



Gdańsk

The frontrunner of inclusion policy in Poland

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1. Abstract & Takeaways

Key Takeaways

1

Together with cooperating local authorities, one engaged mayor can make a crucial difference of national importance.

2

The 'Immigration Integration Model' helps implement integration policies in a comprehensive way across municipal organisations.

What is unique about the city?

Prioritising inclusion and solidarity: Gdańsk is the leader in inclusion policy among Polish cities. Integration issues have been high on its political agenda for several years already. Municipal authorities, including the mayor, have repeatedly emphasised the need to undertake inclusion, solidarity, and anti-discrimination measures for the benefit of new Gdańsk residents.

What is the focus of local migration policies?

A comprehensive policy design: In 2016, Gdańsk adopted the Immigration Integration Model strategic document, which aims to design and implement integration policy in a comprehensive way across all municipal organisations. This model presently serves as an example of best practice for designing integration measures for other municipalities in Poland.

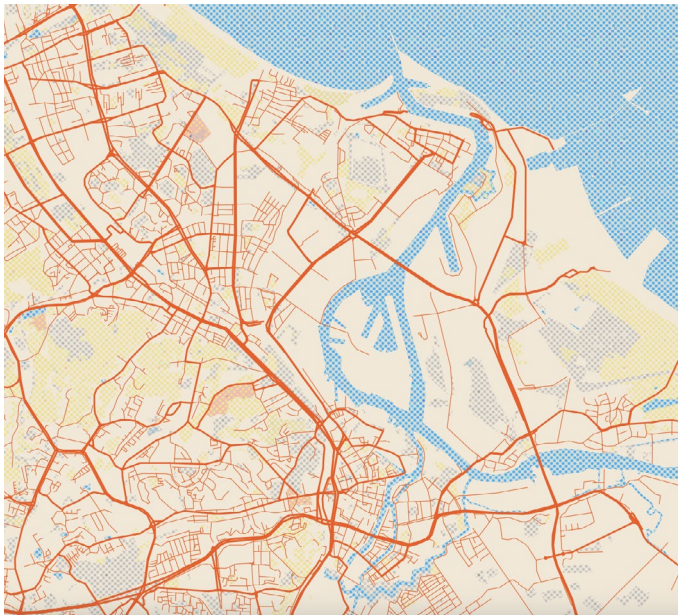
What are the key factors?

A mayor who made a difference: Former mayor of Gdańsk Paweł Adamowicz was the origin of much of the city's special engagement on migrant issues. In 2015, he was one of few Polish politicians who strongly advocated the need to provide help to refugees. On the initiative of the Centre for Supporting Immigrants, but also thanks to Adamowicz's personal involvement, Gdańsk began creating the Immigration Integration Model that would set the course of the city's integration policy.

Political activities and advocacy beyond the city level

Gdańsk took a public stance against restrictive national immigration policies and has advocated for the migrant rights in Poland on numerous occasions. Gdańsk promotes a pro-integration approach among other Polish cities through the Union of Polish Metropolises (UPM) Integration Team – which it helped set up. Together with other UPM members,

Gdańsk issued a statement expressing its willingness to offer shelter to children and families who were victims of the Moria refugee camp in Lesbos.



Population

470,805

Location

Capital of the Pomorskie Voivodship, situated on the Baltic coast of northern Poland

Mayor

Aleksandra Dulciewicz, Wszystko dla Gdańska (All for Gdańsk)

2. Local background and context

The main pillar of the city's migration policy is the strategic document **Immigration Integration Model** (hereafter IIM). It was developed as a result of work that lasted from 2015 to June 2016. The IIM was created by a group of experts, practitioners and officials from various areas – approx. 150 people in total, representing 70 local institutions and organisations. Foreign experiences were also used – Gdańsk took part in the mentoring programme of the Eurocities network concerning the implementation of standards for 'Integrating Cities'. The city's mentors were Barcelona, Ghent, and 'Migration Work' from the UK.

Needs-oriented policies

The development of the IIM also included the needs of migrants themselves. They were not only consulted during the writing of the document; they participated in its implementation from the start. As a result, the Council of Immigrants was appointed by the mayor of Gdańsk – a consulting body, but also a bridge between the migrant community and specific institutions or native residents of the city (more information on this below).

The objectives of the city's integration policy are presented mainly in the IIM. However, they are supplemented by indispensable anti-discrimination policies, provided in a separate document – the Model for Equal Treatment (hereafter MET). Both models were adopted by resolutions of the Municipal Council and became legally binding.

Special training for city officials

City officials performing their tasks are obliged to take integration and equality issues into account in performing their official duties, so they have to complete special training. Courses on the IIM and the MET were included in the programme of the so-called preparatory service – a series of lectures followed by a test. Further, two inspectoral positions were created in the municipal structure, one for migration and one for repatriation. They are responsible for the implementation of the IIM and introduce the migrants' point of view to the tasks performed by individual municipal units. Finally, the city budget includes funds for integration activities entrusted, for example, to social organisations to be used for their public tasks. In 2020 this amount was PLN 546,000.

A network of local institutions

The IIM oversees the realisation of integration activities and takes into account migrants' needs in eight main areas: education, culture, housing, social assistance, employment, discrimination/violence, local communities, and health. Such a wide-ranging area requires the city to cooperate with universities (e.g. the University of Gdańsk and Gdańsk University of Technology), the Municipal Family Welfare Centre, the Powiat Employment Office, social organisations, cultural institutions, and neighbourhood community centres.

Among public stakeholders, the Employment Office in Gdańsk is worth noting. A Department for Foreigner Employment and a Point of Assistance for Foreigners were created in its structure. The latter unit, apart from offering help in finding jobs, also provides migrants with information and legal services (consulting), which goes beyond the statutory scope of duties of employment offices. Since 2018, the Office also runs a competition for 'Foreigner-friendly Employer', whose aim is to identify, reward, and promote good practices connected to employing foreign workers.

Education

The city cooperates with schools, the University of Gdańsk, and NGOs. This cooperation brought, among others, the project Szkoła Różnorodności (School of Diversity) conducted by the Foundation Instytut Równowagi Społeczno-Ekonomicznej, as well as the popularisation of the role-playing game for pupils We are all migrants, created by the Nastyku association. The main partner of the city on the part of the local community is the Centrum Wsparcia Imigrantów i Imigrantek (CWII, Centre for Supporting Immigrants). This organisation initiated the creation of the IIM, is involved in its implementation, and realises various other projects to help immigrants on a daily basis, including integration counselling, legal consulting, Polish language classes or civil education (for details see below).

Annual forum

The annual 'Migration and Integration Forum' is an event that brings together the people and institutions involved in the implementation of the IIM, and integration supporters more broadly. The Forums are organised as part of the United by Gdańsk campaign. They also include other activities organised by the city, such as the 'Days of Diversity', and a website and a social media page. The city also supports conferences and other events that involve migrant integration.

3. Selected local approaches

3.1. The Immigrants' Council of Gdańsk

The role of the Immigrants' Council is to advise the mayor and other local authorities on issues and policies related to migrant and refugee integration. Other tasks of the Council are to amplify the voice of new residents, give witness to the city's openness, be a platform where foreigners can contact Polish inhabitants, and create narratives about successful integration.

Political participation of migrants

The Immigrants' Council of Gdańsk is the only mayor's consulting organisation in Poland which is composed of people of migrant origin (in other cities these are representatives of migrants' organisations or organisations that support migrants). The Council is composed of 16 people who are elected for two-year terms. Migrants who would like to become members of the Council may apply themselves, although they have to present recommendations that confirm their involvement in community activities that support integration. So far, members of the Council have come from different countries, with varied migration experiences, different socio-demographic background, and varied periods of residence in Poland or Gdańsk. There have been repatriated people, economic migrants, students, holders of Karta Polaka (Polish Card) and those who are applying for international protection. The Council is appointed each time by the mayor of Gdańsk. Members of the Council do not receive remuneration.

In practice, the work of Council members consists in consulting issues related to the implementation of the IIM, such as adjusting the participatory budget principles to the needs of immigrants, participating in competition committees, and promoting the IIM by appearing in the media and holding meetings with people responsible for making decisions on integration policy (self-government officials, the Pomeranian Voivode, the Consul of Ukraine). The Council is also involved in various projects organised by social organisations. For example, in 2017 the Council organised the Day of Solidarity with Refugees in cooperation with the European Solidarity Centre, and in 2019 some members of the Council visited schools as part of the School of Diversity project.

Strengthening the perspective of newcomers

The main activities of the Council include regular meetings with district councils and duty hours for residents of Gdańsk at neighbourhood clubs and community centres, where members of the Council talk both about the problems faced by immigrants in Gdańsk, and about the doubts and fears of residents related to the arrival of people of different cultures and religions. These meetings give Council members an insight into the actual integration situation in specific neighbourhoods. The conclusions of these meetings are then presented to the mayor of Gdańsk.

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, Council members have been providing foreigners with information about Covid-19 in different languages and offering various forms of assistance (material and financial support, help for victims of domestic violence).¹ The Immigrants' Council also has social media pages in different languages.

The Immigrants' Council in Gdańsk has been nominated for the Golden Fans prize, awarded by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and the members of the Council from Gdańsk were invited to the recruitment process of the European Migrants' Council.

3.2. Centre for Supporting Immigrants ('Centrum Wsparcia Imigrantów i Imigrantek, CWII)

The Immigrants Centrum Wsparcia Imigrantów i Imigrantek (CWII, Centre for Supporting Immigrants) is the front line of integration policy. The CWII initiated the IIM and was one of its key co-creators, it also started numerous other integration and anti-discrimination initiatives. At the same time, it is the first place in Gdańsk where migrants seek assistance. For several years the CWII has provided them with advice on their stay in Poland, organised Polish language courses, and offered educational support. One of the CWII's current projects is Welcome to Gdansk, financed by the city.

Multiple inclusion services under one umbrella

Welcome to Gdansk is a two-year project (until 2021) aimed at improving the quality of life of immigrants in Gdańsk and improving the systemic conditions for their integration with the local community. Under the programme, the CWII offers migrants help with ratifying their residence, handling formalities and dealing with problems connected with starting their new lives in Gdańsk. Foreigners may use the help of integration assistants at the office of the organisation, but also at neighbourhood community centres and libraries. If necessary, employees of the Centre accompany their clients during visits to public institutions, such as the Immigration Department at the Pomeranian Voivodeship Office or the Municipal Family Welfare Centre in Gdansk, i.e. the institution that is responsible for realising Individual Integration Programmes (IIPs).

¹ https://www.facebook.com/gdanskaraidaimigrantowiimi-grantek/?epa=SEARCH_BOXO

The CWII provides its consulting services in the form of in-person meetings and with the use of messaging software for sending documents. During the pandemic, services have been performed in the second way. In 2019, a YouTube channel was launched, where videos about the legalisation of stay, work, and life in Poland are published.

Supporting employment and education

Adult migrants are offered career consulting services. They include explaining the specifics of Polish labour law and helping to prepare a CV and other documents necessary to start work. Children and young people who have experienced migration and come from groups especially prone to exclusion receive support from educational assistants. The tasks of the assistants include supporting the children in school and in interactions with their peers, and solving potential conflicts including those caused by cultural differences. The assistants also conduct anti-discrimination workshops for students.

Inter-sector cooperation with municipal institutions

The Welcome to Poland project is not only financed by Gdańsk; it is also based on close cooperation between the project and municipal institutions involved in the integration process. Klaudia Iwicka, Vice-President of the Board of CWII pointed out: “As a non-governmental organisation, we are experienced in working directly with migrants; we know their problems and needs. This knowledge allows us to focus on filling the gaps in services addressed to migrants, but also on supporting self-government units in adjusting their services to migrants’ needs, creating policies to integrate immigrants with the local community.” She underlines: “Inter-sector cooperation is the key to successful integration”.

4. Advocacy and network activities

The city’s special engagement with migrants’ issues originates with the former mayor of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz. In 2015, he was one of a few Polish politicians who strongly advocated the need to help refugees. In doing so, he referred mainly to Christian values. He pointed to the global context of the problem and issues of global responsibility. On the initiative of the Centre for Supporting Immigrants, and thanks to the personal involvement of Adamowicz, in 2015 work began on the Immigration Integration Model that would set the course of the city’s integration policy. Even before the IIM was adopted, on the 27th of August 2015 the Municipal Council adopted one of Gdańsk’s first resolutions for its immigrant community. The resolution extended the list of who could apply for the lease of flats in municipal housing to include refugees.² The IIM was adopted in June 2016.

² <https://www.gdansk.pl/migracje/gdansk-200-mieszkan-dla-uchodzcow,a,43182> link to the resolution: https://baw.bip.gdansk.pl/UrządMiejskiw-Gdansk/document/531338/Uchwa%C5%82a-XIII_349_15

Opposing restrictive national immigration policies

After the national government changed in the autumn of 2015, Poland refused to participate in the European Union relocation programme and did not accept refugees from Syria and Eritrea.

“I feel ashamed of the government of my country, who persists in refusing to accept refugees”

Adamowicz wrote several years later in his book *Gdańsk jako wspólnota* (Gdańsk as a community).³ When Adamowicz was assassinated in January 2019, his successor as mayor was Aleksandra Dukiewicz. She continues his policy on migrants and refugees and was one of a few mayors in Poland who expressed willingness to receive refugees from the Moria camp after the fire in 2020.

Connecting to histories of solidarity

The intense work on integration policy that began in 2015 was initiated in the context of Poland’s planned participation in the relocation programme and inflow of people from Ukraine, although the presence of migrants in Gdańsk (approx. 15,000) had already been noticeable. In making this effort, Gdańsk wanted to respond to the needs of its new inhabitants of foreign origin, but also to present itself as an open, multicultural metropolis by referring to its historical past. The city also referred to the heritage of ‘Solidarity’ (Solidarność), the 1980s Polish movement for democratisation and systemic political transformation. The movement demanded, among other things, solidarity and social justice. The idea of Gdańsk being an open city also appears in various strategic municipal documents.

To promote this idea, Gdańsk has conducted a permanent social campaign addressed to its residents since 2017: ŁĄCZY NAS GDAŃSK (UNITED BY GDANSK). The motto of the campaign:

“We may differ in terms of our beliefs, places of origin, languages, cultures, sexual orientation, skin colour, or religion. At the same time we are united by the place where we chose to live – UNITED BY GDANSK”.⁴

³ Testament Adamowicza – wstyd mi, że Polska nie przyjęła uchodźców. (The Testament of Adamowicz – I am ashamed that Poland did not accept refugees) <https://ksiazki.wp.pl/testament-adamowicza-ws-tyd-mi-ze-polska-nie-przyjela-uchodzcow-6343713524959361a>
⁴ <https://www.gdansk.pl/laczy-nas-gdansk/>

This is the only such campaign in Poland.

Promoting pro-integration approaches among other cities

Gdańsk also promotes a pro-integration approach in other cities. Paweł Adamowicz founded the Integration Team within the Union of Polish Metropolises (UPM) and signed the Mayor’s Declaration on Cooperation

between the Cities of the Union of Polish Metropolises in the area of Migration (2017)⁵. The UPM's Integration Team is the main platform for collaboration between cities in the field of integration. Furthermore, in May 2020 the Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area, headed by the mayor of Gdańsk, has introduced systemic solutions for foreigners included in the so-called 'Minimum Standard in Integration'. These include the establishing of Poviats' Migration Teams, providing training for officials, offering free legal advice for foreigners, and organising Polish language courses for adults. The Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area is the first and the only region in Poland which has developed such solutions.

In September 2020, in response to the call of NGOs, Gdańsk (together with other members of the Union of Polish Metropolises) issued a statement expressing its willingness to offer shelter to children and families who were victims of the fire in the refugee camp in Lesbos⁶.

Gdańsk has been praised for its integration policy. In 2016, the Municipal Office in Gdańsk received the Złote Wachlarze (Golden Fans) Institution and Audience prize awarded by the Polish branch of the IOM for its consistent support for the integration of migrants.

5. Update: What is new in 2023?

- ◆ The deputy mayor of Gdańsk, Monika Chabior, condemned the national government's treatment of refugees from Africa and the Middle East who are on the border between Poland and Belarus for several years now, at the ICORN (International Cities of Refuge Network) Congress in June 2022. At the same time, she praised the city of Gdańsk and local civilians for their commitment and solidarity in welcoming Ukrainian refugees: "**Gdańsk's immigrant integration model** has proven successful in supporting refugees from Ukraine".⁷
- ◆ In April 2023, the City of Gdańsk, in cooperation with the 'Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' (Biuro Instytucji Demokratycznych i Praw Człowieka OBWE), organised a series of workshops for Polish and Ukrainian minors on «building an equal, inclusive and cohesive society based on the principles of mutual understanding and respect». They aim to raise awareness and counteract prejudice and hatred based on identity differences.⁸

⁵ <https://www.metropolie.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tekst-deklaracji-UMP-z-30-czerwca-2017.pdf> (Retrieved in 2021)

⁶ <https://www.metropolie.pl/pl/8003,stanowisko-prezydenta-miast-unii-metropolii-polskich-im-pawla-adamowicza-w-sprawie-pomocy-mieszkancom-spalonego-obozu-moria-z-dnia-25-wrzesnia-2020-r/>

⁷ <https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/Gdanski-Model-Integracji-Imigrantow-sprawdzil-sie-w-ramach-pomocy-uchodzcom-z-Ukrainy,a,222055>

⁸ <https://www.gdansk.pl/migracje/warsztaty-dla-mlodziezy-polskiej-i-ukrainskiej-na-temat-spojnosci-spoecznej-i-tolerancji,a,238063>

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