

Arkadiusz FORDOŃSKI 

Mazovian University, Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics, Płock, Poland

Bogdan GUZIŃSKI 

Mazovian University, Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics, Płock, Poland

Economic Immigration as a Challenge for Local and Regional Authorities: The Case of Olefins III – the PKN Orlen Investment

Imigracja zarobkowa jako wyzwanie dla władz lokalnych i regionalnych – na przykładzie projektu Olefiny III, inwestycji PKN Orlen

• **Abstract** •

The authors of this article examine the management of migration processes related to the construction of the Olefins III plant by local and regional authorities. The objective of the research is to determine what measures these authorities have taken. The research problem of the article comprises the following questions: to what extent did local and governmental authorities, including local government administration and relevant inspectorates and services, coordinate their actions and to what extent did they agree on these actions with the investor – PKN Orlen Group – and the contractor of the analysed project? The research confirmed the hypothesis: the public authorities and their dependent inspectorates and services were constantly coordinating their activities and agreeing them with the investor – PKN Orlen Group – and the general contractor. However, it was apparent that the authorities lacked an overall strategy of action. Efforts were focused primarily

• **Abstrakt** •

Autorzy artykułu analizują zarządzanie procesami migracyjnymi związanymi z budową zakładu Olefiny III przez władze lokalne i regionalne. Celem badań jest określenie, jakie działania zostały przez owe władze podjęte. Problem badawczy artykułu stanowią pytania: do jakiego stopnia władze samorządowe i rządowe, w tym administracja rządowa w terenie oraz odpowiednie inspekcje i służby, koordynowały swoje działania i w jakiej mierze uzgadniały je z inwestorem – grupą PKN Orlen – i wykonawcą analizowanego projektu? Badanie potwierdziło przyjętą hipotezę: władze publiczne oraz podległe im inspekcje i służby stale koordynowały swoje działania i uzgadniały je z inwestorem – grupą PKN Orlen – i głównym wykonawcą. Widoczny był jednak brak całościowej strategii działania władz. Wysiłki skoncentrowano przede wszystkim na zapewnieniu bezpieczeństwa lokalnego, stąd kluczowa rola służb i inspekcji, ograniczona była natomiast

on providing local security, hence the key role of services and inspectorates, while the scale of activities aimed at integrating immigrants into the local community was limited. skala działań służących integracji imigrantów ze społecznością lokalną.

Keywords: economic immigration; Olefins III; public authorities; migration policy **Słowa kluczowe:** imigracja zarobkowa; Olefiny III; władze publiczne; polityka migracyjna

Introduction

In 2023, PKN Orlen's Olefins III investment became the subject of public debate due to the decision of the project contractor, a consortium of Hyundai Engineering and Tecnicas Reunidas, to employ several thousand foreign employees to build the complex. There has been particularly strong backlash over the contractor's plans to build a special container town for their stay in the village of Stara Biała, near Płock. In connection with the so-called "Visa-gate", in the period immediately preceding the election campaign for the Polish parliament, politicians from the then opposition tried to highlight the inconsistency of the then authorities presenting themselves as defenders of Polish borders, while at the same time being held responsible for irregularities in the issuance of work visas. This inconsistency was further reinforced by the information that one of the largest companies controlled by the state treasury employs thousands of employees from numerous geographically and culturally distant countries (Grabiec, 2023; Wojciechowska, 2023). This issue subsequently became one of the important topics in the election debate.

Amid a political dispute, the investor, contractors and public authorities faced a number of challenges. They were compounded by the scale of the investment – with up to 13,000 individuals working on the construction site. Moreover, the container town was designed for 6,000 workers, and the workers who came to work on the project represented dozens of nationalities and spoke multiple languages. As of May 2024, more than 6,300 individuals were working on the construction site, of whom more than 3,700 were foreign employees (Urząd Miasta Płocka, 2024). The project, due to its nature, presented logistical, traffic, environmental, health and safety, and communication challenges. Given the number of local people, the scale of migration was substantial. As of 2024, the population of the Stara Biała Municipality was over 12.2 thousand inhabitants, the Płock County had over 109.5 thousand inhabitants, while Płock – a city with poviat rights – had 111.2 thousand inhabitants in 2023 (Statistics Poland, 2024). The activities of public authorities aimed at managing processes related to economic immigration

with a view to the investment project are therefore, in our opinion, a noteworthy objective of the research. The research refers to the local authorities: the Stara Biała Municipality, City of Płock, Płock County, Mazovian Province and government administration, in particular Mazovian Governor and the subordinate inspectorates and services. They cover the period from the beginning of the investment until late October 2024.

The objective of the research is to determine what actions the public authorities have taken. In view of the multitude of actors affected by this investment, particular emphasis is placed on examining their ability to cooperate in the context of the perceived challenges. The research problem of the article is the following: to what extent did local and central government authorities, including local government administration and relevant inspectorates and services, coordinate their activities and to what extent did they agree on them with the investor – PKN Orlen Group – and the contractor of the analysed project? We have assumed that these activities needed to be coordinated – as a hypothesis we presumed that the above-mentioned public authorities and their subordinate inspectorates and services coordinated their activities on a continuous basis and agreed on them with the investor – PKN Orlen Group – and the contractor. To coordinate actions, it was essential to establish common objectives in the form of an action strategy or, what we considered more likely, a set of agreements between public authorities and other institutions. With this in mind, we also asked a supporting question: what were the objectives of the public authorities' actions towards the economic migrants employed in the construction of Olefins? Being aware of some of the manifestations of the authorities' actions, we furthermore asked the question: did the police and services present in the workers' town for foreign workers promote the safety of its inhabitants in objective and subjective terms, and if so, to what extent? Finally, in order to determine the effectiveness of the measures taken, we asked the question: how has labour migration to the Płock sub-region affected the safety of the local communities?

With these questions in mind, we used the observation method and the method of in-depth interviews. The research was complemented by an analysis of documents and statistics, both publicly available and those obtained from the authorities and the investor, as well as numerous media releases concerning the investment. We carried out overt observation, including the one at the premises of the town, with the consent of the investment contractor, and covert observation – in the vicinity of this facility. Together, these observations were supposed to enable us to make factual findings concerning, above all, urban, architectural, and technical solutions for the facility's location in relation to nearby housing estates, employee and vehicle traffic to and from the township, the noise it generated, if any. During the observation,

we also conducted a number of interviews, including, *inter alia*, local vendors, construction workers, police officers on duty related to providing investment security (Kuc & Ścibiorek, 2018, pp. 161, 86–190). Unstructured interviews with the Head of the Stara Biała Municipality, commander of the local anti-riot police unit, investment security project manager and parish priest in Stara Biała, followed by a questionnaire interview with the contractor's Chief Operations Officer and again with the investment security project manager and commander of the Płock Municipal Police served to identify the actors responsible for particular solutions and the motivations behind them (Kuc & Ścibiorek, 2018, pp. 190–193; Kowalik & Szostak, 2007, pp. 118–119). To obtain specific information, we also formulated public record information requests¹.

The research is not the first one concerning this investment. Indeed, an article devoted to safety issues in the workers' town has already been published (Fordoński & Guziński, 2024b). Some context regarding the public perception of migration in the analysed sub-region is also provided by an article devoted to its perception among students of a local university (Lewandowski, 2019) and a bachelor's thesis devoted to security in the Stara Biała Municipality (Murzynowska, 2023). The article, however, focuses primarily on the actions of the public authorities towards the immigrants carrying out the investment.

The scope of public authorities' powers

In the case of the Olefins III investment project, the initiative to hire a significant number of foreign workers came from the general contractor of the project – the consortium of Hyundai Engineering and Tecnicas Reunidas. However, the public authorities had at their disposal ample powers to manage the migration process by deciding on, *inter alia*: obtaining visas for foreign workers, auditing the conditions of their employment, measures to provide security for them and the members of the communities in which they resided, or possibly taking measures to foster the social integration of immigrants. The authorities were thus able to exert influence on the foreign employees themselves, the host societies and the economic operators interested in employing them. On the side of each of these groups, various measures were

¹ Submitted to the Police, the Provincial Crisis Management Office of the Mazovian Voivodeship Office in Warsaw, the Department of Defense Affairs and Crisis Management of the County Office in Płock, and the Department of Security and Crisis Management of the City Office of Płock.

conceivable in response to specific actions by the public authorities. Considering the matter in model terms, taking into account the typology, immigrants could choose:

- integration into the host society, i.e., the adoption of Polish culture, while retaining certain elements of the cultures in which they have been brought up;
- assimilation into Polish society, i.e., rejection of their native culture and adoption of the culture of the host society;
- separation from the host society, i.e., rejection of the culture of the country they have arrived in, up to and including ghettoization;
- marginalisation, i.e. rejection of the culture in which they have grown up and non-acceptance of the culture of the country they have arrived in (Baranowska, 2015, p. 103).

A key factor determining the choice of specific acculturation strategies, i.e., coping with the situation of biculturalism in which the immigrants found themselves, is the duration of their stay. A significant proportion of them arriving only for a period of six months may have considered their relations with Polish society as casual, as they were international economic migrants leaving to earn money and return home – migrations for a period of less than a year are considered short-lived (Donchór, 2017, p. 14; Kawczyńska-Butrym, 2008, pp. 28–29; Bartłomiejski & Kowalewska, 2021, pp. 112–113). As far as they were concerned, it was not so much the adoption of Polish culture or its elements that was important, but gaining respect for local customs and, above all, for the law in force in the country.

For other immigrants, remaining in the Płock sub-region for most of the time of the investment, thus a period of several years, acculturation choices may have become more important. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that even departures planned as temporary often turn into permanent residence (King, 2012, pp. 7–8). From the outset of the investment, assimilation and integration were hampered by language barriers, as most of the immigrants carrying out the Olefins III project did not speak Polish and many of them did not speak English either. Considering this problem, the authorities' representatives seemed to understand from the beginning that there was a risk of ghettoization of the group of foreign employees, numbering up to several thousand individuals, during the period of the investment (Fordoński & Guziński 2024a).

The host societies, in turn, also may have demonstrated four model reactions towards immigrants. These include: “integration – resulting from positive responses to the question of immigrants retaining their culture and the question of immigrants adopting the culture of the country of residence; assimilation – resulting from the expectation that immigrants will abandon their own culture in favour of the culture

of the host society; segregation (separation) – meaning the acceptance for immigrants to retain their own culture while not adopting the values of the culture of the new environment; exclusion (individualism) – meaning the simultaneous rejection by the host society of the possibility for immigrants to retain their own culture while adopting the values of the culture of the dominant group” (Janeta, 2011, p. 258).

Companies employing economic migrants are primarily interested in their commitment to their jobs. However, workers' well-being is also important to them, as it enables them to achieve higher productivity and uninterrupted progress of the investment process. For the latter objective, it may also be important to obtain a favourable image of their employees among the local communities. However, measures going beyond the delivery of the above-mentioned objectives, including those aimed at the social integration of foreign employees in the perspective of a contract running for several years, do not seem economically relevant and can therefore hardly be expected from the companies. Nor can it be ruled out that enterprises employing or intermediating foreign employees will treat them as a resource to be exploited as much as possible. The role of public authorities is therefore to prevent practices that may violate labour law norms or even criminal law norms.

It should be emphasised that for most of the investment execution period so far, the Polish Council of Ministers had no migration strategy in place, and the lack of such a policy document and the associated legal framework for public administration action towards immigrants hindered a coordinated, consistent policy towards them and created considerable room for public officials' interpretations (Bartłomiejski & Kowalewska, 2021, p. 117).

Coordination of activities

Given the scale of the investment and the diverse forms of its impact on the surrounding area, it was necessary to coordinate the actions of the public authorities. According to our findings, this task was undertaken by the Mazovian Governor (Wojewoda Mazowiecki, 2024; Fordoński & Guziński, 2023a). We determined that four meetings were held with the participation of authorities and services. The first three during the period when Konstanty Radziwiłł was the Governor and one after Tobiasz Bocheński had assumed this office.

Meetings between administrative authorities and public services aimed at ensuring public order during the construction of the Olefins III complex in Płock				
	11 Oct 2022	15 Nov 2022	15 March 2023	19 May 2023
Mazovian Governor	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
District Governor of the Płock County	Did not take part	Took part	Took part	Took part
Mayor of Płock	Did not take part	Did not take part	Took part	Took part
Head of the Stara Biała Municipality	Did not take part	Took part	Took part	Took part
Head of the Łęck Municipality	Did not take part	Did not take part	Did not take part	Took part
Provincial Commander of the Police in Radom	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
Mazovian Provincial Commander of the State Fire Service in Warsaw	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
State County Sanitary Inspector in Płock	Did not take part	Took part	Took part	Took part
Commander of the Warsaw Modlin Border Guard Outpost	Did not take part	Took part	Took part	Took part
CEO of PKN Orlen SA	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
CEO of Hyundai Engineering Polska sp. z o.o.	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
City Police Commander of Płock	Did not take part	Did not take part	Did not take part	Took part
Director of the County Roads Management Board in Płock	Did not take part	Did not take part	Did not take part	Took part
Director of the Department of Security and Crisis Management of the MGO ²	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
Director of the Provincial Governor's Office MGO	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
Director of the Department of Health of the MGO	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part
Director of the Płock Delegation of the MGO	Took part	Took part	Took part	Took part

Author's own study based on: Wojewoda Mazowiecki, 2024.

² MGO – Mazovian Governor's Office.

The table above clearly shows that, at the very least, subsequent public institutions were gradually involved in the mutual feedback processes, and from the very outset the Governor and his subordinate services and inspectorates and, on the other hand, the investor and the general contractor were involved. In general, such formulated list of entities involved in the safe and undisturbed course of the investment and the stay of economic migrants does not raise any objections, with one exception, however – it is hardly comprehensible that a representative of the Płock Municipal Police was not invited to any of the meetings (Wojewoda Mazowiecki, 2024; Fordoński, Guziński, 2024a). The topics of the meetings were related to the investment's execution and, in particular, included "discussion of the implemented measures in matters related to providing public safety, organisation of health services, supplies, organisation of the transport system to the investment site".

The meetings were also aimed at diagnosing the hazards for residents of the areas in the vicinity of the investment and the infrastructure of the areas covered by the investment. An important issue at the meetings was also the diagnosis of existing hazards to public and fire safety, as well as the discussion of problems concerning oversized transport. A separate issue discussed during the meetings was the discussion of "potential problems that may arise with the employment of several thousand employees from Central Asia" (Wojewoda Mazowiecki, 2024; Gmina Stara Biała, 2022a). At least at one of the meetings (November 15, 2022), "the Governor committed all services and institutions to work closely together to ensure the safety of both the employees of the construction site as well as the residents of the Stara Biała Municipality and the City of Płock" (Gmina Stara Biała, 2022a).

An interesting outcome of the consultation was the agreement that, in communication on the container housing facilities for foreign contract workers in Stara Biała, the meeting participants would not use the name "camp" previously used by representatives of the contractor and the ordering authority, but the very name "workers' town", already adopted in the debate about it. This idea was to be notified by governor Konstanty Radziwiłł, who argued that individuals informed about the investment would translate the term "camp" into Polish, while in Poland the term "obóz" – (camp in English) has clearly negative connotations (Fordoński, Guziński, 2023a; Fordoński, Guziński, 2023b). This can be considered a very interesting manifestation of the exercise of power understood as a discourse control.

Relevant coordination activities were undertaken by the Płock County Office – the meeting of the County Crisis Management Staff on May 12, 2023, was attended by Płock County Administrator Sylwester Ziemkiewicz, Chief Operating Officer of Hyundai Engineering Tecnicas Reunidas (investment contractor) Jakub Zgorzelski, Vice-County Administrator Iwona Sierocka, Chairman of the Płock County Council

Lech Dąbrowski, councillors, as well as directors of departments of the County Office and service representatives (Tygodnik Płocki, 2023b; Starostwo Powiatowe w Płocku, 2024). Accordingly, the objective in this case was to obtain information from the contractor and to agree on actions within the county office and subordinate services only.

Meetings were also held to help resolve specific issues relating to investment execution. At least two such meetings were held at the Płock City Hall, with one – on May 29, 2024 – having the status of a meeting of the Municipal Crisis Management Team. At the invitation of the City Mayor, the meeting was attended by representatives of the County Administrator's Office in Płock, the City Police Headquarters, the Municipal Police, the County Sanitary and Epidemiological Station in Płock, the Department of Security and Crisis Management of the Płock City Hall, the Department of Health and Social Affairs of the Płock City Hall, and the Local Social Welfare Centre; the other party was represented by the investor and the general contractor. The objective of the Team meeting was to coordinate efforts to protect economic migrants from racist acts of violence and to protect foreign nationals victimised by a fraudulent job agency company. The issues of offences committed by foreign employees and their importance to public safety were also discussed. The meeting was organised in the wake of the TVN news channel reporting cases of mistreatment of immigrants employed to carry out the investment (Fordoński, Guziński, 2024a; Urząd Miasta Płocka, 2024, pp. 1–4; Madejska, Józefiak, 2024a, 2024b).

In their public statements about the foreign workers employed for the Olefins construction project, government officials were preoccupied with the issue of security, a telling indicator being the focus on the role of the police in securing the investment (Stachurska, 2023; Gmina Stara Biała, 2022a). It can therefore be concluded that there was a securitisation of the immigration issue in the Płock sub-region.

The importance of awareness-raising activities

Both the investor, the contractor, and the police have acknowledged that the prejudice of local communities towards foreigners may result in conflicts and constitute a hazard for the investment as such. Consequently, they embarked on a joint awareness-raising campaign aimed primarily at young people, which included meetings in schools devoted to the issue of hate speech and prejudice. The contractor, in cooperation with the police, also distributed handouts on Polish law for foreign

employees and gadgets promoting tolerance. Also, a poster and billboard campaign was carried out (Tygodnik Płocki, 2023b; Fordoński, Guziński, 2023c). Płock institutions of culture, in cooperation with Orlen, also organised meetings devoted to the culture of the foreign workers' countries of origin (Wiśniewska, 2023a, 2023b). Understandably, the public authorities were only involved in part of the activities related to building the image of the investment – most of them were carried out by the investor and contractor. The measures used included, *inter alia*: interviews for local, national and international media, picnic-style meetings with residents and cruises on the Vistula River presenting the city's most interesting landmarks, combined with communication of news about the investment, sponsorship of local sports clubs (Tygodnik Płocki, 2023b; Tygodnik Płocki, 2024; Fordoński, Guziński, 2023c).

The investor and contractor were committed to maintaining friendly relations with local authorities, and to this end they provided financial support to their initiatives and informed local government officials about the progress of the investment (Gmina Stara Biała, 2023b, pp. 2–3; Fordoński, Guziński 2023b; Fordoński, Guziński 2023c). However, there was a prolonged shortage of awareness-raising meetings of the investor and contractor with local residents focused on the investment-related issues. The first meetings organised by the contractor and investor took place on February 19, 21, 22, 2024 and were held in Płock, Trzepowo, and Maszewo Duże (Stańczak, 2024; Info Płock TV, 2024). The last meeting was also attended by the Head of the Stara Biała Municipality. The meetings enjoyed considerable interest from local residents.

Integration of local communities and foreign contract workers

Our research showed little interest on the part of the authorities in efforts aimed at bringing foreign workers and local communities together. Even if certain initiatives were taken, they tended to address overcoming prejudices – a manifestation of this was a joint action by the investor, contractor and the police to promote tolerance. A noteworthy manifestation of cultural exchange measures was the activities of the Płock Public Library – meetings with the culture of the countries from which the immigrants came (Wiśniewska, 2023a, 2023b).

The authorities mainly aimed at providing security for the investment, immigrants and members of the local communities. Since the authorities took no actions, interactions between foreigners and Poles took place spontaneously. Also, the prejudices were quickly overcome (Kołodziejczyk, 2023). Thus, in the first

instance, interactions and conversations took place in local stores and in premises rented to foreigners. At the same time, when interviewed, store clerks informed that immigrants communicated their preferences for products in which they were interested and which were hitherto missing from the local stores' offer (e.g., beef, lamb). Language barriers did not prevent people from playing sports together at local sports facilities (e.g., the basketball court in Stara Biała).

Many also enjoyed local restaurants, bars, clubs, discos, and cinema. Some foreigners also attended mass in local churches. The role of direct contact in overcoming prejudice is illustrated by the statement of the parish priest in Stara Biała, who told us that the tension associated with the announcement of the foreigners' arrival in his parish had been building up until the moment of their arrival; however, once they arrived, tension began to decrease as the parishioners realised that nothing bad had happened. However, it was not entirely without tensions. Many hateful comments against strangers were published on social media. There were also violent acts directed against immigrants: fights at a construction site, a case of several foreigners being beaten up by local pseudo football fans, and violent offences by immigrants.

The impact of investment-driven economic immigration on local safety and security

Given the very number of economic migrants who temporarily resided in Płock and the surrounding towns, the investment was likely to have an impact on the security situation, and the risk of its deterioration was relatively greater than the number of workers alone would suggest, as this group was overwhelmingly male. From the outset, the authorities anticipated both a worsening of the security situation and the fact that even incidental breaches of the law could cause agitation in the local communities because of their fears about the scale of the issue, as well as prejudices that had been prevalent even before construction itself began. The risk of sexual offences was treated as a particularly sensitive issue – it was assumed that if such offences occurred, information on this subject could trigger significant social pressure (Fordoński, Guziński, 2023a; Fordoński, Guziński 2024a).

The large cultural differences and the existence of language barriers between foreign workers and local residents were seen as a major challenge. To mitigate the impact of these barriers, the contractor and investor equipped services, including the police, State Fire Brigade, Municipal Hospital in Płock, Provincial Polyclinical Hospital in Płock, Ambulance Service, and Municipal Police in Płock, with automatic

translators. Our interviews with users of these devices revealed that they improve communication with foreigners by supporting dozens of languages.

Uniformed services have taken a number of measures aimed at preventing offences committed by and against economic migrants. Among the measures were: the organisation of a functioning 24-hour police station in the workers' town, the reinforcement of the staff of the police post in Stara Biała and the determination that one of the patrols would give priority to emergency calls from the town (this was to provide assistance to the officers on duty in the town), the increase in the number of police patrols in the vicinity of the investment and in the village of Koszelówka where a significant number of foreign employees were accommodated, setting up a dedicated team of officers within the local police structures responsible for the security status of the investment, more frequent ID checks by the Municipal Police of foreign workers moving in larger groups in the first months of their stay so that they knew they were of interest to the law enforcement agencies (Fordoński, Guziński, 2023a; Fordoński, Guziński, 2024a; Urząd Miasta Płocka, 2024; InfoPlockTV, 2023).

To ensure that immigrants were aware of the requirements under Polish law, thematic leaflets drawn up by the police and Orlen S.A. were distributed among them. Cooperation between the services and the Orlen Ochrona company, consisting, *inter alia*, in the exchange of information, was of vital importance. In our interviews with the police officers who were on duty in the workers' town, there was a recurring issue – they described their duty in the workers' town as “dull and boring”, as the Orlen Ochrona company's staff responsible for security in the town was the first to respond to even minor manifestations of public order breaches – such actions are in line with the broken windows theory explaining the link between breaching order and crime (Widacki et al., 2022, pp. 253–254). On the other hand, staying in the town may have evoked a sense of excessive control.

As some residents of Płock were seen to be renting premises to foreigners, but not declaring their tenancy anywhere, the problem of the lessees not paying the applicable fees for utilities and waste disposal was raised. Municipal police officer would therefore inspect the premises where foreigners and lessees were staying and inform them about the obligations related to the lease. On this basis, an estimate was also made of how many foreign employees were staying in the city – the number was estimated at more than 2,000 individuals with lessees notifying of only ca. 10 per cent of them. A map of the residence of economic migrants was also developed. Such activities, as well as interviews of officers with foreigners or more frequent ID checks, also fulfilled another important role – they counteracted the migrants' perception of being outsiders to the local community and that both their behaviour

and their situation were of no interest to anyone (Fordoński, Guziński, 2024a; Urząd Miasta Płocka, 2024).

An important part of the discussion on the benefits and challenges of migration is the analysis of statistics on offences that may be committed by, but also against, migrants. Understanding these data enables an objective assessment of the impact of migration on the sense of security of local communities, as well as the identification of problems that require intervention.

While recent research indicates that an increase in the number of migrants is not necessarily associated with a noticeable increase in crime, an analysis of the data reveals some specific patterns. On the one hand, migrants are sometimes perpetrators of offences, which may be due to adaptation difficulties, economic constraints, or lack of knowledge of local laws. On the other hand, migrants themselves often fall victim to criminal acts such as exploitation, discrimination, or violence, which in turn reflects the challenges of integration and building social acceptance. As indicated by data published by the National Police Headquarters, in 2023, foreigners residing in Poland committed more than 17,000 offences, an increase of 2,400 compared to 2022, while almost five times more than a decade ago. The reason for this picture of crime statistics is largely due to the influx of foreigners following the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

According to data obtained for the purpose of this study from the Provincial Police HQ seated in Radom, the most frequent perpetrators of offences in the Płock County are Ukrainian nationals (Policja, 2024). The statistics also include criminal acts committed by citizens of Arab, Belarusian, Bosnian, Georgian, Indian, Spanish, Korean, Moldovan, Russian, Romanian, Turkish, and Tatar nationalities.

The most common offences are those related to driving under the influence of alcohol, theft, burglary, fraud, involvement in a fight, battery or offences under the Act on Counteracting Drug Addiction (most often possession of drugs). Although the nationality of the perpetrators included in the above statistics could indicate that some of them are likely to be the employees of Olefins III investment, the Provincial Police HQ seated in Radom does not collect statistics that contain explicit information of this kind. The situation is different at the City Police Headquarters in Płock, where such a register of incidents related to the Olefins III investment has been kept since its commencement. By mid-September 2024, the aforementioned register contained more than 230 incidents of which construction employees were both perpetrators and victims (Policja, 2024). The data collected in the Intervention Register do not contain information on the completion of proceedings in the described cases, nevertheless they provide a pool of information on the type and nature of these incidents.

At one of the meetings of the Municipal Crisis Management Team, the then acting City Police Chief of Płock reported that the majority of crimes and offences, due to the location of the investment, were committed in the Stara Biała Municipality, which, given the number of criminal acts in the area prior to the commencing of the investment, could be relevant in terms of local security (Urząd Miasta Płocka, 2024).

For the sake of comparison, it is worth noting that before the commencing of the investment, in 2020–2022 in the Stara Biała Municipality such acts as: burglary; theft of someone else's property; robbery, theft and extortion; damage to property; theft of a car and through burglary; causing damage to health, were a total of 21 to 35 per year (Policja, 2024; Murzynowska, 2023). On the other hand, a significant proportion of the offences were carried out on the construction site itself, so that the nuisance of increased crime for the local community was limited.

As in the data obtained from the Provincial Police Headquarters seated in Radom, a significant part of described interventions related to traffic incidents, such as a collision or driving under the influence of alcohol or other narcotic drugs. There were also incidents with features of offences against life and health (fight, beating), against property (theft, burglary, misappropriation), against credibility of documents (using a forged and counterfeited document). Among the described incidents there were descriptions of individual cases of acts against freedom, sexual freedom and morality (recording an image of a naked person without his/her consent, rape).

Among the cases of contract workers being victimised, the most common were offences against life and health (beating, bodily harm), against property (theft, theft of documents), against public order (insults on grounds of nationality), and violations of labour rights. Actions related to depriving employees of their documents (passports) and forging employment-related documentation seem to be of particular concern. Such acts may fulfil the elements of the crime of human trafficking. The District Public Prosecutor's Office in Płock supervises four proceedings, instituted after notifications from the State Labour Inspectorate, concerning suspected forgery of medical documents of foreigners employed at the investment site (Bankier.pl, 2024).

One should once again emphasise that the data from the register obtained from the City Police Headquarters in Płock are not statistics of instituted proceedings and identified crimes, but only information about incidents involving employees of the Olefins III investment, which, once proper legal steps are taken, may be qualified as crimes or offences. The above analysis aims not only to provide an objective picture of the situation, but also to draw attention to the need to counteract stereotypes that may negatively affect relations between local communities and immigrants.

Conclusions

The article confirmed that the public authorities and their subordinate inspectorates and services constantly coordinated their actions and agreed on them with the investor – PKN Orlen Group – and contractor. While it may give some grounds for controlling the migration processes related to the Olefins III investment, it does not yet prejudge that. The challenge for local authorities in this case is the sheer scale of the investment. Although it seems easier to control it due to its gradual development, some unfavourable phenomena have evolved beyond the due control and capacities of the authorities, the most important of which, in our opinion, was the escalation of exploitation of foreign contract workers up to acts fulfilling the characteristics of human trafficking.

Both local and central government institutions, services and inspectorates are involved in immigrant-related measures. The exchange of information and the coordination of activities have proved to be of major importance. On the part of local government, however, there is a perceptible tendency not to take responsibility for the social processes involved in the Olefins III investment – with the main responsibility consequently being relegated to the services, from which the authorities expect commitment in fulfilling their tasks and information, but to which they do not offer anything more than coordination activities. The services, which include, *inter alia*, the police, Border Guard, Municipal Police, or the State Labour Inspection, continually monitor the investment, carrying out preventive measures and responding to violations of the law.

The local authorities seem to lack a strategy to deal with migration for the purposes of the Olefins III investment; based on the analysis of available documents and conducted interviews, it may be assumed that the primary objective is providing safety and security to migrants and residents of the Płock sub-region.

The presence of economic migrants, mainly due to their number, negatively affects the security situation in the Stara Biała Municipality, and results in a lowered sense of security, while tensions have decreased due to communication activities, the cooperation of the investor and contractor with the police, an awareness-raising campaign including the use of mass media (especially local ones). This issue shall be further explored based on sociological methods. In Płock, the scale of incidents that may affect the sense of security is insignificant if we compare the investment data with the data for the city for the years preceding its construction.

What is somewhat concerning is the limited scale of efforts to integrate immigrants. A certain assumption present in a number of statements made by our interlocutors and in public statements by the authorities was that once the

investment is completed, immigrants will return to their countries, and the current state of play, in which immigrants constitute a significant percentage of the local community, is merely temporary. Given that the residents' fears and concerns are clearly communicated in the public space, the authorities are even less inclined to undertake initiatives to make immigrants stay in Poland for good.

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