

From trauma to inclusion: Culture as the tool for managing relations with the Ukrainian minority in city of Lublin

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Abstract

The influx of migrants and war refugees from Ukraine, particularly in late February and early March 2022, into Poland led to a significant increase in the Ukrainian minority in Lublin. Migrants, who often experienced war-related trauma firsthand, had to rebuild their lives, frequently losing their previous professional and economic status. The integration of minorities with the dominant ethnic groups in a given area is generally associated with meeting the diverse needs of society at large, with cultural activity being one of the areas that facilitates coexistence and integration.

This paper raises three main research questions: How do cultural activities in Lublin support the integration of the Ukrainian minority and influence the image of the city? How does the Ukrainian minority perceive its presence and opportunity to participate in the cultural life of the city? How does culture build a positive image of Lublin as a city friendly to national minorities?

The paper is build upon qualitative research with representatives of the Ukrainian minority who actively participate in or organise cultural events in Lublin. A total of 10 people took part in the 2 focus group interviews, while 1 person (unable to participate in the planned FGI due to professional commitments) was interviewed individually due to their important role in the community under study.

Preliminary results indicate that culture has an integrative, therapeutic, identity-building and image-building function in the integration of the Ukrainian minority in Lublin. Grassroots initiatives create a “Ukrainian bubble” of security and bridges to Poles, helping to move from war trauma to acceptance and building social bonds, especially among children and young people. Lublin is perceived as a festival city, safe, open and peaceful, but with barriers such as bureaucracy and low attendance by Poles. Respondents

emphasise the need for better information infrastructure and recognition of Ukrainians as part of the local community.

Keywords: social inclusion of migrants, culture, Ukrainian minority in Poland, war trauma