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INACTIVE AT HOME – INACTIVE ABROAD: CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF POLISH MIGRANTS

This paper examines the patterns of civic participation among Polish migrants in nine European countries. The study is based on an internet survey (with 5000 respondents) and qualitative research with activists and experts. The paper serves two principal research goals: (1) exploring formal civic participation in NGOs of the country of residence among the post-2004 Polish migrants, and (2) establishing the principal predictors of Polish migrants' involvement in the host-country NGOs. Our research leads to two principal conclusions. Firstly, the level of civic activity before migration constitutes a crucial factor in predicting the propensity to engage with host-country NGOs after migration. Our results suggest a robust country-of-origin effect on the patterns of civic engagement abroad. Secondly, however, the likelihood of civic participation grows with time, i.e., the higher the length of stay, the higher the propensity to participate, suggesting the socialization process towards the host-country civic norms and away from the country-of-origin legacy.

Key words: civic participation; integration; NGOs; Polish migrants; host country

Introduction

Civic participation of migrants is typically understood as involvement in civil society institutions and engagement with the host society's political system. Such relations usually involve partaking in organisations – mainly through membership, volunteering or other types of support (Smith, Stebbins 2016). While the intensity of migrant civic participation might be treated as an indicator of their degree of integration (Turcotte 2015; Cyrus 2005), low migrant participation may also be seen as derived from the characteristics of their societies of origin. In the case of migrants from Poland, this legacy of origin likely constitutes a lasting factor depressing the Polish migrants' propensity for

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formal participation. Although Polish civil society has recently been described as developing and gaining significance (Ekiert et al. 2017), there are several limitations to such optimistic judgment. First of all, it is informal participation that is gaining more social range and attention (Jacobsson, Korolczuk 2017). In terms of formal engagement and the development of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), both the number of NGOs and the number of people involved in their activities are lower, not only compared to Western European countries but also compared to other Central and Eastern European countries (Meyer et al. 2017: 20–21).

Even though approximately 2.2 million Polish citizens are living in other countries of the European Union (GUS 2019), the Polish diaspora is estimated at much more – the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs believes that there are about 5 million people of Polish origin living in different European countries originating from different migration waves (MSZ 2014). This Polish diaspora garnered substantial research interest after the massive outward wave following Poland’s EU accession in 2004 (Erdal, Lewicki 2016; Rabikowska 2010; White 2016), questions of civic participation have not featured among top priorities. The limited body of existing research has focused chiefly on the self-organisation of migrants (Nowosielski, Dzięglewski 2021), engagement in Polish migrant organisations¹ (Fiń, Nowak, Nowosielski 2019a), political participation (Fanning et al. 2020) or informal participation (Garapich 2016). This paper aims to fill this apparent knowledge gap concerning migrants’ formal engagement in the country of residence NGOs, by which we understand private, non-profit, voluntary and self-governing organisations (Salamon, Anheier, and Associates 1999: 3–4) that have been established by the members of the host society, and which focus on a diverse scope of issues and are addressed to diverse groups and not only migrants.

The analyses are based on an original 5-year study of Polish migrant engagement in nine European countries with the most substantial Polish communities (Germany, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Italy and Spain). Although the Polish diaspora in Europe has a long history, we decided to focus our analysis on the most recent post-EU accession migration, which differs significantly from the previous waves. This study incorporated a multi-method research framework (Seawright 2016), combining survey data with qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews.

The analysis of quantitative data, obtained from an Internet-based survey of 5000 Polish migrants living in the nine countries mentioned above, is

¹ By migrant organizations, we mean “NGOs founded and managed by migrants or their descendants. Their objectives, practices, and programs usually refer to a sense of ethnic or national identity; therefore, services provided by NGOs are often exclusive—addressed to people of the same origin or ethnic identity” (Nowosielski 2023)

supplemented by qualitative material derived from individual in-depth interviews with Polish migrant organisations' leaders and experts. The analysis is focused on three major research problems: a) what are the levels of formal civic participation in NGOs of the country of residence among the post-2004 Polish migrants, b) what are the principal predictors of Polish migrants' involvement in the host-country NGOs, c) how can the two primary problems be interpreted in the context of the data obtained through qualitative interviews. Our primary focus falls on one aspect of civic participation: the propensity to engage with host-country NGOs in the context of other significant dimensions of civic participation on the part of Polish migrants.

Civic participation of migrants

In its most general understanding, social participation would encompass all social activities outside the home that provide opportunities to meet other people (Van Groenou, Deeg 2010). However, civic participation narrows down this range of actions and practices to those involving engagement in the community or civil society, whereby people engage – individually or collectively – in the processes of decision-making that shape their lives (Dacombe 2010). Civic participation need not be formal, yet it is often studied from the vantage point of involvement in formal organisations through such indicators as membership, volunteering or other types of support (e.g., donating) (Smith et al. 2016; Dekker, van den Broek 1998).

Research on the civic participation of migrants encompasses issues such as engagement with the political system of the country of residence like elections (Cho 1999; Tillie 1998; Pszczółkowska, Lesińska 2021), the political mobilisation of migrants (Nagel, Olzak 1982; Shertzer 2016) and the conditions for political incorporation of migrants (Gidengil, Stolle 2009; Klopp, 2002). Some migration researchers also analyse participation in the political system of the country of origin (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003; Nell 2004). The self-organisation of migrants constitutes another vital area of interest. Notably, studies on migrant organisations tend to espouse an institutional approach (Vermeulen, Schrover 2005; Vermeulen 2006; Moya 2005; Hung 2007), with lesser attention paid to the participation in the activities of migrant associations, including such issues as membership or volunteering (Cyrus 2005; Gandziarowska 2006; Fiń, Nowak, Nowosielski 2019b). On the other hand, considerable interest exists in migrant involvement in civil-society institutions of the host country (Cyrus 2005; Gabrielli et al. 2017). Most analyses concentrate on membership and volunteering in non-governmental organisations (Voicu, Şerban 2012; Ødegård, Fladmoe 2020; Ishizawa 2015).

Studies of involvement in civil society institutions often contrast migrants with non-migrant populations, typically concluding that the former tend to be less active (Turcotte 2015; Bada et al. 2010; Diehl 2002; DeSipio 2011). For example, Qvist (2018) quotes numerous research concerning Scandinavian cases pointing out that migrants less frequently participated in NGOs or volunteered compared to natives (e.g. 21% vs 35% in Denmark, 32,6% vs 47,1% in Sweden, Sweden, and 36% vs 49% in Norway). German research also indicates a lower involvement in the activity of social organisations of migrants compared to members of the host society. While 54% of Germans declared involvement in associations, the proportion of Turkish migrants was only 39%, and compared to other migrant groups, it was still relatively high (Diehl, Blohm 2001). In Canada, the percentage of volunteers among migrants also tends to be lower than in the native-born (41% vs 48%) (Hall et al. 2006). There are, however, exceptions to this pattern. Firstly, some research suggests profound differences in migrants' participation in secular and religious organisations. Often the natives seem to be more likely to be involved in secular NGOs, while migrants tend to be more often engaged in religious associations (Wang, Handy 2014; Carabain, Bekkers 2011; Qvist 2018). Secondly, there might be differences between diverse migrant populations – some less and some more active. For example, the research conducted in Brussels, Belgium, shows that when comparing involvement in organisations between Turks, Moroccans and low-income Belgians, Turkish migrants were more often participating in associations (Jacobs, Phalet, Swyngedouw 2004: 546).

The problem is crucial in migration studies because of the perceived interconnections between civic participation and integration. As Robert Putnam (2000) puts it: participation is “the civic glue that bonds those who would otherwise be divided along racial and ethnic lines”. In other words, the involvement of migrants in organisations is being perceived as an indicator of migrants' integration or an instrument to strengthen it (Handy, Greenspan 2009; Ager, Strang 2008; Manatschal, Stadelmann-Steffen 2014).

The existing body of research on migrant involvement in civil-society organisations distinguishes between individual and contextual (societal) factors underlying the propensity to engage (Valentova, Alieva 2018). Among the individual factors, the following are typically identified: gender, family situation, age, employment, socio-economic situation or social trust (Aleksynska 2011) as well as the duration of residence in a host country (Voicu, Şerban 2012), language command (Handy, Greenspan 2009: 976) or experience of social involvement in the country of origin (Portes, Rumbaut 2006). The contextual (societal factors) may also be called “country-level factors” and are characteristics of the state of origin and state of residence in the dimensions like economic and social situation (Voicu, Rusu 2012) as well as civic participation culture (Vermeulen

2005). Interestingly, the contextual factors may also result from the differences between the country of origin and residence in the dimensions mentioned above, as “international migrants are exposed to two participatory cultures” (Voicu 2014: 616). Both individual and contextual factors are intertwined and often challenging to distinguish analytically.

Survey of Polish migrants in the European Union

The Polish migrant survey was conducted through self-administered web questionnaires on a sample of 5000 Polish migrants aged 15+ and living for more than three months in one of the nine selected European countries (Ireland, Great Britain, Norway, Holland, Spain, Sweden, Italy, France and Germany). The fieldwork lasted from May through June 2018, with country-specific quotas apportioned in line with the available statistical population size estimates. As demonstrated in Table 1, the country quotas were set as guestimates based on Poland’s two main official – and yet widely diverging – data sources. Such divergence between the numbers claimed by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Statistical Office stems from the sparsity of actual data and expresses major differences in their definitional approaches.

Table 1. Survey sample country quotas

Country	Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014)		Polish Statistical Office (2016)		Survey sample quota		Permanent post-2004 migrants	
	Polish migrants (thousands)	%	Polish migrants (thousands)	%	Quota	%	N	%
France	1000	23%	64	3%	375	8%	211	7%
Spain	84	2%	29	1%	200	4%	110	4%
Holland	200	5%	116	6%	500	10%	350	11%
Ireland	150	3%	112	6%	600	12%	407	13%
Germany	2000	46%	687	34%	1125	23%	663	21%
Norway	77	2%	85	4%	375	8%	211	7%
Sweden	110	3%	49	2%	300	6%	195	6%
Great Britain	587	14%	788	39%	1125	23%	779	25%
Italy	100	2%	93	5%	400	8%	187	6%
Total	4308		2023		5000		3113	

Standard survey sampling procedures proved impossible to implement due to the lack of relevant registers and the high dispersion of the target population.

Respondent recruitment was performed online using three parallel approaches: 1) advertising banners associated with selected articles on leading Polish websites (Small Sticky Ads), which were associated with geolocation of IP-addresses – this method proved least efficient: 155 interviews out of 3845 unique hits, with 500 thousand banner displays; 2) advertisements targeting Facebook profiles identified as likely belonging to Polish migrants living in the selected countries – 1210 interviews out of 4550 hits, with 100 thousand displays; 3) invitations to participate directed at migrant community portals identified by researchers – 3846 interviews out of 8033 hits, with 174 thousand displays. In general, 16429 individual contacts with the questionnaire were established, yielding a total of 5000 effective interviews. While the first, most traditional online recruitment method proved even more futile than expected, the performance of Facebook-targeting of respondents turned out to be within the benchmark range set by the pioneering study of Polish migrants (Pöttschke, Braun 2017). However, due to the rising concerns with social-media profiling and targeting in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal (Isaak, Hanna 2018), Facebook policy changes made it necessary to use the third, manual mode of targeting in order to reach the desired sample size within project budget limits.

While there are no other cost-effective methods of conducting interviews, it should also be noted that this research design suffers from certain limitations. In terms of the Total Survey Error components, it involves representation errors (Groves et al. 2011; Groves, Lyberg 2010) and does seem to face serious respondent selection issues at all levels, i.e., coverage error, sampling error, and nonresponse errors at the unit level (Weisberg 2009). Web-based outreach with heavy reliance on social media likely skewed coverage against the participation of older individuals with lower levels of education. Although the outreach was random, the sample comprised self-selected individuals who chose to complete the questionnaire. On top of that, hardly any information could be gathered on the nonrespondents, as in order not to run afoul of the General Data Protection Regulation, the researchers eschewed surreptitious digital tracing of questionnaire website visitors. Therefore, in isolated cases, the same person may have been recruited more than once, yet no signs of multiple suspicious attempts by a unique IP address were registered by staff monitoring the survey process.

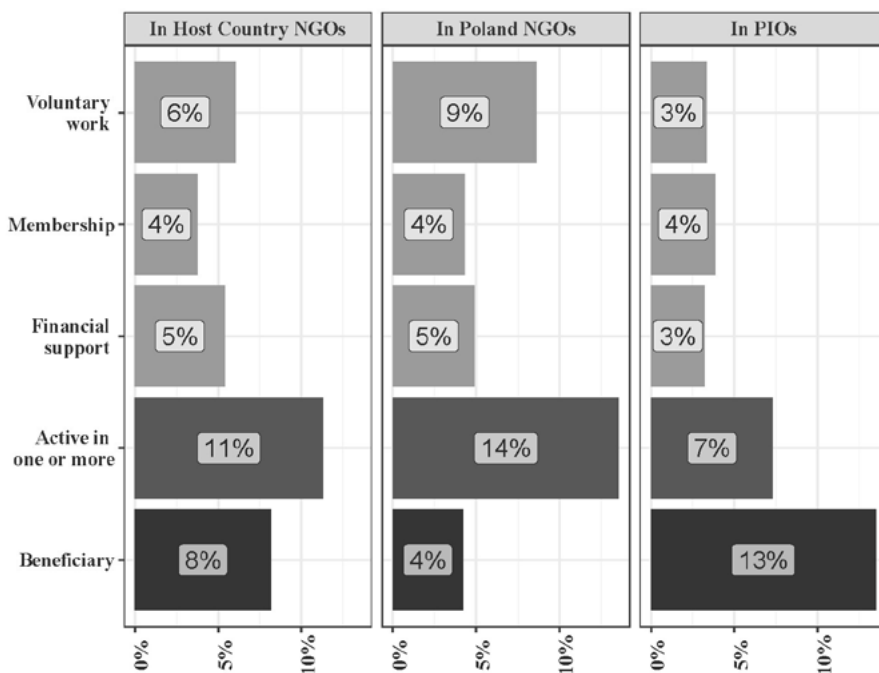
The country-level quotas were set to approximate the best available guestimates of the actual number of Polish migrants. However, as the data presented in Table 1 demonstrates, the sample shares of Germany and Great Britain are probably undershooting their respective shares of Polish migrant populations, albeit it seems impossible to determine precisely by how much. Furthermore, our analysis is focused on a subsample based on two exclusion criteria: 1) years of outward migration – no earlier than 2004, and 2) the type of migration – permanent, i.e., excluding temporary and commuting. The exclusion

of pre-EU accession migrants was necessitated by their different participation characteristics, which are known to exist but could not be effectively captured by the survey. The combined application of the two exclusion criteria decreased the effective sample size from 5000 to 3113. Given the lack of reliable information on the overall migrant population, let alone for post-accession permanent migrants, the analysis eschewed the application of population weights. For the same reason, no attempts have been made to apply any post-stratification adjustments to the data.

The questionnaire was administered in Polish and consisted of 59 questions concerned with a range of topics pertinent to the diaspora experience. Concerning participation, it implemented two cross-cutting distinctions: formal vs informal and host-country vs diaspora orientation. In relation to both the host-country non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Polish migrant organisations (PMOs), the questionnaire probed for information concerning past engagements (e.g., use of services, voluntary work, membership, financial support). An extended section devoted exclusively to PMO awareness and engagement asked a series of supplementary questions concerned with types of encountered PMO activities, reasons for involvement or lack thereof, general opinion about the PMOs, and the Polish diaspora policies. In order to provide a background for analysis, information was also gathered on other forms of civic and social participation: voting in elections and membership in trade unions. Regarding informal participation, a series of questions were asked concerning the respondent's engagement in various activities (e.g., informal groups, Internet activism, participation in protests, spontaneous help to neighbours). The complete documentation of questionnaire items is provided in the online supplementary materials.

Patterns of formal civic participation among Polish migrants

In the migrant survey, engagement in civil society organisations was evaluated with respect to three frames of reference, i.e., declarations concerning activity in Poland prior to migration and contacts with NGOs of the host country and with the PMOs. The other systematic distinction concerned the juxtaposition of active participation with benefiting from the activities of such organisations. In all three frames of reference, the most numerous respondents declare a lack of contact, which seems to fall in line with the well-known fact that Poles exhibit relatively low levels of civic engagement (Ekiert et al. 2017). The primary focus of this analysis falls on the level of (in)activity in the host country NGOs as well as its underlying factors and covariates (with pre-migration activity levels and engagement in PMOs among the predictor variables).

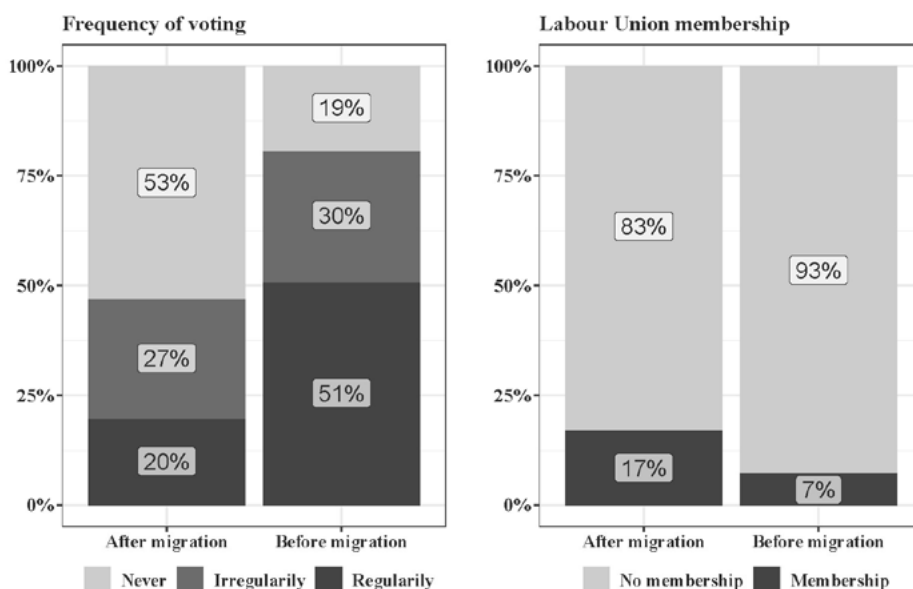
Figure 1. Participation in civil society organisations by Polish migrants

At the aggregate level, when engagement with the host country NGOs is compared to that which was the case in Poland before migration, the patterns are similar. Although fewer respondents declared active participation and, on the other hand, significantly more of them reported using services provided by NGOs, the financial support and membership declarations do not differ significantly. This finding stands in stark contrast with the pattern observed with respect to PMO engagement, where active participation is significantly lower while a relatively large proportion of respondents declare benefiting from the services provided by such organisations. Engagement with PMOs stands in a clear juxtaposition with this pattern, as contacts with PMOs involve overwhelmingly more benefiting than active engagement on the part of the migrants: while 13% of the respondents declare that they used services provided by PMOs in their country of residence, only 3% of the respondents were volunteers supporting the activities of such organisations. However, in order to more formally investigate the relationship between the propensity for activity in the host-country NGOs and the other two forms of reported civic participation, a logistic regression

model has been evaluated (Table 2). The dependent variable, engagement in host country NGOs as presented in Figure 1, has been dichotomised into two possibilities: 0 – no active engagement and 1 – some active engagement. Out of the total sample of 3113, activity in one or more NGOs of the host country was reported by 351 respondents.

Among the independent variables, all factors were dichotomised (0 – no action, 1 – reported action). For the other two forms of civil society engagement, the recoding followed that of the dependent variable. The model also includes other varieties of formal participation probed for in the questionnaire: participation in elections and labour union membership. The level of unionisation in Poland remains lower than in most Western European countries (Bernaciak 2017), reflected in the declarations of trade union membership before and after migration. While an overwhelming majority of respondents have never been members, there is a significant rise in membership declarations after migration (the underlying questionnaire item was already dichotomous). The question on voting distinguished three levels of electoral participation: regular, occasional and nonparticipation; the voting after migration encompassed both elections in the destination country and participation in elections held in Poland from abroad. These have been recoded into a dichotomous variable: participation (regular or occasional) and nonparticipation.

Figure 2. Voting and labour union membership



Informal engagement with the host society has been gauged based on several indicators – in the original context of the questionnaire, this mode of engagement was juxtaposed with that relating to the Polish diaspora, but such comparisons go beyond the scope of this paper. Informal participation was measured through an index composed of ten indicators relating to actions performed outside of institutional settings provided by NGOs and PMOs. Among independent variables, all factors were recoded as 1 if the respondent declared at least some form of the relevant activity and as 0 otherwise. Concerning covariates, indices of trust and of informal engagement were calculated as mean aggregates of underlying questionnaire items, and length of stay in years was calculated as 2018 – 2014 (for coding details, please consult online supplementary materials).

Table 2. Logistic regression: odds ratios of active participation in host-country NGOs

Terms	Odds Ratios	Confidence Intervals
(Intercept)	0.01**	--
Factors – all recoded into dichotomies with 0 as contrast		
Participation in NGOs in Poland before migration	5.94**	4.41 – 8.02
Participation in PMOs in the host country	4.44**	3.10 – 6.35
Having voted in elections before migration	0.81	0.56 – 1.19
Voting in elections after migration	1.62**	1.21 – 2.17
Participation in Trade Unions before migration	0.95	0.57 – 1.53
Participation in Trade Unions after migration	2.11**	1.56 – 2.84
Covariates		
Index of informal engagement (0 to 10 action types)	1.42**	1.33 – 1.51
Index of trust in others (0 to 3 levels)	1.33**	1.15 – 1.53
Length of stay in the host country (in years)	1.10**	1.06 – 1.14
Control variables		
Gender (contrast: Male)	0.96	0.74 – 1.26
Age (in years)	1.01	0.99 – 1.02
Education (contrast: lower than Higher)	1.04	0.79 – 1.37

Note: ** p.value < 0.01; pseudo-R² (Nagelkerke) = 0.38; Hosmer, Lemeshow (GOF) p=0.36

Declaring other kinds of formal participation significantly increases the likelihood of active engagement in the host-country NGOs. Primarily, NGO engagement prior to migration proves to have the strongest impact – a person with

a history of active NGO participation in Poland is almost six times more likely to engage in civic participation in their new host societies. When it comes to the other dimensions of formal participation included in the model, both declaration of electoral participation and labour union membership have a significant yet relatively weak association with active engagement in host-country NGOs only when reported after migration. Increasing degrees of informal participation are also associated with raising the likelihood of such active engagement, and the same is true for interpersonal trust. A relatively weak albeit significant effect of the length of stay has been established, i.e., with every additional year of living abroad, the likelihood of engagement with host-country NGOs increases slightly. On the other hand, no effect exists of the age of respondents. The other control variables included in the model – age and education level – have also proved insignificant.

Patterns of civic engagement as seen by activists and experts

Qualitative data was obtained by means of two research paths: 1) individual in-depth interviews with experts in the field of Polish diaspora and 2) individual in-depth interviews with representatives of Polish migrant organisations. In both cases, purposive sampling was applied to select respondents with high levels of knowledge and engagement (Maison 2018). IDIs with experts, henceforth referenced as *IDI_EXP*, were conducted with representatives of umbrella organisations, Polish diaspora journalists, and consuls responsible for the Polish diaspora. Seven interviews were carried out in each of the nine countries (in total: $N = 9 \times 7 = 63$). During the interviews, a scenario was used, which consisted of two introductory questions and 22 detailed questions covering the following multiple areas, including the participation of Polish migrants and attitudes of the Polish diaspora in the selected countries towards social participation. In turn, IDIs with representatives of Polish migrant organisations (*IDI_PMO*) were carried as a part of case studies conducted in each of the nine countries. The number of case studies was $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$; within each case study, multiple interviews would be conducted with organisation leaders and members as well as representatives of the community. Interview scenarios touched upon issues concerning the functioning of Polish migrant organisations as well as more general problems of social participation of Polish migrants.

It is not surprising that the level of engagement of Polish migrants in NGOs of their host societies would be comparatively low as the well-known pattern compounds the country-of-origin effect that migrants in general usually show a lower level of civic participation than that of their host society. This understanding also proved common among the participants of qualitative

research. The qualitative case studies pointed to an overwhelming consensus among activists and experts that Polish migrants exhibit low aggregate levels of engagement in civil society organisations. The qualitative respondents would volunteer such statements as *And I must tell you that Poles are reluctant [...] to join the organisations* (1_IDI_PMO_1a_POIE_Sweden) or *The engagement of us, the Polish, is small in here, and of the Polish diaspora in general.* (24_IDI_PMO_5b_POIE_Norway). Such low propensity to engage would also be emphasised by juxtaposition with the host societies, especially in countries with strong civic traditions, e.g., *What is deeply rooted in Germany, i.e., participation in various types of associations, organisations [...] is not so strongly embedded but in Poland.* (4_IDI_EXP_POIE_Germany).

Notably, however, some respondents also hinted at the possibility that over time and with the intensification of integration processes with the society of the country of residence, Polish migrants will learn more pro-cooperation attitudes, trust and patterns of social activity characteristic for the host society: *Poles going to the West or Germany also need time to adapt to these new realities. Perhaps some typical and everyday behaviours here take over.* (4_IDI_EXP_POIE_Germany). Results of our migrant survey yield support to such expectations for slow socialisation towards the host country levels of engagement.

Especially among the interviewed experts, a common explanation for low levels of engagement would highlight the impact of pre-migration practices in the context of which the Polish migrants were socialised: *You could say that... the emigration is always in some sense a reflection of what is happening in the country. Also of the world-view, culturally...* (30_IDI_EXP_POIE_The_Netherlands). Some respondents sought deeper reasons for this, looking at the sources of reluctance to self-organise in historical conditions related to the specific path of development of Polish society: *In my opinion, the Polish (...) due to their history, do not constitute a community that is willing to form associations and organise itself* (5_IDI_EXP_POIE_Germany). At the same time, such collective explanations in terms of the legacy of the country of origin seem to be common knowledge, what our survey demonstrated that there exists a strong impact at the individual level between the pre-migration personal history of engagement with NGOs and the propensity to engage in the host-country NGOs. It demonstrates a clear link between the individual and societal factors.

Some of the researched experts and Polish migrant originations activist looked for other factors that would affect Poles' willingness to participate. They often recalled the low level of trust among the diaspora: *No, there is no trust. We really do not trust each other ... it was so difficult for us to get new people involved in certain initiatives. For now, we still have this spirit from Poland, a pinch of distrust towards other men, combined with pettiness* (3_IDI_EXP_POIE_Ireland). It has been pointed out that this trust deficit is also combined

with a predominance of individualistic attitudes: *I compared (Poles – the Authors) with the Dutch, and the Dutch have a more collective approach, Poles are individualists* (30_IDI_EXP_POIE_The_Netherlands). This individualism pushes the migrants away from formalised engagements: *“The Poles strongly depend on gathering information through informal means, they do not create local communities* (8_IDI_PMO_1a_POIE_Great_Britain).

Conclusions

The overall level of civic engagement of Polish migrants in the EU is known to be low. Such understanding was common among activists and experts involved in qualitative studies. Our survey results cannot be directly benchmarked against data for other migrant groups due to the lack of methodologically equivalent data sources. However, our analysis of the patterns of participation of Polish migrants in nine selected countries leads to identifying key factors underlying the propensity to engage with host-country NGOs. At the individual level, a legacy of pre-migration practices is visible. Individuals reporting engagement with NGOs before migration are significantly more likely to engage with NGOs after migration. Furthermore, these individual-level characteristics fit in with the more general way of thinking about migrant civic participation in terms of the legacies of the country of origin (Voicu 2014; Espadas et al. 2013). Notably, this participation form is strongly associated with other kinds of formal participation, such as voting in elections or labour union membership. For the most part, registered forms of activity are associated with a small minority of individuals active on many fronts, while the mainstream tendency remains towards inactivity.

On the other hand, however, we also identify a significant impact of time, i.e., the longer the period passed after migration, the more likely the individuals engage with host-country NGOs. This suggests that integration processes may influence the willingness to participate and its patterns, which supports the idea that the change in societal context significantly impacts attitudes. As Voicu and Şerban (2012) suggested, the differences between the average migrant and the average native tend to disappear after two decades of continuous settlement. With time, Polish migrants are more likely to adopt engagement patterns, prevailing in the country of residence as their own, or supplement their patterns with more universal behaviours. This falls in line with the interpretation in terms of bridging ties supplanting bonding ties over time as migrant ethnic groups integrate with host societies (Lacomba 2020; Putnam 2007).

The limitations of our analysis include the treatment of Polish migrants in different countries as a single population. We did not account for the

cross-country differences, as the country-level effects proved weak relative to the country-of-origin effect. Nevertheless, such differences seem to constitute an interesting goal for future research, especially from the vantage point of long-term socialisation by host-country norms of civic engagement. Another limitation of the analysis regards the impact of religious affiliation on the level of civic engagement. Some evidence exists for the positive impact of engagement in the local parish, which may serve many functions going beyond the purely confessional (Isanski 2018). However, the survey underlying our analysis did not contain questions about religiosity or engagement in confessional organisations.

A loose end in the background of this analysis, and an interesting topic for further research, concerns the juxtaposition of formal and informal participation. Our model shows significant relationships between the propensity to engage formally and informal participation and other aspects of social capital, such as social trust. From the point of view of the country-of-origin legacy, it should be noted that in Poland, like in other post-communist countries, there is a tendency to engage in informal networks as well as to use less formal modes of action instead of participating formally through membership in NGOs or volunteering (Jacobsson, Korolczuk 2017). In the case of many Polish migrants, there is a strong need for active social engagement, which – for different reasons – cannot be fulfilled in traditional formal ways like membership in NGOs and volunteering. Instead of that, they choose less informal modes of involvement. When it comes to the Polish migrant diaspora in the EU, the myriad informal ways of participation constitute a fruitful avenue for future research.

Replication materials

Replication materials are available in this repository through an anonymised link:
https://osf.io/ve93s/?view_only=ec21d757b56f4dbfaa749b8bd29c8c13

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