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Changes in the Involvement of Polish Local Governments in Public Policies Addressing Involuntary Migration Following the 2022 Inflow of Ukrainian Forced Migrants

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This paper analyses the changes in the involvement of Polish local governments in the system of public policies addressing the needs of forced migrants in Poland. The driver of such changes was the humanitarian emergency connected to the influx of Ukrainian forced migrants in 2022, which followed the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In a multi-level governance context, the article unpacks the policy-change process, discussing the interplay between the Polish public-policy system, the political context, the state polity, and local governments' activity. During the humanitarian emergency, the external circumstances for local governments' operations altered. Many local authorities attempted to expand their involvement, while sometimes questioning the inter-institutional power balance. The functional role – the scope of their responsibility and the activities that they undertake – of local governments in the discussed policy system was temporarily extended. Moreover, in the context of power relations between the actors of the policy system, their structural position vis-à-vis other stakeholders was redefined, as their agency and political impact increased. This article concludes that the above, mostly temporary, changes will have implications for the broader development of the Polish migration-policy system, resulting in Polish local governments inflicting greater political impact on such a system in the future, while also maintaining increased activity around policies addressing forced migrants.

Keywords: forced migration, 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, local government, policy change, multi-level governance (MLG)

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Introduction

While the post-1989 decentralisation of the Polish public-governance system provided Polish local governments with relatively wide discretion in public management (Swianiewicz 2014; 2019), their prerogatives around refugee and migration policy-making remained limited (Buraczyński 2015). The development of migration and refugee policies in Poland had a centralised, top-down character, with the Polish Ministry of the Interior assuming the key role (Szonert and Łodziński 2016). The previous years, however, saw some changes to the above picture. These were prompted by an increase in the immigration of Ukrainians to Poland since 2015, the lack of an explicit state-level strategy on immigration and, thirdly, the discrepancy between the agenda of the conservative Law and Justice government and the policy needs in large Polish cities. The above stimulated the development of local migration policies – e.g. in cities such as Gdańsk, Wrocław, Warsaw or Cracow. Cooperation between local governments and NGOs were a primary driver for such developments (Matusz-Protasiewicz and Kwieciński 2018; Wach and Pachocka 2022). As suggested by Cichocka *et al.* (2022), the changing migration profile of Poland to some extent necessitated such a response from some local governments and their civil-society partners. Notably, the emergence of the Polish *Willkommenskultur* – referring here to the German concept which best translates as *welcome culture* – which rose in prominence particularly around 2015, in the context of the mass influx of forced migrants in Europe, mostly in urban settings, palpably decoupled in that period from the far-right government's xenophobic, anti-refugee narrative and a securitarian policy agenda (see Klaus, Lévy, Rzeplińska and Scheinost 2018; Szonert and Łodziński 2016), particularly around the 2015 parliamentary elections campaign.

In early February 2022, Russia invaded the whole territory of Ukraine, forcing 3 million people, 95 per cent of whom were Ukrainian citizens, to cross the Polish border between late February and April 2022 (Duszczyk and Kaczmarczyk 2022). This resulted, in Poland, in a tangible humanitarian emergency across the country. The notion of a humanitarian emergency denotes in this context a set of new challenges for public-policy stakeholders, connected to the need to urgently assist an unprecedented (in the Polish context) number of forced migrants – with the support ranging from basic social aid to the fostering of newcomers' socio-economic integration.

While, at that point, the competence of local governments in the area of forced migration remained limited, such an emergency provoked many (often temporary) developments of a legal, institutional and societal nature. Respectively, in the area of law, one could mention the introduction of a legal act regulating local governments' involvement in supporting Ukrainian forced migrants, the establishment of new legal pathways enabling local governments to devote financial assets to supporting forced migrants or the loosening of regulatory constraints on local governments' finances. In terms of institutional developments, there has been an intensification in the communication between local and central government – or the reinforcement of grassroots, semi-formal cooperation on a local level. On a societal level, one could mention the severity, mass-scale and dispersed nature of the cited humanitarian emergency, as well as its wider social perception in Polish society.

The above developments impacted on local governments' functioning, changing the situation in the key areas that their representatives must take into consideration when they decide whether or not to get involved in specific policy issues. Among such areas one can mention, firstly, local governments' finances (e.g., an increased discretion in the funding of support for forced migrants and the availability of additional funding to cover extracurricular expenses). Secondly, the relevant law regulating local governments' activities (most importantly, greater managerial leeway on the part of local authorities, resulting from the temporary assignment of new formal prerogatives to local authorities – but also an informal acquiescence for them to undertake the steps necessary to support Ukrainian migrants). Thirdly, local authorities' horizontal and vertical relationships with other policy stakeholders (e.g., the reinforcement of local governments' institutional

bargaining power and the strengthening of local authorities' external cooperations). Then, the societal context of their work also changed significantly – most importantly due to the public furtherance for the state's involvement in the provision of support to forced migrants. Finally, there were changes to local authorities' in-house capacity – based on an *ad-hoc* mobilisation of in-house resources around the discussed policy issue, on a development of institutional capital based on a new, hands-on experience of working with forced migrants or on a greater availability of external expertise.

To sum up, the analysed changes provoked local governments to step in, impacting on their engagement with the system of forced-migration policies and, as a result, leading to a temporary decentralisation of the system of policies addressing forced migrants in Poland. Indeed, during the emergency, many local governments deployed activities to provide aid to forced migrants. They formally assumed a range of responsibilities from the state authorities and performed an even more extensive range of tasks on an informal basis.

This resulted in a change in the structural position of Polish local governments *vis-à-vis* other policy stakeholders. In other words, the formers' agency and political impact increased, in the context of power relations between the actors of the policy system. Moreover, the local governments' functional role within this system was altered – in other words, the scope of their responsibility and the activities that they undertake to contribute to the system's functioning. Such changes, it is argued in this article, are likely to remain a temporary phenomenon. However, some of their implications may be sustained in the future, impacting on the development of a broader migration-policy system in Poland. Notably, local governments can be expected to sustain some of their extended activity around forced-migration policy, while their overall impact on the broader policy system is also likely to increase in the future.

This issue is addressed in this article. In the analysis, I discuss the tenacity of the identified changes and their possible impacts on a broader migration-policy system in Poland. Moreover, looking in depth into the above developments, the article highlights the interplay between the specific activities of Polish local governments, the Polish system of public policies, the country's political context and its polity. Crucially, within a neo-institutional paradigm of analysis, it dissects the process of policy change in the specific context of the above-cited policy system.

The article contributes to the literature exploring the applicability of a multi-level governance (MLG) framework for migration-policy analysis (explored earlier, for example, by Caponio and Jones-Correa 2018). It focuses specifically on a process of policy change within an MLG structure, discussing institutional inter-dependencies in the context of a humanitarian emergency. It helps to address the 'under-theorisation [of] bottom-up processes through which local governments affect national immigration policy, vertical processes connecting local immigration policy to global governance, and horizontal processes connecting multiple local governments' (Filomeno 2017: 6).

The structure of the article is as follows: firstly, the key concepts and the broader theoretical paradigm for the analysis are outlined. Then, the study's methodology, its design and the scope of the analysis are presented. This is then followed with an analysis of the evidence collected and the presentation of results. The penultimate section presents the overall conclusions of the article, before the final one – the discussion – addresses some of the key broader considerations emerging from the analysis.

Concepts, definitions and a theoretical background

Multi-level governance

This study applies a lens of multi-level governance (MLG) to conceptually frame local governments' policy-making engagement alongside a central government. MLG is a form of policy governance where a dispersion of state authority occurs across 'a multiplicity of politically independent but otherwise interdependent actors' (Schmitter 2004: 72), while sub-national actors' leverage over policy management increases (Bache and Flinders 2004). In principle, non-public stakeholders involved in decision-making within an MLG system form relationships with public stakeholders within a framework of 'non-hierarchical networks based on cooperation and consensus building' (Caponio 2021: 1592). As such, 'MLG is not necessarily stateless but it is not wedded to statehood either' (Börzel 2021: 127). MLG co-exists with other forms of governance (Caponio 2021: 1592) and can materialise in a dispersion of state authority, both vertically – to stakeholders on other levels of public administration – as well as horizontally, through a dispersion of state power to non-public stakeholders (Bache and Flinders 2004). Moreover, MLG should be seen as inherently underpinned by power relations and political dynamics and analysed as such (Caponio 2021: 1602–1603). An important feature of MLG is that it constitutes 'at the same time a theory of political mobilization, of policy-making, and of polity structuring' (Piattoni 2010: 26). Such a conceptualisation emphasises that actions undertaken by stakeholders within an MLG system simultaneously interfere with a given political context, with a system of public policies as well as with a polity of a given state.

Stability and changeability of a policy system

This study focuses on the process of a change in a given policy system. To better understand how an interplay between the tenacity of policy structures and stakeholders' pro-active bargaining might challenge or reinforce such structures (hence, possibly prompting a policy reform), I deployed a neo-institutional analytic framework. Therefore, I assume that the boundaries of policy-makers' decisive and executive capabilities and, therefore, the way in which institutions operate, are determined by the interaction of formal and informal elements (Lowndes and Leach 2004). Indeed, an institutional change is understood as 'a creative, negotiated and contested process (...) shaped by institutional constraints in the external political environment and within specific local contexts, [as] institutions have meaning and effect only through the actions of individuals' (2004: 561–563). Alongside regulatory reforms, policy change results from the activities of policy stakeholders who interpret policy frameworks, reinforcing or contesting and redefining established policy structures and hierarchies through their activities and communication acts (see Benz 2019).

The above resonates well with the understanding of policy-making that is seen as organised around a policy path which, in turn, is an 'entrenched way of unifying, organizing, and regulating a certain policy field [being in fact a] discursive terrain'. Such 'structured coherences' (Torfing 2001: 288) increase the likelihood that certain patterns of interdependencies between stakeholders (sets of power relations) will be maintained in an ongoing, iterative process of reproduction and transformation. Such constellations are then challenged by policy stakeholders engaging in path-shaping (2001: 289). A policy reform occurs through the 'dislocation' of a policy path, where the challenges that cannot be mitigated by the system in place lead to the 'dissolving of the structured coherence of a policy path, [while] sedimented institutions become destabilised, and fixed meanings start to float' (2001: 288). This allows for a political disarticulation and rearticulation and a window of opportunity opens for new agencies to push for policy changes.

Regarding local governments, arguably the key structural changes resulting from the above developments, within a specific policy system where local governments are involved, can be interpreted as a movement either

towards centralisation or towards decentralisation. In that context, building on Rondinelli's understanding of decentralisation (1999: 2), the following definition of this process was adopted for this study: decentralisation is a redistribution of 'authority, responsibility and financial resources for providing public services among different levels of government' and to other stakeholders involved in public decision-making.

Design of the study and research methods

Three qualitative research methods were used in this study, following an exploratory-sequential design. Firstly, a qualitative systematised review of the literature was conducted, covering academic articles, grey literature and (local) media sources on the development of Polish migration and refugee policy over the last two decades (including local governments' involvement) as well as the evolution of the Polish local governance system since the late 1990s, with a specific focus on the period from 2015 onwards. The non-systematic overview of the literature covered local governments' participation in migration policy-making in the context of MLG systems, provided a point of reference for the analysis and generated hypotheses for my own study. The reviewed legal framework covered Polish laws directly and indirectly regulating the functioning of local governments, as well as the legal measures addressing both voluntary migrants and forcibly displaced persons in Poland. Additionally, the regulations introduced in Poland in response to the 2022 humanitarian emergency have been reviewed. On top of that, 10 semi-structured, online interviews with policy stakeholders were conducted, following a purposive sampling logic. The consultees included representatives of local governments and local government associations (in villages, towns and large and small cities, across different regions of Poland), NGOs and academic experts (see Table A1). Several persons consulted for the study performed more than one of the above roles, holding policy-expertise based on their involvement in different institutional roles and, hence, providing a multi-dimensional view to the circumstances under analysis.

These research methods were chosen to reflect the theoretical paradigm for the analysis. They provided me with an insight into the formal and informal factors that impact on stakeholders' involvement in the discussed policy. The chosen methodology allowed me to capture the subjective viewpoint of the stakeholders involved (through the interviews and the analysis of stakeholders' public communication), the broader societal context of their activity (the analysis of media sources and the review of the academic and grey literature) and the legal-institutional framework for their activity (the legal framework analysis). The choice of resources and materials to be reviewed and the sampling of the stakeholders to be consulted, allowed me to examine the situation at different levels of public governance. This reflected the study's focus on the MLG characteristics of the analysed policy system with the aim of capturing inter-dependencies between such different levels.

When it comes to the scope of the study, the core analysis covers the period from February until October 2022. The study addresses stakeholders' policy-making and policy-implementation activities, as well as a range of *ad-hoc* activities in which local governments engage when responding to the emergency under discussion. In some cases, such activities were then sanctioned by law. Their implementation intertwined with the deployment of formalised policies. It also activated bottom-level stakeholders and provided room for the political agendas of local governments to be substantiated and reasserted – thus contributing to path-shaping in the area of migration policy.

The article refers to 'policies addressing forced migrants', meaning a diverse set of policies addressing the needs of persons who arrived in Poland having experienced non-voluntary migration. While a majority of forced migrants who arrived in Poland in 2022 were addressed in the *Act of 12 March 2022 on Support for the Nationals of Ukraine* – this act transposed into Polish law the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) 2001/55/EC – the situation for such individuals was different to that for asylum-seekers or refugees. In such a context, it should be noted that the activities of local governments, described in this article, mostly addressed

the Ukrainian beneficiaries of the TPD 2001/55/EC. In this article, however, I argue further that the analysed developments might result in sustained changes to local governments' involvement around forced-migration policy and, moreover, might impact on diverse groups of migrants, beyond TPD 2001/55/EC beneficiaries only.

As the study was initially carried out as part of a Master's course at the London School of Economics and Political Science, its plan and methodological approach were subject to a standard ethical verification procedure at the LSE, having received approval from a responsible body at the university.

Analysis and results

This part of the article presents the analysis of the findings from the study and the results. The strategy for the analysis derived from a neo-institutional conceptual paradigm deployed for the study. Accordingly, it was assumed that, in order to understand how local governments manage their involvement in the discussed policy system, it is necessary to capture the dynamics of an ongoing redefinition of inter-institutional power relations therein – between different levels of the MLG system. It was assumed that such a pattern of relations and, hence, the interdependencies between local authorities and other stakeholders, would be determined both by structural factors in place and by the activities deployed by local authorities in relation to such circumstances. Hence, the analytic framework was designed in a way that allows it to capture how local governments, through the actions of their representatives, are impacted on by the framework conditions in which they operate and, at the same time, how local governments position themselves when confronted with such conditions, in the context of perceived opportunities and barriers, with the ultimate goal of achieving the best possible bargaining position within the policy system.

Accordingly, under such a framework, four broad areas of interest were identified for the analysis. Each of them is constituted by a group of factors that local governments have to consider when managing their involvement in policies addressing forcibly displaced persons. The cited typology was derived from an inductive analysis of the data collected in the study. It provides a structure for the analysis and allows for the integration of all the relevant evidence.

The first group of factors is constituted by the issues around the legal framework. The second group covers issues around finance. The third category includes relationships and communication between local governments and the state government, as well as relationships between local governments and residents in their respective local areas. Finally, the last group is constituted by issues around cooperation between local governments, their local partners (including local government associations, other local government units and CSOs) and their partners abroad. This part of the analysis touches upon earlier cooperation within such inter-institutional networks and the role of capital generated on the basis of such experiences.

For each of those categories, the analysis discusses the background situation and the changes that occurred after February 2022. I show how such changes observed in the study (or the lack thereof, where none were identified) impacted on local governments' involvement in policies addressing forced migrants. Wherever possible, in the context of the discussed humanitarian emergency, the analysis explores an interplay between, on the one hand, the tenacity of the existing structures and practices and local governments' activities that either challenged or mobilised and reinforced them, on the other.

Legal framework regulating local governments' involvement in forced migration

Starting with the background legal framework for the Polish local-governance system, it should, firstly, be explained that, in Poland, such a system consists of three tiers. These include: 16 regions or voivodships (in

Polish: *województwo*), each of which is divided into counties (in Polish: *powiat* – there are 314 counties in total) and the latter then split into municipalities (in Polish: *gmina* – 2,477 in total) (Sekuła 2016: 67). Both the remit of Polish local governments and their discretion in public management (under the unitary state polity) are determined by the existing legal framework – namely, the acts on: *Municipal Governments (1990)*, *County Governments (1998)* and *Regional Governments (1998)*.

Based on the above acts (respectively: 1990: Art. 7–8; 1998: Art. 4; 1998: Art. 14) and the Polish Constitution (Art. 146 1–2; Art. 163–166), local governments must take responsibility for those elements of ‘public matters’ pertaining to ‘the matters connected to the local governments’ communities’ but not for ‘state policy’ (Izdebski and Kulesza 1999: 131). A broad range of responsibilities is defined through an explicit enumeration only for Polish counties. Municipal and regional governments’ responsibilities are defined through general clauses instead. Based on these, municipalities and regions should address ‘municipal matters’ and ‘regional matters’, respectively (Izdebski and Kulesza 1999: 131). Local governments can also be commissioned to perform additional tasks, based on separate legal acts. Local authorities’ tasks are then categorised as their *own tasks* or *commissioned tasks*. The first tasks ‘aim at meeting the needs of a local government’s community’ and the latter are state policy-related tasks transferred to local governments. *Commissioned tasks* are financed by the central government, while local governments’ *own tasks* should be financed from their own budgets (Małecka-Lyszczyk 2013). The Polish Constitution guarantees that local governments will be provided with sufficient resources to deliver their own tasks. Importantly, for municipal governments (the lowest level of the Polish local-governance system), some of their own are defined as *obligatory* and some as *non-obligatory* – and municipalities are obliged to deliver the first, whereas delivery of the latter is ‘dependent on needs and financial capabilities of a given unit’ (2013: 62).

None of the laws discussed above specifically include refugee- and immigration-related tasks in the range of local governments’ responsibility. Some of such tasks, however, were commissioned to local governments through separate acts, most importantly the *Act of 12 March 2004 on Social Assistance*. This regulation obliges institutions of all three tiers of the local-governance system to fulfill the basic social needs of eligible individuals, on a local scale (Art. 3; Art. 16). Delivery of most of the social-service-related tasks was commissioned to counties and municipalities in the form of their *own* or *commissioned* tasks. For municipalities, some of these tasks were also made *obligatory* (1998 *Act on County Government*: Art. 19–20; 1990 *Act on Municipal Government*: Art. 17–18). Generally speaking, the act qualifies foreigners who have certain residence statuses to access social services provided on the territory of Poland. Article 5, indeed, lists such eligible statuses, including, for instance, refugee status, subsidiary protection status or a residence permit granted on a humanitarian basis.

Having said that, however, the Polish law, to some extent, empowers local governments to implement social-policy measures of their own choice, with a certain degree of discretion and autonomy. Based on the constitutional rule of the *presumption of tasks* (The Polish Constitution of the 2nd of April 1997, Chap. 7, Art. 163), local governments are allowed to perform any such public tasks that are not explicitly reserved for the remaining public authorities. Municipalities are additionally expected to fulfill any local-governance-related tasks that are not commissioned by the two other tiers of a local government (1997, Art. 164.3). Empowered to autonomously shape public policy on a local scale, municipalities benefit from a relatively wider autonomy than regions and counties, even if their discretion is still limited (see Jaworski 2020; Korczak 2020; Kotarba 2016).

Legal framework introduced after February 2022 to regulate local governments' involvement in forced migration

In response to the humanitarian emergency of February 2022, some changes to the described legal framework were introduced. Crucially, Polish local governments were assigned with additional prerogatives and tasks based on the *Act of 12 March 2022 on Support for the Nationals of Ukraine...*¹ As a result, their autonomy formally increased and their capacity around development of policy initiatives addressing the needs of forced migrants was extended. Indeed, local governments performed a range of tasks resulting from the above-mentioned legal changes. At the same time, they also actively sought legal pathways to step in such cases, where certain forms of involvement were not explicitly backed by the existing legal framework, while they were seen as vital 'on the ground'. Some activities were also undertaken informally.

Most importantly, in this context, the legal Act of 12 March commissioned Polish local governments (municipalities to a great extent), to undertake a range of tasks aimed at aiding the newly arrived forced migrants on an *ad hoc* basis, 'within the remit of [local governments'] financial capabilities and based on their own initiative' (Art. 12.4). Local authorities were allowed to determine the specific scope, form and mode of delivery of such support (Art. 12.5).² The tasks outlined in the regulation included, *inter alia*, the registration and issuing of residence documents (Art. 4.1–4.2), the provision of financial support to local dwellers who hosted Ukrainians (Art. 13.1) and to displaced Ukrainians themselves (Art. 31), the provision of psychological support (Art. 32), guardianship over unaccompanied minors (Art. 25) or the provision of education and support in education (Art. 50, 52, 53). Beyond that, local governments could deploy an array of basic social-support initiatives (Art. 12.4) – for example, covering accommodation, medical care, alimentation, transport and hygiene (Art. 12.1.1–7). Importantly, they could also undertake any 'other actions necessary for the provision of support' (Art. 12.1.8). Finally, local governments could provide the displaced persons (defined in line with the *Council Directive 2001/55/EC*)³ with the social (Art. 29) and financial (Art. 26) support available to Polish citizens, including that based on the above-mentioned 2004 *Act on Social Assistance*. Overall, local governments were commissioned to deliver their usual public services to forced migrants too, including the delivery of local authorities' respective *obligatory* tasks.

One of the interviewed local-government representatives noted that Ukrainian forced migrants were officially recognised by the Polish administrative system and were provided with PESEL numbers (the Polish personal administrative identification number). Such a formal recognition translates into the assignment of legal residence status to individuals, thus allowing local authorities to address such persons with public-funded support. At the same time, the provision of support to foreigners who do not benefit from formal recognition by the state is not imposed on Polish local governments through any of the local government laws, the 2004 *Act on Social Assistance*, the 2013 *Act on Foreigners* nor the 2003 *Act on Provision of Protection to Foreigners on the Territory of the Republic of Poland*.

One example of a legal solution developed in response to the 2022 emergency allowed Lublin's authorities to employ Ukrainian teachers, thus removing a formal difficulty around employing foreigners in the Polish system of education. This step was possible thanks to the adjustment of the existing regulation established to support the Roma minority. The regulation's scope was expanded to hire Ukrainian-speaking teachers 'in the capacity of non-Roma assistants'.⁴ According to one interviewee, 'The city of Lublin, already in March [2022], in cooperation with the Polish Center for International Aid, hired the first 50 teachers in local schools'. The interviewee explained that such ingenious legislative solutions tend to be shared among Polish local governments, who frequently support each other through exchanging knowledge – and went on to suggest that:

In our capacity as local governments, we cooperate and exchange experiences, under the umbrella of the Association of Polish Cities, or in the Union of Polish Metropolises. (...) The solution regarding Ukrainian teachers was deployed across Poland and resulted in the hiring of more than 1,000 teachers across the country.

Some local governments in large cities deployed and upscaled their own local policy frameworks addressing migrants. Such frameworks had already been primarily developed in the years preceeding the 2022 invasion. For instance, according to one of the interviewed public officials, the local migration policy structures in Cracow had been established because the local authorities there had been ‘pragmatically seeking the legal basis that would enable [them] to work locally on the integration of foreigners’. Such policy structures in large cities served some local governments as a formal basis for the immediate deployment of support to foreigners, immediately after the mass influx of forced migrants commenced in February 2022. In some cases, such structures were then upscaled and adjusted to respond to the new challenges – most notably, to foster the socio-economic integration of forced migrants.

Another example that can be cited in this context is the informal relocation of displaced persons within Poland. Some interviewees stated that they had been forbidden by the central government’s regional representatives to get involved in this type of activity. As one of these officials stated:

When it comes to cooperation with other local governments, in general, this [was] forbidden. (...) The most important subject for us, the relocations, is something we [had] no impact on. We were relocating people to Germany, Italy, Portugal or France, while we [were] forbidden to relocate people to the neighbouring municipalities.

The official explained that his unit ‘had been in conversation with another Polish city – as the latter could potentially host migrants relocated from Lublin – but there was no green light from the state authorities’. In practical terms, the problem had been that the interviewee’s city ‘could not send a coach to [the other city] and [the other city] could not send a coach to [them]’. As a result, the authorities could only informally encourage the newcomers to relocate for themselves, through the use of public transport. On top of that, there were, of course, cases of relocation of displaced persons abroad, co-organised by local authorities and their foreign counterparts. The examples include: Cracow (Kraków.pl 2022) and Nowy Sącz (nowysacz.naszemiasto.pl 2022).

Finance as a driver or a barrier for local governments’ involvement

Another issue touched upon in this analysis is local governments’ finances. Indeed, the ability of local authorities’ to provide support for displaced persons is tangibly curbed by their budgets. Firstly, there are constraints that the regulatory framework imposes on them when it comes to the management of their finances. Secondly, having limited resources, local authorities are obliged to deliver on many different public policies. Hence, when committing extracurricular expenditure to support forced migrants, they potentially risk failing in the delivery of their basic tasks. Indeed, facing the 2022 emergency, some local governments complained that:

Every municipality that hosts displaced persons, de facto decides to fail in exercising its expenditure plan regarding public services (...) due to the costs connected to the new tasks, increased workload or indirect costs (Samorządowy Okrągły Stół 2022: 30).

On the other hand, specific changes were implemented to the legal framework and additional funding was provided to local authorities. Such developments enabled the involvement of local governments, which also accessed alternative sources of income, thus increasing their capacity to fund support for forced migrants. In this context, it is worth mentioning that, according to the OECD, the condition for effective decentralisation is a subnational fiscal autonomy, as ‘subnational governments need own-source revenues beyond grants and shared tax revenues – and they need to develop other sources of revenue to have a balanced basket of revenues’ (2019: 12).

Turning, now, to examples illustrating the above changes, the act of 12 March formally allowed local governments to commit public funding to finance the support that they now had to deliver. The new tasks were transferred to local governments in the form of ‘commissioned tasks [shifted from] the central government’s remit’. This indicated that there should be adequate financing provided to local authorities to cover their new responsibilities. Such funding was, indeed, delivered through the fund established in one of the state-owned banks (Art. 14). To allow local governments to commit resources to aid the newcomers, the special Act allowed them to suspend some of their operations (Art. 112), adjust their annual budgets and multi-annual financial prognoses (Art. 111) and repurpose the funding from certain sources (Art. 31 a–b, 34, 36). It also allowed for derogations from the Polish *Public Procurement Law* and from the *Law on Public Finances*. Finally, some of the regulatory limitations on the scope of central government’s contribution to local governments’ and non-public institutions’ expenses were repealed.

The State Council of the Regional Accounting Chambers (*Krajowa Rada Regionalnych Izb Obrachunkowych*), which audits and controls Polish local governments’ financial management, issued a direct communication whereby local governments were additionally reassured about the loosening of the financial restrictions on their expenditure (*Krajowa Rada Regionalnych Izb Obrachunkowych* 2022a, 2022b). Such a step was an important enabler of local authorities’ involvement, given that both previous research (e.g. Smith 2000 on British local governments) and the communication from Polish local governments (Samorządowy Okrągły Stół 2022: 32) suggested that the lack of a clear regulatory pathway to increased engagement might result in concerns among local governments that they would see their expenditure questioned by the relevant controlling bodies.

While the above changes empowered local governments to get involved, the cited act was introduced only as a mitigation measure, following the outbreak of the emergency. In the first days after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, Polish local governments could not formally finance their new, intended involvement. As a temporary measure, they were, therefore, given an informal acquiescence by regional representatives of the central government (‘a gentlemen’s agreement with the *voivode*’, as one interviewee described it). They were also promised that the incurred expenses would be reimbursed by the state authorities after the relevant regulations were introduced. Some of my interviewees highlighted that local governments’ financial discretion is often based on an informal top-down consent granted by central government in an *ad-hoc* manner, under given circumstances (in the past, for example, during the Covid-19 pandemic). Similarly, the scope of local governments’ discretion in the development and implementation of policies supporting forcibly displaced persons is also, to a great extent, dependent on the in-hand agenda mandated by central government. Additionally, during the 2022 emergency, the funding was received too late and – as of 2022, when this analysis was carried out – many local governments received reimbursement for only some of their additional expenses. For example, due to such financial challenges, Lublin – a city of approximately 350,000 which hosted around 70,000 forced migrants as of August 2022 – found it necessary to cancel the multi-million construction of the municipal authorities’ new office building.

To cope with such issues, local governments first accessed and benefitted from non-state funding. For instance, EU member states were allowed to deploy Cohesion Funds and FEAD to support the displaced

persons during the 2022 humanitarian emergency (Council of the European Union 2022b). In Lubelskie, the European Social Fund was deployed in response to the discussed events (ROPS Lublin 2022), while other examples included the Interreg (EU Cohesion Policy-funded instrument for interregional cooperation in the EU) and funding from the Polish–German Youth Cooperation (Stowarzyszenie Gmin Polskich Euroregionu Pomerania 2022). On top of that, the support received from major humanitarian support agencies such as the UNHCR or UNICEF co-financed the emergency-related tasks of local authorities – for instance, in Cracow.

Another vital source of financial support for local governments was direct and indirect contributions from Polish civil society. In practical terms, individuals, organisations and businesses covered much of the costs connected to the provision of support to newcomers across the country. Alongside making direct financial donations, individual people across the country had funded or directly provided alimentation, healthcare or housing for newcomers and thus took on much of the costs that would otherwise have had to be covered by public authorities. The scale of such a contribution was significant enough for one of the interviewees to describe the wider Polish society or local governments as temporary ‘main sponsors’ in the context of this humanitarian emergency.

Communication between local authorities, local residents and the central government

Another factor that impacted on local governments’ involvement in the analysed policy system was the relationships formed between local authorities and, firstly, residents in the local governments’ respective areas and, secondly, the state government. This article addresses such relationships, acknowledging the importance of considering: ‘forms of interaction that exist between different policy levels (vertical modes of interaction)’ and extending beyond ‘different cities and countries (horizontal modes of interaction)’, in order to avoid insulating local policy-making from the broader context of democratic and institutional systems (Dekker, Emilsson, Krieger and Scholten 2015: 653).

During the Ukraine emergency, the changes to the policy system were mediated by local governments deploying soft power through communicative actions and, hence, contributing to a redefinition of inter-institutional power relations. This included the public negotiation of local governments’ systemic position and their prerogatives – and lobbying in favour of, or against, certain policy solutions. Public communication by some local governments in that period were of a coercive nature, clearly aimed at imposing certain structural changes. At the same time, the examples of more-frequent inter-institutional exchanges between different levels of public governance resonate with the OECD’s suggestion that the decentralisation of public management can be mediated by a change in the nature of the relationship between different levels of government towards cooperation and communication (OECD 2019: 155).

Indeed, the communication between local governments and the central government intensified in the analysed period, particularly regarding the frequency of exchanges between regional representatives of the central government and local authorities. This allowed those institutions to cover every-day crisis management on a local scale. Moreover, some institutional changes were introduced through the establishment of new units in the Joint Commission of the Local Governments and the Central Government (*Komisja Wspólna Rządu i Samorządu Terytorialnego*) under the Polish Ministry of the Interior. The aim of these changes was to facilitate the development of the legislative framework relevant to the crisis – a development which was, indeed, ongoing at the time (Portalsamorzadowy.pl 2022).

These changes provided local governments with the opportunity to deploy lobbying activities aimed at the achievement of the desired changes to the regulatory framework. In this respect, representatives of local authorities submitted memoranda to the central government’s representatives which listed the expected legislative changes. Allegedly, few such proposals resulted in the expected changes being actually

implemented. The explicit postulates of legislative changes were also articulated by local governments during the Polish Local Governments' Round-Table, a series of discussions initiated by Polish local governments in May 2022, bringing together key Polish public-policy stakeholders (Samorządowy Okrągły Stół 2022).

Secondly, turning to local government associations, the role of such bodies was pronounced particularly in large cities, where a cooperation of local stakeholders tends to be of a more political nature. Local government associations provided a platform for the articulation of the ambitions of some local leaders. Indeed, many such leaders perceived their own role during the Ukraine emergency as greater than stipulated in the relevant legal framework. As a result, they spoke of the expectation that they would be assigned greater responsibility in the management of Polish policy addressing forced migrants. The new circumstances provided local authorities with arguments supporting their desired changes to the inter-institutional power balance within the cited policy system.

Indeed, already before the crisis of 2022, associations of local governments had been vocal about the need to build the Polish *Willkommenskultur* on a municipal level, insisting on the development of support structures for asylum-seekers (Union of Polish Metropolises 2020, 2021). This materialised, for instance, in the signing of the 'Declaration on Cooperation (...) in the Area of Migration' (Union of Polish Metropolises 2017) by some large cities in Poland. After the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine in 2022, such associations publicly reasserted their position as stakeholders engaged in public-policy development, emphasising their 'social and ethical responsibility stemming from [their] new role of the hosts taking in persons in a difficult situation (...) ' (Union of Polish Metropolises 2022: 12), portraying themselves as 'bearing almost all the weight of responsibility' for hosting the forced migrants from Ukraine and thus 'facing the challenge of developing the new social and institutional solutions' (2022: 5; on education for the Ukrainian children: the Association of Polish Cities 2022). In their narrative they stressed that the central government did not perform well in responding to the humanitarian emergency and that its alleged failure to develop an effective state system in previous years had forced local governments in 2022 to address the new challenges in their own right (Yes! Local Governments' Movement for Poland 2022: 4, 9).

Some local authorities in large cities actively operated in the mainstream public discourse, stressing in their communications that they are best placed to take over the responsibility for both the implementation and the development of policy addressing displaced persons. Such a narrative included an appeal to establish a 'comprehensive and well-organised' system of forced migrants' reception, to replace 'the spontaneous and disorganised actions' of the central government (2022: 2). Such a system, it was suggested explicitly, should be developed by local governments, with the central government acting in a supporting capacity (Union of Polish Metropolises 2022: 13). In this context, informal conversations were held, during the meeting of one local-government association, between local leaders, who addressed the possibility of proposing a bottom-up project of the new state-policy framework that would cover both voluntary and non-voluntary migrants.

The above activities exemplify the pattern whereby the relative mobilisation of stakeholders previously less engaged in a given public policy leads to an increased likelihood of policy changes. Such a causal relationship was highlighted, for example, by Ongaro (2020) or, in an MLG context, by Benz and Broschek (2021). The latter noted that:

Policies and power relations provide reasons for designing or reforming institutions but both are also sources of change that affect institutions, [as] in processes of policy-making, actors modify their patterns of interaction, reinterpret rules and engage in contests over power and resources. In MLG, they not only exploit the room to manoeuvre in the different arenas of policy-making within, between and beyond governments but also follow functional requirements to shift powers between jurisdictions (2021: 263).

Another type of relationship maintained by local authorities in a democratic context is with local residents. Polish local governments both rule and are ruled, as part of a representative democratic system. In this context, public furtherance for Ukrainian persons in Poland was strong and almost unanimous. The above, together with increased media attention, facilitated the engagement of some local political leaders in the provision of support. Many local politicians were encouraged to directly engage with their communities. Such engagement took the form of either their participation in the deployment of substantive humanitarian aid on a local scale or appeals to residents of their respective constituencies to provide shelter and aid to newcomers.

Cooperation within institutional networks and an experience derived from a previous involvement in policy-making

Another type of issue that impacted on local governments' situation under the analysed circumstances were the implications of participation in horizontal networks. The (semi-)formalised structures facilitating cooperation between local-level stakeholders, the practices they had jointly developed and informal relationships built over the years of path-shaping around migration policy (on path-shaping see, e.g., Torfing 1999), allowed for the rapid provision of support to displaced persons. During the Ukraine emergency such structures, particularly in big cities, were upscaled, mobilised and, consequently, reinforced. This allowed for the immediate deployment of support, long before the state-coordinated, institutionalised solutions could be introduced by the central government (Polish Ombudsman's Office 2022). As a result, the bulk of the responsibility was shifted to local stakeholders at the very outset of the emergency. The cited developments, inherently connected to the mobilisation and development of local governments' networks, generated social and institutional capital on a local level and can be expected to impact on the power balance in the overall policy system.

Particularly since the 2015 so-called refugee crisis, local authorities in some large Polish cities have cooperated hands-on with civil society to establish local migration policies and accompanying institutional structures. Such efforts were necessitated by the inertia of the state authorities and the increasing presence and visibility of foreigners in Polish metropolises. The circumstances around the Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine and the inflow of migrants boosted the development of local migration policies in Poland. For instance, Cracow's municipalities, in the interview held for this study, suggested that the issues connected to foreigners' long-term integration would be accentuated in the updating of the city's strategic policy documents. Indeed, Cracow's multicultural policy: 'The Open Cracow' (*Otwarty Kraków*) was then evaluated in 2023, with a view to re-profile it to respond to the new, forced-migration-related challenges.

The social capital that enabled the involvement of some stakeholders had already been developed in Poland before 2022 – for instance, in the context of the humanitarian crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border (in this specific case, though, mostly among NGOs and other civil society stakeholders). In the context of the 2022 humanitarian emergency, the representative of the local government in Lublin explained that: 'A majority among [the persons engaged in provision of aid to displaced persons in the city], moments before this conflict, in Lublin, had been supporting another group of forced migrants, under the framework of *Grupa Granica*'.⁵

Indeed, the Social Committee for Aiding Ukraine (*Centrum Kultury w Lublinie* 2022) in Lublin (a collaboration between local NGOs and the municipal government) had been in operation since early 2022, both when the crisis was unfolding on the Belarussian border and in the context of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. As argued by the interviewee from Lublin's local government, 'The people who met 5 hours after the first bombs had been dropped, they knew each other. They knew (how to collectively organise support)', having taken part in the 15-year-long development of the city's migration policies. This capital facilitated a coordinated engagement of several thousand volunteers in Lublin in the first week of the war, including 460 individuals who spoke Ukrainian. At the same time, according to the interviewee, the human resources deployed by the

office of the central government's regional representative totalled 6 people deployed across 3 different areas of the city, who also lacked sufficient foreign-language skills.

Importantly, the Committee operated on a largely informal basis during both crises. According to the interviewee, the Committee 'did not have a legal status, nor its own bank account, had not been established with a legal act and, in such a form, it co-managed the city, handling dozens of millions of Polish *złoty*'. Such co-management was carried out based on the informal understanding shared between different institutions – 'Sometimes a city representative might say: "I understand that your NGO might undertake certain steps", to which the NGO would respond: "We also assume that the city would set up portable toilets in a certain spot"'. At the same time, the interviewee clarified that 'the committee had its own decisive body-making decisions on a consensus basis, without ever holding ballots, and (...) it was catching up once a week (as of summer 2022) and, as such, it was not an entirely informal initiative'. The interviewee concluded that 'This was the way that (policy stakeholders in Lublin) solve problems: (...) based on the built trust (...), with the diverse organisations sitting next to each other, benefitting from the local residents' "goodwill and support"'.

Some Polish local governments acted additionally as coordinators and intermediaries in the process of transferring of material support from abroad to Poland and then from Poland to Ukraine. Western-European local authorities sent humanitarian aid through their partner cities and villages across Poland, supporting both Ukrainians in Poland and those who had remained in Ukraine (see, for instance, *Piła.pl* 2022; *Wydminy.pl* 2022; *Żagań.pl* 2022). Similar efforts were also commonly undertaken by Polish local governments. One of the interviewed representatives of a medium-sized town in Southern Poland argued that their unit had been informally dispatching lorries directly to Ukraine, instead of relying on the central government's logistic channels, doubting the state government's ability to act efficiently under such urgent circumstances.

Another municipality's representative explained that:

[his city] and its Western-European partners dispatched more than one hundred lorries to [his city's] Ukrainian partner cities, with the first of such transport, from Switzerland, having crossed the Ukrainian border on the fourth day of the conflict (...), weeks before the coordination of humanitarian corridors in the South came into being.

The interviewee mentioned that 'all those lorries were being dispatched illegally', as the interviewee and their counterparts from other units across Poland had been forbidden by state authorities to engage in such an activity. Instead, they had been commanded to transfer the material aid to the voivode's warehouses, as only the freight handed over therein could be exempt from customs procedures. While it is not an objective of this article to assess the extent to which such a strategy could outperform the effectiveness of adhering to the central government's requests, the above examples illustrate that some local governments in Poland preferred to rely on their horizontal networks, rather than to co-operate with the central government. The existing horizontal networks were actively used for this purpose.

As far as the involvement of local-government associations is concerned, apart from activities supporting the coordination of local-government activities, I also identified some examples of associations that took on the role of facilitators of international cooperation, putting Polish and foreign stakeholders involved in a provision of support in touch with each other. For example, the Association of Polish Municipalities of the Pomerania Euroregion (*Stowarzyszenie Gmin Polskich Euroregionu Pomierania*), according to its interviewed representative, utilised its networks developed during the implementation of transnational programmes and acted as 'an intermediary' in communication between German NGOs and local authorities and stakeholders in Poland. This was indeed possible because the German partners of the association were perceived as long-time friends and were described as such in the interview. Cooperation such as that cited exemplify a reinforcement

of contacts between local government units. Such a change during the Ukraine crisis led to a better institutional coordination and improved information exchange, contributing to local authorities' capacity to act.

When discussing local governments' horizontal networks, one important caveat to be made is that some of the NGO-sector representatives argued that their sector's role in mitigating the emergency was underappreciated in public discourse *vis-à-vis* the role of local authorities. The NGO coordinator's response, in our interview in one of the largest Polish cities, pointed out that the *ad-hoc* involvement of Polish civil society suffered from a lack of sufficient resources and of previous subject-specific experience and knowledge. The reason for this was that, in the past, there had been hardly any opportunities in Poland to develop such know-how. While NGOs provided additional resources that strengthened the overall capacity of the public-policy system, in most cases, their involvement relied on private residents' time and effort, rather than on an implementation of sustainable strategies devised in advance. The above circumstances, according to the cited interviewee, in some instances resulted in NGOs becoming overburdened with responsibility, while local authorities significantly relied on their civil-society partners' support to cope with the circumstances. Rather than the poor management by the involved civil-society organisations, such a dynamic highlights the general reliance of the emergency response on private people's good will. This, in turn, points to the insufficiency of the available assets on all levels of governance and to the lack of a sustainable contingency framework in order to respond to such a large-scale humanitarian challenge as the events of 2022.

Discussion

In terms of the long-term implications of the developments discussed in this article, we should examine the extent to which such changes might have sustained impacts on the broader policy system and whether they can lead to a permanent policy change.

On the one hand, local governments' new involvement could be seen as mostly situational – an *ad-hoc* mitigation measure, rather than an indication of a long-term, extended commitment. Indeed, local governments stepped in because they were best positioned to respond to the inflow of migrants locally. To some extent, they were also forced to address the gaps in the system of immediate support for forced migrants. While the state authorities financially and legislatively empowered local governments to increase their involvement, such circumstances were created only temporarily and, as the changes in this area had a limited scope, they allowed local governments mostly to implement *ad-hoc* activities. In the long term, local authorities' formal prerogatives around forced migration in Poland remain limited and, formally, their impact on asylum and refugee policy is not significant. Moreover, from a political point of view, the interviewees unanimously agreed that, under the former government of the Law and Justice Party, a long-standing, substantive shift towards decentralisation seemed highly unlikely, as the party had pushed for a recentralisation of the overall public-governance system. This, generally, resulted in a deterioration of the state authorities' relationship with local-government communities.

On the other hand, local governments' mobilisation around the humanitarian emergency allowed some local authorities to accumulate institutional capital. This, in the future, could empower them to impact on the policy landscape. One can argue that the existing policy structures have been challenged and destabilised by the external circumstances and that a window of opportunity has opened for local governments to negotiate the power relations set in the policy system. The existing policy path was dislocated or, at least, temporarily destabilised, while bottom-level stakeholders, particularly local authorities in large cities, engaged in path-shaping around policies addressing displaced persons. The fact that some local governments seem to have identified a critical juncture in the analysed emergency illustrates that the circumstances around specific crises tend to be perceived differently by the various policy stakeholders. In this context, Torfing (2001: 289) pointed out that such

challenges might be seen, either as ‘a failure, a crisis, or a new opportunity (...)’, depending on a given stakeholder’s point of view.

Firstly, local authorities developed and reinforced institutional cooperation – both in the country and internationally – and reinforced their relationship with a broader civil society across the country. On a political level, some local leaders and their units were promoted and strengthened, having been commissioned to deliver a wider range of tasks, assume a greater scope of responsibility and enjoy greater managerial leeway. In general, local governments gained an opportunity to discursively reassert their own significance within the Polish public-governance system. They saw their political leverage extended and their impact on the Polish public discourse increasing. The emergency also created a space in which local authorities could highlight and negotiate specific regulatory issues in which they were interested (such as an overall insufficiency of local government revenues) in a direct communication with central authorities.

Moreover, the crisis provided the stimulus to update and further develop local migration policies, particularly in large cities. The updates were considered necessary to ensure that such policies could successfully address forced migrants’ specific needs and their increased presence in Poland. The external circumstances since 2022 allowed local governments to develop an experience in crisis management and in the deployment of humanitarian aid. There was an opportunity to gain such a hands-on experience under legal and financial constraints, with limited resources and under time pressure. On top of that, currently, the increased number of forced migrants residing in Poland provides an opportunity for local governments to develop an in-house, practical experience in the socio-economic integration of foreigners with forced-migration experience and in the provision of public services to them.

It is likely that some new institutional arrangements – the adjustments to the system of delivery of public services to foreigners, the reinforced network structures and, most importantly, the increased engagement and sense of responsibility of some local authorities – will be retained in the coming years. In this sense, the changes described might, in the long term, impact on the situation of migrants belonging to other groups than only the beneficiaries of the Temporary Protection Directive 2001/55/EC – such as asylum-seekers, refugees, and other groups of migrants characterised by greater vulnerability and, hence, requiring more extensive institutional support. The accumulated capital might also, in the long term, foster political ambitions, improve local governments’ bargaining position and stimulate their participation in discussions crucial to the development of the migration policy system in Poland. This includes both the development of policies addressing voluntary and involuntary migrants and the conversations regarding the very shape of the public governance system, under the framework of the Polish polity.

Conclusions

Turning now to the conclusions from the study, in this paper I analysed the process of policy change, based on the examination of various forms of local governments’ increased engagement in the policy system covering forced migrants in Poland. In late February 2022, after Russia invaded the whole territory of Ukraine, Poland saw a significant influx of Ukrainian forced migrants, which provoked a humanitarian emergency. In the light of such a challenge, the legal, budgetary and institutional arrangements of the system of policies addressing forced migrants proved insufficient to cope. Following the state government’s decision, the external circumstances for local governments’ activity changed significantly in areas such as law or finance. At the same time, a broader societal context for local governments’ activity shifted. Following such developments, local governments mobilised their own resources in order to respond to the new challenge all across the country.

Local authorities, both formally and informally, assumed a range of new responsibilities. Arguably, their involvement also surpassed what was explicitly commissioned to them based on the Special Act of 12 March 2022. While some activities were already pursued prior to February 2022, the new circumstances prompted local governments to increase their collective involvement – and this happened across an extended range of sub-areas of public policy. For large cities, the key resource that allowed for that was the capital generated in local-level migration policy-making in cooperation with civil society in the years before the 2022 full-scale invasion. During the crisis, the existing policy structures were upscaled and mobilised. Local governments, supported by NGOs and civil society, in many cases deployed humanitarian support in their own right, largely at their own cost and risk and facing financial and administrative challenges connected to such an involvement.

Following the above developments, the pattern of power relations within the policy system shifted. As a result, the crisis circumstances prompted a temporary redefinition of local governments' structural position *vis-à-vis* other policy stakeholders, within a broader policy system. In a *de facto* hierarchical set-up of the Polish local governance system, local governments' position was strengthened, as they gained more leverage in their ongoing relationship with the central government, while their ties with civil-society stakeholders became, strategically, closer and stronger. At the same time, local governments' functional role in the discussed policy system changed, as they temporarily became the key stakeholders in the implementation of activities addressed at helping forced migrants in Poland. The changes described in this article and the activities deployed by local governments in relation to such developments, increased local authorities' importance regarding the further development of the discussed policy system. While local governments in Poland tended to be largely excluded from this process in the past, during the Ukraine emergency, they increased their presence in the shaping process of the policy system.

Analysing how the above changes occurred, the article has highlighted an interplay between the regulatory and institutional structures of the unitary state and the local governments' activities that undermined the inter-institutional hierarchies within the forced-migration policy system. Through various activities, local governments either directly pushed for policy changes or at least indirectly impacted on policy-making processes, contributing to the development of the broader system. The examples of such an involvement included the deployment of communication activities in a public discourse, lobbying, the building of capacity based on the mobilisation of inter-institutional networks, increased engagement in the implementation of state policies, upscaling and the development of local migration policies, as well as local governments' involvement in a wide range of *ad-hoc* humanitarian initiatives.

Notes

1. Implementing the Council's Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/382 of 4 March 2022 Establishing the Existence of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons from Ukraine within the Meaning of Article 5 of Directive 2001/55/EC and Having the Effect of Introducing Temporary Protection (Council of the European Union 2022a) which, in turn, activated the provisions of the Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons (...) (Council of the European Union 2001).
2. Notably, the target group of the regulation was Ukrainian citizens and their families; however, beneficiaries of the TPD 2001/55/EC holding passports of other countries could legalise their residence based on the Directive.
3. Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on Minimum Standards for Giving Temporary Protection in the Event of a Mass Influx of Displaced Persons and on Measures Promoting a Balance of Efforts Between Member States in Receiving such Persons and Bearing the Consequences Thereof.

4. Described in the interview (in Polish) as ‘*asystenci nieromscy*’.
5. *Grupa Granica* (‘The Border’ Group) is the Polish social movement formed as a result of the widespread discontent with the reaction of the Polish central government to the events unfolding on the border between Poland and Belarus and the humanitarian crisis that resulted.

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