

**SIGNIFICANCE AND REACTIONS TO THE
POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY MARCH IN
WROCŁAW,
11 NOVEMBER 2018**

REPORT:

**COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
AND COLLEGIUM CIVITAS
CENTER FOR SOCIOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS**

Social Significance and Reactions to the Polish Independence Day March in Wrocław, 11 November 2018

Report prepared by the Collegium Civitas
Center for Sociological Interventions and
the Commissioner for Human Rights

I. Methodological introduction

It should be noted that this report was prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and Collegium Civitas¹ as the result of a suggestion put forward by the Social Council of the Commissioner for Human Rights in Wrocław. At a meeting of the Council held on November 16, 2018, its members raised concerns about the behavior of participants in the Polish Independence Day March of November 11, 2018.

They called attention to the increasingly frequent use of violence and incitement to ideological and ethnic hatred by the event's participants. In addition, the Council noted the problem of radical nationalist groups operating in the city's public space and the need to consider whether to outlaw them.

The Council recommended preparing a report.

The report should aim to diagnose the significance of the March and analyze its consequences for public authorities as well as community organizations. The central question would be how they should deal with the March itself and the consequences of increasing nationalistic tendencies in the city.

In order to prepare the report, researchers conducted an exploratory field study. This research took place in Wrocław on February 15 and 16, 2019. It served as the basis for formulating the research issues in a more precise way.

¹ The study was conducted by Andrzej Stefański, the Chief Coordinator for Social Projects at the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, in conjunction with Collegium Civitas Center for Sociological Interventions (CSI), headed by Dr. Łukasz Jurczyszyn.

The first interviews allowed us to observe the “social shock” that was triggered by the “evening” March of November 11, 2018 in Wrocław. This shock stemmed more from the damage to the city’s image and conviction that a “turning point” had been reached, which necessitated an “appropriate reaction” to the increased activity of nationalist groups more than from the actual degradation of the situation, e.g. from any drastic increase in hate-motivated physical violence.

The first interviews made it evident that in multicultural Wrocław (European Capital of Culture etc.), the several thousand participants in the Polish Independence Day March and the accompanying physical violence and slogans such as “The city is ruled by a Jew in a yarmulke”, “Oppose the dictates of Brussels”, “Anti-Banderite Poland”, “We remember Volhynia” [the latter two are anti-Ukrainian] aroused significant social opposition. Coupled with another turning-point event, this time at the national level –the murder of Gdańsk mayor Paweł Adamowicz – quite a few respondents expressed fears that something “bad may happen in the city”, for example, “a bloodier confrontation” that “may slip out of the city’s control.”

As a result, the exploratory research had a fundamental impact on the research methodology. It helped make the study’s authors realize that the problem is not only the March itself or counter-marches (in the sense of violent outcomes, when the march’s participants became victims of some radical nationalists), but that it’s a litmus test for increasing negative tendencies “around the marchers” (xenophobia, radical nationalism, racism). In view of the above, as a result of last year’s March, the city authorities decided that now is “the right moment” to take new, more decisive action, e.g. to think about a “real”, “more in-depth”, “less bureaucratic” strategy to counteract ethnic tensions and nationalist ideology.

The findings of the exploratory study led to formulation of the following **central research questions** around which individual and group interviews as well as media content analyses were conducted – and the **main hypothesis**:

- 1) What is the meaning of the Polish Independence Day March of 11 November 2018 and what mobilized people to participate in it?
- 2) What is the social structure of the March’s organizers and participants (socio-demographic profiles of participants, organizational, ideological, subcultural structure)?

- 3) What is the local history of organizing marches and counter-marches as part of Independence Day?
- 4) What is specific to the March organized in Wrocław? Do radical nationalism and racism have characteristics specific to Wrocław?
- 5) How radical do right-wing slogans have to be to dissuade several thousand people who are not far-right activists from participating in the March?
- 6) To what extent are local government and civil society coping with violence, hate crimes and incitement to such crimes in the context of the March?
- 7) What is your opinion about terminating the March? Should such marches be permitted in Wrocław? What are your opinions about radical nationalist groups operating in public space, and the question of whether they should be banned, including the organizations responsible for organizing the March?
- 8) What were (are) the direct and indirect social and political consequences of the March and counter-march?
- 9) What recommendations should be formulated for the city authorities, what would have to be done to combat the activities of nationalist groups and the reach of their ideology (the groups that organize the March in Wrocław)? What programs need to be improved? Which institutions need to be strengthened? What new institutions need to be established?
- 10) What are the likely medium-term dynamics of nationalist and racist tendencies in Wrocław?

Main Hypothesis

The Polish Independence Day March of 11 November 2018 in Wrocław – despite its historical and local specificity – is a symptom of a much broader and more significant societal phenomenon in Wrocław as well as the country as a whole.

First, there has been an increase in racist and nationalist tendencies in Polish society in the face of major demographic changes – in particular, the large-scale immigration from Ukraine, particularly to Wrocław.

Second, an effective policy response to radicalization will not be possible if the representatives of as diverse a range of groups as possible (in terms of ideology, milieu, profession, age, gender etc.) interested in this problem are not invited to help devise and implement this policy. Those invited should represent a

wide array of optics and functional sensitivities in society (offices, community organizations, universities, entrepreneurs, experts), which will increase the chances of jointly developing more effective instruments to counter the process of radicalization.

Methods

Below is a description of the five qualitative methods that have been used to answer the aforementioned questions and test the main hypothesis.

It bears mentioning at this point that we were guided by two basic principles when conducting the research: first, **anonymity** for public figures as well as those who do not perform any official functions. There were, however, three exceptions – high-level officials at Wrocław City Hall whose responsibilities include prevention of conflicts and threats to public safety, whether based on social, ethnic, national or ideological background.

As a result, we provide below only brief descriptions of the particular segments of society that took part in this qualitative study. Second, the **diversity of the selected research sample** is clearly evident, which proved to be of fundamental importance due to the specific nature of the research problem: radical nationalism relating to ideological polarization and social-economic exclusion. The sample was selected using the targeted, non-random “Snowball” method. This methodology is consistent with the key research findings as well as with the recommendations, which emphasize the need to go beyond all ideological, community and political “bubbles” in order to counteract nationalist radicalization more effectively in Wrocław and elsewhere.

The research methods described above consisted of:

19 individual interviews with:

- Jacek Sutryk – president (mayor) of Wrocław
- Renata Granowska – vice-president (deputy mayor) of Wrocław
- Bartłomiej Ciężyński – deputy chairman of Wrocław City Council and the mayor’s plenipotentiary for tolerance and prevention of xenophobia.
- anonymous representatives of the Catholic Church, police department, judicial system, cultural, scientific and scholarly organizations, local media, businesspersons and community organizations.

5 group interviews with:

representatives of a wide range of community organizations (in terms of ideology, identity or programs). One of these interviews was carried out with two police officers.

4 focus groups with:

city councilors and officials responsible for intercultural dialogue; managers international corporations operating in Wrocław; young fans of F.C. Śląsk Wrocław (including young people living in smaller towns outside Wrocław); participants and supporters of the march countering the “evening” March dominated by nationalists; people from left-wing, anti-discrimination, anti-fascist or ecological groups; representatives of ethnic and national minorities (the locally very numerous Ukrainian and Jewish communities); high school students and teachers; university students active in the Catholic community.

Desk research

Content analysis of 20 articles from various periodicals².

Four participating observations:

1. The march held on 1 March 2019, the National Day of Remembrance of the Cursed Soldiers, called the “March in Homage to Soldiers”, organized by the former priest and monk, Jacek Międlar.
2. An intergenerational event held on 2 March 2019 as part of the National Day of Remembrance of the Cursed Soldiers, which included history lectures, film screenings, meetings with veterans and invited guests at the Zajezdnia History Center on ul. Grabiszyńska 184, which was co-organized by one of our interviewees.
3. The Stations of the Cross for University Students, held on 12 April 2019 and organized by the Academic Chaplaincy – participants walked through Wrocław.
4. A Football match between Śląsk Wrocław and Górnik Zabrze held on 13 April 2019 at the Wrocław city stadium on Aleja Śląska 1.

The Study by the Numbers:

118 interview subjects;

² Full list of the articles analyzed and cited in the report can be found in part V - *Cited sources* of this report

1 city;
19 individual interviews and 5 group interviews;
14 focus groups;
20 articles from periodicals;
4 participating observations;
13 recommendations.

The research was performed:

15 February (exploratory study) to 30 April 2019.

II. Research Results

1. The broader significance of the March in the context of growing nationalist tendencies not only in Wrocław, but in the country as a whole.

The exploratory study found at the outset that various social segments in Wrocław are worried about the increased nationalist tendencies in the city, and that the annual 11 November “evening” March demonstrates this. As one of the young interviewees who described himself as conservative (and who belongs to such an organization) put it,

“the atmosphere is thickening and no one de facto knows how things are going to end”

A representative of city government expressed similar views, saying,

“For several years now, a kind of tension has been felt in Wrocław, associated with the increase in hate against those who are different, foreign or think differently.”

The official perceived an increased risk over the next several years of physical, forceful “inter-group solutions”. However, at the present time, such situations are marginal, as is the level of activity engaged in by ideologically extreme right-wing groups.

A scandalous as well as drastic example of the potentially tragic consequences of the spread of racist and nationalist tendencies was a recent attack in Wrocław on Przemysław Witkowski, a journalist and researcher of extremist groups³. The University of Wrocław lecturer, whose articles we cite later in this report, was brutally beaten after commenting upon homophobic graffiti that appeared on a wall by the Oder river boulevard. Yet, as an interview with a representative of the Jewish minority indicated, the threat of anti-Semitic violence is not particularly serious, in contrast to the recent situation, for instance, in France (where there was an 80% increase in antisemitic attacks compared to 2017). According to the caretaker of the Wrocław synagogue, there is no need to organize special security for the temple, as there is for Paris synagogues. Nevertheless, Wrocław and Poland in general are beset by an enormous and increasing volume of anti-Semitic hate speech online, which obviously could result in more physical manifestations over time.

It should be noted that the March phenomenon is related to social-economic changes in Wrocław and the city's specific context as well as to broader tendencies – i.e. the increasing prominence of attitudes that could be described more positively as national-patriotic or more negatively as racism or radical, exclusive ethnic nationalism. Historically, beginning in 2010/2011, the 1 November Wrocław March of nationalist groups became (and continues to be) an important event on the map of public nationalist events in Poland. If we consider the 2013 iteration of the March, which drew about 25,000 people, then it becomes clear that Wrocław is Poland's second largest center of this far-right phenomenon, after Warsaw. In connection with this “double” meaning of the Wrocław 11 November March – local and nationwide – it does not appear that this march has been declining in importance, or that it will be suspended, even though municipal authorities have been making increasing efforts to do so. This is the case because radical right-wing groups are becoming increasingly active as they systematically exploit public space in Poland during national holidays. For these groups, every such occasion is an invaluable opportunity to mobilize local

³ Kinga Czernichowska, Paweł Relikowski, “Przemysław Witkowski brutally beaten, has a broken nose. Police continue to search for the perpetrator and appeal for help. What inscriptions was it about?”, *Gazeta Wrocławska*, 26/07/2019, , <https://gazetawroclawska.pl/przemyslaw-witkowskibrutalnie-pobity-ma-zlamany-nos-policja-dalej-szuka-sprawcy-i-apeluje-o-pomoc-oktore-napisy-poszlo-zdjecia/ar/c1-14305029> .

activists and sympathizers and to present themselves (and their slogans) to the public and media.

Moreover, Wrocław has a history and tradition of activism on the part of nationalist organizations, which were the most robust in the entire country in the 1990s and 2000s. The leading radical groups then were the Polish National Revival (Polish acronym: NOP), though the range of its activities has faded significantly since that time, and the radical football fans of F.C. Śląsk Wrocław, some of whom split into a more nationalist faction several ago under the leadership of Roman Zieliński. There was also a more moderate, “hools” group centered around Przemysław Piwowarski⁴. It should be noted that NOP came up with a Wrocław alternative to the well-known Warsaw Independence Day March – the so-called Patriots’ March. Editor Jacek Harłukowicz said that three persons play key roles in the current growth of nationalist tendencies in Wrocław: Jacek Międlar (a former priest and monk), Piotr Rybak (who was convicted of publicly setting fire to an effigy of a Jew⁵) and Roman Zieliński (leader of the Wrocław football fan movement and author of the book *How I fell in love with Adolf Hitler*). Each of them have the ability to effectively mobilize crowds numbering in the thousands.

A good illustration of this “coupling” of the local and national dimensions of the 11 November March is the following quote from one of its organizers:

“For me, [TV celebrity] Kuba Wojewódzki is not a Pole. His ethnicity itself doesn't matter that much to me, but if he says no, he isn't interested in Polishness, he doesn't want to live only here, he wants to be a citizen of the world and what's more, he wants everyone around to think so, too. So to me he's an enemy of the social interest of maintaining a certain cultural uniformity of our nation. He is, simply put, a threat to it, to everything about how we function here. There has been an intensification of purely patriotic needs as well as dissatisfaction with the functioning of the system shaped under PO [Civic Platform party] and the decline in the quality of life of some people, and we simply sensed this and took advantage of it.”

⁴ To delve deeper into this historical context, see: Jacek Harłukowicz, “‘Fascism? We are worse’. Who is who on the radical right”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15/12/2018.

⁵ Marcin Rybak, “Sentence handed down for burning a Jew in effigy in the Wrocław market square. Nationalist demonstration faces the court”, *Newsweek*, 13/04/2017, <https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/dzis-wyrok-w-sprawie-spalenia-kuklyzyda-przed-sadem-rozpozcela-sie-manifestacja/smdh1k>.

The participants of the Wrocław March and the organizers of the Independence Day March in Warsaw came to see, after 2010, the potential for organizing such events on the local as well as national levels:

“I am a member of the Independence March Association. For years I have organized all of this, so I can say that from the beginning we were aware of it, we observed it very quickly and, what else is there to say, it was just fuel for this march, using those who are, let's call them using leftist-speak, ‘excluded’, and they are in fact the truly excluded, not some elites from Zbawiciel Square who are demanding their rights there, but people who are earning, say, one thousand three hundred [złoty a month – i.e. poverty-level wages]”.

At the national level it is impossible not to notice a political atmosphere conducive to right-wing extremism. For several years, hate speech against ethnic minorities (e.g. refugees), religious minorities (e.g. Muslims) or sexual minorities is evident on a daily basis in public space in Poland. This phenomenon was aptly described by one of the teachers who participated in this study:

“Young people do not understand what freedom of speech is. They know the rules, they may have got an A+ in Human Rights in school, but they don't understand the meaning of these types of words. There have always been radical views, but they were voiced in smaller groups. Now, in a favorable political atmosphere, they have joined together and spilled out into the open.”

2. Social structure of March participants

2.1. The influence of towns in the vicinity of Wrocław on growth of the March and on anti-radicalization policy

The social structure of the participants of the “evening” Wrocław March is particularly important in the context of projects planned by the municipal authorities as well as various community groups to counteract xenophobic and radical nationalist trends. It should be noted at the outset, however, that due to the mass character of the event, precisely specifying the social profiles of its participants is not merely difficult, but completely impossible. Nevertheless,

information obtained from the police during the group interview indicates that a significant segment of the 2018 March's approx. 9,000 participants had come to Wrocław from nearby towns (including Nowa Ruda, Świdnica, Legnica, Dzierżoniów, Wołów, Strzegom, Kąty Wrocławskie, Zgorzelec, Oleśnica, Oborniki and Środa Śląska). Thus, the March's starting point – Wrocław's main train station – played a key role. It's also important in this context that, as we learned from Śląsk Wrocław "club" sources, approximately 15% of this football club's fans belong to one of the main groups participating in the March. We also know that these two key groups of March participants overlap (though we are unable to specify to what extent), as a significant group of Śląsk Wrocław fans come from towns outside Wrocław.

Without a doubt, Wrocław has become a "real metropolis" over the last 10 years – a point often made by interviewees from various social groups. This means that the relationship between the now affluent, worldly big city and the smaller, more parochial towns in its general vicinity has changed. And it explains the origin of a significant proportion of March participants from outside the city. These facts need to be considered when formulating appropriate policies for counteracting radicalization. Unfortunately, the various educational programs and initiatives promoting intercultural dialogue – for which Wrocław is known in Poland – mainly serve the city and its inhabitants. It turns out there are no similar cultural and educational activities aimed at local communities in smaller urban centers in Wrocław's general vicinity. This shortcoming has ended up "ricocheting" on Wrocław and the city government's efforts to promote intercultural dialogue and ensure public safety. There has been a failure to reach young people who come to Wrocław not only for the Independence March but also to spend weekends, with messages about tolerance towards the Other, towards unfamiliar people. Moreover – and this is crucial – young people from smaller cities and towns have almost no everyday contact with ethnic minorities, thus they live in a different reality than the inhabitants of Wrocław, which is far more ethnically diverse and multicultural. As a result, the risk of intolerant and even hateful attitudes towards other races, religions, cultures or ideologies is greater. Analysis of interviews conducted for this study appears to indicate that this is one of the reasons for the increase in hate crimes in Wrocław in recent years. To get a more complete picture of this trend, we recommend delving more deeply into these issues by conducting further research on a larger sample of the young people who inhabit these towns.

2.2. The class factor – “taking the city back for one day”

We wish to make clear, however, that we do not mean to stigmatize these communities in this report by pointing out their large representation in the March. The fact is that the majority of the March’s participants as well as perpetrators of hate crimes in the city are Wrocław residents, not “visitors”. Analysis of the research data shows there is a clear barrier to understanding or awareness between Wrocław's political, financial and cultural elites and residents with lower incomes, less education, from smaller towns outside Wrocław. Hence, it’s very important to supplement our characterization of the role played by young residents of towns outside Wrocław in the structure of the March’s participants and in growing racist and nationalist tendencies by examining the influence of social class, from two perspectives.

First of all, the occupational experiences of people in this profile should be taken into consideration. They are often low- or medium-skilled workers laboring in the Wrocław Special Economic Zone. These workers take busses from nearby towns to their jobs, where they find themselves more and more often under the management of people with different ethnic or national backgrounds than their own – e.g. Koreans or Ukrainians. Interviews we conducted show a possible build-up of frustration among workers who reside in mono-ethnic towns but are subordinated at work to bosses representing largely unfamiliar ethnic minorities. These circumstances can give rise to a mechanism in which this relationship is not sufficiently explained / understood (How is it that this foreigner is my boss and higher than me?), and discussing it with the boss at the workplace is absolutely impossible. For some people, their accumulated frustrations may find an outlet in the street, a bar or a bus, where the object of hateful views may be a random representative of an ethnic or national minority. A similar mechanism may explain the motivation to participate in the March itself: by doing so, the frustrated worker can demonstrate his desire to – in the words of one study participant – “take back the city [from its multicultural reality, from the foreigner-boss] for one day”.

Second, social class is significant in the context of people who have less education and less cultural capital, consequently greater difficulty resisting ideological indoctrination by such local far-right leaders as the former priest Jacek Międlar – and greater difficulty accepting the sharp demographic changes that are currently taking place in Poland. Yet another factor explaining participation by the

small-town working class in the Wrocław March is that it's an attractive alternative for people who cannot afford to go to Warsaw for the nationalist "March of marches".

2.3. F. C. Śląsk Wrocław fans and the March

Because Śląsk Wrocław football fans are one of the main groups participating in the March, they deserve separate treatment in this report. There's no doubt that from a historical perspective, particularly in the 2000s, they constituted the main organizational force, and contributed the most participants, to the public rallies held November 11. However, this group – which is far from homogeneous – should not be treated in a stereotypical way or referred to solely as "muscle" who contribute the most visible participants to the event and are easily recruited by far-right organizations, thus pose a threat to public safety. This group should be the subject of more in-depth analysis and viewed, in many cases, as willing to create a positive, ambitious personal and collective project. As one of them put it during an interview:

"We want to be the lords, to rule in Poland. [But] we don't want to be millionaires."

They want to create something for themselves and talk about an identity that is relatively poorly understood/ explored, especially in the segments of society that are better educated, have higher incomes, live in larger urban centers. Our interviews with the football fans revealed that some of them take a highly critical view of Wrocław's leading right-wing extremist, Roman Zieliński.

The majority (4/7) of young football fans we interviewed do not want to have anything to do with politics, though they are definitely not supporters of homosexual rights or equality parades. Instead, they are supporters of the "cursed soldiers" [Polish partisans who resisted the imposition of communist rule after World War II] and proud of it:

"It's a mistake to think if a bandit in the colors of Śląsk is arrested by the police, and even identifies with the club, that the club has anything to do with him. If I steal something in a store and I have a Barcelona cap, does that club have anything to do with it? (...) Of course Wrocław is a multicultural city. Everywhere there are lots of foreigners, students from Spain, Portugal, Ukrainians everywhere. Some residents have nothing against there being more of them, while others say, 'Enough'. But both groups insist that they do not

want them to change our laws and customs. They can be here so long as they don't say we are not allowed to eat pork."

The majority of them participate in the March without taking Międlar's slogans seriously: "Everyone knows that he's a cretin."

A participating observation performed while riding a streetcar full of fans on the way to a match enabled us to observe the following revealing situation. The fans sang and shouted "Wrocław is ours", which was the second most popular slogan shouted while the tram was running. It explained a great deal about their desire to claim their right to some form of ownership, not in a material but symbolic sense.

2.4. The March is becoming more nationalist, more "red-and-white" – and less "green" (i.e. the local F.C. color)

The organizers have undoubtedly been very successful at channeling certain distinct emotional needs on the one hand, and patriotic-national needs on the other. But another attitude skillfully exploited by the organizers (from extreme right-wing circles) are feelings of being against the system. Such feelings are often felt and expressed by people who are worse off financially or perceive themselves to be the victims of injustice, including those who are socially excluded.

Despite the difficulty of precisely defining the structure of March participants, we can conclude – based on interviews with a variety of groups, particularly police – that the March has generally become more nationalist and red-and-white, and less fan-based and green (i.e. the colors of F.C. Śląsk Wrocław) over the past few years. The main groups that can be distinguished are: ONR [National Radical Camp], NOP, "Zadruga", Młodzież Wszechpolska [All-Polish Youth], Śląsk Wrocław fans, residents of Wrocław and residents of towns outside Wrocław (Nowa Ruda, Świdnica, Legnica, Dzierżonów, Wołów, Strzegom), a group defined as "socially and materially marginalized", "socially frustrated." As a rule, this group uses national symbols, and not club, organizational or ideological symbols. Thus, the March is seen as highly diverse and divided, especially in relation to the right-wing nationalist movement.

The institutions responsible for securing the March are very concerned and have little trust in March participants due to their unpredictability. Interviewees from one of the patriotic organizations shared this relevant observation:

“Recently we heard from an official that maybe we are an okay organization, maybe we’re all right, but ‘bad people join us at the March’. We deeply disagree with that. (...) We don’t divide people like that, but we know that it’s better to manage some people in connection with our events than to lose contact with them, because no one knows what they’ll come up with. But we’ve taught everyone that we’re not giving up our microphones at our events.”

On the one hand, we are dealing here with a classic situation in which law enforcement must deal with certain social movements that practice violence as part of their demonstrations. On the other hand, as the March has become less and less of a football fan event, it has become more difficult for the police to perform their preventive and operational work. This is because the police already have a relatively good handle on Śląsk Wrocław fans, but they do not know much about whole groups of people from Wrocław and surrounding towns, which are difficult to identify.

3. Dilemmas of moderate right-wing groups concerning the March

Interviews conducted with local high school students, university students, representatives of conservative-Catholic circles and older city residents (including city councilors) revealed ambivalent attitudes toward the “evening” March. These people would like to participate in the March for patriotic reasons and a sincere desire to celebrate the anniversary of Poland’s restoration of independence. However, the radicalism of the slogans propagated during the March, often by its organizers, causes many on the moderate right to distance themselves from the event and not participate in it. Nonetheless, some of these people – due to the lack of an acceptable alternative – took part in the March, though they may have needed to wrestle with their conscience in order to do so. This group absolutely refuses to participate in the city-organized Joyful Parade, dismissing it as “clownish” – i.e. an event that fails to treat the patriotic holiday seriously. Yet a significant portion of youthful interviewees who hold conservative views, describe themselves as patriotic and consider the celebration of national holidays to be important do not participate in any events organized by radical nationalists (e.g. by Piotr Rybak, Jacek Międlar or ONR). This is because they clearly oppose the radical slogans that are commonplace at such events, such as “the city is ruled by a Jew in a yarmulke”.

Various ideas have been suggested, such as establishing a 11 November Run for Independence with a route that would impede the organization of large public

gatherings in the city center. But this does not appear to be a good solution; many of our interviewees would like City Hall to come up with a more authentically patriotic plan for celebrating 11 November. This would require the involvement of some of those who are currently interested in participating in the “evening” March. The solutions proposed so far by the Wrocław city authorities show a certain gap in their thinking – i.e. insufficient sensitivity to the needs of people and groups who feel strong ties with Poland’s history and traditions. For instance, when it’s scheduled to be sung at 12 noon, the national hymn should begin at 12 noon – city authorities should not allow it to start at 11:56 am, as was the case last year. Moreover, not all participants of the “evening” March should be treated as “occasional patriots” or merely as a “noisy and visible minority”.

Interviews with a group of people associated with two conservative-patriotic organizations proved to be particularly fruitful in that they validated the chosen methodology. Thanks to them, we confirmed the need to extend the range of interviewees beyond individuals or groups who hold a tolerant vision of the world and are open to different cultures. There are plenty of young people who harbor doubts, ask questions about the future, the scale and limits to local integration of immigrants in general and the Ukrainian community in particular. According to statistics, there are approx. 110,000 Ukrainians in Wrocław. The study found worries and concerns in the minds of some residents about mass immigration from this country.

4. Great demographic changes: the impact of migration on the city and social life, also on organization of the March

Another factor that needs to be analyzed from a national and European perspective, and that was found to be particularly important in the context of explaining the reasons and significance of the “evening” March in Wrocław, is the functioning of ethnic, national and religious minorities in the city. On the national level, Poland is shifting from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. In 2018, Poland gave residency permits to over 635,000 foreigners, which ranks first in the EU (ahead of Germany and Great Britain)⁶. The vast majority of these immigrants are Ukrainians – a fact that has been exploited by nationalist groups

⁶ Source: Krzysztof Strzępka, Eurostat Newsrelease (164/2019), 25/10/2019, <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C348343%2Cpolska-znajwieksza-liczba-wydanych-pozwolen-dla-imigrantow-w-ue.html>

to fuel their ideologies, due to the “mass” character of the migration and the undesirable competition it adds to the local labor market, as well as the difficult historic relations between the two countries, including the Volhynia Massacre.

At the local level, a large influx of Ukrainians (especially over the past eight years) to the city of Wrocław has caused this minority – now numbering approx. 110,000 – to become the largest minority community, percentage-wise, of any Polish city. With this phenomenon in mind, many interviewees wanted to know whether the city authorities have the immigration process “under control”, whether they are keeping track of conflicts and “problematic” immigrants. They also posed questions about the extent and the manner in which the immigrants are being integrated into the life of the city.

Studies published in recent years have found that Ukrainians are perceived positively by Poles, especially in contrast to immigrants from Muslim countries (particularly refugees)⁷. The main reason for this generally positive view of Ukrainians mentioned by young Poles is the fact that Ukrainian immigrants have worked hard in our country, the same as Poles who work abroad: “no one helps them”, “jobs and housing are not organized for them”⁸. The positive perception of this immigrant community is also illustrated in a study conducted under the *Wrocław Strategy for Intercultural Dialogue, 2018-2022*. The study found that the host community was very positively disposed to immigrants, including the growing number of Ukrainians in the city. They assessed the presence of immigrants in Wrocław as very beneficial for the city and its growth. The authors of this diagnosis stated that Wrocław residents are aware that foreigners are sometimes harassed or face other dangers, but the respondents themselves had only been involved in such situations on rare occasions. They felt that bystanders had failed to react appropriately to these behaviors.⁹

Our study has revealed recent changes in Poles' attitudes towards Ukrainians, mainly due to “their mass arrivals” and “clogging the labor market” as well as expected tensions and conflicts with the Polish majority – views that are

⁷ See for example: *To be different doesn't mean to hate. Less hostility through knowledge of human rights and dialogue*, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, September 2017 (p. 19).

⁸ *ibidem*, p. 7

⁹ *Wrocław Strategy for Intercultural Dialogue, 2018-2022*, Wrocław City Hall, 15/02/2018, p. 20

justified by citing the “genocide in Volhynia” of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists during World War II.

Our interviewees indicated they perceive there to be a “Ukrainian problem”. Ukrainians are regarded as the new, largest minority in Wrocław. Thus, questions are being asked about the need to control the issuance of residence and work permits. Our analysis of the Wrocław media likewise found some unfavorable or even offensive articles suggesting that there is a real threat posed by the Ukrainian community to the local urban fabric. There has definitely been a lack of positive content about Ukrainians appearing in the public space – for instance, information such as that identified during this study. An example of positive information illustrating the desire of the Ukrainian community to integrate with Polish society is the increase in baptisms of Ukrainian children performed according to the Catholic not Orthodox rite. Analysis of Wrocław media content also found that the Ukrainian community does not enjoy a positive image in the media.

During a focus group we conducted in City Hall with representatives of various political options, one of the left-wing city councilors noted that:

“Ukrainians, since the first more significant waves of immigration – that is, for at least ten years – have behaved impeccably. (...) It’s even surprising that they are practically no problem for the city.”

The study included interviews with members of the Ukrainian community in Wrocław, which enables us to get their perspective on local Polish-Ukrainian relations. We found that they are clearly concerned about the recent increase in anti-immigrant behaviors among the Polish inhabitants of Wrocław:

“The hate has emerged recently, about three years ago. I’m starting to fear speaking Ukrainian with my family and friends in public places – I look around to see whether there are any guys with patriotic shirts or several beer cans”.

A similar increase in xenophobic attitudes, in this case anti-Semitic – has been noted by the Jewish minority, although it has been 100% confined to the Internet so far.

“Online hate against Jews is visible, but there is no physical violence (...) there is no need to protect the city synagogue, as in other European cities, in Paris. It must be added that the Jewish minority is completely Polonized, and does not stand out in public space in language or appearance”.

Getting back to the Ukrainian community, because their occupations are the key parts of their life, what they experience in this sphere in Poland often leads to much more suffering than any xenophobia they encounter – specifically, the long waiting period to obtain a legal work permit, which sometimes lasts a year and a half; until that moment, they are forced to work illegally.

Due to the large number of Ukrainians in Wrocław and the city's proximity to the German border it can serve as a kind of laboratory to explore trends and attitudes about the West prevailing in this community. Analysis of the qualitative data we collected indicates that Ukrainians continue to regard their life prospects in Poland as excellent, and those who have acquired fairly good professional and linguistic competency believe that they can do better in Poland than in the West, in Germany. Thus, they prefer to stay in Poland and are not planning to migrate any further west. Another reason is the fact that they feel good in Poland – as one interviewee put it, “as a person and through the cultural closeness of these two nations, which is not there in the case of, for example, Germany.”

There is another significant challenge related to the aforementioned phenomenon for Polish-Ukrainian relations in Wrocław, but also more broadly in Poland. The Ukrainian immigrants whom we interviewed stated that they have observed a big change in the attitudes and the needs of their compatriots in Wrocław, who no longer want:

“to melt into the crowd – instead, they want to develop their identity”

Previously, Ukrainian immigrants had wanted to blend in with Polish society, but this attitude has quickly shifted. One of the reasons is the strong national consciousness and good education, especially of young immigrants from Ukraine, who mostly have a higher or at least partial higher education. The latest nationwide survey conducted by the Centre for East Europe Studies at the University of Warsaw and the EWL employee recruitment agency confirms this characterization of Ukrainian employees in Poland, stating that the largest segment consist of persons with a higher or incomplete higher education (38.8% all together)¹⁰. This culturally assertive attitude manifests itself in the need to organize and participate in Ukrainian concerts and in other events that express their cultural identity in public spaces (exhibitions, sports events etc.). One of the

¹⁰ Daniel Rzaša, 16 Charts Showing Who the Average Worker from Ukraine in Poland is and What They Want”, *300gospodarka*, 10/06/2019, <http://300gospodarka.pl/wykres-dnia/2019/06/17/16-wykresow-pokazujacych-kimjest-i-czego-chce-przecietny-pracownik-z-ukrainy-w-polsce/>.

leading ONR representatives we interviewed predicted in a short time that “tensions between Ukrainians and Poles will start to grow and become increasingly visible as this community increases its identity-related demands”. We might well risk the hypothesis that this will happen sooner than later.

Based on interviews conducted with teachers as well as with representatives of the Ukrainian community, it appears that the problem of Polish children being indoctrinated against Ukrainians begins in pre-school. This problem manifests itself, *inter alia*, in Polish children voicing the opinion that “in Poland we speak Polish”, dividing kids into Polish and “the worse” Ukrainian ones, including dividing physical space, e.g. locker rooms.

On the flipside, there are signals that some groups of Ukrainians are becoming radicalized, especially men who come to Poland to earn money with no intention of settling down and bringing their families with them. They may try to impose their own “order” by force in the neighborhoods where they live. This phenomenon contributes to the negative attitudes harbored by some Wrocław residents towards Ukrainians and growing concerns about safety.

In this context, it’s not surprising that members of ethnic minorities expect city officials to make greater efforts to cope with the rise of xenophobic and nationalist tendencies in Wrocław, a growing phenomenon that they have already observed.

An interview with local ONR activists showed that from the perspective of organized Polish nationalists, Ukrainians will not pose much of a threat to Poland so long as they don’t display their national identity in public space or demand the right to cultivate it:

“In my opinion, the Ukrainians are not going too far. They function quietly on the economic level and I haven't heard of any big social initiatives by them. So far, I don't see any danger from them. I see a greater threat from actions taken by the government which, by aping the modernity coming from the West, wants to be holier than the pope and make [Wrocław into] London for all these people, without even asking them if they are interested in it (...) I know Ukrainians, they work in the pub where I work, and naturally I have spoken with them about their supposed needs many times, and not a single time did the issue come up that, well, we would like to have for example our own cultural association, our own schools, no. It seems to me

that most of these people, as no doubt Poles who have emigrated to Great Britain and so forth, have come here to work.”

In this context, a focus group with seven Śląsk Wrocław fans just before a match turned out to be quite interesting. When asked, 'Is Wrocław a multicultural, multinational city?' they all replied that it was.

“There are more and more Ukrainians on the streets who work and study in Poland. Most of them speak Polish. However, there are also those who cannot cope with our language. This can be annoying, particularly when such a person serves you in a store and you are unable to communicate with each other. Generally, they are not a problem. They are similar to us, they have similar beliefs, they look and act like us. There are also more and more students from abroad: Spain, Italy, Russia and Ukraine. Wrocław has become different, interesting.”

This part of football fans' response to the question consisted of positive words about people who came to study and additionally work in Wrocław. They regarded foreigners who meet these criteria to be unproblematic and likeable. Thanks to such people, according to this group of interviewees, Wrocław has become a truly European city.

In a word, their presence definitely pleased these respondents.

But when they were asked about the Roma minority, they all said that this ethnic group is a problem. When asked what they meant by “problem” and why, they replied:

“They are visible, they walk around the Market Square and accost people. They pester people for various reasons, most often it's their so-called source of income. They do some begging there, play their accordions there. What's classic about it for me is that they are very young people, even children...

(at this point, the interviewers established that the interviewees were not talking about Roma from abroad exploited by criminals and/or human traffickers)

...who run up to people walking down the street, fob off flowers on them and want money in return. They set up nomadic camps. Nobody knows where they work, if they work at all.”

5. Nationalist tendencies are a threat to the city's image and economic interests

Nationalist tendencies, especially hate crimes, pose a threat not only in terms of public safety and to the life or health of those who oppose this ideology and members of ethnic or sexual minorities. Wrocław has been working on building its image as a multicultural city for years, referring not only to the city's history in general, but also to a significant event that proved to be a turning point in the city's contemporary history: in 2016, Wrocław held the status of European Capital of Culture, which was accompanied by promotion of Wrocław as a "multicultural" city.

According to a representative of a global association of employers in the business and technology sector, analyses conducted within the sector found that cases of verbal harassment and physical attacks against foreigners working and living in Wrocław could inhibit the influx of such workers, who may choose to work in other east-central European countries (such as Czechia and Romania). This sector employs approx. 300,000 people in Poland, 10% of whom are foreigners, including 2% from Ukraine. After Warsaw, Wrocław is the next most important Polish center for this sector. And this is important in that Ukraine has a large stock of good-quality IT specialists and mathematicians, whom Poland – due to constantly rising demand – needs to attract:

"Insults and beatings have been reported in these international corporations for several years, and not only in Wrocław. We try not to publicize them. If a major business periodical such as The Financial Times started raising these issues, [we] would start losing employees, investments to the benefit of neighbors in the region, i.e. Romania or Czechia. The key is to – in cooperation with the local authorities but also at the central government level – formulate measures that will minimize this risk, resulting in fewer cases of employees of particular corporations being beaten or none at all."

It must be acknowledged that global corporations operating in the business technology sector (Google, IBM, Amazon etc.) have expressed concern about the rise of nationalist tendencies in the city for several years. From time to time these corporations report complaints internally by those who have been affected by hate speech or more physical racist attacks. A striking example was a group message circulated in early November 2015 by IBM headquarters in Wrocław

warning foreign employees to avoid the vicinity of Wrocław city center on November 11 for the sake of their safety. The so-called March of Patriots passed through

the center of Wrocław that day.¹¹ In this context, a large proportion of these multinational companies have been active in supporting education and training meant to raise awareness and promote openness, tolerance, cooperation and multicultural dialogue.

The Wrocław association WrOpenUp has been particularly active in this field, conducting trainings and workshops on multiculturalism and tolerance for major international corporations, which eagerly commission these types of activities. However, we found during the focus group conducted with representatives of several of these corporations that – due to the scale of the problem and concerns about future xenophobic trends in the city – they have concluded that closer cooperation between international corporations and city authorities is needed in order to counter these worrisome trends. From their perspective, growing media attention given to increasingly frequent cases of hostility or violence against foreign workers could result in reduced immigration of the specialists needed most: IT professionals and mathematicians. The companies employing these people have not been able to cope with this socio-cultural problem through their own individual efforts. The focus group we conducted with elite representatives of ethnic minorities showed that as a result of their sense of living under threat or lacking everyday comfort in the city, they were making plans to leave Wrocław. A striking example from the focus group was provided by a Muslim woman wearing a hijab. She had come to live in the city with her husband, who was working as a high-level manager in a logistics corporation. But the couple has already made the decision to leave Wrocław for two specific reasons, both of which were related to the low quality of life experienced by local members of the Muslim minority and their realization that Wrocław leaves a great deal to be desired as a “multicultural” city. First, the woman had been accosted several times in public places, and on two occasions a local resident wanted to take off her hijab, telling her once that – as the woman put it during the focus group – “in Poland you don’t have to wear that, because women are free and no one must force her to do so.”

Second, the couple complained that in all of Wrocław – which has a diverse and rich culinary offering – there is not a single kitchen that offers meat prepared

¹¹ “IBM warns its foreign employees: watch out for yourself on November 11”, *TVN24 Biznes i Świat*, 4/11/2015, <https://tvn24bis.pl/z-kraju,74/ibmostrzega-obcokrajowcow-pracujacych-we-wroclawiu,592221.html>.

according to Muslim halal rules. As a result of these “shortcomings” in understanding their culture, the couple decided to terminate their contract and move to Berlin.

Another, more drastic example from the world of international corporations was the story of a high-level specialist from the USA, who came to work under a several-month training contract for managers of the Wrocław branch of a large automotive company. He was spit upon in a Wrocław pub. After this incident, his “pride was injured like that for the first time in his life, despite being a man of great confidence”, so he decided that after completing the assignment, “he would steer clear of this intolerant city”.

In this context, the present study does not provide grounds for “debunking the myth” of Wrocław as a tolerant and multicultural city, though it clearly challenges this well-established image. Based on our focus group with city councilors, one could say that the city seems to be resting on its laurels – it has not sufficiently animated the process of intercultural exchange and is treating the peaceful coexistence of its increasingly diverse social tissue too superficially, allowing inter-group relations to play out on their own. In this sense – as a participant in a different focus group (people with left-wing, anti-discrimination and ecological backgrounds) put it,

“Wrocław is not intercultural, it’s merely multicultural. Wrocław is open, but in a boutique or festive manner. You can eat something exotic, but there’s no desire among its inhabitants to go deeper.”

This is the case despite the Strategy for Intercultural Dialogue recently adopted by the city and quoted above. The reason is the insufficient number of initiatives aimed at encouraging interaction between the city’s ethnic minorities and the majority populace. Moreover, xenophobic and nationalist tendencies have been on the rise, a problem the city has failed to address adequately for many years. A result of these shortcomings, perhaps, are such deplorable incidents as the burning of a Jew in effigy on Wrocław's Main Square as part of a nationalist demonstration held on 18 November 2015. This event strongly tarnished the city's “multicultural” image not only in Poland, but also internationally.

This event also showed that the institutions responsible for public safety have not been responding appropriately to disturbances during public gatherings. The police and municipal authorities acted as if they were paralyzed once again during the 2018 Independence Day March. They lack the necessary training and

experience for dealing with extreme right-wing groups, and they don't know when to intervene. Instead, they have grown accustomed to gathering evidence for later analysis. Only after consulting with specialists (for example, provincial police department coordinators for hate crimes) are they ready to hold specific people accountable. It should be added that persons responsible for such crimes should face charges under Article 256 of the Criminal Code (incitement to ethnic or racial hatred). The leniency with which law enforcement deals with threats and provocations by the radical right stems from the high organizational and political risks that these authorities incur for taking decisive action. First of all, a vigorous police response to violations of the law (after they have been committed) by intervening in and ending a public assembly could trigger rioting that could easily spiral out of control, especially if the police are not prepared for it. Second, radical nationalists are, in a certain sense, waiting for this sort of intervention and are ready to film any use of force by the police. If the police responded vigorously, the ensuing recordings would later circulate online, allowing the nationalists to present themselves as "martyrs", which in turn would enable them to gain greater public sympathy and support. City officials, it should be kept in mind, do not have to grant a permit to a public gathering if it could violate the law. But radical right-wing rally organizers can get around this obstacle easily. In their permit application they do not indicate exactly what will happen at the demonstration. They declare that they will secure the event and promote patriotism – but later they prove unable to control everything that happens, including violations of the law. One gets the impression that they are probing the limits of what they can get away with in legal and illegal assemblies and in their ideological and organizational activities.

The above event, much like a previous one in 2013 – namely, the disruption of a lecture by the late Zygmunt Bauman by a group of NOP activists and Śląsk Wrocław fans – was undoubtedly a turning point when Wrocław's three leading far-right activists (Międlar, Zieliński and Rybak) practically monopolized the "internationalization" of Wrocław's image as a xenophobic city. Hence city authorities' staunch objection to comparing racist tendencies in Wrocław to those in, for example, Białystok, which is notorious for such phenomena. When expressing their rejection of such comparisons, one Wrocław city official said the following:

“It is a kind of drama for us to put our city’s situation on the same level as Białystok’s. It damages our city’s image, and we should fight such highly exaggerated comparisons.”

From this standpoint, Wrocław’s hosting of the 42nd European Community Ecumenical Youth Meeting Taizé in 2019 will serve as a kind of “multiculturalism test” (it’s the third time for the city, which hosted the meeting previously in 1989 and 1995). During this event, young people from all over the world meet for prayer, and it will be another occasion to promote the image of a multicultural Wrocław.

6. Much creativity and activity by city authorities in responding to the growth of nationalist groups and trends in Wrocław

Newly elected local government officials have begun to take the problem of growing nationalism and racism seriously, especially their manifestation on the streets in the form of the March. The new mayor of Wrocław, Jacek Sutryk – a sociologist by training and the head of City Hall’s Department of Social Affairs for seven years who understands the problem of radicalization – has stated his desire to continue the firm measures to fight xenophobia and hate speech implemented by his predecessor, Rafał Dutkiewicz. However, he wants to alter the tone of this policy and equip it with new tools – although he had overseen many of the policies to counter right-wing radicalism implemented under Dutkiewicz, such as drafting of the above-mentioned Strategy. In an interview conducted for this report, Mayor Sutryk said he considers the March itself and its context to be a serious matter that deserves priority attention, particularly in the wake of Gdańsk mayor Paweł Adamowicz’s murder by a right-wing fanatic.

One of the mayor’s new measures was to appoint Bartłomiej Ciążyński, Deputy Chairman of Wrocław City Council, to the position of the mayor's plenipotentiary for tolerance and the prevention of xenophobia. Based on interviews with senior officials and key figures in institutions responsible for education and public policy relating to intercultural dialogue (Wrocław Center for Social Development, Wrocław Teacher Training Center), as well as with the police, we can distinguish three pillars of the city’s renewed policy to fight growing right-wing radicalization:

1) The pillar of education and dialogue

Officials and NGOs involved in the city's anti-hate speech policy believe that “it’s not yet time to sound the alarm.” However, they definitely advocate more energetic, better planned and more systemic efforts to reach a broader group of residents. The range of measures has been expanding, and City Hall wants to implement them increasingly in cooperation with NGOs. These officials are well aware that, in order to effectively counter radicalization, it’s necessary to formulate long-term, in-depth programs, which should largely consist of educational activities. In this context they need partners who can reach a wider audience with their activities, particularly children and young people.

One example is a program developed and endorsed by Ms. Renata Granowska, Vice-President of “Światowy Wrocław” [Global Wrocław], which cooperates with WCRS media, WrOpenUp, international corporations, WCDN (which drafts the program) and F.C. Śląsk Wrocław. Specifically, the educational project “Światowy Wrocław”, prepared with verve and commitment by City Hall together with the aforementioned organizations, will be launched in the city’s schools. The project’s initiators managed to go beyond the stereotypical format of a single class to be “checked off” – instead, they drafted a series of 10 classes formulated for various types of schools and age groups. The lessons cover hate speech, online hate, tolerance and intercultural dialogue. A key aspect of the program is its division into three age groups: grades 1-3, grades 4-6 and grades 7-8 (14-15-year-olds). “Światowy Wrocław” classes will also address important topics outside multiculturalism, such as disability.

A series of preparatory classes for children who speak foreign languages, coordinated by the City Hall Education Department and WCRS, is slated to begin in the 2019/2020 school year. The project, which consists of teaching the Polish language and Polish customs to foreign-born children, is meant to communicate to these kids that they are welcome in the city and in Poland in addition to its educational and integrational goals. These classes will cover approx. 44 nationalities in 20 classes in 7 schools (6 primary schools and 2 high schools).

Another project that has been highly successful over the years is “Pomnik Pamięci” [Monument to Memory], which consists of organizing school trips to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. So far, over 30,000 children and adolescents have participated in the project.

In light of this program’s long-running success, it is worth considering a program of school trips to Ukraine. The authors of the report observed a certain division in the perception of Wrocław between its Polish and Ukrainian residents.

In their opinion, it's time for Poles to learn something about Ukrainians and Ukraine, and perhaps Poland's other eastern neighbors. Exploring the world and trying to look at it from a different perspective provides a broader context that makes people more tolerant. Thinking along these lines, the mayor of Wrocław has proposed a youth exchange between Wrocław and the partner city of Lviv, or summer school trips to Kiev. This initiative would give many Wrocław residents their first opportunity to see the place from which hundreds of thousands of people have emigrated to work in Poland. It will enable them to learn more about this country and its people, who – unfortunately – are associated by many Poles only with recent mass immigration or the World War Two-era Volhynia Massacre. In this context, it was wise that Wrocław City Hall appointed a plenipotentiary for the Ukrainian minority in March 2019.

Another interesting project that resulted from cooperation between City Hall and NGOs is “Kaleidoscope of Cultures”. It's an annual festival promoting multiculturalism that has been held in Wrocław since 2008. Ever since its first edition, the festival has presented the works of artists representing Poland's various ethnic minorities, including Germans, Ukrainians, Greeks, Roma, Lemkos and Sorbs.

Another project that deserves attention here is “Ambassadors of Dialogue”. In 2019 a series of regular consultative meetings was launched by WCRS in conjunction with the University Wrocław, the Wrocław Vocational Training Center and community organizations that work to resolve intercultural conflicts. The meetings were addressed to employees of Wrocław educational institutions and in particular the people most involved in this field, dubbed “Ambassadors of Dialogue” (about 221 individuals).

2) The pillar of public assemblies

This pillar of the city's efforts to prevent right-wing radicalization primarily consists of the Joyful Parade, an event held on November 11 that has been growing. Nevertheless, opinions about this parade are divided, even though it has enjoyed a great deal of success, especially compared to similar city-organized parades elsewhere (e.g. in Warsaw). On the one hand, it's an event that is an example of success by the city authorities. It's not just that the Parade has continued every year since its inception, or that it's attracting thousands of participants. The key achievement of the Joyful Parade is the fact that a

substantial proportion of participants have been young people who feel this event is right for them – as opposed to the “evening” March organized by nationalists. On the other hand, many of the interviewees consider the parade to be underdeveloped, lacking some culminating, solemn moment during which participants could properly honor the nation’s heroes who fought for independence. Also, there is no alternative event in the evening to the March organized by nationalists.

Another initiative is the Council for Intercultural Dialogue, established in January 2017. Its members include representatives of community organizations, churches and religious associations, universities and businesses. The Mayor of Wrocław established a Panel for the Strategy for Intercultural Dialogue on 29 May 2017. Its purpose is to integrate activities and cooperation in the development and implementation of City Hall’s Wrocław Dialogue Strategy, including municipal organizational units and municipal enterprises that perform tasks in the field of public safety, education, social development, integration, social communication, international cooperation, culture, sport, promotion of the city and other units and entities carrying out tasks relating to intercultural dialogue¹².

Yet another key policy under this pillar is City Hall’s strict approach to public assemblies that break the law. Due to this “tougher” policy aimed essentially at events organized by far-right groups, three demonstrations by nationalists have been terminated: on 15 August 2018, 11 November 2018, and 1 March 2019. In an interview, Bartłomiej Ciążyński said,

“The problem of these groups and their activities in public space has been growing, and the city will no longer downplay it – it’s fringe [groups, but] we take this problem very seriously. (...) It’s good considering everything that this milieu is divided – several dozen small groups of several persons apiece – highly dispersed”.

The city’s strict new approach to extremist demonstrations clearly enjoys the support of the Wrocław residents we interviewed. They particularly approved of such recent decisions as refusing to issue a permit to hold the Polish Independence Day March on 11 November 2018, or the Memorial Day March for the Cursed Soldiers on 1 March 2019. In the case of the former, it was Mayor Dutkiewicz who made the decision, though in conjunction with Mayor-elect Jacek

¹² Wrocław Strategy for Intercultural Dialogue, 2018-2022, op. cit., p. 22.

Sutryk. However, a court overturned this decision. Support for City Hall's efforts in this context was expressed by one of our interviewees thus:

"The new mayor of Wrocław has shown that he will not tolerate hate speech in public space or the incitement of violence against representatives of national, ethnic, religious or ideological minorities."

A similar tendency to be more attentive and at the same time more professional in their handling of demonstrations has been evident on the part of the Wrocław police. Their hate crime unit has been joined by an officer who specializes in securing public gatherings. This has clearly bolstered the force's efficacy in this field.

3) The criminal law pillar

The third and final pillar has been reflection and the decisive use of legal and institutional tools to fight criminal activity by people in far-right organizations (or people who do not identify with them, but perpetrate illegal acts during their events). It's noteworthy how determined the municipal authorities have become in this sphere. Their representatives have announced that they will no longer limit themselves to notifying the public prosecutor's office about the perpetration of crimes, but will also challenge prosecutors whenever they refuse to initiate proceedings or decide to discontinue them against extremists.

However, the vast majority of interviews with high-ranking politicians and social leaders in Wrocław demonstrate their deep-seated awareness that the problem of far-right radicalization is too complex to be solved by banning marches or arresting their organizers or other leaders of the local nationalist milieu – or even with one or two educational programs on top of that. There appears to be a consensus around the position that this increasingly disturbing phenomenon requires more in-depth diagnosis and the formulation of a more robust response.

Nevertheless, the criminal law pillar is clearly another example of the high degree of creativity as well as pioneering approach within Poland of the Wrocław city authorities' anti-extremist strategy. The Wrocław Center for Restorative Justice has been operating in the city over the past 10 years, serving as proof of the effective cooperation between the municipal government and the criminal justice system. The Center has created a unique system (within Poland) whereby

those convicted of violations and misdemeanors are sentenced to perform supervised work for social purposes.

It is less frequently noticed that hate-related criminal acts can also do damage to collective entities – local communities. Damaged public property, trashed space, vandalized or defaced courtyards, cemeteries, underground passages, benches in parks, playgrounds are problems familiar throughout the world. The perpetrators of these acts can rectify their mistakes by performing social work, thereby paying off their debt to the community they come from and have in some way injured. Organizing and supervising the execution of these penalties is the responsibility of the probation officer. Moreover, the initiators of this solution said, while being interviewed for this study, that in connection with rising nationalist tendencies, the perpetrators of racial hate crimes will be ordered to perform work relating to the type of crime they committed – e.g. painting over swastikas scrawled in public space. Wrocław City Hall has recently decided to appoint a 10-person Restorative Justice Panel, which will enable Wrocław to apply for the status of European City of Restorative Justice.

7. Selective cooperation is ineffective cooperation

Despite being particularly active compared to other Polish cities in fighting radicalization and hate speech, the Wrocław city authorities have been guilty of one significant shortcoming (which also applies on the national level) that has rendered their efforts less effective. The battle against extremist tendencies has been waged in conjunction with numerous community organizations, media and businesses. All too often, however, city officials invite entities that represent their own values, views or political interests (usually liberal, centrist) to formulate/ implement policy and serve as recipient groups. The logic by which city authorities select partners is commendable, as they focus on the third sector, on local social movements, on initiatives that aim to counteract radicalization using a “bottom-up” approach. However – and this was a point made by some members of the Social Council of Wrocław’s Commissioner for Human Rights – in order to effectively counter radicalization it’s necessary to better understand those who “think differently”, who have different sensitivities and take a more traditional, less liberal approach to patriotism. A constructive dialogue should be initiated with these groups, even with representatives of radical groups, among whom young people predominate. They need to be drawn into discussions, contact must be maintained with them, so that they do not radicalize even more. Some of our

interviewees from NGOs expressed dissatisfaction with City Hall's failure to include any of these groups in preparatory work on the "Światowy Wrocław" project. This is an example of a broader phenomenon whereby conservative organizations promoting patriotism and historical education are thrown into one bag with radical nationalists and labeled as "fascists", and as a result, are often not invited to various activities organized by the city. Here is an example of this concern from an interview with a member of this organization:

"For me it's important to have such a discussion, because the topic of fighting hate speech here in Wrocław is very strong, and sometimes we discuss it among ourselves and we say, 'It won't yield any effect at all, because it will not'. If hate speech is about excluding a large proportion of people from dialogue, then unfortunately it's not easy (...). We experience it every day, it's not easy in our milieu to discuss, but you have to pick up the gauntlet and when someone comes from ONR, let's sit down – they are mostly very intelligent, very well read, so sit down with them, talk to them, don't forbid them. At least you'll find out who they are."

City Hall maintains a completely different level of cooperation with the WrOpenUp Foundation, which organizes tolerance and openness trainings¹³. The Foundation currently focuses on providing these courses to large international corporations, though they have also given tolerance trainings to approx. 2,000 primary and secondary school students in Wrocław. WrOpenUp was invited by municipal authorities to collaborate on preparation of an anti-discrimination program for city schools.

8. "Action begets reaction" – the forecast high point of radicalization

A negative scenario that could await Wrocław is even greater radicalization and increased street violence, including acts directed against law enforcement and public authorities, including brawls, knife attacks or detonations of improvised explosive devices in public places.

According to a representative of an association that supports ethnic minorities, any actions taken by the authorities or police against nationalist organizations operating in the city results in increased hostile acts against the

¹³ Jacek Harłukowicz, "How to educate in a spirit of tolerance? It's worse with hate, because people have much more fear inside", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9/02/2019.

type of association he belongs to. An example of this correlation was the vandalizing of three buildings used by leftwing/ anti-racist groups, most likely in reaction to the city's termination of the March in Honor of the Cursed Soldiers on account of threats and incitement to religious hatred, including the words "Jewish murderers" and "Holocaust Enterprise"¹⁴. A representative of an anti-racist association stated that "their action will beget a reaction". One example of the nationalist reaction was the defacement of the Artistic Courtyard on ul. Rydygiera 25a – the words "Fuck the leftist", a large Celtic cross and the letters "AN" (for "Autonomous Nationalists") were scrawled on a mural displayed there on the night of March 7. The mural had been painted by the Poznań artist SomAart to celebrate Wrocław's status as European Capital of Culture in 2016. The next place attacked was the headquarters of the "Nomad" Society for Integration of a Multicultural Society on ul. Paulińska 4/8. There is no doubt about the perpetrators' intentions: the threat "Death to the leftists whores, we'll fuck you up, you Shabesgoi" was scrawled at the entrance to the headquarters of the association, which works with migrants, on the night of March 8. The third attack targeted the Firlej Artistic Actions Center on ul. Grabiszyńska 56, a popular organization in Wrocław's feminist milieu. Someone wrote "Fuck feminists" on a window of the organization¹⁵.

If nationalist circles oppose Ukrainians cultivating their national identity in Wrocław, as the city's large Ukrainian immigrant population increasingly aspires to do so, we can expect rising tensions between the two sides in this context.

Moreover, a large proportion of the people we interviewed for this study considered the 13 January 2019 assassination of Gdańsk mayor Paweł Adamowicz by a right-wing fanatic to confirm the likelihood of the escalation scenario. It is a surprising finding of this study that our interviewees – residents of Wrocław, on the other side of Poland from Gdańsk – referred to Adamowicz's murder so frequently in discussions about the ongoing radicalization affecting the city, making such comments as: "something bad could happen in our city", such as "a bloodier confrontation" or "the situation in the city could slip out of control."

¹⁴ "Termination of the nationalists' march is the beginning of the end of these threatening movements", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2/03/2019
<http://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/7,35771,24510281,rozwiązanie-marszunacjonalistow-to-poczatek-konca-groźnych.html>

¹⁵ Przemysław Witkowski, "The nationalist cesspool has overflowed in Wrocław. Attack on NGOs", *OKO.press*, 19/03/2019, <https://oko.press/nacjonalistyczne-szambo-wylalo-we-wroclawiu-atak-na-organizacje-pozarzadowe>

9. Co-production of tension and conflict by the media

The vast majority of people whom we interviewed believe that the local media have been stoking the bad atmosphere in the city. The articles we analyzed focused mainly on events and activities conducted by nationalist groups. These articles largely omitted or merely mentioned – without deeper analysis – commemorative events organized by local and central government officials or community organizations. We did find, however, a fair amount of information about the Joyful Parade held to celebrate Independence Day, even though this event lasts only until noon of 11 November.

Another fault of local media coverage is its tendency to drive spirals of negative emotions regarding immigrants or national minorities – for instance, a series of stories on the Roma encampment on ul. Kamieńskiego published in *Gazeta Wroclawska*. Another example was an article about an automobile accident with overtones suggesting “an Arab caused an accident”; in general, this medium closely links events with the ethnic origin of those involved in them.

- playing on viewers’ emotions in order to generate more click-throughs, thus greater income for the given medium;
- extreme populist actions comparable to techniques used by the Nazis; an example of this is a juxtaposition of information sidebars appearing in the TV evening news *Wiadomości* – on one side, “Refugees who brought disease to Poland”, on the other, a notorious poster from 1942 “on Jews spreading lice and typhus”.

The media’s irresponsible sensationalism is a socially noticeable problem. The press devotes little coverage to positive events, because they do not really interest anyone – only conflict seems to be interesting.

10. Tolerance is demanding – “if you want to be recognized, recognize and respect others”

An important issue that deserves separate treatment was raised repeatedly in the group interviews and discussions with young activists in various organizations, both left- and right-wing, as well as with older officials, such as members of the City Council. It is a phenomenon directly related to the ability to emerge from one’s bubble (based on group, identity, information sources, ideology or, increasingly, party) – namely, the courage to oppose instances of intolerance or

discrimination against people or groups to which one does not belong. This problem is related to attempts to find a new language for thinking about long-term actions that aim to curb radicalization. For example, one of the Wrocław groups decided that it would cease to call nationalists “fascists” because some nationalists regard nationalism as a higher degree of patriotism. Maybe the search for a more conciliatory language is worth discussing, although some may consider it unacceptable. Another example of language that could be interpreted in ways other than intended is the jocular chant “bób – humus – włoszczyzna” [bean – humus – vegetables]. A left-wing activist noted that if this chant is shouted in a context indicating it’s meant to mock the popular patriotic slogan “bóg – honor – ojczyzna” [god – honor – fatherland], then in her opinion it becomes hate speech. And a leading defender of human rights described the slogan “rainbow baptism”, which appeared at the Equality Parade in Gniezno, as hate speech.

A problem here is that some on the right do not like to talk with people outside their bubble. This is how one of the leaders of F.C. Śląsk Wrocław fans reacted to a request to engage in a conversation:

“We are not going to talk to you about what we have to say. We speak at marches and at the stadium, we take part in them because we are patriots, we are happy to live in Poland. We don't take part in the Joy Parade because we don't need any leftist events”.

When Roman Zieliński was asked to take part in the present study, he replied:

“You are from another world. I'm not going to speak with you.”

Nationalist football fans holding the traditional blessing of Easter baskets filled with food at the stadium is an example of their group closing itself off from the larger community of Catholics who normally go to churches to perform this ritual. Another example is a right-wing organization that did not want to allow us to speak with their young members and sympathizers. For no apparent reason, leaders of the group also complained about their lack of financial support from the city government, not to mention grants from state institutions.

A positive example of efforts to build mutual understanding and pierce the aforementioned “bubbles” is the position taken by the group Citizens of the Republic of Poland, who stated that they do not use terms like “fascist or Nazi marches” in relation to right-wing groups because they do not want to provoke or

offend the other side. And this stance has, in fact, been appreciated by some on “the other side”, as a member of a patriotic-historical organization responded to this statement thus:

“Look, we can actually even differ with them in terms of our views, but if they lay flowers on the monument to Captain Pilecki [one of the famous Cursed Soldiers], that’s great, we can only applaud.”

III. Recommendations

A. Wrocław municipal level

1. When formulating and implementing programs that promote intercultural dialogue and fight discrimination and radicalization, city authorities should take greater account of the fact that the addressees of these programs have a variety of political beliefs and world views, not necessarily representing an open or liberal approach to other cultures and religions. Such people should not be excluded from the process of designing and implementing municipal programs.
2. City authorities should develop an effective model for communicating and even cooperating with informal patriotic-nationalist groups and organizations that are not extremist and do not propagate xenophobic or racist behaviors. Such groups could prove to be helpful in exerting a positive influence on other, more radical groups.
3. City authorities should undertake more systemic initiatives that seek to prevent or stop discriminatory practices or hate speech, such as the “Światowy Wrocław” [Global Wrocław] project aimed at educating children and youth. Such systemic solutions should be addressed to a broader range of social groups, also via an inter-sectoral approach (broader social dialogue) as well as multi-agency approach (e.g. in conjunction with other municipalities in Dolny Śląsk province).
4. City authorities should put more emphasis on the role played by the Plenipotentiary for the Ukrainian Minority. The experiences, problems and needs of this minority group living in the city need to be identified via direct contact

with individuals (e.g. by publicizing the opportunity to meet with the plenipotentiary) or with organizations established by or operating on behalf of Ukrainians.

5. City authorities should strive to develop educational activities in conjunction with the provincial Marshal's Office and other towns and cities in the vicinity (e.g. Strzegocin, Świdnica, Dzierżoniów, Brzeg, Oleśnica, Legnica). The city should inspire and help the towns around it to implement social projects by disseminating good practices, e.g. organizing a “living library” or various forms of cooperation between municipal authorities and local community organizations.

6. City authorities should take a global as well as in-depth approach to the formulation and implementation of scholastic programs combatting discrimination and hate speech. Each selected social topic should be covered in classes lasting the entire school year. These programs should include classes not only for students, but also for parents, teachers and administrative staff. Moreover, a space inside the classroom should be devoted to the issues taught in the program in order to strengthen and disseminate its message.

7. City authorities should initiate a training program for city employees and City Guard officers on recognizing and counteracting the development of various forms of radicalization.

8. City authorities should include representatives of medium-size and large multinational corporations employing foreigners in a kind of “round table”. These meetings would serve to reflect on the situation of foreigners in Wrocław, exchange experiences and develop ways to counter local radicalization, i.e. measures that aim to promote greater tolerance, equality and multicultural education.

B. Central government level

1. The core curriculum of kindergartens and schools should put greater emphasis on anti-discrimination education. Properly prepared and professionally

conducted educational projects addressed to children and adolescents are currently the only opportunity to make the public aware of how harmful and dangerous prejudice-motivated hatred is. Education is the only way to reverse the public's progressing desensitization, i.e. its reduced sensitivity to negative content commonly present in public space. Educational authorities should encourage teachers to undertake this kind activity in cooperation with parents according to the rules set forth in education law.

2. It is advisable to prepare and conduct an educational campaign with the broadest possible reach in the form of so-called "counterspeech", i.e. disseminating statements in public space by high-level officials condemning hate speech and rebutting disinformation, stereotyping and stigmatization of groups at risk of being targeted by hate speech and discrimination.

3. It is essential to amend the Penal Code provisions penalizing membership in organizations promoting or inciting racial hatred or participation in any activities of this kind. Article 13 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland prohibits organizations that refer in their programs to the totalitarian methods and practices of Nazism, fascism and communism, as well as those whose program or activity imply or permit racial or national hatred. The inclusion of regulations prohibiting the activity of Nazi, fascist, communist, racist and xenophobic organizations in the first chapter of Poland's Constitution testifies to the systemic importance of this prohibition as a guarantee of the country's democratic system of governance as well as respect for human dignity. The importance of this provision should therefore incline the legislature to enact solutions that ensure this ban is effective. The existing mechanism that enables outlawing of organizations whose program or activities fulfill the conditions set forth in Article 13 of the Constitution has proved to be insufficient, because it does not work preventively against groups that propagate hateful ideologies under various labels and in changing organizational structures. To remedy this situation, a provision should be enacted that criminalizes membership itself in organizations that promote or incite racial hatred or participation in any activities of this type. Note

that Polish law already contains an analogous provision penalizing participation in organized crime groups, which could serve as a model for the proposed amendment. Specifically, Article 258 of the Penal Code provides for criminal liability for persons who take part in organized groups that aim to perpetrate crimes, establish such groups or lead them.

C. Level of community organizations

1. Community organizations should get involved in promoting a vision of a common future in which various cultures, ethnic and national groups, religions and ideological traditions co-exist – instead of engaging in the name of “multiculturalism”, which often focuses on the differences between groups rather than the goals or values they have in common.
2. Due to their superior orientation and local sensitivity, community organizations should urgently seek out and support/ promote local leaders who demonstrate an interest in building dialogue and improving communication between different social groups.

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V. Methodological Annex

A. Interview guideline¹⁶

- 1) What is the meaning of, and the reasons mobilizing people to take part in, the Polish Independence Day March on November 11, 2018?
- 2) What is the social structure of the March's organizers and participants (socio-demographic profiles of participants, organizational, ideological, subcultural structure)?
- 3) What is the local history of marches and counter-marches as part of Independence Day?
- 4) What are the specific characteristics of the March organized in Wrocław? Is there anything specific about radical nationalism and racism in Wrocław?
- 5) How radical do right-wing slogans have to be to dissuade several thousand people who are not far-right activists from participating in the March?
- 6) To what extent have local authorities and civil society dealt with violence, hate crimes and incitement to commit them in the context of the March?
- 7) What are your opinions on the decision to terminate the March? Should such marches be allowed in Wrocław? What are your opinions about radical nationalist groups operating in public space, and the question of whether they should be banned, including the organizations responsible for organizing the March?
- 8) What were (are) the direct and indirect social and political consequences of the Polish Independence Day March and counter-march?
- 9) What recommendations should be formulated for the city authorities, what would have to be done to combat the activities of nationalist groups and the reach of their ideology (the groups that organize the March in Wrocław)? What programs need to be improved? Which institutions need to be strengthened? What new institutions need to be established?
- 10) What the medium-term dynamics for nationalist and racist tendencies in Wrocław do you expect?

¹⁶ More precisely, its core, which was modified depending on the sociodemographic profile of the individual or group interviewed.