consumers about AI functionalities and adopt transparent data practices to build trust. Future research should expand the sample size and include diverse demographics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of AI's impact on

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digital marketing. This research contributes valuable insights into the dual role of AI in personalizing content and addressing privacy concerns, offering actionable recommendations for leveraging AI in ethical and effective ways.

**Key words:** AI, marketing, online, Lithuania, Poland.

## **1. International food and energy market**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a cornerstone in the evolution of digital marketing, offering unparalleled opportunities to personalize content, enhance user experiences, and optimize marketing strategies. By utilizing machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics, AI has enabled marketers to transition from traditional methods to data-driven approaches. According to Babatunde et al. (2024), AI-driven personalization has redefined consumer engagement, tailoring content to individual preferences and improving the overall effectiveness of marketing campaigns. These advancements reflect a fundamental shift in how businesses connect with their audiences in a digital-first world.

Alqurashi et al. (2023) delve into the broader implications of AI in personalized marketing, highlighting its ability to analyze vast datasets and deliver customized messaging. They argue that such strategies significantly enhance consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty, creating a competitive edge in crowded markets. Choi and Lee (2024) add to this narrative by showcasing the potential of AI in profiling consumer behavior, predicting purchasing trends, and optimizing marketing efforts to align with user preferences. Similarly, Ridha (2024) emphasizes the importance of balancing innovation with ethical considerations in AI-driven marketing. While AI can optimize personalization, it also necessitates robust frameworks for data protection and transparency, addressing growing concerns around privacy violations.

Despite its benefits, the integration of AI into marketing strategies is not without ethical challenges. Babatunde et al. (2024) emphasize that as AI systems rely heavily on consumer data, concerns about data privacy and ethical use have risen. Similarly, Alqurashi et al. (2023) discuss the growing need for transparency in how data is collected and processed, particularly as users become increasingly aware of potential breaches of trust. Balancing the advantages of AI-driven personalization with the ethical implications of its use remains a critical challenge for businesses and policymakers alike.

This study aims to explore the dual role of AI in digital marketing, focusing on its ability to personalize content while addressing the privacy concerns it raises. By examining these dynamics, the research seeks to provide actionable insights that enable businesses to leverage AI effectively while fostering ethical practices and maintaining consumer trust.

## 2. Analysis of original research

The research sample consisted of 400 people, with equal proportions coming from Lithuania (200 people) and Poland (200 people). In terms of gender, the proportion of participants varied: 183 people were female (45.75%), 214 were male (53.5%) and 3 people declared another gender (0.75%). Participants from Lithuania included 83 women, 115 men and 2 people with a different gender, while those from Poland included respectively: 100 women, 99 men and 1 person of a different gender.

The age of the respondents ranged from 19 to over 25 years, with the largest group being participants aged 20 years – 82 participants from Lithuania (41% of the sample in Lithuania) and 61 participants from Poland (30.5% of the sample in Poland). The least numerous group was people aged 24 and over 25 in Lithuania with only 4 and 7 people respectively, and 5 and 7 in Poland.

Participants also differed in terms of educational level. In both Lithuania and Poland, the largest group were second year university students: 93 people in Lithuania (38 women and 54 men and 1 other) and 67 people in Poland (31 women and 36 men). The smallest group in Poland were participants at master's or postgraduate level (3 women and 1 man), while in Lithuania 1 woman and 1 man at master's/postgraduate level but also in their 5th year of study.

The survey was conducted remotely using a Google form, which allowed for efficient outreach to a wide range of respondents from Lithuania and Poland. The data collection process started in November 2024 and ended in December 2024. The chosen research method ensured the anonymity of the participants and allowed responses to be collected at their convenience, increasing the reliability and representativeness of the results.

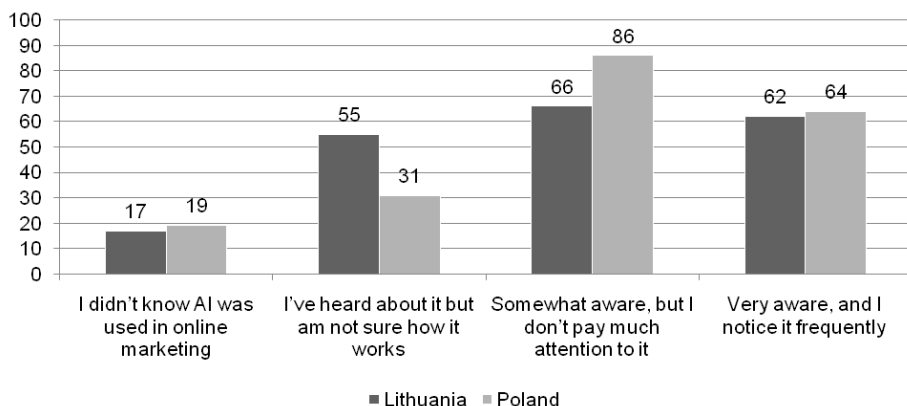
This study represents an important step in analysing perceptions of the usability of artificial intelligence. Due to the limited sample size and its focus on two countries, these results can be considered as a basis for further research, which could include a broader spectrum of respondents from different countries or age groups.

It is worth noting that the results of the survey not only highlight current trends in the use of AI, but also provide valuable insights into potential directions for the technology. A particularly interesting thread that may be developed in future analyses is the difference in perceptions of AI between countries, which may be due to cultural, economic or educational backgrounds.

All in all, the study provides a solid foundation for further deliberation and exploration of the impact of AI on various aspects of life. Its continuation could contribute to a deeper understanding of the technological transformation of societies and identify areas where AI could play a key role in the future.

## 2.1. Awareness and knowledge of AI in marketing

Awareness and knowledge of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in online marketing play a key role in shaping consumer opinions on personalized advertising and recommendations. AI technologies are increasingly used to analyse data and adapt content to individual user preferences, which can affect their purchasing decisions (Jarek, Mazurek, 2019). At the same time, the different levels of consumer awareness of such practices raise questions about their acceptance and perceived benefits and risks. This subsection will analyse respondents' answers regarding awareness of AI applications in marketing and opinions on personalized advertising content, which will allow for a better understanding of consumers' approach to this issue.



**Figure 1.** How aware are you that AI is used in internet marketing to personalize ads and recommendations you see online?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The analysis of awareness regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in internet marketing among respondents from Poland and Lithuania reveals varying levels of understanding and engagement. The survey results indicate that a small percentage of individuals in both countries are completely unaware of AI's role in online marketing, with 17 respondents from Lithuania and 19 from Poland indicating that they did not know AI was utilized for this purpose, resulting in a total of 36 respondents.

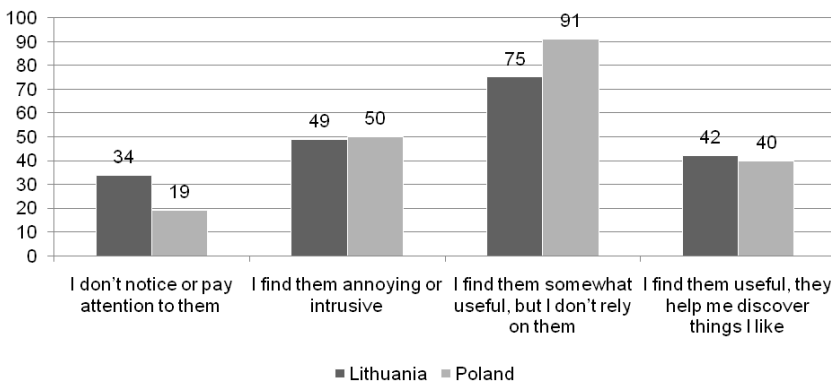
A more significant group expressed limited understanding, with 55 Lithuanians and 31 Poles stating that they had heard about AI but were unsure how it works. This suggests that while there is some awareness, particularly among Lithuanians, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the functionalities and implications of AI in marketing.

The survey further categorized responses into those who are somewhat aware but do not pay much attention to AI's application. Here, 66 respondents from

Lithuania and 86 from Poland identified with this statement, indicating that while they recognize the presence of AI in their online experiences, they do not actively engage with or consider its impact. This category represents a substantial portion of the surveyed population, particularly in Poland.

In contrast, the responses also highlighted a notable segment of individuals who are very aware of AI's role in marketing. Both countries reported similar figures in this category, with 62 Lithuanians and 64 Poles stating that they frequently notice AI's influence on their online interactions. This parity suggests a growing consciousness about the implications of AI-driven personalization among consumers in both nations.

Overall, the findings illustrate a foundational awareness of AI's application in internet marketing among Poles and Lithuanians, coupled with significant differences in their levels of understanding and engagement. The data indicates that while there is recognition of AI's presence, particularly among Polish respondents who tend to be somewhat aware yet indifferent, there is also an opportunity for marketers to enhance consumer education about AI functionalities. This could foster greater engagement and trust in personalized marketing strategies, aligning with broader trends in consumer expectations for tailored online experiences driven by technological advancements.



**Figure 2.** How do you feel about AI-based personalized ads and recommendations on social media or websites?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The analysis of attitudes toward AI-based personalized ads and recommendations on social media and websites among respondents from Lithuania and Poland reveals a spectrum of perceptions, ranging from indifference to appreciation. The survey results indicate that a notable portion of individuals, specifically 34 respondents from Lithuania and 19 from Poland, reported that they do not notice or pay attention to personalized ads, leading to a total of

53 respondents in this category. This suggests a degree of disengagement with AI-driven content among some users.

In contrast, a significant number of respondents expressed negative sentiments regarding personalized ads. Specifically, 49 Lithuanians and 50 Poles indicated that they find these advertisements annoying or intrusive, culminating in a total of 99 respondents. This response highlights a critical perspective on the perceived intrusiveness of AI personalization, suggesting that while users are aware of these ads, they may not appreciate their presence.

The survey also captured responses from those who view personalized ads as somewhat useful but do not rely on them. In this category, 75 respondents from Lithuania and 91 from Poland identified with this sentiment, resulting in a total of 166 respondents. This indicates that while many individuals recognize some utility in personalized recommendations, they maintain a level of skepticism or caution regarding their overall reliability.

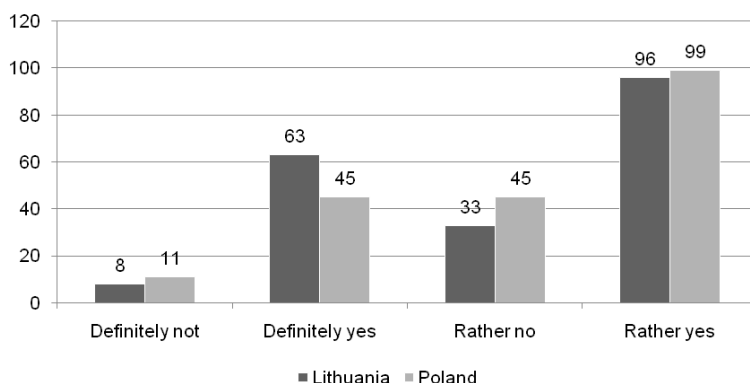
Finally, the survey included those who find personalized ads useful and believe they help them discover things they like. Here, the responses were relatively balanced, with 42 Lithuanians and 40 Poles expressing positive sentiments about the utility of these ads, leading to a total of 82 respondents. This suggests that there is a segment of the population that appreciates the role of AI in enhancing their online experiences by facilitating relevant discoveries.

Overall, the findings illustrate a complex landscape of attitudes toward AI-based personalized advertising among Poles and Lithuanians. While there is a segment of users who are indifferent or critical of these ads, there is also recognition of their potential usefulness. The data indicates an opportunity for marketers to address concerns about intrusiveness while emphasizing the benefits of AI-driven personalization. By doing so, they may enhance user engagement and satisfaction with personalized content on social media and websites.

## **2.2. Perceptions of AI and personalisation**

The perception of artificial intelligence (AI) and its role in personalizing marketing content raises numerous discussions and emotions among consumers. AI is increasingly replacing human creativity, which leads to the question of whether content created by machines can match the quality of human works. At the same time, this technology is changing the prospects for the future of advertising, where automation may become the norm (Taddeo, Floridi, 2018). The survey included respondents' answers regarding their opinions on the quality of content created by AI and their predictions for the future of advertising based on AI. The results will allow for a better understanding of how consumers perceive the impact of AI on the advertising industry and its potential in creating marketing content.



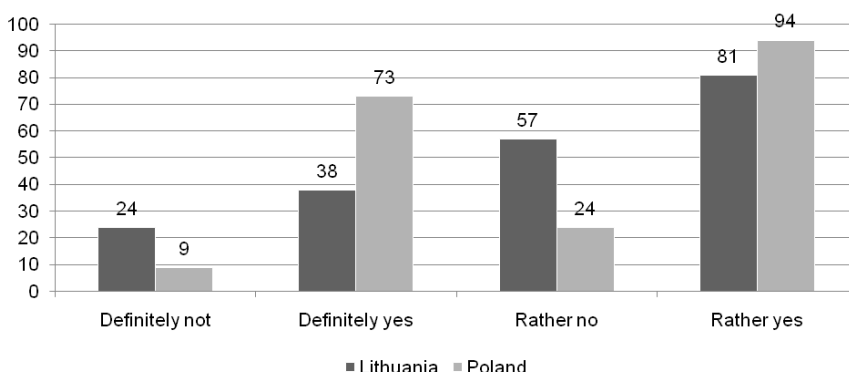


**Figure 3.** Do you think that content created by AI is usually worse than that created by humans?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The above chart shows responses to the question: "Do you think AI-generated content is generally worse than human-created content?"

Comparing both countries, it is evident that in both Lithuania and Poland, the majority of respondents believe that AI-generated content is worse than human-created content. However, in Poland, more people strongly agree with this statement (99 people) compared to Lithuania (63 people). On the other hand, in Lithuania, a larger number of respondents somewhat agree with this statement (96 people) than in Poland (45 people). Both countries have a similar number of respondents who disagree with this statement, although in Poland, there are slightly more people who strongly disagree (11 people) compared to Lithuania (8 people).

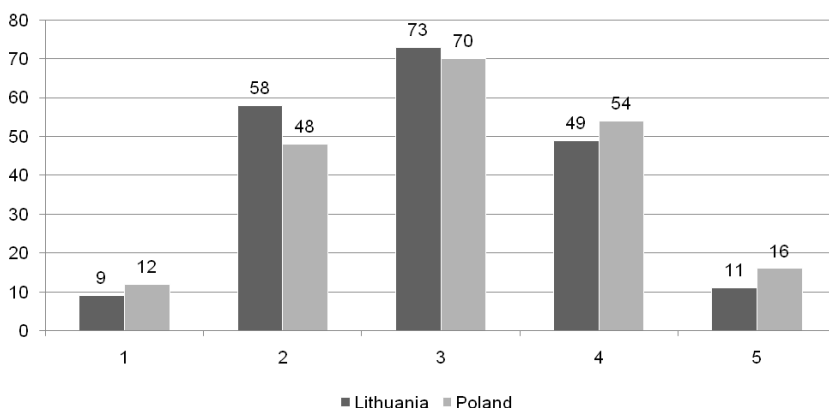


**Figure 4.** Do you think that in the future most advertising content will be created by AI?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The above chart shows responses to the question: "Do you think that in the future, most advertising content will be created by AI?"

Comparing both countries, it is evident that in both Lithuania and Poland, the majority of respondents believe that in the future, most advertising content will be created by AI. In Poland, a larger number of respondents somewhat agree with this statement (94 people) compared to Lithuania (81 people). On the other hand, in Lithuania, a larger number of respondents somewhat disagree with this statement (57 people) than in Poland (24 people). In Poland, more people strongly agree with this statement (73 people) compared to Lithuania (38 people). Both countries have a relatively small number of respondents who strongly disagree with this statement, although there are more in Lithuania (24 people) than in Poland (9 people).



**Figure 5.** On a scale of 1 to 5, how much do you think AI enhances the creativity of online marketing campaigns?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

Data provides respondents answers rating the extent to which they believe AI contributes to creative efforts in marketing campaigns on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "Not at All", 2 meaning "A little", 3 meaning "Moderately", 4 meaning "Significantly" and 5 meaning "Extremely."

In Lithuania, most participants (73) viewed AI's impact as moderate, indicating it contributes to creativity but not in a transformative way. A group of 49 respondents recognized a more significant impact, while only a few (11) considered it highly influential. A portion of respondents (9) were skeptical, rating AI's creative influence as minimal or nonexistent.

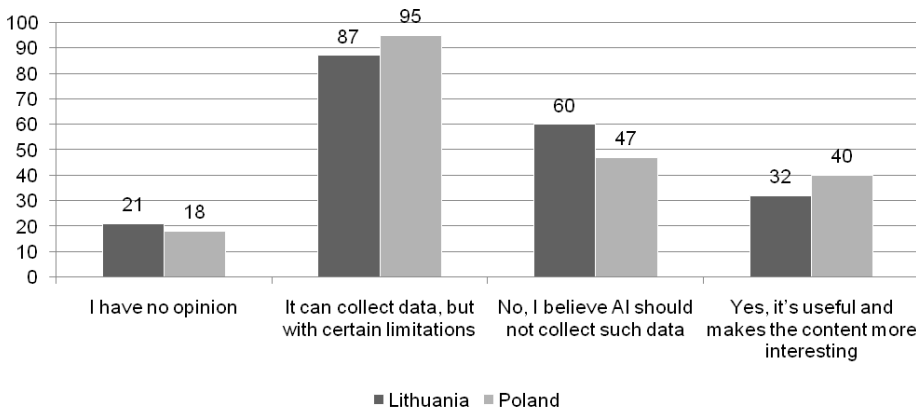
In Poland, a similar trend emerged, with most respondents (70) seeing AI's role as moderate. However, a larger group of 54 acknowledged a more substantial impact, and a few (16) believed it played a significant role in enhancing creativity.

Skepticism was also present, with 12 people considering AI's impact limited or nonexistent.

When comparing the two countries, both show a generally moderate perception of AI's creative influence, with some recognizing its potential but not viewing it as revolutionary. Both nations display similar levels of skepticism regarding AI's effectiveness in marketing creativity.

### 2.3. Concerns about AI

The use of AI in online marketing raises numerous controversies and concerns, which concern both ethical and practical aspects. Key consumer concerns focus on issues related to privacy, data security, and the potential undue influence of AI on their daily lives. Collecting data on user interests and activities for the purpose of personalizing ads raises concerns about privacy violations, while also raising questions about the limits of acceptable technological interference in individual lives. In this context, it becomes important to understand what specific concerns are present in the minds of consumers and how they can be minimized in order to build trust in AI-based solutions in marketing.



**Figure 6.** Do you think that AI in marketing should collect data about your interests and online activities to better tailor advertising content?

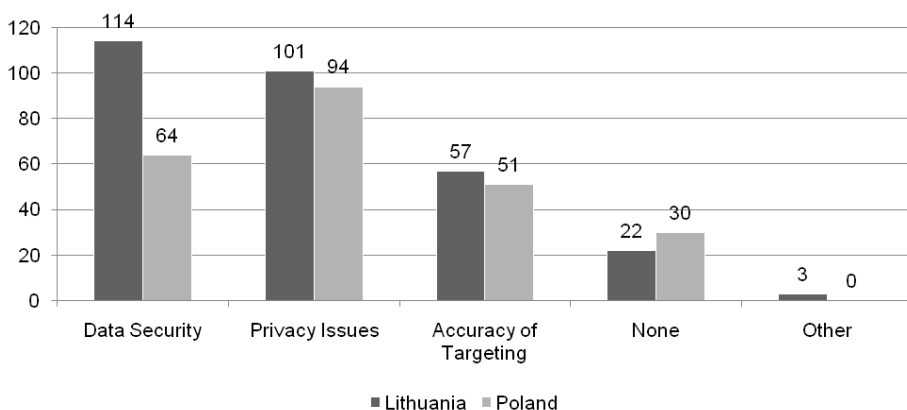
*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data pertains to responses to the question, "Do you think that AI in marketing should collect data about your interests and online activities to better tailor advertising content?" The responses are categorized into four options: "I have no opinion," "It can collect data, but with certain limitations," "No, I believe AI should not collect such data," and "Yes, it's useful and makes the content more interesting."

In Lithuania, the largest group, consisting of 87 respondents, believes that AI can collect data but with certain limitations. However, 60 respondents are against AI collecting data, which highlights notable skepticism. Additionally, 32 respondents feel that such data collection is useful and improves content, while 21 respondents do not have an opinion on the matter.

In Poland, a majority of 95 respondents also agree that AI can collect data but only with certain limitations. A smaller group of 47 respondents opposes data collection by AI, which is less than the corresponding group in Lithuania. Furthermore, 40 respondents in Poland find data collection useful, which is a higher number than in Lithuania. Only 18 respondents expressed no opinion on this topic.

Both countries show a majority supporting AI data collection with certain limitations, with 87 respondents in Lithuania and 95 in Poland. However, opposition to data collection is more prevalent in Lithuania, where 60 respondents expressed this view compared to 47 in Poland. On the other hand, Poland has a slightly higher number of respondents (40) who view data collection as useful compared to Lithuania (32). Overall, the trend indicates that while most respondents in both countries accept limited AI data collection, Lithuanians exhibit greater skepticism toward the practice.



**Figure 7.** What concerns, if any, do you have about the use of AI in internet marketing? (Select all that apply)

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The following data examines respondents concerns regarding the use of AI in internet marketing, focusing on privacy issues, data security, and targeting accuracy.

In Lithuania, privacy issues were the most prominent concern, with a significant portion of 94 respondents highlighting this as a major issue. Data security

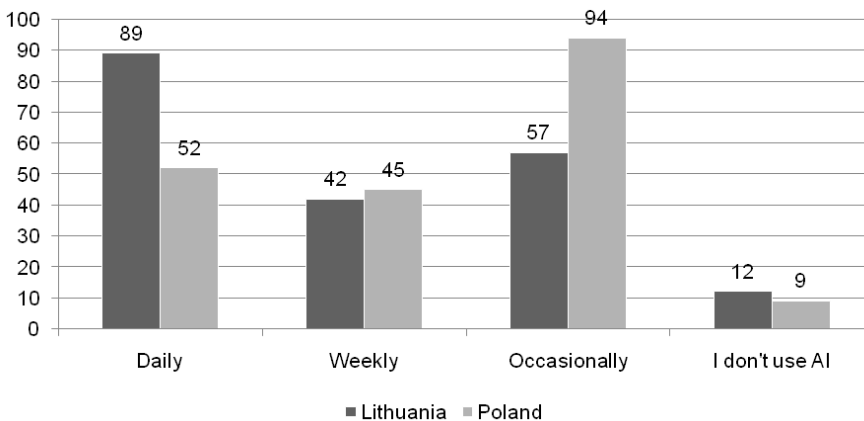
also raised concerns, though to a lesser extent of 64, while fewer participants (51) were worried about the accuracy of AI's targeting. A small amount of respondents expressed no concerns and no one mentioned other concerns.

In Poland, privacy issues were similarly a major concern with 94 respondents marking it, though data security topped the list as the most pressing issue for 114 respondents. Concerns about targeting accuracy were also present but less significant. A similar proportion of Polish respondents reported no concerns, with a small group mentioning other issues.

Comparing the two countries, both Lithuania and Poland show a strong focus on privacy and data security as key concerns. However, Poles are more concerned about data security, while Lithuanians place a slightly higher emphasis on privacy. Both countries exhibit relatively low levels of concern about targeting accuracy, with a small minority expressing no concerns at all.

#### 2.4. Interaction with AI recommendations

Artificial intelligence (AI) is playing an increasingly important role in everyday life, adapting its functions to the diverse needs of users. The frequency of AI use and its application areas indicate the growing integration of this technology in education, work and entertainment. Understanding how often and in what contexts AI is used allows us to assess its importance in everyday activities and its potential impact on the development of individual sectors. Analyzing respondents' answers to these questions allows for a better understanding of both the benefits and limitations of AI-based systems.



**Figure 8.** How often do you use AI?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

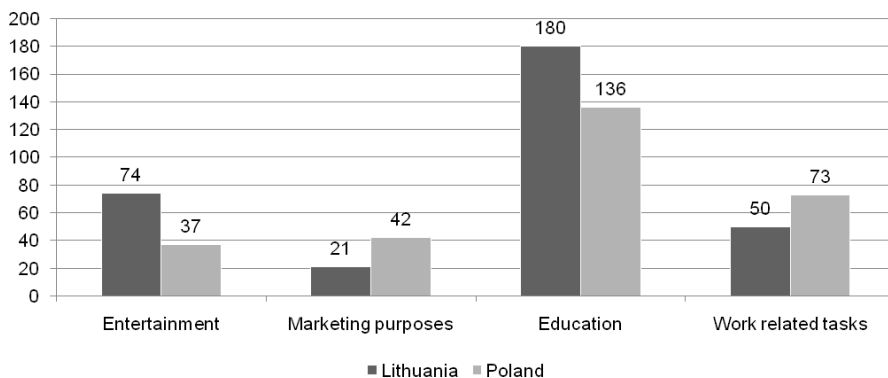
This graph contains the responses to the question: “How often do you use AI?”. The answers are put into four categories: “Daily”, “I don’t use AI”, “Occasionally” and “Weekly”.

Out of 400 respondents 140 of them indicated that they use AI on a daily basis. This highlights the increasing integration of AI into everyday life and its importance across various sectors. This consistent daily usage suggests a growing reliance on AI technologies, possibly reflecting trends in automation, convenience, and enhanced productivity.

The option that received the least amount of answers was “I don’t use AI”. This supports the statement above. Whether for personal use, work-related tasks, entertainment, or education, AI is becoming an essential tool for many people.

The majority of respondents answered that they use AI occasionally. This shows that even when the usage of artificial intelligence is growing at great speeds people still try to rely on their own knowledge/research.

Almost 90 people responded that they use AI once a week. The data suggests that AI is becoming increasingly integrated into people's routines, particularly in work-related tasks, education, or entertainment, but it may not yet be essential for everyone on a daily basis."



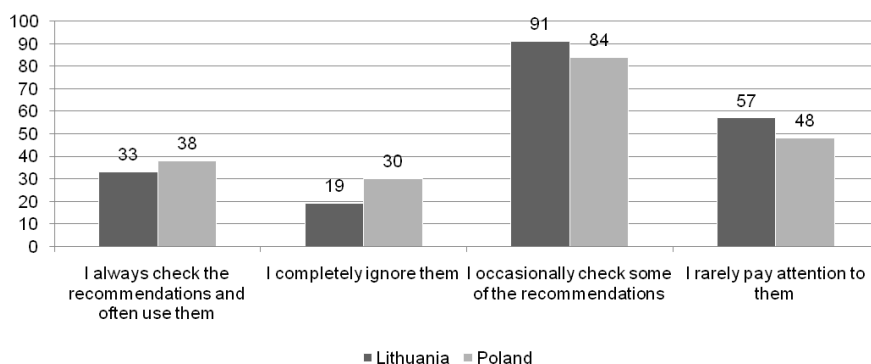
**Figure 9.** In which areas do you find AI most useful?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

In Poland, artificial intelligence (AI) is most often seen as most useful in education, with 136 people indicating this response. The next area in which AI was considered useful were work-related tasks, which were indicated by 73 people. This was followed by 42 people who found AI most useful for marketing purposes, and the smallest number of respondents (37 people) indicated entertainment as the main area of AI use.

Lithuanian respondents indicated education as the area where AI is most useful – this answer was selected by as many as 180 people, which is the highest value in the chart. In second place there was entertainment, which was indicated by 74 respondents. Significantly fewer people found AI most useful in professional work, with 50 indications. Marketing as an application area for AI received the fewest responses, with only 21 indications.

In both countries, AI is seen primarily as a tool to support education, which may indicate the high importance of modern technologies in the education process. In Poland, more importance is given to AI applications in professional work and marketing, which may be due to differences in the structure of the economy and the labour market. In Lithuania, on the other hand, AI is more often associated with entertainment, which may reflect different priorities or patterns of technology use in the country.



**Figure 10.** How do you respond to AI-based product or content recommendations that you see on social media?

*Source: own elaboration based on figures from the author's study.*

The data relates to responses to the question, "How do you respond to AI-based product or content recommendations that you see on social media?" The responses are divided into four categories: "I always check the recommendations and often use them," "I completely ignore them," "I occasionally check some of the recommendations," and "I rarely pay attention to them."

In Lithuania, the majority of respondents, numbering 91, occasionally check AI-based recommendations. Additionally, 57 respondents rarely pay attention to these recommendations. Only 33 respondents actively use recommendations, while 19 respondents completely ignore them.

In Poland, a similar pattern emerges, with 84 respondents occasionally checking recommendations, though this is slightly fewer than in Lithuania. However, fewer Polish respondents (48) rarely pay attention to AI recommendations compared to Lithuanian respondents. A larger group in Poland (38 respond-

ents) actively uses recommendations, which is higher than in Lithuania. On the other hand, 30 respondents in Poland completely ignore recommendations, which is more than the 19 respondents in Lithuania who reported the same.

The majority in both countries occasionally check AI-based recommendations, with 91 respondents in Lithuania and 84 in Poland. Poland shows a slightly higher number of respondents (38) actively using recommendations compared to Lithuania (33). However, more respondents in Poland (30) completely ignore AI recommendations than in Lithuania (19). These results suggest a general tendency in both countries to occasionally engage with AI-based recommendations, with Polish respondents displaying a slightly greater inclination to actively use them.

### **3. Conclusions**

A study on the awareness of AI and its role in digital marketing among students from Lithuania and Poland provided valuable insights into the perception of AI in these countries. The research hypothesis was that students see AI as an important component of digital marketing, helping to streamline various processes and deliver and adapt advertising content faster, while raising privacy concerns. The results of the study confirmed this hypothesis.

On the basis of this study, the following conclusions have been drawn. Students from Lithuania and Polish have a basic understanding of the use of AI in online marketing, although the level of understanding and engagement differs slightly between the two countries. Poles are more aware, but also indifferent, which indicates the need to educate consumers about AI functionalities.

Most respondents believe that AI-generated content is worse than that created by humans. However, there is a belief that in the future, most advertising and marketing content will be created by artificial intelligence. Both countries also show moderate perceptions of AI's creative impact on marketing content, which is combined with some skepticism about its effectiveness.

Key concerns relate to privacy, data security, and the excessive impact of AI on daily life. Poles are more concerned about data security, while Lithuanians place more emphasis on privacy. For example, large corporations such as Google, Amazon or Facebook collect and analyze huge amounts of data and information about their users, which allows them to better understand user needs and tailor offers, but at the same time it can weaken the sense of privacy among customers.

AI is seen as a tool that supports education, professional work and marketing. Most respondents rely on AI-based recommendations quite occasionally, with Poles showing a greater tendency to use them more actively.

The above study also made several recommendations for entrepreneurs who want to better use artificial intelligence in their company's marketing.



The first recommendation is that business owners should invest in educating consumers about the functionality and benefits of using AI in personalized marketing strategies to increase their engagement and trust in this type of activity. It is also important that companies have a transparent policy on how they collect and use personal data, which can help build trust and reduce consumer concerns. Entrepreneurs should also use ethical activities in the field of AI, taking care of the privacy and security of user data, which is crucial for maintaining a positive brand image. A final recommendation on how to use AI in your business is that businesses should strive to personalize content while avoiding excessive intrusiveness to increase customer satisfaction and engagement.

The study provides a solid basis for further consideration and exploration of the impact of artificial intelligence on various aspects of life such as business, security and everyday life. He confirms that AI is seen among students as an important element of digital marketing that can increase the effectiveness of campaigns. At the same time, it can be seen that it raises privacy concerns. Further research could contribute to a deeper understanding of the many benefits of AI-based digital marketing, especially in the context of a complex online environment where rapidly changing trends and customer expectations require dynamic marketing strategies and constant analysis of current activities.

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