Labour Market Inclusiveness as a Key Challenge Facing Society and Management

Agnieszka Raczek[1], Anna Dewalska-Opitek[2], Ewa Kraus[3],
Agnieszka Szostak [4], Dawid Żebrak [5]

Abstract:

Purpose: *This article is a part of an interdisciplinary project that pertains to topics related to the labour market in Poland, which is extremely dynamic and diverse, depending on the region, industry, and job group. However, the key challenge remains acquiring competent employees. The inclusiveness of the labour market is an extremely important and current topic that both companies and societies in many countries are addressing.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *Taking into account the managerial approach, the main research methods used in the study were literature review, diagnostic survey research, and basic statistical analysis. The study was conducted based on a survey questionnaire, using the CAWI method and a selected research sample of 2900 respondents—Metropolis GZM in Poland (1274), the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis in Poland (824), and the Ruhr Metropolis in Germany (802)—inhabitants, who declared themselves mostly employed in all sectors, including the public, private, and nongovernmental sectors. The research results were presented using a comparative approach, both for the entire representative population of each metropolitan areas and in cross-sectional approaches, which include status in the labour market defined by the four categories.*

Findings: *The results of this research provide new insights into the practical understanding of inclusiveness and diversity in the context of a contemporary labour market among metropolitan inhabitants, including among other employees in the main group. They also show international and cross-sectoral differences in their understanding of labour market inclusiveness.*

Practical Implications *They can be used, among other methods, by local authorities as a guide for shaping policies to help foreigners better adapt to the requirements of the Polish labour market in line with the expectations of companies and organisations in metropolitan areas.*

[1]PhD., Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Academy of Silesia, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-1023-9723 , e-mail: agnieszka.raczek@akademiaslaska.pl;
[2]Ph.D., Department of Organisational Relationship Management, University of Economics in Katowice, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-1269-4738, a.dewalska-opitek@ue.katowice.pl;
[3]Institute of Management and Quality Sciences, Humanitas University in Sosnowiec, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0002-1282-343X, ewa.kraus@humanitas.edu.pl;
[4]Academy of Silesia, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Poland, ORCID: 0009-0001-1084-1837, e-mail: agnieszka.szostak@akademiaslaska.pl;
[5]Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Academy of Silesia, Poland, ORCID: 0000-0001-8788-6251 e-mail: dawid.zebrak@akademiaslaska.pl;

Originality/Value: *This is one of the first and largest surveys regarding the entirety of the Metropolis GZM, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis, and Ruhr Metropolis in relation to the implementation of prioritisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) as well as labour market inclusiveness that takes a comparative approach and provides practical recommendations for metropolitan authorities and other stakeholders as well as for future in-depth research.*

Keywords: *Labour market, inclusion, diversity, cultural diversity, cultural differences, employment of foreigners.*

JEL codes: *J24, M12, O15, J5.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

1. Introduction

This article is a part of an interdisciplinary project. The main objective of the project was establishing a new state of knowledge in the field of social inclusion management in the context of the internationalisation of the Upper Silesian-Zagłębie Metropolis (GZM), along with comparative analyses with other metropolitan areas in the country and abroad and recommendations for the practical use of these experiences in the GZM. This article focuses on the inclusiveness of the labour market.

The specified research topics regarding social inclusion management are widely implemented in the social sciences, specifically in the discipline of management and quality sciences, and within the field of engineering and technical sciences, specifically in the discipline of architecture and urban planning.

Inclusiveness concerns the broadly understood concept of diversity in terms of different generations present in the labour market, as well as in the international and multicultural dimension, because never before have we had to deal with such large scale migrations as we do now.

The study analysed the role of a selection of factors in shaping the labour market of the metropolis, such as economic revitalisation programs, i.e., programs aimed at investing money in creating places for foreigners, and educational and training initiatives (e.g., Polish language courses, cultural training/workshops, enabling understanding of cultural differences, and thus more effective assimilation of foreigners in the metropolis).

In this context, three main research questions were asked:

RQ1: Are companies prepared to take on the challenges of the changing labour market, and how can they ensure the continuity of their businesses in terms of filling job positions with qualified employees and filling any vacancies with foreign employees?

RQ2: What actions should local governments take to make it easier for foreign job candidates to find employment and effectively acclimate to metropolises?

RQ3: What expectations do employers located in the metropolises have towards foreign employees?

2. Characteristics and Research Hypothesis

In the literature on the subject, the idea of inclusiveness is directly connected with the terms diversity and cultural diversity. Inclusiveness, diversity, and cultural diversity are interconnected concepts that play crucial roles in shaping a dynamic and equitable contemporary labour market. These concepts are related to each other in the following ways:

- *Inclusiveness:* This refers to creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and have equal access to opportunities. In the labour market, inclusiveness ensures that every employee, regardless of their background, can contribute fully and feel a sense of belonging.

- *Diversity:* Diversity encompasses the range of differences among people, including race, gender, age, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. In the workplace, diversity means having a workforce that reflects a variety of perspectives and experiences, which can drive innovation and improve decision-making.

- *Cultural Diversity:* This is a subset of diversity that specifically refers to the inclusion of people from different cultural backgrounds. It involves recognising and valuing the unique cultural contributions of employees, which can enhance creativity and problem solving within teams.

The reasons for the increase in diversity and multiculturalism in today's organisations are demographic changes, organisational efforts to improve the quality of the workforce, pressure from legal norms, and the increase in globalization (Griffin, 2013, p. 200).

Diverse values, beliefs, and behavioural patterns are critical to the success of every aspect of international business, including activities such as international negotiations, sales interactions between people from different countries, managing the performance of employees from multiple countries, understanding and handling contracts between companies from different countries, and all human resource responsibilities, such as staffing, compensation, training, labour relations, and performance evaluation (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, p. 114).

In terms of training, attention should primarily be given to the topic of communication and as well as training , which makes people aware of cultural differences and the aspects that they affect, such as approach to work, commitments, work style, and task implementation. When communicating with people from other cultures, it is worth taking cultural differences into account to avoid communication barriers, misunderstandings, and conflicts. In addition, intercultural communication should be an integral part of development and training programs dedicated to both managers and all employees of international organisations (Raczek, 2020, p. 139-158). Leadership and management are also key aspects (Grima *et al.,* 2023).

In terms of leadership, top management support, a true commitment to cultural diversity, and flexibility to adapt the best leadership style(s) to a diverse and multicultural environment are essential. Diversity leaders, or people who will approach the necessary changes with determination, are needed to further the growth of the organization, and, at the same time, will be involved in the process of adapting to foreign employees.

The training and development of managers and leaders in the area of international management, diversity, and multiculturalism should be among the key tasks of every international organization. In the area of training, two types of training are preferred: awareness training and skills training. Awareness training focuses on understanding the need for and importance of managing and appreciating diversity.

It also aims to increase participants' awareness of diverse issues, such as stereotypes and cross-cultural insensitivity. Skill-building training educates employees about specific cultural differences and how to respond to differences in the workplace. These two types of training are often combined. Training is key and should be treated as an ongoing educational process, not a one-time seminar.

In terms of research, it is advisable to collect information on diversity. Different types of data are needed, including traditional equal opportunity profile data, analyses of employee attitudes and perceptions, and data that highlight the work experiences of different cultural groups. Research has several important applications.

It helps to identify issues that should be addressed in the education process. In turn, data that indicate differences in opinions on the value of diversity can be a starting point for discussions in training sessions. In addition, research helps to identify areas where changes are needed and provides guidance on how to implement these changes. To assess progress, baseline data on key indicators of the diverse environment should be collected and periodically updated.

In terms of analyzing and changing culture and human resource management systems, a comprehensive analysis of the organization's culture and human resource processes, such as recruitment, should be conducted. The audit aims to uncover sources of potential bias that disadvantage members of certain cultural groups and to

identify how the corporate culture may inadvertently put some members at a disadvantage (Cox and Blake, 1991, p. 45-56). Diversity is also referred to as multiculturalism. This means that members of an organization differ from each other in one or more factors, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, physical ability, or sexual orientation (Rozkwitalska, 2006, p 33-50).

Diversity is defined as all of the differences among people. Diversity has not always been defined so broadly. Several decades ago, many companies defined diversity in terms of race, gender, age, lifestyle, and disability (Daft, 2010, p. 346). Cultural diversity includes two dimensions, ethnicity and nationality, which directly indicate that an individual belongs to a specific culture.

This is why the terms "diversity" or "cultural diversity" are used. The EU Racial Equality Directive and the EU Employment Equality Directive state that cultural diversity includes six dimensions: age, physical ability/disability, culture, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Further classifications of cultural diversity can be found in the scientific literature.

The positive effects of cultural diversity and the combination of cultures in an organization/company include the following:

- A greater number of ideas, different points of view, and a multitude of interpretations regarding the functioning of the organisation, greater openness to new ideas;
- An increased number of choices as a result of greater creativity, flexibility, and the ability to solve existing problems.

However, the negative factors of cultural diversity include the following:

- Greater uncertainty caused by the increased complexity and ambiguity of social situations;
- Difficulties in finding consensus on definitions due to errors in communication, a lack of understanding, and difficulties in agreeing on actions (Adler, 1986, p. 80).

In promoting the inclusiveness of the labour market, management of the relationship among stakeholders such as local authorities, employers, and migrant workers is crucial. Effective stakeholder involvement promotes understanding and appreciation of the diverse needs of the labour market, enhancing the likelihood of cooperation (Guillaume and Loufrani-Fedida, 2023, p. 123).

Companies can benefit from having open communication strategies and good partnerships with local authorities that permit training programs in cultural diversity and legal compliance. For example, providing offerings such as Polish language courses and integration training workshops can help to surmount some of the challenges faced by international workers.

Research demonstrates that organizations that actively involve their stakeholders not only enhance employee satisfaction and retention but also access various insights, resulting in innovation and improved business performance. The proactive connection of initiatives that promote diversity and inclusiveness can greatly help improve organizational agility and resilience amidst the context of changing labour markets (O'Brien and Cooney, 2025, p. 178-179).

Today, organizations are accepting a more comprehensive definition of diversity that recognizes the range of differences that affect how employees approach work, interact with each other, derive satisfaction from work, and define who they are as people in the workplace (Daft, 2010, p. 346-347).

When integration is needed (as in the case of joint ventures and the development of a global workforce), cultural diversity must be valued and leveraged, but its effects must be minimized, whereas when cultural diversity is needed to differentiate products and services, for example, to meet the needs of local markets, different corporate practices and organizational projects are required (Briscoe and Schuler, 2004, p. 46.)

A key challenge for companies operating internationally is managing the various challenges to integration (to ensure consistency worldwide) and differentiation (to adapt to local conditions) (Mirzoev *et al.,* 2023, p. 3-4; Brewster, Sparrow, Vernon, and Houldsworth, 2011, p. 2). Notably, multiculturalism has a strong effect on many important aspects of the functioning of international enterprises. This primarily concerns:

- transfer of technology and production management methods;
- dissemination of organisational innovations;
- horizontal integration of production processes of realised goals and products within the enterprise;
- relations between the headquarters and foreign branches (degree of freedom of the branch);
- interpersonal relations;
- management of the enterprise's human resources;
- the way of conducting negotiations (Penc, 2008, p. 1107).

Five key elements are needed to transform traditional organizations into multicultural organizations: leadership, training, research, analysis, and change of culture and human resources management systems, and follow-up of each of the above (Cox and Blake, 1991, p. 45-56).

By integrating inclusiveness, diversity, and cultural diversity into their practices, organizations can create a more equitable and dynamic labour market that benefits both employees and employers. Notably, awareness of cultural diversity can be an

element of competitive advantage. It is possible that a diverse workforce better understands various market segments and approaches problem solving more creatively. However, diversity among employees can also lead to numerous conflicts in the communication process. To prevent such a situation, it is necessary to work on improving tolerance, understanding, and communication among employees from different cultures (Bojewska, 2008, p. 33).

Taking all of the above into consideration, three main research hypotheses were created:

H1: To minimise the main challenges to integration into the labour market, which are low awareness of the need for change, cultural differences and fear of difficulties related to employing foreigners, specific actions, and support from metropolis authorities should be offered to employers who wish to employ foreigners.
H2: Language courses and training in cultural differences have a key impact on the inclusion of the labour market and effective acclimation of foreigners.
H3: The assistance of local authorities in formal procedures related to the employment of foreigners (legalisation of stay) has a positive effect on employers' decisions to employ workers from abroad.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The main research methods used in the study were literature review, diagnostic survey research, and basic statistical analysis. The study was conducted based on a survey questionnaire that employed the CAWI method on a selected research sample of 2900 respondents, who were inhabitants of the Metropolis GZM in Poland (1274), the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot metropolis in Poland (824), and the Ruhr metropolis in Germany (802) who declared themselves mostly employed in all sectors, including the public, private, and nongovernmental sectors. The research results were obtained by taking a comparative approach, both for the entire representative population of each metropolitan area and in cross-sectional approaches, which include status in the labour market as defined in four categories.

The main research methods employed in the study were a literature review (to develop research scales), as well as diagnostic survey research and preliminary statistics. Research was carried out between June to September 2024, allowing for a systematic collection and analysis of data.

In-timeline, it was possible to program survey collection, thus: ensured comparatively relevant, accurate and updated understanding over labour-market inclusiveness in the three screened metropolitan areas. Geographically, labour markets were chosen in three major metropolitan areas: Metropolis GZM, Gdańsk-

Gdynia-Sopot (both in Poland) and the Ruhr metropolis in Germany. The context and research stratification of these study areas had historical and simultaneous value in understanding the differences in demographic variety, and economic bases of influence, on the labour market. Both Metropolis GZM and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot represent the Polish labour market with its emerging demographic variety including the recent addition of migrant workers interacting with local economies.

The Ruhr metropolis has been historically industrial, allowing the research to contrast in terms of established institutions, and addressing how established industrial economies shape diversity issues in labour processes to respond to demographic changes in light of global labour market settings. From a subject scope the study focused on labour market inclusive language diversity and explored how the three contextual issues of: cultural diversity; active-participant engagement; and local policy, led to identifying what constitutes inclusive labour processes.

The study participants were residents of the metropolis. This analysis examines respondents from the three metropolitan areas—GZM, Pomorskie, and Ruhr—based on three key demographic factors: education level, age distribution, and gender representation. The education level of respondents varies significantly across the regions:

- Basic Education: The lowest representation is among those with basic education. Only 1 respondent in GZM and 4 in Pomorskie reported this qualification, while there are none in Ruhr.
- Secondary education is the most common qualification in all three areas, with 67 respondents in GZM, 48 in Pomorskie, and 13 in Ruhr.
- Incomplete secondary education remains low in all regions (2 in GZM, 3 in Pomorskie, and 1 in Ruhr). Higher Education (Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate):
- Master's degrees are the most prevalent among higher education qualifications, with 71 respondents in Pomorskie, followed by 63 in GZM and 13 in Ruhr.
- Bachelor's/Engineering degrees are slightly more common in Ruhr (25 respondents) compared to GZM (37 respondents) and Pomorskie (41 respondents).
- Doctoral degrees are relatively rare but evenly distributed between GZM and Pomorskie (5 respondents each) and 2 in Ruhr.
- Vocational Education: Ruhr has a higher proportion of vocational education holders (14 respondents) compared to Pomorskie (9) and GZM (13).

The respondent age groups reveal a diverse demographic structure across the three metropolitan areas:

- Young Adults (18-24 years old): the lowest representation is in GZM (15 respondents), compared to 22 in Pomorskie and 11 in Ruhr. Prime Working Age (25-34 years old)
- this age group is the largest in all regions, particularly GZM (56 respondents) and Ruhr (23 respondents), while Pomorskie has 38 respondents. Middle Age (35-44 years old)
- Pomorskie has the highest number of respondents in this category (56 respondents), followed by GZM (49) and Ruhr (18). Older Adults (45-54 years old & 55-64 years old)
- GZM and Pomorskie show similar numbers for 45-54 years old, with 34 and 30 respondents, respectively. Ruhr has 13 respondents
- In the 55-64 age group, Pomorskie (29 respondents) slightly surpasses GZM (25 respondents), while Ruhr shows the lowest representation (5 respondents). Seniors (65+ years old)
- the lowest percentage of respondents falls within this category, with 9 in GZM, 6 in Pomorskie, and none in Ruhr.

The gender distribution of respondents presents distinct patterns across the metropolitan areas: Female Representation: women form the majority in GZM (117 respondents) and Pomorskie (111 respondents). In Ruhr, female respondents are significantly fewer (25 respondents). Regarding male Representation worth noting that men make up a sizable portion in Ruhr (45 respondents), compared to 70 in GZM and 69 in Pomorskie.

3.2 Measures and Variable Definitions

The Polish labour market in 2024-2025 is characterized by low unemployment, strong wage growth, and increasing labour demand. While employment fell in 2024, it is projected to remain stable in 2025, with the unemployment rate staying low and the activity rate increasing. Unemployment rate in May 2025 was 5% (GUS, 2025). The labour market situation varies significantly across different regions in Poland. The workforce population will decrease due to aging, and this could influence future trends in the labour market and perhaps produce labour shortages.

We cannot ignore the war in Ukraine, which caused an increase in the number of workers from Ukraine in the Polish labour market. Not without significance are the rising labour costs and the increase in the minimum wage in Poland, which makes investors more cautious when deciding to start a business. Poland has a vast foreign workforce, with many Ukrainians working in Poland, contributing to the nation's total labour force. Hybrid work patterns are gaining traction, reflecting the shifting preferences of employees.

When discussing the labour market in Poland, data from the Central Statistical Office should be taken into account:

- A total of 1,004.6 thousand foreigners were working in Poland as of 29 February 2024. At the end of February 2024, the share of foreigners in the total number of people working was 6.6%. Foreigners working in February 2024 came from more than 150 countries.
- Compared with that in January 2022, the share of foreigners working in Poland in the total number of people working in Poland increased by 1.4 percentage points.
- In the analysed population of foreigners, the majority were men, and their share decreased from 64.7% at the end of January 2022 to 59.5% at the end of February 2024.
- The largest group of foreigners working in Poland were citizens of Ukraine, who numbered 690.2 thousand at the end of February 2024. Compared with January 2022, their share of the total number of foreigners working decreased by 4.6 % points.
- Other nationalities with a significant impact on the Polish labour market include Belarusian, Georgian, Moldovan, Filipino, and Indian.

The Labour Market Department of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy published information on the employment of foreigners in Poland in the first half of 2024. The ministerial data confirm the trend of an increasing number of foreigners finding employment in Poland.

Notably, in the first half of 2024, 173,500 work permits were issued, which is an 18% increase compared with the same period in 20232. In addition, 1.16 million foreigners were registered in the ZUS social insurance system. Citizens of Ukraine continue to constitute the largest group of foreigners on the Polish labour market—774,000, of which 242,000 are refugees with the UKR PESEL number.

Moreover, there has been an increase in the number of work permits for citizens of non-European countries, such as the Philippines, Nepal, India, Colombia, Uzbekistan, and Bangladesh. Most foreigners are employed in manufacturing (29%), transport and storage (22%), administrative services (16%), and construction (11%). They are employed mainly as unskilled workers (39%), industrial workers and artisans (21%), and machinery and equipment operators (15%) (HRIaw, 2024).

Despite many challenges and difficulties, Poland is still one of the most attractive labour markets for foreigners in Europe. Therefore, it is crucial to take all possible actions to enable faster adaptation of foreigners to life and work in Poland and in metropolitan areas.

This will constitute an added value both for foreign employees and for employers and the Polish labour market.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis process in this study focused on exploring information on the employment of foreigners. The respondents were asked to answer the following questions:

- ➢ Does your organisation intend to employ foreigners?
- ➢ What competencies/skills/qualifications does your organisation seek among candidates for work from abroad?
- ➢ What special benefits and/or support activities does your organisation offer to foreign employees?
- ➢ Does your organisation already employ foreigners?
- ➢ What activities/initiatives do you think your organisation would expect from the metropolis that would be helpful in making a decision to employ foreigners?
- ➢ Please indicate the education profile (e.g., field of study, profession).

4. Results

The results of the study provide insight into the current state of readiness for the employment of foreigners in metropolises. It was possible to obtain data exclusively from Polish metropolises. The main research results related to foreigners in the Polish labour market are presented in the graphs below. In response to the question "Does your organisation intend to employ foreigners?", the majority of respondents in both metropolitan regions expressed openness to hiring foreign workers.

- GZM Metropolis: a total of 188 respondents indicated their companies plan to employ foreigners. Of these, 21 respondents specified that they would limit such employment to blue-collar positions only.
- Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis: 181 respondents expressed positively about hiring foreigners. Among them, 13 respondents stated a preference for hiring foreigners exclusively for blue-collar roles.

These results suggest that while there is overall receptiveness to employing foreigners in both metropolitan areas, a portion of organisations still perceive such employment as being most applicable to lower-skilled, manual labor sectors.

In response to the question "Does your organisation already employ foreigners?", survey results from two major metropolitan areas GZM Metropolis and Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis highlight a strong and growing interest in hiring foreign workers. The research shows that a substantial number of organisations in both regions currently employ foreign workers, indicating openness and integration into a multicultural workforce. A smaller but notable group plans to begin hiring foreigners, suggesting future growth in international employment. Worth noting that many organisations have experience working with foreign employees in the past,

reflecting established patterns of cross-border recruitment. These results demonstrate a clear and sustained interest in employing foreigners across both metropolises. The trend points to an increasingly diverse and internationally engaged labor market in Poland's urban centers.

Figure 1. *Intention to employ foreigners by respondents' level of education - GZM Metropolis*
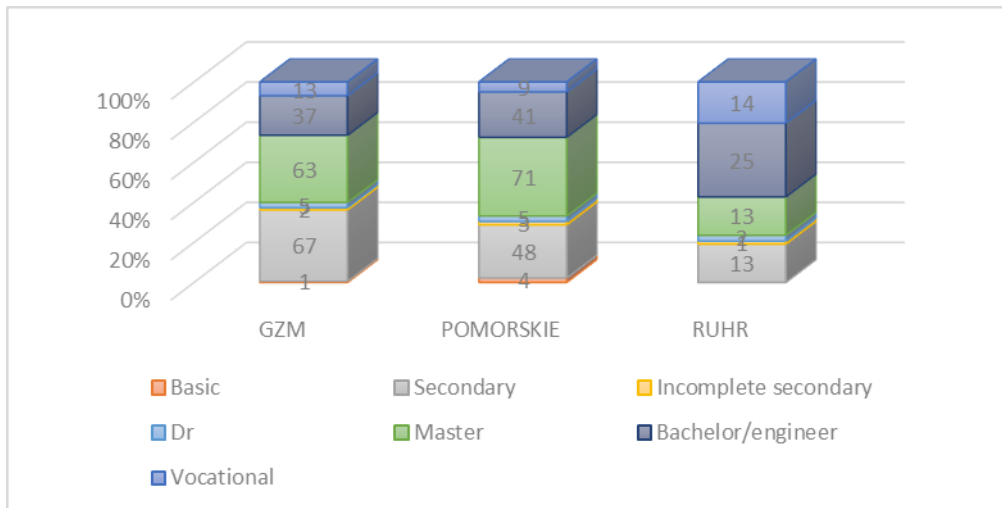
Source: *Authors' own elaboration based on the research results.*

Figure 2. *Intention to employ foreigners by respondents' sector of employment – GZM Metropoli*
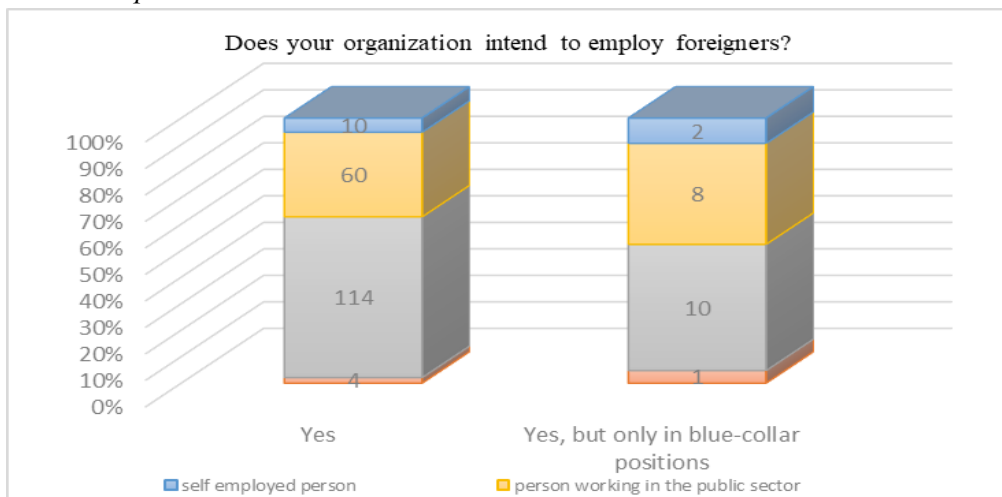
Source: *Authors' own elaboration based on the research results.*

Another issue that was examined was the competences/skills/qualifications sought by employers among foreign employees. The results are presented in the table 1. The respondents mentioned issues such as Polish language skills, education profiles, and professional qualifications. Willingness to take up employment in the position, knowledge of a specific foreign language/languages, and my organisation is not looking for foreigners to work. The most important ones were Polish language skills and professional qualifications. The respondents were also asked to answer the question regarding specific benefits and/or support activities offered by their organisations to foreign employees.

The obtained results are presented in the table 2. Notably, the following options were available: cultural training, comprehensive assistance in relocation, help in finding an apartment, help in obtaining legal residence in Poland, help in finding a job for a spouse/partner, help in finding a school for a foreigner's child, co-financing for renting/buying an apartment, co-financing for the costs of a nursery/kindergarten, opportunity to get to know the country before employment, and coverage of the total training costs.

There are differences in the respondents' answers in individual metropolises. Cultural training, help in legalising their stay in Poland, and help in finding an apartment were considered the most important for the GZM metropolitan residents. Moreover, Polish language courses, cultural training, and help in legalising their stay in Poland were considered the most important issues in the case of respondents from Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis.

Another question was dedicated to gaining information on actions/initiatives that the organisations would expect from the metropolis, which would be helpful in making decisions on employing foreigners in the opinion of respondents. The obtained results are shown in the table 3. It was possible to choose from the following options: substantive support in the area of legalisation of stay, substantive support in the area of cultural training, financial support in the area of cofinancing temporary remuneration, assistance in the area of employee recruitment, and other options (possible to indicate a different answer). Substantive support in the area of legalisation of stay and financial support in the area of co-financing temporary remuneration – these answers were unanimously considered the most important by respondents from both metropolises.

Table 1. *Competencies/skills/qualifications looking for among job candidates from abroad*

Competencies/skills/qualifications	Percentage of responses - GZM Metropolis	Percentage of responses - Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis
Knowledge of Polish	34,79	33,33
Education profile	15,97	20,23

Professional qualifications	24,14	24,83
Willingness to work	6,08	4,14
Knowledge of a specific foreign language	11,41	11,95
Not looking for foreigners	7,61	5,52

Source: *Authors' own elaboration based on research results.*

Table 2. *Specific benefits and/or support activities offered by organisations to foreign employees according to respondents*

Benefits and/or support activities	Percentage of responses – GZM Metropolis	Percentage of responses – Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis
Polish language courses	n/a	21,49
Cultural training	19,16	13,38
Comprehensive assistance in relocation	9,71	9,87
Help in finding an apartment	16,27	10,74
Help in legalizing your stay in Poland	17,32	12,5
Help in finding a job for your spouse/partner	8,41	7,46
Help in finding a school for a foreigner's child	7,35	5,92
Co-financing for renting/buying an apartment	7,87	4,39
Co-financing for the costs of a nursery/kindergarten	5,25	5,26
Opportunity to get to know the country before employment	3,41	6,14
Coverage of the total training costs	5,25	2,85

Source: *Authors' own elaboration based on research results.*

Table 3. *Actions/initiatives that the organisations would expect from the metropolis, which would be helpful in making decisions on employing foreigners according to respondents*

Actions/initiatives	Percentage of responses – GZM Metropolis	Percentage of responses – Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolis
Substantive support in the area of legalization of stay	28,09	32,06
Substantive support in the area of cultural training	23,97	23,1
Financial support in the area of co-financing temporary remuneration	28,09	25,82
Assistance in the area of employee recruitment	18,88	19,02
Other	0,97	n/a

Source: *Authors' own elaboration based on research results*

In summary, the research highlights that employers in both metropolises are interested in hiring foreigners, and some of them already employ or have employed

foreign workers in the past. It is advisable for metropolitan authorities to take action to support employers, which would be mutually beneficial, and for foreigners to have better and faster assimilation into new professional environments.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The main research conclusions related to foreigners in the Polish labour market are:

- ➢ 369 respondents anticipate future employment of foreigners, indicating openness and demand.
- ➢ 34 respondents limit this intention to blue-collar roles, suggesting some segmentation or barriers to wider inclusion.
- ➢ 344 respondents report active foreign employment—evidence of established integration.
- ➢ 130 respondents mention past foreign employment, reinforcing historical openness.

Considering the desired competencies of foreign workers, research shows that the most sought-after qualities are: Polish language proficiency as a key for integration and operational effectiveness; relevant education profile, what indicates preference for qualified talent; and professional certifications, aligned with sectoral skill requirements.

- ➢ As part of the support provided to foreign workers, organisations offer: cultural training, legalisation assistance, help finding accommodation, language courses.
- ➢ As support from the metropolis, organisations expect mainly the following activities/initiatives: expert guidance on legalisation procedures, cultural integration assistance, financial aid for temporary wages and recruitment support.

The data highlights a progressively adaptive labour market in Poland's Metropolis region with respect to foreign employment. It is possible to assume that there is an indication of stratification - while many organizations are open to foreign hires, 34 respondents pointed limit employment to blue-collar positions. This aligns with segmentation theory, which posits that immigrants often occupy lower-tier roles due to linguistic, cultural, and institutional barriers.

The emphasis on language skills, education profile, and certifications underscores that employers value transferrable human capital in foreign candidates. Polish language proficiency acts as both a practical requirement and a symbolic gateway to professional inclusion.

Additionally, the range of support activities provided reveals a growing organizational responsibility toward employee well-being and integration. Cultural

training and language courses are crucial as a soft infrastructure that promote workforce cohesion and reduce friction in multicultural settings. Organisations' expectations for support from the Metropolis suggest that employment integration is not solely an HR issue but a regional development priority. Financial and legal support mechanisms could foster a more attractive ecosystem for both employers and foreign workers.

The results above allowed us to answer all the research questions and to prove or deny each of the hypotheses. Two of them were fully confirmed and one was partly proven.

Notably, effectively managing inclusion in the workforce requires a strategic approach and commitment at multiple levels. DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) policies should be an integral part of each organisation's strategy, including the offices and authorities of the metropolis. This approach involves setting diversity goals, monitoring progress, and ensuring that all employees are treated equally. Regular diversity and inclusion training can help increase awareness and understanding among employees. This training can cover topics such as unconscious bias, intercultural communication, and diversity management.

Additionally, promoting a culture where all employees feel respected, appreciated, and valued is key. This can include initiatives such as employee support groups, mentorship, and open, transparent communication with many channels. It is certainly necessary to have an appropriate approach to the recruitment and selection process and to prepare recruiters to conduct interviews with candidates from different countries.

Recruitment processes should be designed in a way that minimises prejudice and promotes diversity in the organisation. Moreover, it is crucial to prepare managers to manage diverse teams, including multicultural teams, which requires the acquisition or development of many important competencies.

To sum up and check out the three main hypotheses, the following must be announced:

➢ H1: To minimise the main challenges to integration into the labour market, which are low awareness of the need for change, cultural differences, and fear of difficulties related to employing foreigners, specific actions, and support from metropolis authorities should be offered to employers who wish to employ foreigners. The study confirmed the need for metropolises to support employers in matters related to the employment of foreigners.

➢ H2: Language courses and training in cultural differences have a key impact on the inclusion of the labour market and effective acclimation of foreigners, which was partially proven. Polish language courses, cultural training and

help in legalising the stays of foreigners in Poland are extremely important. Employers find legal requirements expensive and time-consuming.

➢ H3:The assistance of local authorities in formal procedures related to the employment of foreigners (legalisation of stay) has a positive effect on employers' decisions to employ workers from abroad. As mentioned above, the legalisation of stay may be a significant barrier in deciding to employ foreigners.

Notably, labour market inclusion is only part of an interdisciplinary project aimed at gaining a new state of knowledge in the field of social inclusion management in the context of the internationalisation of the Upper Silesian-Zagłębie Metropolis.

This is why the main challenges in managing social inclusion in metropolises should be addressed. They are:

➢ Acceptance of others: Counteracting prejudice and xenophobia, tolerance of people with a different religion, nationality, skin colour, or sexual orientation, integration processes that also include immigrants;
➢ Communication with community members/stakeholders: Effective communication and dialogue with residents, including minority and peripheral groups, new ways of reaching residents and various social groups with information, information campaigns and direct meetings;
➢ Ecology: Environmental protection and clean air combined with the development of ecological transport and reduction of exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions, counteracting adverse climate change and waste management;
➢ Acceptance of change: The challenge is to change the mentality and awareness of a part of society that still does not want to accept diversity, has a closed attitude, and lacks openness to conversation and arguments;
➢ Equal treatment: Equality of society in all areas of functioning, including for every national minority, ensuring equal opportunities for everyone regardless of nationality, accessibility for people with disabilities;
➢ Diversity: Respecting the differences and traditions of people from other cultural circles, counteracting stereotypes and fears of other cultures combined with creating common spaces for residents; increasing cultural awareness and equality in rights and duties;
➢ Education: Equal access to education and social education in the field of inclusivity and tolerance concerning, for example, counteracting ethnic, religious or disability prejudices, from an early age;
➢ Workplaces: Decent work that pays well and is combined with more jobs and less unemployment, including jobs regardless of origin and for professionals;

➢ Public transport: Must be accessible, cheap, and adaptable to the needs of residents, and include collision-free transport options and efficient ticketing systems;
➢ Equal treatment - equality of society in all areas of functioning, including for every national.

References:

Adler, N.J. 1986. International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior. Kent Publishing Comp., Boston, p. 80.

Ahuchogu, M.C., Sanyaolu, T.O., Adeleke, A.G. 2024. Workforce development in the transport sector amidst environmental change: A conceptual review. Global Journal of Research in Science and Technology, 2(01), 061-077.

Bojewska, B. 2008. Uwarunkowania kultury organizacyjnej w przedsiębiorstwie międzynarodowym. In: P. Wachowiak, (ed.), Kulturowe i kadrowe problemy internacjonalizacji przedsiębiorstw. Szkoła Główna Handlowa w Warszawie, Warszawa.

Brewster, Ch., Sparrow, P., Vernon, G., Houldsworth, E. 2011. International Human Resource Management, 3rd Edition. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, UK.

Briscoe, D.R., Schuler, R.S. 2004. International Human Resource Management, Second Edition, Policy and practice for the global enterprise, Routledge.

Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. The directive aims to ensure that people with a particular religion or belief, disability or sexual orientation do not suffer discrimination and benefit from equal treatment in the workplace.

Cox, T.H., Blake, S. 1991. Managing Cultural Diversity: Implications for Organizational Competitiveness. The Executive, Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 45-56.

Daft, R.L. 2010. Management, 9th edition. South-Western Cengage Learning, Canada.

Griffin, R.W. 2013. Podstawy zarządzania organizacjami. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.

Grima, S., Thalassinos, E., Cristea, M., Kadłubek, M., Maditinos, D., Peiseniece, L. (Eds.). 2023. Digital transformation, strategic resilience, cyber security and risk management. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Guillaume, M., Loufrani-Fedida, S. 2023. Stakeholder engagement in inclusive employability management for employees whose health at work is impaired: Empirical evidence from a French public organisation. Personnel Review, 52(1), pp. 121-144.

GUS. 2025. Stopa bezrobocia rejestrowanego w latach 1990-2025. Główny Urząd Statystyczny. https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/bezrobocie-rejestrowane/stopa-bezrobocia-rejestrowanego-w-latach-1990-2025,4,1.html.

HRIaw. 2024. Employment of foreigners in Poland - first half of 2024. https://hrlaw.pl/en/flash-news/employment-of-foreigners-in-poland-first-half-of-2024.

Mirzoev, T., Tull, K.I., Winn, N., Mir, G., King, N.V., Wright, J.M., Gong, Y.Y. 2022. Systematic review of the role of social inclusion within sustainable urban developments. International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology, 29(1).

O'Brien, E., Cooney, T.M. 2025. Enhancing inclusive entrepreneurial activity through community engagement led by higher education institutions. Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy, 19(2), pp. 177-201.

Penc, J. 2008. Encyklopedia zarządzania. WSSM, Łódź.

Raczek, A. 2020. Effective communication as an essential management tool in international enterprises. In: J. Paliszkiewicz (ed.), Management and information technology: new challenges. Warsaw University of Life Sciences Press, Warsaw.

Rozkwitalska, M. 2006. Kultura organizacyjna korporacji transnarodowych oparta o społeczną odpowiedzialność. Organizacja i kierowanie, 2(124), 33-50.

The Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) is a key piece of EU legislation to combat discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, its essence and purpose being to implement the principle of equal treatment. The Directive, adopted in 2000, introduced a new and strengthened the existing legal framework for combating racial discrimination in the European Union. http://www.efhr.eu/2012/02/29/dyrektywa-o-rownosci-rasowej-zastosowanie-i-wyzwania/.