The experience of Polish-Scottish Integration in Scotland
## Table of Contents

1 Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 7

2 Background - Recent Polish migration to UK ................................................................. 8
   2.1 What are the reasons for Polish migration to UK? ......................................................... 9
       a Motivations of the government ...................................................................................... 9
       b Motivations of the Polish migrants ................................................................................ 9

3 Defining Integration ............................................................................................................. 11
   3.1 The Definition of Integration ........................................................................................ 12
       a Assimilation or Integration ............................................................................................ 12
       b Dimensions of Integration ............................................................................................ 12
   3.2 Why do we need ‘integration’? ..................................................................................... 13
   3.3 Migrant and host community role in integration ......................................................... 14
   3.4 Integration Policies in UK ........................................................................................... 14

4 Methodology .................................................................................................................... 16
   4.1 Scope of the Study .......................................................................................................... 16
   4.2 Indicators Framework .................................................................................................... 16
   4.3 Gathered data ................................................................................................................ 17

5 The experience of Polish-Scottish integration in Edinburgh .................................. 19
   5.1 Profile of our study group ............................................................................................ 19
       a Age and sex .................................................................................................................. 19
       b Geographical Spread and length of stay in Scotland .................................................. 20
       c Length of anticipated stay in UK ................................................................................ 21
   5.2 Education, employment and access to services .............................................................. 21
       a Education ....................................................................................................................... 21
       b Employment and job satisfaction .................................................................................. 22
       c Access to public services ............................................................................................. 23
   5.3 Social Connections ......................................................................................................... 24
       a Social Bonds .................................................................................................................. 24
       b Social bridges ............................................................................................................... 26
       c Social Links ................................................................................................................... 28
   5.4 Language and cultural knowledge ................................................................................. 29
   5.5 Safety and Stability ........................................................................................................ 31

6 Bibliography. ....................................................................................................................... 32
The recent large Polish migration to Scotland is considered as one of the most important social and economic phenomena shaping the UK today. The impact of the migration on the services and communities of the host country is considerable. The integration of the newcomers into the Scottish labour market and society has become a key focus of the government, local authorities and community organisations. A number of Polish community organisations were also created to meet the needs of the growing Polish community.

Integration of the newcomers takes place at every level and in every sector of society. It involves a wide range of social stakeholders: public officials, political decision-makers, employers, trade union officials, fellow workers, service providers, neighbours and so on. However, there is no consensus as to what ‘integration’ of migrants really means, or how it can be measured.

This paper brings some new findings to the ongoing debate on Scottish-Polish integration, by trying to capture experiences of migrants as participants in the integration process.

Specifically, the study aims to learn more about opportunities and barriers to integration, focusing on social connections, and cultural exchanges between migrants and host communities.
KEY FINDINGS

1. The Polish community is diverse and the integration process proceeds differently depending on the migrants’ socio-demographic background, attitude and length of stay in UK. The “elites” are integrating very well; this group is typically Polish scientists, professionals and entrepreneurs. In addition, Polish mothers whose children attend Scottish schools are also leaders in successful integration.

2. The typical Polish migrant is not only looking for a better livelihood but also a better lifestyle. The decision to relocate is seen not only as a way to increase their income but also a way to redefine their work, family, and personal priorities. Social and cultural aspects are also important for migrants who are ultimately looking for a new home.

3. Polish migrants are eager to develop their skills and undertake training, especially courses developing their professional and English language skills. The key perceived barriers to training and education are working hours incompatible with studying, financing courses and lack of information about educational opportunities.

4. Despite possessing reasonably high levels of education, Polish migrants are occupying the lowest paid jobs and receiving a low return for their education. The anticipated positive effects of migration, such as opportunities to improve qualifications, or professional development, are out of reach for the majority of educated migrants. Instead there appears to be a developing phenomenon of ‘brain wasting’ or deskilling. The key perceived barriers to career progression are lack of confidence in their skills and abilities, language barriers, lack of recognition of qualifications gained in Poland and the attitude of employers.

5. Access to services like health, housing and social support is still a challenge for migrants with a poor level of English. The lack of Polish speaking staff in support services, information about available support, clarity about the habitual residency test and access to public funds for people in crisis situations are still issues.

6. Polish migrants are willing to get involved in activities, projects and cultural events run by Polish community organisations, and are eager to use skills not utilised at work. However they think there is not enough of this type of activities organised in Scotland. The access to these types of events is often limited by lack of resources and better promotion of these activities.

7. There is a call for more activities to cater to the needs of growing populations of Polish children to give them opportunity to learn more about their culture, stay in touch with the Polish language and meet their peers. Parents.
are concerned that children are losing their Polish language and cultural identity. It was also highlighted that some of the older children and teenagers often feel isolated and find it difficult to understand their new country.

8. Polish people are eager to socialise with Scottish people, however the lack of opportunities to meet like minded Scots and the language barrier was highlighted. The barriers to building bridges with Scottish community often come from differences in values, priorities, ambitions and interests. These difficulties in finding the common ground might come with the differences in the education level between Scottish and Polish people working in the same jobs. As Polish people often work in jobs below their qualification level, they have fewer chances to meet people with similar outlook on life and interest.

9. Polish people are happy to get involved in the life of their local communities by getting involved in the events and charity work. However they do not feel their voice is important when decisions are made about local community life.

10. English language is still a key barrier to career development and cultural integration. The need for more ESOL classes organised outside of the working hours and the opportunities to practice English outside the class room setting was highlighted.

11. Both Polish and Scottish people are interested to learn more about each other’s cultures and engage in cultural dialogue. However organised events should be focusing more on showcasing the modern Polish and Scottish culture to appeal to the younger generation. Events should be developed by partnering Polish and Scottish organisations to bring people together in sports, cultural and hobby groups.

12. Celebration of the historical links between Scotland and Poland should also be utilised as a tool to promote integration.

13. The Polish minority learn about Scotland mostly by taking sightseeing trips, visiting the museums and galleries and meeting with Scots.

14. Polish migrants do not feel they are represented in the political and civil society structures. The perceived barriers to representation are a lack of knowledge of how to engage in these structures in Scotland, and a lack of strong community leaders to represent the Polish community in local organizations.

15. Racial discrimination and hate crimes are not uncommon especially in more deprived areas. Migrants behaviour, lack of understanding of local politics and social norms can also lead to potential problems and antisocial behaviors. It was reported during interviews that organizing noisy parties, living in overcrowded houses, driving after drinking by Polish people has caused disruption in local communities and may be responsible for building a bad reputation of Polish migrants living in Scotland.
1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a study undertaken by the Polish Cultural Festival Association (PCFA) and funded by the “Big Lottery Fund - Investing in Ideas” programme. The study aims to provide a better understanding of Polish migrants’ experience of integration in Scotland. The recommendations of this research will be used by the Polish Cultural Festival Association and other similar organisations to provide enhanced services and better support Polish-Scottish integration.

This work is based on selected academic studies, research by public organisations, as well as data gathered from empirical research undertaken by the PCFA. Research by the PCFA included questionnaires, focus groups, study tours and interviews with key Polish community organisations in the United Kingdom. Detailed reports from the five study visits will be presented in a separate document.
2. Background - Recent Polish migration to UK

Polish migration into the UK gained momentum just after Polish accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004, growing steadily up to 2007. According to data from the Accession Monitoring Report 2008, total applications for the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) in the period 2004-2007 numbered 430,395 applications in UK. Scotland has also seen a significant influx of Polish immigrants: estimates of Poles currently living in Scotland range from 40,000 according to General Register Office for Scotland up to 50,000 as per Polish Consulate General.

Given the scale of the migration from Poland, it has been considered “…one of the most important social and economic phenomena shaping the UK today.”, as “…this movement of people has dramatically changed the scale, composition and characteristics of immigration to the UK.” (Pollard 2008).

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1 Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) was a measure used in the period from 2004 to 2011 by the United Kingdom to restrict incoming workers from the “A8” countries – countries acceding to the European Union in 2004. The UK government used the WRS to track the effect of the migrant workers on the labour market. The scheme is no longer in operation - the last day on which a new worker in the U.K. was required to register was the 1st of April 2011.

2 The WRS figure is only indicative as although compulsory, the scheme was “opt-in” with no significant incentives. It is believed that the actual number of workers is much higher.
2.1 What are the reasons for Polish migration to UK?

a) Motivations of the government

On the 1st of May 2004 the UK - one of only three ‘old’ EU countries together with Ireland and Sweden - fully opened its labour market to nationals of Accession 8 (A8)3 countries. The decision of the British government to follow this policy was largely based on economic premises (Fihel & Piętka 2007), but also to answer to the objectives of the Government Economic Strategy (2007) and to achieve the target of matching average European population growth over the period from 2007 to 2017. Migration has a key role to play in helping to ensure that this target and other performance indicators are met.

b) Motivations of the Polish migrants

To better understand the phenomena of Polish migration into the UK it is essential to identify migration motivations of the newcomers. It is often reported that the situation on the Polish labour market was a significant “push out” factor for migration. As argued by A.Fihel and P. Kaczmarczyk:

“After 1989, the human capital attributes of the younger sections of the population improved significantly, but this was not matched by changes in the labour market. As a consequence, local labour markets in rural areas and tiny towns, not being able to offer good prospects for young and well educated people, became a ‘trap’ for a relatively large group of people who effectively became economically redundant.” (Fithel & Kaczmarczyk 2008)

For this group of people, migration can be perceived not only as an escape from unemployment, but also as opportunity to gain additional skills, professional experience, language skills or to accumulate the capital needed to start their own businesses (Kaczmarczyk 2008).

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3 Accession 8 - the eight former Eastern Bloc countries that acceded to the EU in 2004: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia.
However looking at the motivations of the migrants in purely economic sense would be an oversimplification. As argued by Galazinska & Kozlowska (Galazinska & Kozlowska 2009), the idea of “normal life”, “better life” plays an important role in migration decisions. The decision to move to new country is seen not only as a way to increase their income but also as a way of redefining their work, family, and personal priorities. Social and cultural aspects are also important for the migrant who ultimately is looking for a new and better home.

The Polish migrant is not only looking for a better livelihood but also a better lifestyle.
3. Defining Integration

It is important to define what “integration” means, and what the role of migrants, host communities and policy makers are in fostering it. This section defines integration for the scope of this study and clarifies the focus of the empirical research undertaken.
3.1 The Definition of Integration

a) Assimilation or Integration

Integration means different things to different people. There is no consensus as to what ‘integration’ of immigrants really means, or how it can be measured.

Integration of the newcomers takes place at every level and in every sector of society. It involves a wide range of social players: public officials, political decision-makers, employers, trade union officials, fellow-workers, service providers, neighbours and so on.

As argued in “Integration, mapping the field” (Castle, Korac, Vasta, Vertovec 2001) two definitions, offering a very different understanding of integration, seem to be the most popular in both the public and academic debate of the last decade.

Definition 1) Integration is often used in a normative way, to imply a one-way process of adaptation by newcomers to fit in with a dominant culture and way of life.”

Definition 2) Integration as a two-way process of adaptation, involving change in values, norms and behaviour for both newcomers and members the existing society”

The second definition is very much how PCFA understands integration, and this study is based on this definition.

However, in recent years changes in the social and economic situation in UK have strengthened support of positions and policies critical of multiculturalism and minority formation among immigrants. This viewpoint prefers “integration” as in the first definition - a watered down version of assimilation. In short, “integration” represents a medicine that migrants should take to fit in. However the PCFA believes that without recognising the diversity of social and cultural patterns already existing in the UK, the building of a cohesive society will be undermined.

b) Dimensions of Integration

Integration is a complex, multidimensional dynamic process. Heckmann and Schnapper (Heckmann & Schnapper 2003) identified four basic dimensions of integration in their research:
• **Structural Integration** - the acquisition of rights and the access to position and status in the core institutions of the host society: the economy and labour market, education and qualification systems, the housing system, welfare state institutions (including the health system), and full political citizenship.

• **Cultural Integration** - acquiring the understanding of the cultural and society values of the host country. Following the individual’s cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change. However this does not mean neglecting their old culture and its values.

• **Interactive Integration** - the acceptance and inclusion of immigrants in the primary relationships and social networks of the host society.

• **Identification Integration** - indicated by feelings of belonging to, and identification with, groups, particularly in ethnic, regional, local and/or national identification.

The Polish Cultural Festival Association’s (PCFA) main activities focus on delivering cultural and educational projects to support integration and promote Polish culture and heritage. Therefore it is especially interested in learning more about opportunities and barriers to integration on the cultural and interactive levels.

### 3.1 Why do we need ‘integration’?

To some, integration is a positive goal, a broad-ranging synonym for greater justice, equality, material well being and democratic freedom. In this case, becoming more integrated implies improving life chances. To others, however, increased integration may bring unwanted changes to their communities; creating threats to their way of life such as additional pressure on social services.

If the integration is sought without paying attention to cultural diversity within society, integration can become synonymous with imposed uniformity.

Poor immigrant integration weakens social cohesion and may cause some serious problems; for the majority (host) society, for immigrants and other minority groups.

In comparison with the majority population, non-integrated immigrants are more affected by unemployment, have lower education, qualifications and lower income. They are more likely to depend on social benefits; they tend to live apart from the majority society and are usually unable to integrate their children into society – segregation thus becomes a problem not only for the first generation but also for the next generation. They are at risk of discrimination, their rights are violated more often and due to various barriers they are unable to participate fully in the creation of societal values and to benefit from these values.

**Successful integration allows for creation of the common identities which lessen the likelihood of conflict and strengthen co-operation.**
Therefore enhancing social integration can be understood as promoting harmonious interaction and solidarity at all levels of society.

### 3.2 Migrant and host community role in integration

Integration is a process which takes time and effort from both migrants and the host community. It is a process of negotiation, learning and development.

Successful integration heavily depends on the migrants themselves, their social and economic background, attitude, aspirations, and motivations.

Over time, migrants will be going through different stages of adaptation to their new situation; gaining understanding and experience but also often changing their attitude towards the host and home country.

The success of integration depends also on the host community and its attitude. The idea of intercultural competency education have been advocated by the European Commission as a way to better support integration in Europe. Intercultural competency education aims to develop the knowledge of other cultures, people, behaviours, empathy with the feelings and the needs of others, self-confidence and cultural identity.

### 3.3 Integration Policies in UK

Government agencies can influence the integration process in number of ways using mechanisms like laws, policies, guidelines and good practice codes, publicly supported initiatives and state funding.

Integration policy has a significant role in determining immigrants’ social and economic outcomes as well as their impact on non-immigrant local communities (Castle, Korac, Vasta, and Vertovec 2001).

There are a number of integration policies relating to single aspects of migration: refugees, settlement and UK citizenship. Others include A8 migrants in their remit and tackle discrimination and community cohesion. The two most relevant are presented below.

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4 Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate successfully with people of other cultures.
• “Our Shared Future”- Community and local Government commission presents a vision for building integration and community cohesion on a local level, emphasising the need for a new model of rights and responsibilities, mutual respect, civility and visible social justice as key to integration and social cohesion.

• “Equality strategy” and the legislative framework “Equality Act 2010” - Government Equality Office - presents a vision for the fairer modern Britain, protecting the rights of all to equal treatment and equal opportunities, to build society “where no one is held back because of who they are, or where they come from” (Equality strategy 2010).

There are also some important areas of services which have developed targeted provision to meet migrants’ particular needs, including English language tuition, and services such as health, education, employment and social benefits. Different agencies are still responsible for these services, as described in detail in “Integration policy review” (CIC 2008).

However there are a number of gaps identified in the current provision of services that need to be addressed to achieve the vision presented in “Our shared Future”.

Key gaps (after CIC 2008)

• Lack of practical information about how to live in the UK.

• Lack of knowledge on rights and responsibilities, and UK laws.

• Non-recognition of qualifications.

• Lack of language/employment skills.

• Access to ESOL which meets new migrant’s needs.

• Lack of opportunities to meet and integrate with existing population.

• Public hostility and ignorance.

• Restrictions attached to immigration status.

• Community tensions around behaviours of new migrants.

• Lack of understanding of other cultures.

• Perceived fairness over access to housing, jobs and other service provision.

This study aims to help identify the key issues around integration present in migrant experience and suggest new services to address the gaps in provision.
4. Methodology

4.1 Scope of the Study

The study was undertaken by the Polish Cultural Festival Association (PCFA) to learn more about the experiences of integration of Polish migrants in Scotland, and to guide the development of services and projects in the future.

The PCFA’s main activities focus on delivering cultural and educational projects to support cultural integration and promote Polish culture and heritage. To support this work, there is a need to learn more about opportunities and barriers to integration on the cultural and interactive level.

This study examines social connections and the development of bonds, bridges, links and cultural exchanges between migrants and host communities. This will provide a better understanding of this dimension of integration, which has not previously been studied in detail.

This study does not focus on the structural level of integration like access to housing, education, employment, and health systems. It is believed that this topic has been sufficiently covered by number of studies and surveys commissioned by local authorities and government, with the “Recent migration to Scotland-evidence base” (Scottish Government 2009) giving the most comprehensive account.

However several questions were included to gather personal assessments of the respondents of their situation in the labour market, education and qualification systems, to address the knowledge gaps highlighted in previous reports and studies.

4.2 Indicators Framework

To develop the quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (focus groups) instruments for the study, as well as for exploratory fieldwork, the indicators framework as in “Indicators of Integration” (Ager & Strand 2004) was used.

Ager and Strand identified in their study the key factors affecting integration, and based on these developed a set of indicators which could be used to assess how much integration has been achieved. Although the framework was developed for studies on refugees, most of the indicators are relevant for A8 migrants - including Polish migrants.
The framework is structured around ten key domains that evidence suggests are of central importance to the integration of migrants.

The framework is based around following domains:

- **Means and Markers** - Housing, Employment, Education, Health
- **Social Connections** - Social Bonds, Social Bridges, Social links
- **Facilitators** - Language and Cultural Knowledge, Safety and Security
- **Foundation** – Rights & Citizenship (Not relevant for A8 migrants as these are secured)

The questionnaires and focus group questions were developed following the logic of the framework. Questions were created around indicators presented in the framework. The major focus was on the Social Connections and Facilitators domain as those are of the main interest for the PCFA.

4.3 **Gathered data**

The study is based on data gathered from empirical research undertaken by the PCFA; questionnaires, focus groups, study tours and interviews with key Polish community organisations in the UK. Detailed reports are presented in a separate document.

The respondents of the PCFA study were Polish. Questionnaires were therefore written in Polish to make it more accessible for the target group, and responses were translated into English. The free on-line tool Survey Monkey was used to publish the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed using a variety of methods to maximise the number of responses and to reach a diverse range of respondents:

- Polish media in Scotland and on-line portals - edinburgh.com.pl, emito
- Mailing lists of Scottish Polish Cultural Association, PCFA, Polish Consulate General
- Social media - face book, Nasza Klasa

Two hundred and twenty six (226) questionnaires were returned, with 206 fully answered. The findings of the questionnaires have been referenced against qualitative data gathered via two focus groups with Polish migrants. The focus groups were also carried out in Polish, recorded and the key points translated into English and presented in this study.
Consent forms were collected from the participants to enable selected responses to be quoted, in compliance with the Data Protection Act.

The focus groups were promoted using similar methods as the questionnaires. In total, twenty two people took part in the focus groups.
5. The experience of Polish-Scottish integration in Edinburgh

5.1 Profile of our study group

a) Age and sex

The majority of the respondents (79%) were between 20 and 35 years old. This corresponds with WRS profile for the UK (89%) (Accession Monitoring Report 2009).

It can be argued that Polish migration to the UK (as well as other destination countries) presents a case of “youth drain”. In terms of the demography of Poland, young migrants are strongly over represented (Grabowska-Lusińska & Okolski 2009: 97).

In the study the majority 65% respondents where female. This is slightly higher than the WRS figure across the UK for 2009 which showed a 50%. This may be due the specifics of Edinburgh as a city, where most jobs are in catering and hospitality and more attractive to female workers.
b) Geographical Spread and length of stay in Scotland

Most of the respondents live in the major cities in Scotland: Edinburgh (71%), Glasgow (25%), Inverness and Dundee (3%) other regions (1%). This might be due to distribution of the study via online: web-based methods accessible for those with easy internet access, which might be less accessible in rural areas of Scotland. As Edinburgh is the target area for the PCFA, the study population is representative for improving the services the PCFA can provide.

This characteristic of the sample is important for the study as the integration process and experiences change depending on the time migrants have stayed in the host country.

It is believed that most of the respondents had enough time to organise the practicalities of living in the UK as well as time to gain a better understanding of the Scottish culture. Looking back, most respondents will be able to reflect on their integration as an evolving process.

Chart 1: Length of stay in UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Stay</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>more than 10 years</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>25.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One year or less</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c) Length of anticipated stay in UK

Around 38.5% of respondents want to stay in UK forever, and 34.5% have not yet made a decision about leaving. Respondents who are expecting to stay in UK “only for couple of years” are a significant minority (25%) of the study group. Only a small proportion of respondents (1.3%) want to leave the UK in next few months. It is of note that a large number of respondents are not certain about their future plans. This might be connected with the UK economy suffering from the recession in recent years. Another factor is the rapid economic growth in Poland - falling unemployment and the rising strength of the zloty have reduced the economic incentive for Poles to migrate to and stay in the UK.

5.2 Education, employment and access to services

They are the key areas of participation of migrants in the life of communities. They serve as markers of integration in so far as they show evidence of achieving or accessing things that are valued within the community. They also serve as means to those ends, in that they will often help achieve other things relevant to integration. (Ager & Strand 2004)

a) Education

Almost 40% of our respondents have a higher education qualification and 20% are currently studying for a degree in UK. The proportion of respondents of the study group with higher education qualifications is higher than that presented in the WRS profile for the UK (22.5%). However the figure is comparable with the data from the EU8 Migrants in Edinburgh Survey carried out by the Scottish Government in 2007 (50%). It may be that the labour market and educational opportunities in larger cities attract the better-educated part of the Polish minority, and those planning to study. They are interested in courses helping them with developing their professional skills (43%), language courses (28%) and hobby related (24 %). For those not in the training the key barriers were identified as presented in chart 2.

Despite of the high level of qualifications, the majority of respondents (66%) are eager to learn and develop new skills.
b) Employment and job satisfaction

Majority of the respondents are in employment with only 10% out of work - corresponding with WRS data for UK. This is 9% more in employment than the UK born average as pointed out by Pollard (Pollard 2008). Polish migrants in UK are generally perceived as a hard-working and highly motivated individuals.

The majority of respondents were employed in the hospitality and catering sector (27.23%) followed by administration and management (24.73%) and retail (9.9%) and construction (9.9%). It seems that despite possessing reasonably high levels of education Polish migrants are occupying the lowest paid jobs, getting a low return on their education (Drinkwater et al. 2006: 18).

As concluded by Kaczmarczyk & Fithel (Kaczmarczyk & Fithel 2008):

“This situation can lead to a high frustration level among the migrant...”
population and depreciation of the migrants’ human capital can negatively impact their determination to improve their skills and qualifications.

However when asked, only 37% of the respondents are dissatisfied with their jobs. The key perceived barriers to achieve more job satisfaction is lack of confidence in their skills and abilities, language barriers and lack of recognition of qualifications. Qualifications gained in Poland are often not accepted by employers (Chart 3). Progression of migrant workers to more highly skilled work is likely to increase the economic benefit of migration to the economy and encourage settlement rather than short-term stays.

Chart 3. Key barriers for achieving more satisfying jobs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge about the recruitment process in Scotland</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited access to information about employment opportunities</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence in my skills and abilities</td>
<td>26.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications gained in Poland are not recognised</td>
<td>18.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of employers</td>
<td>28.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language barrier</td>
<td>25.64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c) Access to public services

The majority of the sample group (80.7%) feel that they have the same access to public services as Scottish people. However, considering the particular demographic of our sample group (well educated, long stay in UK, fluent English) it is recognised that what seems to be easily accessible by our respondents is still a challenge for a large group of Polish migrants. The key barriers were identified by the “Report on migration to Scotland - evidence based” by the Scottish Government. However Polish community groups working with migrants have shared with us some of their own concerns not covered in the above-mentioned report.

Information was provided by “Swietlica” - Migrant Workers’ Community Drop-in based in Edinburgh supporting newcomers having difficulties arising from lack of language or unfamiliarity with the culture.

The following problems were highlighted;
• lack of Polish speaking people in support agencies
e.g. mental health, hospitals etc.

• lack of information about the available support and services accessibility

• lack of clarity in relation to Habitual residency test, entitlement to public funds for people in crisis situations (e.g. in hospitals, accident victims etc)

• lack of government policy and dependency of case law

• Habitual Residency Test – complicated process, not easily understood by migrants.

• Not enough publicity to inform them of their requirements and rights.

5.3 Social Connections

Access to services like employment, education, health and housing are important for integration. However, the different social relationships and networks that migrants build within their communities are equally important.

a) Social Bonds

Social Bonds are; “The connections migrants form with people who share their own experiences like other Polish migrants” (Ager & Strand 2004)

There is a large number of Polish migrants in Scotland and the potential to build a strong community. Of the respondents, 94% socialise with other Polish people outside work or home setting (Chart 4).

Chart 4. Frequency respondents socialise with other Polish people outside work or home setting.
There is a number of Polish community organisations in Scotland offering service and helping to bring community together. PCFA undertaken a number of study visits were undertaken and interviews carried out to determine the role they take in their local communities and the key barriers to their development. The key findings will be presented in this chapter and the full reports from the study visits provided outside of this report.

Most of the groups are run by volunteers without core-staff, funding or any long term strategy. Therefore many of the good initiatives, projects are not continued beyond their pilot stage.

The lack of knowledge of the local structures, funding bodies and fund raising techniques often puts them at a disadvantage positions when looking for funds. The organisations often work on a stand-alone basis; not linked with the existing networks of NGO’s and other local community groups.

More than 88% of the study group know about existing Polish organisations and 44.7% are involved in the Polish community by working as volunteer for those organisations. The 2009 Polish Cultural Festival (organised by PCFA) gathered almost 30 Polish people willing to act as volunteers in the project: wanting to be part of something bigger, gain new experiences and make new friends.

There are also number of on-line portals and social networking groups which bring Polish people together. Of respondents, 46.7% use Polish community web-sites and social forums.

The “edinburgh.com.pl” website is a good example of a platform to gather people with similar cultural, travel and sports interests and promote Polish cultural events in Scotland.

The majority of respondents take part in organised Polish events and gatherings. However more than 59% think there are not enough Polish cultural events in Scotland and would like to see more.
Chart 5. The suggested community events to support integration and promote Polish culture and heritage.

In the focus group it was highlighted that with a growing population of Polish children, there is a need for more events to cater to their needs, help them to learn more about their own culture and create opportunities to meet other Polish children.

Parents are concerned that Polish children are losing the language and cultural identity. It was also highlighted that some of the older children and teenagers often feel isolated and find it difficult to understand the new country.

\textbf{b) Social bridges}

Social bridges are “The connections migrants form with host communities” (Ager&Strand 2004)

Most of the Polish people think that Scots have positive attitude towards them (Chart 6).

Chart 6. Attitude of Scottish people towards Polish migrants (as perceived by migrants)
Polish people from our focus groups find Scottish people open to different cultures and minority groups, tolerant, laid back, enjoying their life.

“They have a similar mentality to Polish people, they complain like Polish people, they party like Polish people, they are proud of their heritage and national identity. However they are more relaxed, they don’t worry all the time like Poles.”

More than 69% of the study group socialise with Scottish people after work mostly at social outings 26% and in public spaces 23% (Chart 7).

Chart 7. Ways of socialising with Scottish people.

For those who do not socialise with Scots the key identified barriers are; not enough opportunities to meet like minded people (31%) and language barrier (26%).

The language issue remains a problem however, as highlighted by focus groups. Even though a lot of Poles speak good English it is often not enough to engage in the meaningful conversation that helps build relationships.

It was also voiced during the focus groups that barriers to socialising often come from differences in values, priorities, ambitions and interests;

“I work in a call centre, I would love to talk to my colleagues about books I read, movies and the theatre performance I have seen but they are simply not interested they talk about shows they seen on TV and nights out.”

As Polish people often work in the jobs below their qualification level they have fewer chances to meet people with similar outlook on life and interest. Difficulties in finding the common ground might come with the differences in the education level between Scottish and Polish people working in the same jobs.
Cultural differences were also highlighted:

“We have been brought up in a different culture, education and political system; sometimes it is difficult for us to explain it and for them to understand fully”

However they also mentioned that there is a number of activities, events they participated and recommend as beneficial for integration:

- participating in playgroups for kids and other family events
- sport activities (kite-surfing, cycling, football)
- cultural events: jam sessions, concerts, art
- educational events: lectures, book clubs
- hobby: playing music together, dancing, painting, theatre

There is a scope for improvements in creating new opportunities for people to meet, and Polish and Scottish organisations can engage in partnerships to develop services to bring these groups together.

c) Social Links

Social links are- “The connections migrants form to gain full involvement as citizens”. (Ager & Strand 2004)

Of respondents, 64% feel that they are part of their local community, 31% actively participate in local community events, meetings, perform charity work and 18.7% would be interested to get involved. They feel that they role often is reduced to “beneficiary” status and “those who need help” and not full participants.

There is a lack of Polish representatives in the local community organisations, working in local councils or assuming political office.

When asked, no one at the focus group (of 22 people) knew any Polish person assuming office or representational functions with local community organisations or committees (e.g. playgroup board, patient group, residents’ association, neighbourhood renewal partnership, warden scheme etc.).

As perceived barriers, the focus groups participants mentioned the following:

More than 61% of Polish migrants do not feel that their voice is important when making decisions about the local community.
• lack of knowledge of the political system and knowledge of how to engage in the civil society structures in Scotland

• lack of time and skills to take on such a responsibility

• as migrants they do not feel entitled

• Polish people do not get involved in politics

• Language barriers

It is also very much up to the Polish community to make sure that they have representatives who take on leadership roles and participate in the wider local society. Support from the government is required to improve understanding and facilitate access to civil and political systems.

A good example of support on this issue is the Scottish parliament Cross Party Group on Poland where major Polish community groups and parliamentary representatives can meet to discuss pressing matters regarding the Polish minority.

5.4 Language and cultural knowledge

Language and cultural knowledge- “...are the key skills, knowledge that help people to be active, engaged within communities.(Ager & Strand 2004)”

The ability to speak English is a key skill to facilitate social connection, both with other communities and with state and voluntary agencies.

Considering the specifics of the sample group (40% educated to degree level, 89% living in UK for longer than 3 years) their ability to speak fluent English should not come as a surprise. Of respondents, 53.1% of respondents referred to their language abilities as fluent and 36.7% communicative.

In the case of language, the sample group is not representative of the community as a whole. As reported to us during study tours, interviews with other community organisations and identified in number of studies, there are many Polish people with poor English, who find it difficult to communicate. This issue is well known to local authorities and there are
a number of services being set up to help with this problem. However the problem still remains; there are not enough ESOL classes and problems with accessibility as most of the courses are offered during normal working hours.

During the focus groups fluent English speakers welcomed the opportunity to learn and practice English outside of the classroom setting - to gain confidence and widen their vocabulary. They believe that the language is still the key barrier to further career development and cultural integration. Programmes could be set up to help with this: for example tandems (language exchange groups), voluntary work with Scottish institutions, work placements “English on the job”.

The other important facilitator of integration is cultural knowledge, which includes practical information for daily living as well as customs and expectations and wider community knowledge of the cultural background. As integration is a two-way process both migrants and host communities should be included in this learning process.

When looking at our study sample, 97% of respondents are interested to learn more about Scottish culture and 76% believe that Scottish people are also interested in Polish culture and traditions.

The highlighted best methods to facilitate this learning process were:

Chart 8. Methods of learning about each other’s culture

Opportunities arise for organisations like PCFA to satisfy this interest and bring people together to celebrate cultural and historical links between nations. The focus group participants helped explore this idea further, suggesting showcasing more of Polish modern culture to attract the younger audience interested in design, animation, architecture, politics and social issues. In addition, it was suggested to promote Polish-Scottish historical links, as well as the tourist attractions of Poland and Scotland.
“We need to show Scots that we are not all about bigos, pierogi and folk dancing but that Poland is changing and we have plenty of a good stuff going on”

5.5 Safety and Stability

-“are the key circumstances that help people to be secure within communities” (Ager & Strand 2004)

The study showed 89.7% of respondents feel safe in their communities. However 56.7% admit that they have experienced some form of discrimination because of their nationality. Of all respondents 33.5% experienced discrimination a few times (less than 5) and 3.9% experienced discrimination very often.

It was also highlighted during the study visits that racial discrimination and hate crimes are not uncommon. Tensions are especially relevant for migrants living in socially deprived areas. Further development of remote reporting to support those who are experiencing hate crimes was suggested by “Swietlica”. Migrants’ behaviour, lack of understanding of the local politics and social norms can also lead to possible problems and antisocial behaviors. It was reported during interviews that organizing noisy parties, living in overcrowded houses, driving after drinking by Polish people can often cause disruption in the local communities and be responsible for building a bad reputation of Polish immigrants in Scotland.

As highlighted by Maciej Bator, media plays an important role in creating images of migration. However, although the media’s role in integration is an important aspect, it is beyond the scope of this study. A short report based on the interviews and newspaper reviews studied will be presented in a separate document.
6. Bibliography


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