

Five Necessary Steps

Following a debate that took place during the 131st General Assembly of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the members of the Academy adopted a position statement on the issue of migration. In it, they underscored the need for Poland to cooperate with other countries of the European Union and to strive to promote attitudes of mutual openness between the receiving communities and immigrant communities.

Realizing the challenges brought by the current humanitarian crisis and recognizing the gravity of migratory issues for discussion about the future of the European Union, the General Assembly of the Polish Academy of Sciences resolved to adopt the following position statement:

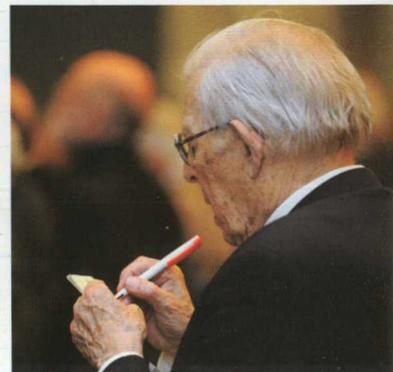
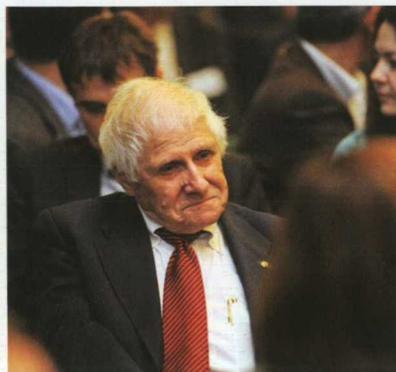
Migration processes are a natural part of how societies function, and waves of migration have been frequent occurrences in the history of Europe and the world. Despite the numerous challenges this phenomenon entails, it brings more benefits than costs. A clear majority of developed countries benefit from immigration, both economically and socially. Poland has also nowadays experienced the benefits of immigration, as tens of thousands of immigrants (mainly from Ukraine) are living and working here, contributing for instance to making Polish agriculture highly competitive and to the advancement of science. At the same time, the influx of immigrants raises the challenging issues of their becoming included into the societies of the receiving countries and of ensuring that those countries and European institutions maintain control over the process. That is why, in considering the migratory processes currently underway, we draw attention to what we consider to be three basic issues in this regard:

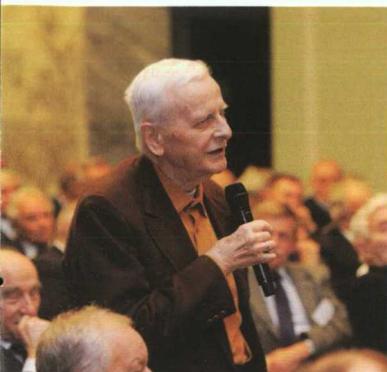
1. These migrations have led to the suspension of an important portion of the migration-related law in force in the EU, particularly the “first safe country” rule. As

a consequence, migrants have been moving practically unhampered, both within the EU and between third countries. That is causing negative consequences both for those migrants (exposing them to crime) and for the member states (losing control over migratory processes).

2. Migrants may have gotten the mistaken impression that the European Union is capable of offering a place to live to everyone who feels threatened in their countries of origin. Moreover, the ranks of migrants who clearly qualify for attaining refugee status within the EU have been further augmented by individuals whose main migratory motive is a desire to improve their quality of life.
3. The attempts that have been made so far to cope with this greater than anticipated influx of refugees have been of an ad-hoc nature. One of these has involved a proposal to create an obligatory, uniform instrument for relocating foreigners between member states, which has paradoxically been provoking additional problems. There is also a lack of significant progress in implementing important instruments, such as improving living conditions in refugee camps situated outside the EU borders and tightening up the borders of the Schengen zone.

The resulting impression is that migratory processes are not being controlled in any way, which provokes a societal reaction that is increasingly immigrant-averse. Poland and Polish society are among those to which this observation applies.





In view of the above, the General Assembly of the Polish Academy of Sciences draws attention to the need for measures of the following types to be undertaken:

- Recognizing that cooperation among EU member states under the framework of European solidarity should be key for resolving the current migratory problem. The objective of such measures should be to confirm the acceptance of a specific number of individuals with refugee status, offering them programs of integration meant to encourage them to stay in Poland. Non-governmental organizations have unique experience in this regard, and their potential can be harnessed towards achieving this goal. As a result, the scale of resettlements should be contingent upon the integration potential of Poland and Polish society. This would make it possible to avoid many of the mistakes that have been made by countries in the past when taking in foreigners, and it would also reduce the fears of Polish society.
- Undertaking broad efforts aimed at promoting attitudes of mutual openness between the receiving communities and immigrant communities. Research has shown that the goodwill of the host society depends in large part on facilitating personal contacts with immigrants and making members of the host society more aware of the common attributes shared by both communities. It is important to counteract the stereotype which sees immigrants as unequivocally associated with problems, including terrorism. Moreover, it should be stressed that hostility towards immigrants results in the opposite reaction, whereas openness leads to quicker immigration and the avoidance of potential problems.
- Remaining open to the inflow of migrants, in keeping with the country's immigration potential, while consistently honoring the rule that they must conform to the legal and social model that prevails in Poland. The Polish Academy of Sciences, particularly its various committees, declares its readiness to contribute to developing an optimal model for immigrant integration and identifying the causes for the failure of this process in many EU countries. The

basis for such a model must involve tools for effective integration, including broad access to the labor market and social services (educational and legal services, health care, etc.), and at the same a lack of tolerance for violations of the law or behaviors that run counter to the cultural patterns that prevail in Poland.

- Creating a system, more effective than at present, for preventing foreigners from being taken advantage of in the labor market (by being offered low wages or no vacation time) and violations of their basic rights (having their passports taken away or being restricted from leaving their places of residence and employment).
- In the context of immigration to Poland, the Poles and persons of Polish origin living abroad should not be forgotten. They should be offered opportunities in accordance with their needs.

The consistent pursuit of the above measures would make it possible to curb the negative consequences of migration processes and to reinforce the positive ones, while at the same time maintaining the basic principles that Polish society traditionally holds dear, based on tolerance, solidarity, hospitality, and providing assistance to those in need. If such measures are not taken, on the other hand, this may weaken the European Union and Poland's position within it, limit the competitiveness of our economy, and exacerbate the difficulties with finding a response to demographic challenges. ◀



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