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Good practices in multicultural education based on the example of the “Raszyńska” Community Junior Secondary School No. 20 in Warsaw

Keywords: foreign student education in the Polish educational system, multicultural education, intercultural education, “Raszyńska” Community Junior Secondary School No. 20 in Warsaw

Abstract: This article is an attempt to present good practices in multicultural education. By introducing the main problems, the author presents the principles of teaching foreign students in the Polish educational system, highlighting the most important provisions of Polish legal regulations.

Next, she defines the key concepts, namely intercultural education and multicultural education, discussing their main goals and tasks. The second part of the text presents good practices in multicultural education based on the example of the “Raszyńska” Community Junior Secondary School No. 20 in Warsaw.

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Foreword

In recent years, with a growing scale of migration, the number of foreign students who do not speak Polish at all or good enough has been growing in schools. These are usually students who were brought up in a culture with different customs than what is assumed to be standard in our country.

Legally, a foreigner is a person who does not have Polish nationality (JoL / Dz.U./ 2003, no. 128, item 1175). Foreigners include refugees and persons applying for refugee status (JoL /Dz.U./ 2003 no. 128, item 1176), and EU nationals (JoL /Dz.U./ 2006 no. 144, item 1043). The instruments that grant refugee protection

according to international standards are the 1951 Geneva Convention and the New York Protocol of 1967, ratified by Poland on 2 September 1991.

The 1951 Geneva Convention defines the refugee as any person who “owing to well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (JoL /Dz.U./ 1991 no 119, item 515).

The law obliges Polish educational institutions to receive foreign children. According to the data of the Polish Office for Foreigners, the number of foreign children in compulsory school age, i.e. between 6 and 18 years, is 945. It is slightly more than last year: as on 1 September 2014, 885 foreign children in the same age group were registered. The most numerous in this group are young Ukraine nationals – 418. They are followed by: Russia nationals – 370 (of which 321 are Chechens), Kirgizstan nationals – 44, Georgia nationals – 40 and Syria nationals – 32¹.

The teaching of foreign students in the Polish educational system is governed by two instruments: the Act on the Educational System of 7 September 1991 (JoL /Dz.U./ 2004 no. 256, item 2572, as amended) and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education on the conditions and procedures for receiving in public preschools, other preschool institutions, schools and educational institutions persons who are not Polish nationals and Polish nationals who attended schools in the educational systems of other countries as well as on organising additional Polish language teaching, additional remedial classes and teaching of the language and culture of the country of origin of 30 July 2015 (JoL /Dz.U./ 2015, item 1202). The most important provisions of the two instruments are discussed below.

Principles of foreign student education in the Polish educational system

According to Art. 15.2 of the Act on the Educational System, each child at the age of 7 years is subject to compulsory education from the beginning of the school year until completion of Junior Secondary school, however not longer than until the age of 18 years. Compulsory education applies to every child who resides in

¹ www.udsc.gov.pl/uchodzcy-w-polskiej-szkole/ (accessed on: 18.05.16).

the territory of the Republic of Poland, regardless of their legal status, including refugees, whether or not their stay in Poland is legal (Art. 94 a.1.).

It is the duty of parents to observe compulsory education, and they are controlled by the head teacher of the school in the area of the child's residence, or by local (gmina) authorities – in the case of compulsory education after completion of Junior Secondary school:

Art. 14b. 1. The parents of child subjected to compulsory education referred to in Art. 14.3 are obliged to:

- 1) Put the child in preschool, preschool unit in primary school or another preschool institution;
- 2) Make sure the child regularly attends classes;
- 3) Inform, by the 30th of September of each year, the head teacher of the primary school in the area of the child's residence that the obligation has been complied with in accordance with Art. 16.5b;
- 4) Ensure proper learning conditions for the child, in accordance with the permit referred to in Art. 16.8 – in the case of a child for whom the obligation is performed outside preschool, preschool unit or another preschool institution.

2. It is the duty of the head teacher of the primary school in the area of a child's residence to control performance of the obligation referred to in Art. 14.3.

If a child's parents do not perform the obligation, the head teacher is obliged to take proper actions for its enforcement:

Art. 19.1. Head teachers of public primary schools and Junior Secondary schools control performance of the obligation to attend school by children residing in the area of respective schools, and local (gmina) authorities control performance of the obligation to attend school by youth residing in the area under their authority, including, respectively, they:

- 1) Control compliance with the obligations referred to in Art. 18.1.1, 18.1.2 and 18.1.4 and cooperate with parents to ensure performance of the obligations referred to in Art. 18.1.3 and 18.3;
- 2) Keep a register of performance of the obligation to attend school and obligation to learn.

2. The mayor of a gmina, town or city is obliged to keep the head teachers of public primary schools and Junior Secondary schools informed about the current status of and changes in the register of children and youth aged from 3 to 18 years.

According to the legislator, a student who misses without just cause at least 50% of classes in a given month does not perform the obligation. If such a situation

is reported, the head teacher should take actions provided for in the law in order to verify the situation and discipline the parents:

Art. 20.1. Failure to perform the obligation referred to in Art. 14.3, the obligation to attend school and the obligation to learn is subject to enforcement, pursuant to legal regulations on administrative enforcement procedures.

2. Failure to perform the obligation referred to in Art. 14.3, the obligation to attend school and the obligation to learn should be understood to mean that in one month a student misses without just cause at least 50% of:

1) Days of classes in preschool, another preschool institution, primary school, Junior Secondary school, secondary school or institution;

2) Classes, if the obligation to learn is performed in accordance with Art.16.5a.2 and in regulations issued pursuant to Art.16.6c.

Admission of foreign children to public schools is provided for in detail by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 1 April 2010. According to that Regulation, those children are admitted to all institutions on the same principles as Polish nationals (§ 2.1 of the Regulation). According to § 2.2 of the Regulation, admission is based on school certificates or other documents confirming completion of a certain stage of education abroad, or specifying the grade completed by a child and the total number of years in school. The exception is, if there are no documents confirming completion of a corresponding school or grade abroad. If this is the case, before admission of a child to school, the head teacher interviews the child and based on the result of the interview, the child is admitted to appropriate grade, according to §2.4 and § 2.5:

4. If a foreigner cannot present the documents referred to in par. 1.2.a or 1.2.b, he is admitted and classified to appropriate grade or term based on an interview. The interview is held by the head teacher of a public school, teacher training facility or institution, assisted, if needed, by another teacher or teachers.

5. If a foreigner does not speak Polish, the interview is held in the foreign language the foreigner speaks. If needed, the interview should be attended by a person who speaks the same language as the foreigner.

Polish legal regulations also provide for additional assistance to foreign children. The students are entitled to free Polish lessons and remedial classes.

According to Art. 94a.4 of the Act, if a foreign child does not speak Polish at all or well enough, he should be granted additional free Polish lessons for the period of one year. Additional Polish lessons are organised by the school's managerial authority.

The organisation of additional free Polish lessons is also provided for in detail in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 1 April 2010. According

to Art. 5.2 of the Regulation, the number of lessons should be such that the foreigner can learn the language well enough in order to attend compulsory educational courses, however, in any case no less than 2 lessons a week.

Besides additional free Polish lessons, a foreign child in Polish school is also entitled to extra support in the form of remedial classes to bridge any curriculum gaps (Art. 94a.4c). Remedial classes are organised by the school’s managerial authority at the request of a teacher who reports curriculum gaps and are held during the first 12 months of a child’s attendance to school, one lesson per week per subject.

The Regulation of the 1 April 2010 introduces some limitations – the number of all equal-chance classes attended by a foreigner, that is Polish lessons and remedial classes – must not exceed 5 lessons a week.

Multicultural vs. intercultural education

When discussing multicultural education, two terms should be highlighted, namely: “multicultural education” and “intercultural education”, which are often used interchangeably in the literature and educational practice.

Przemysław Grzybowski believes that “unlike multicultural education that aims at the assimilation of minorities by subordinating them to the dominant group and maintaining a static status quo, the effect of intercultural education is supposed to be integration and sociocultural activation of various social circles, based on bringing their members closer together”².

A similar understanding of multicultural education and intercultural education is presented by Tadeusz Lewowicki, in whose opinion multicultural education is often stigmatised as hegemonic and instrumental and it uses education to assimilate or to maintain social peace. On the other hand, the purpose of intercultural education is not to “stay beside”, but rather to get closer – to integrate without an overt or covert domination programme of any of the groups (Lewowicki, 2001: 25-26).

According to Jerzy Nikitorowicz, “the activities of multicultural education result from the need to accommodate education to the phenomenon of multiculturalism, whereas the activities of intercultural education involve educating

² P. Grzybowski (2007). *Edukacja europejska – od wielokulturowości ku międzykulturowości. Koncepcje edukacji wielokulturowej i międzykulturowej w kontekście europejskim ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem środowiska frankofońskiego*. Kraków, p. 39.

towards multiculturalism, meeting half way”³. He adds that multiculturalism is a fact, whereas interculturalism is an educational task and challenge (Nikitorowicz, 1999: 25).

Stanisława Nazaruk believes that intercultural education performs the role of preparing children to meet their peers from different cultures and it is supposed to make young people aware of the fact that, despite cultural, ethnic or religious differences, people may live together, integrate and coexist. In an intercultural society, the most important principle is to “be together”, rather than “be beside” (Nazaruk, 2014: 248-249). On the other hand, research conducted by Izabela Czerniejewska proves that intercultural education still remains only a certain aim, a goal to be achieved, whereas in practice, the multicultural model is much more frequent (Czerniejewska, 2013: 28), and accordingly, in the subsequent part of the text, we use the term “multicultural education”.

In order to properly understand multicultural education, one should analyse its main goals and activities, which we do subsequently.

Goals and activities in multicultural education

In multicultural education, the school plays an important role and is responsible for developing a multicultural teaching and upbringing programme respecting ethnic and cultural differences (cf. Nikitorowicz, 2009: 265). “Multicultural upbringing is the pedagogical response to the reality of a multicultural society, an open concept of action that is aware of social changes and introduces innovative processes, and has its share in education for peace by conflict solving. It is based on student-focused pedagogy, understood to be close to life, and on assistance in self-fulfilment, and it takes into account spontaneity and individual differences (...)”⁴.

School is “a space, where a student of non-Polish nationality learns the competencies associated both with his native culture and the culture of the country of his residence. Students who attend minority schools have a chance to integrate or confront knowledge originating from the dominant culture with the minority culture”⁵.

³ J. Nikitorowicz (1995). *Pogranicze – tożsamość – edukacja międzykulturowa*. Białystok, p. 116.

⁴ E. Ogrodzka-Mazur (1999). *Szkołą na pograniczu a proces wychowania wielokulturowego*. [In:] *Edukacja międzykulturowa w wymiarze instytucjonalnym*. Red. J. Nikitorowicz, M. Sobecki. Białystok, p. 113.

⁵ I. Czerniejewska (2013). *Edukacja wielokulturowa. Działania podejmowane w Polsce*. Toruń, p. 59.

According to Dariusz Wojakowski, multiculturalism determines two types of goals for education:

1. Ensuring equal rights for a specific ethnic group, preparing to live in a certain society and teaching and cultivating the group's own language and culture;
2. Organising meetings, especially of the dominant culture with minority groups (Wojakowski, 2002: 124).

A longer list of the goals of multicultural upbringing is proposed by Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur. These are:

1. Learning one's own culture and the culture of others.
2. Learning the reasons and motivations behind the conduct of people from different cultures.
3. Making students aware of the problem of stigmatising minority groups.
4. Being tolerant of traditions, language, religion and different lifestyles. Developing conflict-free standards of behaviour to prevent emotional confrontation and promote mutual enrichment between different cultures (Ogrodzka-Mazur, 1999: 114).

According to Mirosław Sobecki, "the school is the only place, where changes in awareness of the attitude towards the culturally different may be initiated on an adequate scale. The point is to make use of the school's potential"⁶. When it comes to multicultural education, the main goals of the school are to:

- 11) Assimilate minorities with the majority society, acquaint them with the dominant culture;
- 12) Teach the language, history and culture of the dominant society to minority group members, according to the principle of political correctness;
- 13) Educate to tolerance, prevent racism, make aware of the problem of stigmatisation, prejudices, negative stereotypes, etc.;
- 14) Highlight the problem of structural injustice towards minorities and motivate them to assert their rights and take action to improve their social, political, cultural and other conditions;
- 15) Prepare people to work and live in harmony in a multicultural society (Nikitorowicz, 2009: 265-266).

John Rex believes that the most important challenge posed by multiculturalism to education is to develop tolerance in a young person and transmit knowledge of the minority culture to the dominant group (Czerniejewska, 2013: 28-29).

⁶ M. Sobecki (1999). *Kształtowanie postaw wobec odmienności jako nowe zadanie wychowania*. [In:] *Edukacja międzykulturowa w wymiarze instytucjonalnym*. Ed. J. Nikitorowicz, M. Sobecki. Białystok, p. 96.

James A. Banks, apart from such dimensions of multicultural education as: integration of multicultural content, education as a process of the co-development of knowledge, preventing prejudice and empowerment within the framework of the school and social structure, also mentions education for equal treatment (C.A. Banks, J. Banks, 2010: 45-46). It should be understood as “teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and create and perpetuate, a just, humane and democratic society”⁷. The definition suggests that it is not enough to teach writing, reading and counting, but that students should also be prepared to question the dominant paradigms and assumptions. The idea of education for equal treatment is to help students mature in such a way that they develop critical thinking and become active members of a democratic society (C.A. Banks, J. Banks, 2010: 46-47). In order to effectively implement education for equal treatment in multicultural education, teachers must be familiar with the history and characteristics of the main social groups and minorities, and the differences within them (C.A. Banks, J. Banks, 2010: 57).

Implementation of the above goals and activities of multicultural education is challenging for Polish schools. The subsequent part of the text presents good practices in multicultural education based on the example of the “Raszyńska” Community Junior Secondary School No. 20 in Warsaw.

Good practices in multicultural education based on the example of the “Raszyńska” Community Junior Secondary School No. 20 in Warsaw⁸

The “Raszyńska” Community Junior Secondary School No. 20 in Warsaw is one of the seven schools⁹ of the “Bednarska” Community General Education Schools in Warsaw. It was founded in 1999 and since 2000 has been located at Raszyńska

⁷ C. A. Banks, J. Banks. (2010). *Pedagogika na rzecz równego traktowania: zasadniczy element edukacji wielokulturowej*. [In:] *Szkoła wielokulturowa – organizacja pracy i metody nauczania. Wybór tekstów*. Ed. A. Grudzińska, K. Kubin. Warszawa, p. 46.

⁸ Description of the activity of the Community Junior Secondary School no. 20 in Warsaw is based on an interview with the Head Teacher Krystyna Starczewska and other members of the school personnel. The pictures in the article were either taken by the author or used from the school's archives.

⁹ The “Bednarska” Community General Education Schools in Warsaw include, in the order of their foundation: 1st Community General Education High School – 1990, Community Junior Secondary School no. 20 – 1999, General Education High School with International Baccalaureate – IBO – 2003, Multicultural Human Sciences High School – 2006, Junior Secondary School at Startowa Street – 2007, Primary School – 2011 and Community Junior Secondary School Hispaniola – 2013.

Street in Warsaw. From the beginning until 2015, the Head Teacher of the Junior Secondary School was Krystyna Starczewska, Polish language teacher, philosopher, ethician, educator. In 1989, she devoted herself to creating “Bednarska” – the Community General Education High School no. 1 at Bednarska Street and the Community Junior Secondary School no. 20 in Warsaw.

Since the 1998/1999 school year, the school’s patron has been the Hindu Maharajah Jam Saheb Digvijay Sinhji. He was a great friend of Polish people. During World War II, he saved more than a thousand Polish children who, after the trauma of Siberia camps and having lost their parents, fled from the USSR. The Maharajah created a real house for them in India and raised and educated them, making sure that they preserved their religious and national identity. Thus, it was concluded that the best way to commemorate him would be to make him the patron of a Polish school.

The main educational idea of the Community Junior Secondary School no. 20 in Warsaw is that *“Our school does not promote harsh competition between students or spectacular successes. We do not fight at all costs for the first places in rankings. Apart from very talented children who pass entrance examinations with excellent results, we also receive children who need additional assistance – sick, disabled, with psychological problems. Moreover, we also receive refugee children and children from orphanages, and offer them free tuition (...) we try to make our school a good place not only for the best achieving students but also for those who need educational assistance (...)”*.

The first foreign students were admitted to “Bednarska” Schools in 1995. They were children from the Refugee Centre in Dębak – from Greece and Chechnya. Since the 2003/2004 school year, immigrants and refugees have been attending classes at Raszyńska Street together with Polish students – up to four foreigners per class, or in separate groups, where they had intensive Polish language courses in order to be able to join standard classes later on. By 2007, the school had students from: Armenia, Vietnam, China, Somalia, Burundi, Kirgizstan, Ingushetia and Bangladesh. Between the years 2008 and 2013, students of the following nationalities were received, in the order of their arrival: Iran, Cuba, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Israel and the Ivory Coast. In the 2013/2014 school year, students from three other countries joined the school: a boy from the Netherlands and girls from Serbia and Nigeria went to the first grade. Besides, every year new children from Armenia, Chechnya and Belarus join the school. Currently, there are students from 17 countries (over 70 refugee and immigrant children) learning in “Raszyńska” school.

Kaja Malanowska, former teacher at the Community Junior Secondary School no. 20 in Warsaw, says that: *“Working with a multicultural class – i.e. a class with*

children of, for example, different cultural and religious background, different levels of knowledge compared to their peers or different Polish language skills – requires tailoring classes to the individual needs of a student, using different teaching methods than usual and patiently creating a bond with the children (...) Most Chechen students with whom I worked suffered from war trauma that had left a permanent and sad mark in them. Such children may be withdrawn, distrustful and are often aggressive. Even though it is usually easy for them to learn Polish, they find it difficult to abide by the school discipline. Many of them fall into conflict with their Polish peers. (...) Some of them never attended school before (...) For many, it is difficult to function in the school as an institution that requires punctuality, regular work and certain discipline” (Malanowska, 2012: 25-27).

The practices used in the Junior Secondary School no. 20, which I analysed, introduce many solutions that adapt the teaching, raising and integrating methods to the needs of students – in particular those who do not speak Polish. One of the interesting ideas for additional support is to prepare the school and classrooms to receive children who do not speak Polish. With the assistance of Polish students, stickers with names are placed on every object in a classroom (e.g. the wall, door, board, etc.) or area in the school (e.g. the toilet, canteen, stairs, bell, etc.). This way, children who do not speak Polish may learn some basic vocabulary (Malanowska, 2012;29).

Foreign children attending “Raszyńska” school are at first placed for one year in a multicultural class, where, in a group of appr. 12 students, they learn Polish language and Polish culture for about 4-5 hours a day. Apart from regular lessons, they go to the theatre, museums and restaurants, and on integration trips together with Polish students. One teacher in such a class is trained to teach Polish as a foreign language. After one year, the teacher council decides whether a student has learned the Polish language well enough to join a standard class, or it would be better for him to stay for another year in the multicultural class.

For students over 16 years of age who do not speak Polish, a “multicultural extra” class has been created – after 2-3 years of intensive courses, they may choose a general education or vocational secondary school.

Multiculturalism in “Raszyńska” school is evident the moment one enters the building. In the hall, there hang flags of the countries of origin of all the students attending the school.

Foreign children, especially those who do not speak Polish, initially have poorer achievements and stay behind the rest of the class, so special conditions must be created for them to be able to show their rich knowledge about the world or other talents (artistic, musical, etc.).



Photo: School hall

One such solution is, for example, the school’s project: “Multiplicity that makes us richer”, involving classes on the culture, history and traditions of the countries of origin of foreign students attending the school. In this project, students were asked to bring to school pictures, paintings and other items, and the school was decorated in the Hindu style (as a reference to the school’s patron).

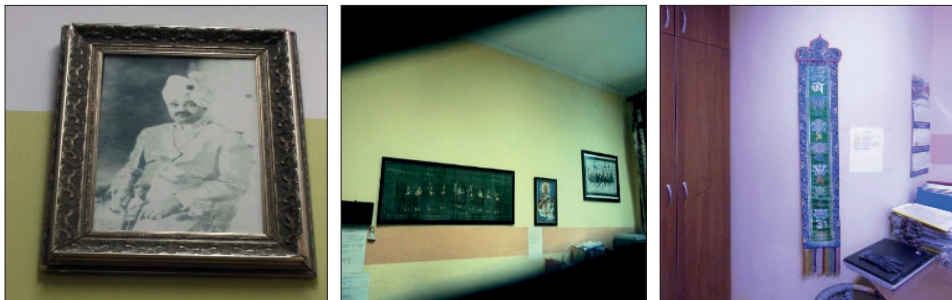


Photo: School hall and office

Multiculturalism is visible not only inside the school building but also outside it. In “Raszyńska”, school walls were decorated by Chechen students. Students painted their national leaders, as if to create their “little homeland” in the school.



Photo: school walls

Another interesting idea for student integration is the Multicultural Club, where foreign students may learn about Polish culture, customs and traditions. Various outings are organised: to the theatre, museums or restaurants, as well as integration trips. Once a month, a culture evening is organised, during which students learn dances and discover the cuisine, culture, etc. of a given country. The Multicultural Club invites guests from the students' countries of origin.



Chechen folk dance

Source: school archives



Students from Tibet

Source: school archives



From the left: India Ambassador, Head Teacher Krystyna Starczewska, one of the Patron's pupils



Tibetan monk

Another of the school's initiatives was to create a day room for young refugee children, with school students as volunteers. Twice a week, a bus delivers children from the Refugee Centre to the school's day room, where they may play various games and participate in integration activities. Also, two annual events are regularly organised at the school: Christmas Party and Children's Day.



Source: Day room, school archives

The school readily organises its own charity concerts and donates funds from those concerts to various purposes. In 2011, they raised money for a well building project in Somalia and two years earlier, in 2009 – to build a school in Birma. The school's donation made it possible to erect a brick school building and provide it with basic teaching aids. As a thank-you from the local people, one of the girls born there was named Poland.



Photos: School archives

The Head Teacher of the “Raszyńska” Community Junior Secondary School no. 20 in Warsaw, Krystyna Starczewska, PhD, describes multicultural education: *“Multicultural education is fascinating and receiving refugee children puts Poland in a positive light (...) It is our civic duty to receive those children in Polish schools (...) They should be received for the sake of our children; after all, it teaches them the multiplicity of cultures, the world's complexity and openness, and it promotes volunteerism”*. Multicultural education is not only about teaching foreign children. It is also beneficial for other students as well as for teachers and parents. It enables the exchange of knowledge and experience, and learning from one another.

Conclusion

Because of the growing rate of migration, the number of foreign children joining Polish schools grows by the year. The law obliges Polish educational institutions to receive foreign children. In many of them, refugee and immigrant students have been for years an internal part of the school's community, and yet, for quite a few teachers, educating foreigners and assisting them in the integration process is a challenge.

The success of multicultural education depends mainly on the engagement of the persons forming the school's environment. The stronger the engagement, the better for the sense of the school's community (Malanowska, 2012: 29). Another necessary condition is knowledge of the culture, religion and traditions of the

country of origin of a foreign child, which helps not only prepare the classroom, tailor the classes to that child's needs and prepare Polish students to welcome him, but also makes it easier for the teacher to build a bond with foreign children (Malanowska, 2012: 33). What is also beneficial for multicultural education, is promotion of good practices by schools and other institutions that have worked with foreign children for many years.

It is worth mentioning here the Foundation for the Promotion of Social Diversity (FPSD), whose mission is to “create an open and diverse society by promoting intercultural dialogue and social integration, preventing discrimination, developing knowledge of and tools for social integration and equal treatment, and strengthening the position of male and female migrants, and migrant communities”¹⁰. The FSDP organises various educational activities, such as training courses and workshops, e.g. for public administration, teachers, students and NGOs. Also, it offers counselling and advisory services for the planning and implementation of equal treatment solutions. It also develops and delivers free of charge educational tools, such as the series of videos called “Migrant Narratives”. Additionally, the FSDP conducts research with view to implementing specific solutions or changes in practice or in the law. The Foundation issues numerous publications, this way creating a space for dialogue, and it engages in the public debate. Also, it provides direct assistance to migrants. These are but a few examples of the Foundation's activities. More information is available on <http://ffrs.org.pl/>.

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- Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 1 kwietnia 2010 r. w sprawie przyjmowania osób niebędących obywatelami polskimi do publicznych przedszkoli, szkół, zakładów kształcenia nauczycieli i placówek oraz organizacji dodatkowej nauki języka polskiego, dodatkowych zajęć wyrównawczych oraz nauki języka i kultury kraju pochodzenia (Dz.U. /JoL/ 2010 no. 57 item 361).
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