Title: Poles have adapted here, but the English haven’t

Abstract

The enlargement of the European Union in 2004 resulted in a massive migration from Poland to the United Kingdom (UK), where the labour market was fully accessible for new member states (A8 countries). For a myriad of reasons, apart from economic motives, Polish migrants settled in the UK; however, their number is only an estimate as due to inefficiency of migration measurement tools, neither British nor Polish authorities are able to specify migrant numbers. Borderless structures of the EU enable free flow of people, which, in turn, leads to new multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual patterns within European societies.

Ten years on (May 2014), issues such as adaptation, lifestyle, cultural understanding and translation are very much blurred by political populism. In the times of economic instability, multiculturalism has become a favourite cliché in political campaigns of governments and the opposition, especially in the United Kingdom; however, the politicization of the term resulted in observable dichotomy between the social and cultural perspective and political jabbering.

This paper focuses on the initial analysis of the results of a doctoral project Translating Cultures – Adapting Lives among Polish post-2004 first-generation migrants in the East Midlands, UK. Cultural elements of adaptation, interpretation of cultures and their numerous aspects, language issues, comprehension of the environment and expectations versus reality have been researched in the light of challenges of social integration. The latter has been contested by some respondents through their claims that “Poles have adapted here [the UK], but the English haven't.” It should be noted though that local attitudes towards Polish migrants are beyond the scope of the research project and this paper; however, they have great research potential ten years after Poland joined the European Union.