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ARIZ, AZERBAIJAN

My name is Ariz, I come from Azerbaijan.


In Azerbaijan, I studied to become a hairdresser. I was also engaged in volunteering activities, providing people with food during the hostilities on the border with Azerbaijan in 2020.


In February 2022, I came to Poland, specifically to Gdansk, because I found an opportunity to work at a barbershop. The owner of the barbershop offered me this job, because he is my connational.

By working in the beauty industry, I help people increase their self-esteem. Learning Polish was easy for me because I am a sociable person, so I used my conversational skills while working. I have good relations with my Polish friends, and I want to continue working as a barber in the future. I also would like to open my own barber shop, maybe in Gdansk.

I often talk with my clients about the history and origin of my country, and I share my national cuisine with local people.



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KATERYNA, UKRAINE

My name is Kateryna, I came to Poland from Ukraine because of the war in April 2022. Over the past five years I have been involved in various activities in Ukraine and Poland, helping local communities and developing projects. In Ukraine, I was a member of the Merefa Youth Council, AVA (Association of Active Volunteers), ELSA Kharkiv and ELSA Ukraine, and the Kharkiv National University named after me. I also supported the Red Cross organisation.

In July 2022, I became a Caritas European Solidarity Corps volunteer until I signed my employment contract on 1 January 2023. The biggest problem upon arrival was definitely the language: I did not know Polish. I also met many Poles and representatives of other nationalities who helped me to improve my language and social skills, as well as to gain access to other cultures. My first support came from two older people who showed me the area and allowed me to take part in a Polish Easter party. Overall, almost everyone was great, but sometimes random people can be less than hospitable. For example, when I arrived, the employer of the phone company stopped speaking English just because I asked and he understood that I was Ukrainian.

But overall, I built a lot of professional and personal relationships and received a lot of emotional, linguistic and practical support from Poles. Some people were also very interested in Ukrainian culture



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AHMED, EGYPT

My name is Ahmed, I come from Egypt. I was born in Saudi Arabia, but I have Egyptian citizenship and I am naturalized Egyptian.

I arrived in Poland in May 2018, and I married a Polish girl. Since then, I have had an overall very good experience here in Poland. The only challenge for me has been the linguistic barrier, because I find Polish language very hard to learn.

Before coming to Poland, my occupation consisted in providing my clients with body treatments and body massages.

When I was looking for a job here, I turned to the Recruitment Office. They were very helpful and caring, they helped me find employment in kebab shops and restaurants.

Generally speaking, Polish people from Gdańsk are very nice and kind people, and they are very welcoming. I have not experienced any episodes of racism or xenophobia that I can recall here in Poland.

Moreover, I have good relationships with Arab people living here. There is a very big net of Arab people in Gdańsk, we are almost 100 people and we organize meetings and celebrations together.

A few Polish people are also interested in learning our culture or trying to learn Arabic. Immigration in Poland is kind of a new issue, so keeping in touch with the Arab diaspora can be challenging at times. Nonetheless, I can see that this Country is improving year by year.



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MOHAMED, EGYPT

My name is Mohamed and I am from Egypt. I arrived in Poland in November 2021 as a European Solidarity Corps volunteer. In that period I helped the kindergarten in a village near Gdansk. Before arriving here, I was a pharmacist and I was involved in some volunteering activities as well. The biggest problem that I faced was the language, but now I can handle it pretty well. At the beginning the language barrier was huge and it was hard, even if many Poles wanted to help me. But now I can work here and I am contributing to the local economy by paying taxes. And I had chances to meet a lot of Polish people during my time here, letting me know places, practice language and help in daily life.

In general, I did not experience such episodes as society racism or xenophobia, but I faced some episodes of discrimination by single people, as could happen everywhere in the world. On the other hand, I witnessed racist situations as inspectors in trams or buses trying to catch foreigners because they thought that these people do not have tickets for sure.

Many Poles were really interested in Egyptian culture, language and lifestyle. And I had opportunities to share all of this during cultural days in my workplace. After these sharing moments everybody was happy to have received such information about a country that they know so little.



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SAFIA, UKRAINE

My name is Sofia, I am Ukrainian, but I have Crimean Tatar origins.

I come from Yalta, Crimea, and in Ukraine I was a student.

I was engaged in volunteering activities in the Crimean Tatar community, including humanitarian aid.

I moved to Poland in 2016, specifically to Katowice. I studied Polish and entered the University of Gdańsk in 2017.

I am also a volunteer here in Poland. At the beginning of the war, I helped refugees from Ukraine to find shelter in Gdańsk Voivodeship. I worked in an agency for the legalization of immigrants and helped them with this.

At the university, teachers helped me integrate into the Polish community. They treated me adequately when I spoke Polish poorly at the beginning, saying "speak as well as you can for now". After graduating, I started my own business. I help people find employment. There is a Crimean Tatar community here in Gdańsk, and we organized events and talked about the historical facts of the 18th of May 1944, about the genocide of the Crimean Tatars.

Did I experience xenophobia here in Poland? My boyfriend was beaten very badly in SKM by kibols because they heard that he could not speak Polish. They smashed his head with a glass bottle. The police did not want to take a statement because it was an interethnic conflict.





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YUSIF, AZERBAIJAN

My Name is Yusif, I come from Azerbaijan. I came to Poland in 2017 as a student. Previously, I was living in Baku. In Azerbaijan, I was involved in many volunteering projects. I am a friendly person and I am trying to get to know more and more people.

Therefore, here in Poland I got so many friends, both from my country of origin but also from other countries. Initially, I had experienced some challenges in adapting to the culture and customs of Poland, but then I got used to Polish culture and lifestyle. Moreover, I found employment here in Poland and I am contributing to the local economy. I have had different working experiences here, and, as a foreigner, I have been paying taxes for 6 years. I integrated into the local community because I was a student, so I went to some university parties and events and I had the chance to meet new people.

I also had the opportunity to make Polish friends. It actually depends on the person, because most of them were a bit cold to me. I have had many problems related to racism here. Nonetheless, I am trying to introduce my culture to my university and work colleagues, also by cooking them Azerbaijan dishes and so on.



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NISARUT, INDIA

I am Nisarut, an immigrant from India who arrived in Poland in 2015 as a student. Before coming here, I did not have any occupation or previous experience in helping the local community.

Once I arrived, I started to work hard and I opened seven restaurants in Warsaw. Now, I am in Gdansk because I opened a new restaurant in the Montownia Food Hall. And thanks to my entrepreneurial spirit, I employed fifty-eight people in Poland, finding occupation for twenty Ukrainians. A huge support has arrived from Polish people, who taught me the language and who were always very helpful in general.

So, I have always had and found good relationships with everyone, also because many people are interested in Indian culture and food. Anyway, what I learnt in my life is that you just have to work hard and God will bless you.



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TUNÇ, TURKEY

My name is Tunç, I'm from Istanbul, Turkiye. I came to Poland 15 years ago for marriage. Before coming here, I was working as a tourist guide in Germany under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Before coming to Poland, I didn't have any experience of volunteering in my local community. But while I was here, I helped work for earthquake victims in Turkey during the February 6 earthquakes. After I came here, I founded a company and started selling Turkish food products online. Because of my previous job, I was familiar with the culture of the people here, and since I started living with my wife when I came to Poland, I didn't have much difficulty and trouble adapting to the culture and traditions here. Polish people have been tolerant and hospitable to me since I came here. I haven't experienced any discrimination or xenophobia.

I had the opportunity to engage with local community members through my work. This communication happens in daily life when selling over the internet. I didn't have much direct contact with the community here. But since I came to Poland, I have had the opportunity to share my culture and language with the local community members here, at events promoting Turkish culture. We organize these events by organizing cooking and promotion organizations with my wife. My wife participates in such activities more and tries to promote Turkish culture when appropriate. I try to participate in these activities with him whenever I get the opportunity from my job. When I organized these events with my wife, we received positive feedback from the people around us.



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MALYENA, UKRAINE

My name is Malyena, I am from Ukraine and India.

I arrived in Poland in 2022. Before coming to Poland, I was a student and a volunteer. Specifically, I participated in volunteering activities aimed at renovating the Central Park in my city in India.

I also have contributed to the local community here in Gdańsk by sharing information and advice with the newcomers. Here in Gdańsk I work in a restaurant. My occupation has positively reinforced my interest in local businesses and made me realize how Gdańsk is a huge touristic spot.


My work colleague Denys is also from Ukraine, he came to Poland in March 2022 because of the war in Ukraine. He also was a student before coming here in Poland and finding an occupation in my restaurant. He agrees with me about Polish people being very welcoming and nice to him.

The biggest challenge I faced here was the Polish language. However, since Polish people have been very welcoming to me, I have been able to overcome this issue. Polish people (but also foreigners) have welcomed me here in an impeccable way. For this reason, I have created many meaningful friendships and bonds with local people. They helped me understand Polish culture better. I have not been involved in local community organizations or activities yet, but I would love to.

Fortunately, I have not experienced episodes of racism or xenophobia myself, but I can say that a few Polish people do not seem to like Ukrainians.

On the other hand, Denys says that his Polish friends were very interested in learning Ukrainian culture and traditions, and that is why they get along so well.



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VINCENZO, ITALY

My name is Vincenzo and I am from Italy. I arrived in Poland eighteen years ago after working in the Italian embassy in Kiev and managing meals for official meetings and dinners. Twelve years ago I opened a restaurant in the old town and I employed many people from Poland and Ukraine.


This way I could share thoughts, ideas and time with the local community, but I could also help Italians. Polish people in Gdansk have always been very welcoming and I built very beneficial relationships both on personal and working level.

Being Italian, I felt very accepted by Poles, but I saw discrimination towards other people, also because non-European immigrants are rare in the Tri-city area. For me it was easy to share my culture through cuisine but also doing Italian events together with the famous Italian guide Roberto. Sometimes there is a sort of hate and love inside the Italian community in Gdansk, but for sure Poles are between greatest friends and they are part of my daily life.





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OLGA, LIJA & VITALI , BELARUS

My name is Olga, I am from Belarus. I came to Poland in 2021 with my husband and three children. Later, in 2023, my sister Lia came with her husband Vitaly. We were engaged in volunteer work in Belarus.

We, and our children, adapted very quickly, found jobs, kindergarten and school. But my sister and her husband had some problems renting an apartment because they had a cat.

We met some interesting people who supported us with advice and now we are friends. We have warm relations with our neighbour and a Polish family. There were some negative situations in shops when we heard Belarusian-Russian speech. But in general, there are more positive things.

Last year my husband died suddenly and I was left alone with three children. I was fired from my job and had to change my profession, as the children were constantly sick and I was not hired.

In January, my friends decided to sell their restaurant. My sister, her husband, and I saw it as an opportunity and bought the restaurant, but we had to sell our apartment in Minsk.

We are currently working in our restaurant and paying taxes. We plan to open several food truck outlets with an exclusive dish and open a franchise for it.

In 1.5 years in Poland, I have achieved more than in 37 years in my home country.

In general, our integration is still ongoing, and there are more positive people than negative ones.



MY NEW LIFE IN POLAND

The exhibition was organized by a group of volunteers from ECS. We are from Türkiye, Ukraine, Italy, Azerbaijan and Spain and we are volunteering in Poland thanks to the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) project. We have prepared for you the exhibition "My new life in Poland" about xenophobia. There is a common belief that immigrants only have a negative impact on the local community, that foreigners "do nothing" and are a nuisance.

The aim of the project is to change the current view of immigrants, to overcome prejudices and to build empathy towards them. We want to achieve this by showing the positive impact of immigrants on the local community and drawing people's attention to the fact that you can find your place in every country. And how important it is to have a positive attitude towards the new opportunities that open up in this new place.

Wystawa została zorganizowana przez grupę wolontariuszy z EKS. Przyjechaliśmy z Turcji, Ukrainy, Włoch, Azerbejdżanu i Hiszpanii, dzięki projektowi Europejskiego Korpusu Solidarności, aby odbyć wolontariat w Polsce. Przygotowaliśmy dla Was wystawę "Moje nowe życie w Polsce", które opowiada o ksenofobii. Istnieje powszechne przekonanie, że imigranci mają jedynie negatywny wpływ na lokalną społeczność, że obcokrajowcy "nic nie robią" i są uciążliwi.

Celem projektu jest zmiana dotychczasowego spojrzenia na imigrantów, przezwyciężenie uprzedzeń i budowanie empatii wobec nich. Chcemy to osiągnąć poprzez pokazanie pozytywnego wpływu imigrantów na lokalną społeczność, zwrócenie uwagi ludzi na fakt, że w każdym kraju można znaleźć swoje miejsce i że ważne jest, aby mieć pozytywne nastawienie do nowych możliwości, które otwierają się w tym nowym miejscu.

