

[ ARTYKUŁ RECENZOWANY ]

## Ukrainian Women Migrants in Poland During COVID-19: New Twists to Old Problems<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:**

The article considers the role of the third sector in addressing the impact of COVID-19 on Ukrainian women migrants in Poland. Based on research amongst Ukrainian women in Poland, the article argues that the primary effects of the pandemic have been to intensify existing problems in a number of spheres, and to illustrate that it is the interconnection between these spheres that constitutes the unique experience of migrant women. In this context, we argue that there is a need for third sector projects that address the experiences of migrant women during Covid and that the perspectives of Ukrainian women need to be incorporated in wider debates and actions regarding post-pandemic Polish society. The article reflects on how this can be achieved.

**Introduction**

While all economic crises tend to have more pronounced consequences for women, the COVID-19 crisis has specific features that make its impact on women particularly acute (OECD 2020; WBG 2020; Korolczuk 2020). It was this insight that inspired us to undertake a pilot research project tracking the effects of the pandemic on Ukrainian women migrants in Poland.<sup>2</sup> Migration to Poland from all over Ukraine, which has intensified since the onset of the war in Donbas in 2014, is today a significant and dynamically evolving feature of Polish society. Overall, the estimated 558,975 Ukrainian women residing in Poland constitute 44% of Ukrainian migrants, with women accounting for over 50% of Ukrainian migrants in big cities (Selectivv 2020). This inward migration of Ukrainians has transformed Poland from a nation of emigration to one also of immigration, an ongoing social experiment in which NGOs have a key role. The aim of the research, which we performed from October to December 2020, was to diagnose what the pandemic reveals and has changed with regard to the situation of Ukrainian migrant women in Poland, and so lay the groundwork for proposals to improve their situation.

In this paper, we summarise the research, with the particular aim of reflecting on the challenges and possibilities inherent in seeking to improve the situation of Ukrainian women in Poland. With regard to this issue, two

<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful and forthright critiques.

<sup>2</sup> This research was supported by the Heinrich Boell Stiftung. The full report can be read at: [https://naszwybor.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Report\\_ENG\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Covid-19\\_on\\_Ukrainian\\_Women\\_Migrants\\_in\\_Poland.pdf](https://naszwybor.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Report_ENG_The_Impact_of_Covid-19_on_Ukrainian_Women_Migrants_in_Poland.pdf).

aspects of our research stand out. The first is a sense of frustration provoked by the fact that the majority of the problems that Ukrainian women encountered during the pandemic were not new: they are frequently problems that NGOs have been signalling and campaigning about for some time. Simply (*sic!*), COVID-19 gave these issues a new, and frequently dramatic, twist. In this light, we wish to provoke readers to ponder the question of what can or should these COVID-19 twists change in NGO strategies for addressing issues facing migrant women? The second factor we view as significant is that the impact of the pandemic on migrant women combines social, medical, economic, psychological and cultural dimensions. The difficulties that women migrants encountered in one sphere of their lives during the coronavirus outbreak had obvious repercussions in others, thus highlighting the intersectional nature of the discrimination faced by Ukrainian women. The intersectional inequality experienced by Ukrainian women in Poland, exacerbated during the pandemic, calls for specific types of response, both in terms of research methodologies and in terms of the actions required to combat this situation.

The paper starts by providing an overview of the methodology and findings of the research. It then moves on to discuss the challenges and possibilities that the research suggests civil society should consider in seeking to alleviate problems faced by migrant women. We conclude the article with a brief presentation of two projects, which we believe have promising potential. The logic behind this structure is to briefly present the findings of our research as a basis for opening up for consideration the taxing question of how the third sector can respond to the problems that the pandemic has laid bare.

### **The Impact of COVID-19 on Ukrainian Migrant Women: A Summary of the Research**

In this section, we present a brief overview of our research into the impact of COVID-19 on Ukrainian migrant women in Poland. By way of introduction, it is important to note that the research was rooted in the experiences and knowledge accumulated at the Foundation ‘Our Choice’, a foundation run by and for Ukrainian migrants in Poland animated primarily by women.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the consultations which the foundation has offered to migrants, both prior to and during the pandemic, provided a valuable source of information about the concerns of Ukrainians in Poland. The project also built on the authors’ previous research into the experiences of Ukrainian migrants in Poland in the context of changing work relations (Keryk 2018; Kery,

<sup>3</sup> Foundation ‘Our Choice’ (Fundacja Nasz Wybór, [www.naszwybor.org.pl](http://www.naszwybor.org.pl)).

Cope 2019). We supplemented this background by performing a study of relevant literature, data and reports exploring various effects of COVID-19 both in Poland and internationally; analysing media coverage related to the situation of migrants in Poland during the pandemic; collecting statistical data; requesting information from state institutions and organizations (e.g., the Border Guards, the Social Insurance Institution, Feminoteka, the Women's Rights Centre and the Blue Line of the Polish Emergency Service of the Association for the Prevention of Violence in Families); and analysing the content of Ukrainian women's groups in social media.

On this basis, we defined major themes for the research and sought to recruit migrant women with relevant experiences for individual in-depth interviews. Due to its activity in supporting migrants from Ukraine, the Foundation 'Our Choice' has a broad network of contacts, which we used to find interlocutors and invite them to interviews. We selected each interviewee to illustrate a given theme, yet it was equally important to us to ensure that all twelve conversations, each lasting from 1.5 to 2 hours, enabled the women to freely tell the full stories of their move to Poland and their experiences prior to and during COVID-19. The interviews often proved to be moving experiences for both parties. Given the absence of psychological support and contact, which many interviewees identified as a key challenge of the pandemic, telling one's story had a therapeutic dimension.<sup>4</sup>

The interviews influenced both the final set of key themes that we selected, and the structure of the report in which we presented the results. Each thematic chapter of the report followed a similar structure: Old Problems, Covid Twists, Covid Stories and Propositions. We developed this structure in order to emphasise that the primary effect of COVID-19 was to intensify, dramatise or transform into new guises problems that pre-existed the onset of the virus. The sections describing a given issue before and during the pandemic are followed by Covid Stories, i.e. brief summaries of our interviewees' stories. In the conclusion of each chapter, we propose actions aimed at redressing the problems discussed.

The report that emerged was wide-ranging and detailed, in that it sought to illustrate how Ukrainian migrant women's experiences during COVID-19 incorporate a range of different components. Thus, the report is also long and difficult to summarise. For the purpose of the more succinct presentation in the present article, we have kept a skeleton form of the original multi-valent, anecdotal and wide-ranging structure. The logic behind this decision is to illustrate the biographical dimension of our research, indicate how past and current problems are interconnected and demonstrate

4. We thank our interlocutors for taking the time and energy to share their stories.

that the intersectional interweave between the documented issues is key to migrant women's lived experiences. We do not go into particular issues in the depth or complexity they deserve, as the aim of the article is to consider the overall scenario for further actions.

We also signal that this report was a pilot project seeking to open up a framework of issues for further reflection and action. The group of Ukrainian women travelling to Poland in a variety of rhythms is highly diverse. As a result, while our interviewees were of different ages and backgrounds, and had different family and visa statuses, many issues were beyond the purview of our study. To name a few limitations of our research: we spoke to Ukrainian women still in Poland in autumn 2020, and thus omitted those who returned home during the pandemic; we focussed on Warsaw and Wrocław, and so overlooked the situation of Ukrainian women in smaller towns or villages; and we concentrated especially on service industries, as these were hardest hit by the pandemic, and omitted Ukrainian women working in, for example, factory production or agriculture. We argue and hope that this study should act as a stimulus to further research and action dedicated to the situation of Ukrainian women during and following the pandemic.

The sections beneath summarise the report as a prelude to discussing what such findings mean for the third sector. We start with the challenges of legalising residence in Poland, and then move on to issues related to the impact of COVID-19 on migrant women in terms of work, the household, medical care and social integration. This order does not follow any specific narrative sequence, as the various dimensions described interplay in the everyday experiences of Ukrainian women. Each section begins with personal accounts provided by women with whom we spoke, and then continues with a short description that charts the pre-pandemic problems related to the given issue and how COVID-19 gave these difficulties a new twist. Our aim in this section is to briefly set out the field in which actions for change need to intervene, before then turning to the question of how to respond to these challenges in the latter part of the text.

## **I. Legalisation and Lockdown**

### **Covid Stories**

In March 2020, a single mother from Ukraine knew she was losing her job and found new work. While waiting 4 months for the documents certifying this change of employer to be processed, she was unable to pay rent and, at the start of the first lockdown, had to find temporary accommodation for herself and her children with friends.

A war widow and single mother working as a hospital cleaner submitted a residence permit application in March 2020. In November, she had not

yet received any reply and was unable to claim social welfare (e.g. 500+) to which she would have been entitled had the application been approved.

Despite the government extension of legal residence for foreigners until 30 days after the end of the pandemic, introducing a derogation which at the time of writing is still in effect, the problems endemic in the system of obtaining legal residence status intensified for migrants during the pandemic. Residence status problems for migrants during the pandemic were particularly caused by: legal residence being tied to a particular job with a specific employer; the delays and difficulties of obtaining residence permits from voivodship offices; and the political volatility that made it impossible to predict future conditions for crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border. The widespread problem of mass job loss amongst migrant women, combined with the requirement to receive a new work and residence permit, pushed migrants into the grey zone and intensified economic precarity.

## **II. Precarious Sectors amid Economic Downturn**

### **Covid Stories**

We spoke to Ukrainian women in the gastronomy, informal education and culture sectors, who had all had been working on a basis other than full-time work contracts. When they were made redundant during lockdowns, they were also left without access to welfare. In some cases, they did not receive their last wages. When we talked in late 2020, these women were using networks of contacts to find other intermittent jobs. They were on the lookout for new possibilities, though pessimism was prevalent.

Lockdowns particularly hit service sectors, such as gastronomy, tourism, events and informal care, where women are over-represented (Krzaska 2020). These industries also tend to be dominated by various forms of non-standard work arrangements (Conaghan 2020). As such work tends to be informal or temporary, the unemployment generated as a result of COVID-19 is largely invisible to statistics and its extent is difficult to estimate. The mass loss of work amongst Ukrainian women caused by the pandemic and the consequent difficulties they encountered (with rent payments, of caring for children, of coping without a family support network, of respecting health guidelines, etc.) provide a graphic illustration of the problems posed by the growth of precarious labour (Vosko *et al.* 2009, Fudge, Strauss 2013).

## **III. Uncertain Entrepreneurs**

### **Covid Stories**

When a highly qualified civil servant from the now occupied territories in

east Ukraine realised that she would be unable to progress in her original profession in Poland, she founded a cosmetics salon. During COVID-19, she used government support to adapt her salon to new hygienic requirements, and after the first lockdown clients returned. However, although she was still open when we talked in November, the anxieties and uncertainties provoked by the further course of the outbreak meant that she had 8 clients per month instead of 8 daily.

Only a migrant with long-term residence status can register as an entrepreneur in Poland. For the vast majority of migrants, thus, this is not a viable option. In addition, a self-employed migrant's legal residence status in Poland is dependent on the success of their business. Being self-employed is generally risky and demanding, especially for women, while COVID-19 ushered in new challenges to all entrepreneurs, migrants included. Nonetheless, many of our interlocutors cherished dreams or ambitions of setting up their own businesses.

#### **IV. Domestic Work and Care**

##### **Covid Stories**

A Ukrainian migrant worked as a live-in carer for an elderly man. She and her client were infected with COVID-19 by his child. After her client was taken to hospital, the carer was left on her own, and found support through a network of Ukrainian contacts. After two weeks of illness, this network advised her to go to hospital. In hospital, she received abusive phone calls from the client's child, accusing her of attempting to incriminate the family. On return from hospital, she injured herself trying to lift her now bed-ridden client. Thereafter, the carer left the family who required her to sign a declaration that she would not seek retribution against them.

Domestic workers (Mikulska 2020) have experienced particularly profound COVID-19 impact, in terms both of unemployment and new risks and constraints of work. In particular, informal at home care performed by Ukrainian migrants constitutes an important, though under-appreciated, element of Poland's healthcare system whose significance has only intensified in the light of COVID-19 (Levitas 2020). The pandemic has stimulated international movements to mobilise domestic workers, for instance through the campaigns of the International Domestic Workers' Federation. It has also led to calls for a wider reappraisal of the role and value of care in societies (De Henau and Himmelweit 2020; Wielgosz 2020). In Poland, domestic work is a rare sector where, despite lockdowns, demand for Ukrainian migrant labour grew in the first half of 2021.

## V. Home Schooling and Housework

### Covid Stories

During the first lockdown, a Ukrainian migrant mother lost most of her cleaning work and therefore was free to assist her 9 year old daughter with online-learning (her teenage son resisted her help). In November, the mother had new clients and could only check her daughter's work after hours. This situation was difficult for the mother and ate away at already lacking free family time. She regretted that both her children encountered difficulties in expressing themselves online in their school groups, as offering them new opportunities was her main motivation for remaining in Poland.

A Supreme Audit Office Report (NIK 2019) on 'The Education of the Children of Parents' Returning to the Country and Immigrants' notes the growing number of Ukrainian children in Polish schools and criticises the Ministry of Education for its failure to develop a systematic approach to the integration of migrant children into Polish schools. The challenges of distance schooling, which have posed difficulties for many families over the past year, have been felt acutely by Ukrainian children and their parents. An interview with an intercultural education assistant in Warsaw indicated that a lack of appropriate equipment or spaces for home schooling, unfamiliarity with the curriculum and difficulties in communicating with teachers were compounded by the need of many migrant mothers to keep going to work. Thus, children were left home alone, with elder siblings taking on quasi-parental responsibilities. However, the pandemic also stimulated initiatives by individual teachers, such as those coordinated around the Centre for Learning Improvement in Poznań, who experimented with lockdown conditions imposed to develop tools for involving migrant children.<sup>5</sup>

## VI. Domestic Violence

### Covid Stories

A mother of a four year old boy arrived to Poland in 2018. She experienced intensifying violence from her husband, who blamed her for getting him into their current situation and distancing him from his family. Feeling that she had nowhere to turn, she exerted pressure on his family members to finally persuade him to leave. In order to enable her to recuperate, her parents took her child back to Ukraine. However, following job-loss after mobbing at work, during lockdown she was no longer able to send home the same level of remittances. In response, her family abused and neglected the child. In the end, our interlocutor retrieved her child, found him

<sup>5</sup> Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli w Poznaniu, <https://odnpoznan.pl/>



a place in playschool and has a new job. This woman's advice was not to trust promises that domestic violence would never happen again, and to speak openly about your experiences, no matter how difficult sharing the story of one's plight may be, as people can be supportive.

The lockdowns implemented to stem the spread of the coronavirus have accelerated cycles of domestic violence and made it more difficult to find support (Women's Aid 2020; Neetu *et al.* 2020; Krytyka Polityczna [ed.] 2020). As a result, the pandemic has seen increased attention being paid to domestic violence, but this has not been extended to migrants. In Poland, there is only one local crisis-line in Ukrainian (in Gdańsk), and information about violence and about sources of support dedicated to migrant women is not readily available. Emergency services are not trained in responding to the difficulties faced by migrant women suffering domestic violence. In addition, the legislative framework can make a woman's residence status dependent on her partner. This applies, for example, in the case of a residence permit granted on the basis of joining a family member residing in Poland. The case of our interviewee demonstrates how domestic violence perpetuated on migrant women can interweave with other forms of violence and how problematic it is to find support.

## **VII. Health Care**

### **Covid Stories**

While hospital care for COVID-19 was available for all migrants, this information often failed to reach Ukrainian women. In one of the cases discussed above, an in-house carer who contracted Covid found support through a network in Ukraine. It was on their advice that she in the end went to hospital, where she received sympathetic and helpful treatment. We also heard of cases where medical services failed to intervene on the basis of the nationality of patients.

The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the need for an effective public health service and the problems of organising such a system. In the exceptional conditions of the pandemic, migrants were granted free access to hospital treatment for COVID-19. The question of migrants' everyday access to healthcare has yet to be resolved, though. Pre-pandemic issues emerge afresh: for example, public health insurance is still dependent on employment status, Poland's health service has insufficient capacity and is unwilling to cater to migrants, and health campaigns fail to reach migrant communities. Like other social groups, the difficulties Ukrainian women face in accessing free non-Covid medical care intensified during the pandemic, with further implications for their health.

## VIII. Social Integration

### Covid Stories

COVID-19 has obstructed the integration of Ukrainian women into Polish society, restricting contacts to one's immediate circle and reducing encounters with the Polish language. Given that the wave of Ukrainian immigration to Poland is still fresh, the impact of this sustained period of interrupted integration is yet to play itself out.

COVID-19 has demonstrated that it is impossible to just be a 'labour migrant'. A well-integrated migrant who bases decisions on information gathered from reliable Polish sources is better able to react to changing guidelines, and thus be an asset rather than a risk in Poland's response to COVID-19. The social and linguistic integration of Ukrainians into Polish society is often erroneously presumed to happen naturally on account of the two countries' cultural and linguistic proximity. As indicated on the Migrant Integration Policy Index, Poland lacks a holistic programme assisting the integration of migrants.<sup>6</sup> The pandemic reduced access to projects facilitating integration to a minimum, while the public discourse framed the COVID-19 response in national terms and occluded healthcare services offered to migrants. Dominant gender paradigms in Ukraine and Poland, and the optics through which women's migration is perceived, mean that practices of and barriers to social integration are constructed in gendered terms (Tolstokorova 2012; Urbańska 2020). The refocusing of life around the home implied by lockdowns reinforces gender barriers to social integration.

## IX. Key Workers versus Migrant Workers

### Covid Stories

A Ukrainian anaesthetist and operating theatre cleaner described the new burdens and responsibilities of working in a healthcare system under intense strain. The anaesthetist remarked that dealing with stress was expected in her profession, but that now staff shortages were endemic and it was difficult to foresee the psychological effects of seeing many more patients dying. The cleaner was glad of the training sessions she received, and described the new equipment and procedures involved in preventing the spread of the virus. While the cleaner received a modest Covid bonus, neither of these two healthcare workers felt their labour was more valued during the pandemic.

The term 'key workers' emerged during COVID-19 to designate those whose continued presence at work kept society functioning during lockdowns.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mipex.eu>

This vital labour turned out to often be performed by migrants in low-paid jobs (Fasani 2020; Dobbins 2020; Babakova 2020). The term did not catch on in Poland and some believe it articulates merely a right to self-exploitation, i.e. the need to go to work in order that others can stay at home. Still, referring to Ukrainian women working in such fields as care, cleaning, retail and agriculture as key workers at least suggests that their labour constitutes a vital, albeit underestimated, element in Poland's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

### **Consequences for the Third Sector**

The primary conclusion of our research was that the impact of the pandemic on Ukrainian women in Poland was to highlight a wide range of areas in which action is needed. But how can change be achieved? It is this question that we propose to open up for deliberation in the remainder of this text.

### **Limitations and Possibilities**

In our report, we provided proposals for a series of actions to address each of the key issues identified. We divided these actions into three types: policy and legislation; institutional reform; and NGO initiatives and inter-institutional cooperation. This scheme was motivated by a dual sense. Firstly, we believe that the experiences of Ukrainian women during COVID-19 constitute a significant voice for debates about how society can or should be reconstructed post-Covid, and that NGOs have a key role to play in this process. Secondly, however, given that many of the problems that Ukrainian women encountered are those already signalled by NGOs, we also see a need to reconsider strategies for action. COVID-19 stridently reveals a need for changes to the political approach to migration or the design and practices of institutions dealing with various aspects of migration: but how can this be brought about?

COVID-19 in fact suggests that there is greater leeway than previously thought with regard to migration policy: the waiving of all residence limitations until 30 days after the end of the pandemic would have been previously unthinkable! Yet, as described above, this apparent revolution was marred by other problems, such as tying right to residence to a particular employer, and the overdue, overcomplicated and non-transparent processes of applying for residence permits ('karta pobytu') at voivodship offices. The pandemic has demonstrated the need for migrants to be integrated into Polish society; but the policy framework and the chronic failures of the system encourage conceiving of residence in temporary and purely labour-oriented terms. Indeed, the quantity of documents required by migrants seeking to legalise their residence increased during the coronavirus outbreak, and now also includes certificates from the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS).

If residence legalisation is an area where policy change seems vital, then a phenomenon that legalisation exacerbates, that of Ukrainian migrant women working *en masse* in non-traditional labour contracts, is one where we posit first and foremost a need for institutional reform. The growth of this type of work poses wide-ranging questions to the current legislative organisation of social welfare in both Poland and beyond. However, the lockdown-provoked job loss in sectors where such work is prevalent also highlights the problem of the institutional defence of migrant workers' rights in Poland. The State Labour Inspectorate (PIP) can only intervene in cases of full time labour contracts and is legally bound to transfer information about irregularities in migrants' work situations to the Border Guards. This means that the State Labour Inspectorate is unable to intervene in the majority of cases where infractions of labour rights involve migrant women, or is even seen as a threat.

The lack of support for migrant women experiencing domestic violence, on the other hand, is an area where we identify a lacuna in the current NGO offer. Supporting those suffering domestic violence is a complex matter and it is understandable that Polish women are the primary targets of this assistance. However, in the case of our interlocutor, domestic violence was one of a number of modes of violence enacted on a Ukrainian woman, who felt she had nowhere to turn. Domestic violence is frequently a taboo subject amongst migrant women, so approaches to providing support and educating about violence amongst Ukrainian women need to be carefully elaborated. However, this is an issue where NGO collaborative initiatives could make a tangible difference and are urgently needed.

The examples cited above illustrate the three different levels on which we see that action is needed. In the current political climate, however, it is difficult to imagine how NGOs can influence cases where a change in policy, or institutional structure or practices is needed. In seeking to generate change in a generally hostile economic and political climate, in which migrant NGOs themselves also experience precarity, we argue that new coalitions are needed that bring the perspective of Ukrainian migrant women into wider configurations of reflection and actions. These coalitions might emerge in surprising forms, incorporating actors in various situations perhaps deploying different resources and guided by distinct logics. Notwithstanding the difficulties of incorporating migrants' perspectives in policy making at the national level, there is an increasing attention at both European and city levels to the intersectional nature of migrant women's experience (Grubanov-Boskovic, Tintori, Biagi 2020; Warsaw City Report 2020). In this context, migrant NGOs have a paramount role in seeking to facilitate cooperation between migrant women and possible allies at different

levels: be they national level politicians, representatives of local authorities, employees of relevant state institutions, academics, artists, trade unions, employers, feminist organisations, other NGOs and journalists, as well as potentially interested individuals and institutions based overseas.

The need to find ways to incorporate the perspective of migrant women in the debates about future Polish society is particularly intense given an uncertainty over what may happen after the pandemic: either COVID-19 will lead to an intensification of pre-existing trends of increasing social injustice, or the social reorganisation required to combat the outbreak can act as a trigger to reorienting society around the social value of work (particularly as concerns the reproductive labour of women and the 'key work' of migrants) (ILO 2020; Mundlak, Fudge 2020). In order for the latter to happen, the needs of Ukrainian women must be addressed and their voices heard in the context of wider debates. Beneath, we give examples of two project types that we see as promising.

### **Project Examples**

#### Ukrainian Women's Club / Klub Ukraińskich Kobiet (KUK)

The Foundation 'Our Choice' developed a Ukrainian Women's Club in Warsaw between 2014-2019. The foundation's initiative gathered Ukrainian women and used soft tools (collective activities, workshops, seminars, etc.) as a forum for socialising outside one's immediate circle, increasing confidence and building a sense of female collectivity. These activities were supplemented with advice and training on issues and skills important in building social and professional biographies. The club played a significant role in the biographies of a number of women who are today active voices in the Ukrainian diaspora.

While funding for this project came to an end in 2019, our research indicates that in the light of the coronavirus outbreak this kind of project needs to be refreshed and given prolonged support. The interconnected nature of the difficulties faced by women during the pandemic requires, first and foremost, spaces in which such experiences can be communicated, where confidence that one's experience is worth sharing is promoted and where the capabilities to make such stories heard are developed. Such a project would also lay the groundwork for Ukrainian women to be included in the entrepreneurial support offered to women, for instance by Warsaw City Council. The resilience of the interviewed women in developing their professional lives in migration and the hopes that several expressed of realising entrepreneurial dreams indicate that there is a need for such assistance. However, bridges need to be built in order to enable migrant women to access such programmes. Moreover, the ambitions of a Ukrainian

Women's Club should not be limited to professional development: especially in the wake of the pandemic, such a club needs to act as a platform for the expression of a range of perspectives of Ukrainian women.

### Care Revolutions / Rewolucje opiekuńcze

Internationally, COVID-19 has given new impetus both to projects aiming at a reappraisal of the value of various forms of care work in society and to the mobilisation of care workers in defence of their rights (De Henau, Himmelweit 2020; Rosińska, Pellerito forthcoming). In Poland, a season of seminars animated at the Biennale Warszawa under the slogan 'Care Revolutions' has brought together a diverse set of contributions exploring social reproduction as a key to demonstrating social injustice and bringing about change.

The pandemic generates a significant impetus for trying to facilitate the mobilisation of Ukrainian women working in the domestic care sector. Ukrainian artist Marta Romankiv has responded to this need by gathering a group of Ukrainian care workers who meet regularly to share their experiences and explore possibilities for defending their rights. This is a challenge, as women domestic workers lie outside the traditional scope of trade unions. They generally work in isolation, often in informal relations with their employer. In addition, care work has a significant affective charge, which is important to care workers and employers alike and makes regulating this sphere of labour difficult. Working to promote the rights of domestic and care workers thus requires innovative approaches, combining the knowledge and engagement of different actors with various types of expertise, and blending local specificity with international experience in mobilising domestic workers. Such an initiative can both bring concrete benefits to Ukrainian migrant women working in the domestic sector, and also have wider repercussions for debates about the future shape of Polish society.

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On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the obstacles to the integration of Ukrainian women migrants into Polish society. On the other, it has also demonstrated the vital importance of this integration. The invisibility of many migrant women in economic statistics and absence of their perspectives in official discourse means that the experiences of this diverse group are too easily overlooked. As the pandemic is still on-going, we do not yet know what lasting consequences it will have for the biographies of migrant women. In this article, we have indicated that the experiences of Ukrainian women in Poland during the pandemic were marked primarily by new twists to old problems. In this context, we argue that new,

broad coalitions of actors working on particular issues are needed. Migrant NGOs have an important role to play both in highlighting and supporting the intersectional complexity of the experiences of migrant women, and enabling and mentoring the inclusion of migrant women's experiences in new coalitions working for social change.

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