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Human resources in Polish organisations in Germany

Within the wealth of literature on the subject of migration, a great deal of importance has been attached to the subject of political and social participation of immigrants¹. Among the main forms of immigrant participation mentioned are for example involvement in the political system of the country of origin, membership in special organisations created for immigrants, cooperation with institutions in the host country, such as political parties and trade unions, and participation in various forms of non-institutional activity (for example public protest)². Even though still as late as the latter half of the 1980s Grzegorz Babiński observed that there was a visible «scarcity of analyses carried out until now regarding both the areas of transformation of ethnic organisations and their role in ethnic collectives»³, nowadays involvement in immigrant organisations is documented quite well⁴, mostly due to the fact that their activities are

¹ See for example. Michael Jones-Correa, «Different paths: gender, immigration and political participation», *International Migration Review*, (32), 2, 1998, pp. 326-349; Jean Tillie Meindert Fennema, «Political participation and political trust in Amsterdam: civic communities and ethnic networks», *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (25), 4, 1999, pp. 703-726; Lise Togeby, «It depends ... How organisational participation affects political participation and social trust among second-generation immigrants in Denmark», *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (30), 3, 2004, pp. 509-528; Anja van Heelsum, «Political participation and civic community of ethnic minorities in four cities in the Netherlands», *Politics*, (25), 2005, pp. 19-30; Nelson Kasfir, «Explaining ethnic political participation», *World Politics*, (31), 3, 1979, pp. 365-388.

² «Introduction: Political Participation and Civil Rights of Immigrants, a Research Agenda», *International Migration Review*, (19), 3, 1985, p. 403.

³ Grzegorz Babiński, *Wież etniczna a procesy asymilacji. Przemiany organizacji etnicznych. Zagadnienia teoretyczne i metodologiczne*, Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Kraków 1986, p. 10.

⁴ Michael A. Stoll, «Race, Neighborhood Poverty and Participation in Voluntary Associations», *Sociological Forum*, (16), 3, 2001, pp. 529-557; John Rex, Daniele Joly, and Czarina Wilpert (ed.), *Immigrant Associations in Europe*, Gower Press, Aldershot 1987; Floris Vermeulen, *The Immigrant Organising Process*.

reflected in all of the forms of involvement mentioned above. Also, as Floris Vermeulen notes, immigrant associations play an extraordinarily important role both for immigrant communities themselves and for the host society⁵.

From the point of view of immigrants there are all sorts of functions that can be fulfilled by organisations. Firstly, they can represent the rights and interests of immigrants. Secondly, they can provide community support – this is particularly important for those immigrants who are finding it hard to adapt to their new circumstances. Thirdly, associations play a significant role in preserving the national identity of immigrants, for example by ensuring them contact with the native language and culture; and finally organisations can also be a platform for forming and maintaining social contact with their fellow countrymen⁶.

Immigrant organisations can also perform important functions for the host country society. Above all they help to bring about integration of immigrants. In literature on this subject there are opposing views however with regard to the area in which this contribution is made. With respect to a portion of society and some organisations it is acknowledged that involvement of immigrants in the activity of associations has a beneficial effect on the processes of integration with the host society. This is because involvement in these processes is deemed to increase (particularly in the case of secular organisations) the level of participation by immigrants in the political system of the host society⁷ and by the same token speeds up integration. In other cases, involvement in organisations can have the opposite effect.

Turkish Organisations in Amsterdam and Berlin and Surinamese Organisations in Amsterdam 1960-2000, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2006; Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational politics. Turks and Kurds in Germany*, Routledge, London 2003; a special example of this interest is the special edition issued in 2004 of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (30), 3, 2004, concerning immigrant associations.

⁵ Vermeulen, *The Immigrant Organising Process*, p. 12.

⁶ Jose C. Moya, «Immigrants and Associations: A Global and Historical Perspective», *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (31), 5, 2005; Chi-Kan Richard Hung, «Immigrant Nonprofit Organisations in U.S. Metropolitan Areas», *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, (36), 4, 2007, pp. 707-729.

⁷ Meindert Fennema, Jean Tillie, «Civic community, political participation and political trust of ethnic groups», *Connections*, (24), 1, 2001, pp. 26-41; M. Stoll, «Race, Neighborhood Poverty and Participation in Voluntary Associations»; also see Herbert Gans, «Etniczność, akulturacja, asymilacja», *Przegląd Polonijny*, (2), 1977, pp. 25-34, Barbara Lai, «Perspectives on Ethnicity: Old Wine in New Bottles», *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (6), 2, 1983, pp. 154-73, Georg Elwert, «Probleme der Ausländerintegration. Gesellschaftliche Interaktion durch Binnenintegration», *Koelner Zeitschrift fuer Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, (34), 5, 1982, pp. 717-731.

Studies of transnational organisations reveal that maintaining close relations with the country of origin and so-called “dual loyalty” can mean that members of immigrant associations will have a highly developed sense of national identity, which, in some cases, can slow down or even prevent full integration⁸. Also, «*when there is an entire network of “parallel institutions” such as schools, the media, and cultural organisations a specific ethnic group can fall prey to segregation and exclusion processes*»⁹. This is possible of course only in cases in which there is so-called “institutional completeness” which exists when the immigrant community creates its own institutions parallel to the host country institutions, which meet all or at least most of the immigrants’ needs¹⁰.

It must be pointed however that to fulfil those functions – both for the immigrant group and the host society, organisations need to have sufficient resources. One of the most important resource needed in the functioning of an organisation are human resources: members, professional staff as well as leaders¹¹. The aim of the article is to describe the state of human resources of Polish organisations in Germany and its impact on their standing. The example of Polish organisations in Germany proves that scarcities in human resources might be an important factor reducing effectiveness of organizations and limiting their utility for the immigrant community.

This paper is organized in the following way: Initially, as necessary background, Polish migration to Germany and the process by which the Polish diaspora in Germany organized itself will be shortly described. In the second part of the paper, three different issues concerning human resources of organizations will be presented with the use of empirical findings¹²: members, management boards and personnel.

⁸ Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, «Turkish Diaspora: Trans-state Politics and Loyalties of Turks and Kurds in Western Europe», *SAIS Review*, (20), 1, 2000, pp. 23-38.

⁹ Ulrike Schoeneberg, «Participation in Ethnic Associations: The Case of Immigrants in West Germany», *International Migration Review*, (19), 3, 1985, p. 419.

¹⁰ Raymond Brenton, «Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants», *American Journal of Sociology*, (70), 2, 1964, pp. 193-205; see also review of the latest discussions regarding institutional completeness in: Sheldon Goldenberg, Valerie A. Haines, «Social Networks and Institutional Completeness: From Territory to Ties», *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, (17), 3, 1992, pp. 301-312.

¹¹ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, «Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: a Partial Theory», *American Journal of Sociology*, (82), 6, 1977, pp. 1212-1241.

¹² The data presented in this paper come from my research project entitled “Polish nongovernmental organizations in Germany”, funded by the Polish-German Cooperation Foundation. This study, conducted in 2008-2009, was based on two research techniques: in-depth interviews with the leaders of the most

Poles and Polish organizations in Germany

Polish migration to Germany has been ongoing for about two hundred years, occurring in a number of waves. Poles are one of the largest immigrant and ethnic groups in Germany. According to data from Mikrozensus 2009¹³, people with Polish migration background (*Migrationshintergrund*) constitute the second most populous group of foreigners in the Federal Republic of Germany, counting 1,298,000 people (after 2,505,000 Turks). However this high number is not necessarily reflected by the status of the Polish group in German society.

While Polish migration to Germany has been happening over the span of last two hundred years, the process of organizing the Polish diaspora in Germany started only in 1877 with the establishment of the Jedność Society (*Towarzystwo "Jedność"*). As Grzegorz Janusz states, "over the next few years in western Germany, about one hundred such organizations were created"¹⁴. After the end of the First World War, the process of organizing the Polish diaspora began to intensify. This activation expressed itself mostly in the form of unification processes. On August 27, 1922, the Association of Poles in Germany (*Związek Polaków w Niemczech*) was established with 45,000 members¹⁵, which gave the Association great power. Janusz also observes that the Association of Poles in Germany played a vital role in creating a cooperative platform between minorities in Germany¹⁶.

After the Second World War, the Polish movement began to be more heterogenic, because each wave of immigration tended to create its own organizations, which led to conflicts and weakness. In the 90s, a process of unification began, resulting in the creation in 1998 of the Assembly of Polish Organizations (*Konwent Organizacji Polskich w Niemczech*) in Germany by five umbrella organizations – the Rodło Association of Poles in Germany, the Zgoda Association of Poles in Germany, the Congress of German Polonia (*Kongres Polonii Niemieckiej*), the Polish Council in Germany (*Polska Rada w Niemczech*), and the Catholic

important Polish immigrant organizations, and a postal survey of organizations. Of about 100 Polish organizations in Germany, 42 took part in the survey research, and 8 organization leaders were interviewed.

¹³ *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit – Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2009*, Statistisches Bundesamt, Wiesbaden 2010.

¹⁴ Grzegorz Janusz, «Polonia w Niemczech», in *Polonia w Niemczech. Historia i współczesność*, Elipsa, Warszawa 2001, p. 22.

¹⁵ Marek Kostrzewa, *Procesy integracyjne i konsolidacyjne Polonii w Niemczech w latach 1990-2000*, Prawo i Praktyka Gospodarcza, Warszawa 2005, p. 18.

¹⁶ Janusz, «Polonia w Niemczech».

Centre for the Propagation of Culture, Tradition, and the Polish Language (Katolickie Centrum Krzewienia Kultury, Tradycji i Języka Polskiego) – as the representative of the whole Polish movement in Germany. Although this structure is not formally registered, and it is no longer participated in by the Rodło Association, it remains the most representative organization of Poles in Germany.

The contemporary organizations and their potential to represent immigrants' interests results from the overall history of the whole movement. The history of Polish organizations in Germany is an interesting example of the growth, development, and decline of an immigrant organization movement. The subsequent waves of immigrants did not contribute to a development of the situation and importance of the ethnic group as a whole, or of its organizations. On the contrary it resulted in conflicts and a tendency to create new organizations instead of integrating into the old structures. In other words, new flows of immigrants tended to lower the potential and cohesion of the Polish group.

The results of the detailed examination of the Polish organizations' situation show also that as a consequence of their condition is not great. Both the human and material resources available for Polish organizations are limited. The overall lack of unity of the movement is also an argument in favour of a rather negative evaluation of their potential. Cooperation with other non-Polish organizations is also imperfect, which may hinder the role of Polish organizations in the immigrant movement in Germany. This also may contribute to the relatively low status of Poles in German society¹⁷.

Human Resources

Members

The organisations taking part in the research were asked about the number of members. In this regard there are three scenarios: when organisations are made up only of people (34), other organisations or institutions, for example businesses (4) or also both people and other organisations or institutions (3). Organisations whose members are individuals and those that are affiliations of other organisations will be analysed separately.

¹⁷ Michał Nowosielski, «Growth and decline – the situation of Polish immigrant organizations in Germany», in Marek Nowak and Michał Nowosielski, eds., *(Post)transformational Migration. Inequalities, Welfare State, and Horizontal Mobility*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2011, pp. 201-224.

In the case of ordinary associations the average number of members is just over 109¹⁸. The smallest organisation has only 8 people. In the examined group most of the organisations were made up of between 20 and 49 members. Just over one quarter of organisations have more than 100 members. Although the largest of the organisations studied has 800 members none of the organisations is a mass organisation – particularly taking into account the membership figures for the Polish and the Polish-speaking community in Germany. In total there are 4068 people in all of the 37 studied organisations.

Table 1 – Number of members of organisations

Range	Number	percentage
up to 19	6	16.2
20-49	13	35.1
50-99	8	21.6
100-199	3	8.1
200 and over	7	18.9
Total	37	100.0

Representatives of the associations that took part in the research see various causes for the low level of involvement of the Polish collective in Germany in the activities of Polish and Polish-language organisations. One of the reasons is an unwillingness to commit to an organisation in the long term. Members of local Polish communities are glad to join in with ongoing projects of various kinds or the organisation's activities, but they do not want to become members.

This is an old problem and this is the phenomenon well I would say of the 1990s or today's twenty-first century, maybe even the second half of the 1980s, that people are glad to come along to help in the organisation of an event, but they don't want to commit for the long term. (CK3)

There is also the phenomenon of temporary involvement, which is evident in particular in the case of community work of parents for schools or Polish schools operating as part of organisations. A strategy of this kind means that organisations do not have long-term participants who are actively involved in their work, and this is an obstacle in their long-term activities.

¹⁸ Median = 43.

Those are people who band together in a given year, they are elected by a group of parents, and they will be active. They will run a small café, buy things for the café, settle accounts, and run it. But that is for one year. After a year we will have to look for new people again. (CK3)

In addition leaders of the organisations that took part in the study see the reasons for the low level of involvement of Poles in their materialism. In their opinion involvement in community action on a voluntary basis might not be an attractive prospect for most Poles living in Germany.

Well I am glad that it can be said that we have over 500 people in the church. They come to church, of course. They bring the children to religious education, etc. And that is coming to an end. And that is all, see? I mean I can even say to a certain extent that it is as if they avoid the Polish community, see? God forbid help or get involved in something or other, see? Maybe I will also tell you honestly, I think it is more about how much they can earn, isn't it? (NL8)

Another reason for the lack of involvement is also the lack of time, the focus above all on work and family.

This is a kind of phenomenon of today's times, I think that people are scared of complete responsibility of that kind, because they have a job, family and because I am like a workhorse, and extra work is all I need. Maybe this is this phenomenon. (CK3)

Two groups could become a source of new members of Polish associations: young people, mostly immigrants in the second generation or one-and-a half generation¹⁹ and new immigrants from Poland. However in the opinion of leaders of the organisations studied they cannot become the social support for Polish associations because in most cases they also do not want to become involved in community activities. Young people reject membership in organisations most of all due to other interests.

I mean those people in the younger generations are in general those people who help, let's assume, in some matters, but as members as such in general they don't. I mean there are two or three people who are younger, but that is not the rule, see? Well the young people as a rule don't feel drawn towards activities of that kind. They have completely different interests, don't they? (LA9)

¹⁹ The "one and a half" generation is referred to in cases in which they emigrated as small children. It is true that these people were born in the country of origin but a large portion of their social upbringing was in the host country.

Also, as the leaders of the organisations that took part in the research observe, as in the case of the older generations, financial motives also play an important role.

The younger people don't come (...) No, they rather have their own business, in their pocket, the money is correct. (NL8)

It is true that new arrivals from Poland sometimes make use of the organisation's activities, but at the same time they are not willing to get involved. The reason for this is first and foremost the focus on their career, which is mainly due to the model of that kind of migration to Germany – economic and largely temporary which is not conducive to development of social networks or participation in Polish institutions.

Because here in fact there are a huge amount of Poles [...] They are not interested [in contact with organisations], because they are here for a specific purpose. To earn some money and that's it. There is not even time. Well I have a few acquaintances of this kind, so even if we say that there would be something there is something to be done, so come along help us. I do have some money, at least some.... Then he says that he doesn't have time, that that's not it, and that is not that kind of money... (RK5)

Another cause hindering involvement of new immigrants in the activity of Polish and Polish-language organisations may also be the fact that some of them are working in Germany illegally, which means that they try to avoid drawing attention to the fact that they are Polish and have ties with a Polish institution.

No, no absolutely not or they participate very little because they simply have to survive and they also work harder. And this is largely physical work. And in addition they are working illegally. (NON4)

Some of the leaders that took part in the research see however reasons for the crisis of involvement of Poles in particular limitations of Polish organisations in Germany. Above all the range of things offered is too narrow. The reason for this is undoubtedly the low level of instrumentalisation of associations, which in many cases cannot offer recipients much more than participation in cultural events. An offer of activities of this kind is not necessarily attractive to the recipients, especially as, as opposed to the 1980s, or the beginning of the 1990s, there are no restrictions on participation in Polish culture thanks to universally available Polish television, press and the Internet and freedom to travel to nearby Poland.

Now the situation has changed. The close proximity and opening of borders to Poland, in fact the appetite for Poland is also less, because if I have the option of flying from Kiel to Gdańsk within an hour, because it

happens, I don't know, that there is some wonderful theatre, or I feel like having a good Polish dinner, then I can simply do that. It is not the way it used to be, that in essence when one decided to go abroad one expected that one would not be able to see or be there, I don't know, for years. No, nowadays there is that accessibility and as I say there is Polish television, there is the press, there are Polish shops, the cultural needs are within arm's reach so that in fact I think that the role of Polish organisations will be less and less. (LN7)

For this reason instrumentalisation is needed of at least some organisations, due to which they could become more attractive for Poles, because they would offer specific benefits of being a member.

Why are so few Poles members of organisations in Germany?

We don't give them enough [...] I can tell you using the example [of my organisation]. I will not stand non-payment of fees. If someone doesn't pay the fees, they are thrown out, but not that I remove them completely, they just don't receive information, they don't get that carrot, that we have [...]. and that is the message that all members of our association receive. And of course they want to receive it. But some of them are the types that want to receive it but don't want to be members. (MKK1)

It should also be pointed out that some organisations – especially those that operate effectively – are not interested in increasing the number of members. These are probably organisations that are more *goal oriented* than *member oriented*. This means that it is more important for them for example to attract as many participants as possible for specific activities (for example events) than members.

I am the chairman of a Polish organisation [...], which has let's say fifty members. I have never counted those members in the sense of one by one, so to speak, because each time a lot of people came along and that was the most important thing for me. (PKK2)

It should be remembered that the number of members does not necessarily translate into active participation in associations' activities. Some of them are so-called passive members, whose involvement in the organisation is limited to – at best – paying of the fees.

In every organisation a few people are active and the rest are, how to say, passive members. This is always the case. We have a few people, up to ten people, you could say, that can be given things to do, that simply when there is work to be done, they do it, while the other members, how to say it, come along when something has been done. That is always the case and in fact I see that in every organisation [...]. There is also, how to say it, always a group of those active members that do something. So maybe around ten, maybe fifteen, no more. And the rest are simply

passive members, you see? But the important thing is that they pay the fee, isn't it? (LA9)

When the organisations that took part in the research were asked to estimate the portion of their members that get actively involved in the life of the organisation – for example they follow what is going on in the organisation's life and have an active part in its work, devoting time to it, only 29 out of 42 responded to that question. In that group the average percentage of active members was 47.7%²⁰. Most of the organisations said that among their members between 21 and 50% were active members. It is worth noting that the average number of people actively working for an organisation (just under 50 people per organisation) is higher than in the case of other ethnic organisations in Germany (approximately 20 active members²¹).

Table 2 – Proportion of active members of organisations

Proportion	number	percentage
Up to 20%	8	27.6
21%-50%	12	41.4
51%-80%	4	13.8
81%-100%	5	17.2
Total	29	100.0

In the case of umbrella organisations concentrating other organisations and institutions the situation is rather different. The smallest umbrella organisation examined has three members, while the biggest has 100. The average number of members of affiliations of this type was 22 organisations or institutions. Seven of these organisations bring together in total 158 entities, of which approximately 100 are businesses and approximately 50 – organisations.

Management board

Most of organisations those that took part in the research have a relatively small management board. The average number of members of the management board among the 40 associations that responded to this question is 5. The smallest management board is made up of two members, and the largest is made up of 10 members. This figure is

²⁰ Median = 50.

²¹ Vermeulen, *The Immigrant Organising Process*, p. 17.

most frequently 5 (13 organisations), 3 (10 organisations) and 7 (7 organisations).

On the management boards of nine organisations there are no women, while the majority (34) of the 41 organisations have less than 5 women on their management boards. In general however women constitute around 50% of the members of the management boards. It is worth noting that in some cases the majority of members are women, and in some cases even 100% of the management board. This demonstrates quite a high level of activity of women and probably of a significant role in decision making.

The situation with regard to young people – below 35 years of age – is entirely different. As many as 24 of the 40 organisations which responded to this question do not have people below 35 years of age on the management board. Among the remaining organisations the majority (8) have one person in that age range on the management board. Only two organisations have 7 young people on the management board. People within this age range constitute on average only one fifth of the management boards of the organisations that took part in the research. It is evident that Polish organisations in Germany are undergoing the “aging” process, which manifests itself in the lack of young people entering the organisation, as a result of which there is no transition from one generation to another.

Table 3 – Members of management boards

Number of members of management board	Number		Number of women		Number of people of below 35	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
0	-	-	9	22.00	24	60
1-4	15	37.5	25	61.00	13	32.5
5-7	21	52.5	5	12.2	3	7.5
More than 7	4	10	2	4.8	0	0
Average	5.08		2.54		1.00	
Median	5.00		2.00		0.00	
Total	203		104		40	

It is true that this does not mean that there are no young people in the entire Polish movement in Germany, but two conclusions should be emphasised. The first is that a lot of the existing organisations are not able to gain the interest of and get involved people under 35 years of

age. The second is that there are not many associations that appeal mainly to young people. This demonstrates that young people are not only discouraged from joining the existing organisations but also that they do not want to form their own associations. As a result, individual organisations, as well the whole Polish movement in Germany might, within a few years or ten to twenty years, face problems with functioning due to the lack of transition from one generation to another.

The management board, and in particular the chair of the association are usually the force holding the associations together and motivating the other members. The leaders that took part in the research seem to realise that that it is they that guarantee activity, and in the case of associations in which the processes of institutionalisation are not very highly developed they guarantee the very existence of the organisation.

Every organisation has a lifespan [...] which is as long as the strength of the chairperson and a few enthusiastic people around that person. Sometimes this is an even group, i.e. there are three, four people who do the same and gain, how to say it, a lot of pleasure from it, and that can last longer, but usually this is only a small group. The rest are simply satellites who come along and are happy and do things together, but when the core is no longer there, then usually they do not take over the activity, because they simply do not have any ideas. You have to have a certain vision. (PKK2)

For this reason, provided that there are no serious conflicts between individuals, the composition of the management is usually quite stable and connected with the same group of people, who work together for many years. The process of determining this “hard core” of the organisation normally lasts for the first few years of its existence.

At the beginning there were quite frequent changes, due one could say simply to the period, how to say it, needed for forming and working out the form of activity, of operations, and maybe not as much the form as simply the area of operation. Well there were various, how to say it, notions. Some people had, wanted, let's say, to make it into a certain kind of commercial venture, etc. So what remained after some time, how to say it, resolved itself in the sense that those people simply withdrew themselves, see? [...] So from I think it was 1998 that there were few changes of this kind to the management board. Sometimes one or two people simply leave the management board, and others take their place, but this kind of core on the management board has remained virtually unchanged since that time, see? (LA9)

Leaders and people highly involved in the organisation's activities, emphasising their particular involvement – especially when compared

to other members of the Polish collective in Germany – describe themselves and people similar to themselves as “enthusiasts”, “fanatics” or even “madmen”.

Organisations are strong firstly because they have their good driving force (...). This is why I can tell you that those people who travel like that, fly to Berlin or anywhere or to Poland or to the Ministry and all that are crazy. Because they don't want... (...) they have some mission they have to fulfil. I don't know how to explain this. (PKK2)

Well there are a couple of enthusiasts who always stay (CK3)

So I know a few visionaries of this kind, that you would be surprised (...). They do it simply because they like it, they love it, they are wonderful people working for the organisation or people. (PKK2)

Well there is a group of fanatics who feel very strongly about being Polish, even with a slight nationalist bent, that's the way we were brought up, so it's difficult to blame them, isn't it? (MKK1)

The active approach to social activities in the management board of an organisation involves costs. The analysis of the detailed interviews show that here one can mention four types of costs of this kind. Firstly these can be financial costs, related above all with putting one's own money towards the organisation's activities.

Well and at times, how to say it, we put a little bit of private money in as well. (LA9)

But there are those who... I don't know, whether I'm one of them, that's a different matter, but those are people who do in fact put in a lot of money. (PKK2)

The second category of costs connected with an active kind of activity in an organisation – usually in spare time – are personal costs: the lack of time and the cost of conflict with family.

Once my wife had such a go at me, that I had had enough, see? (PKK2)

I do what I do at the cost of my family. My wife is beginning to say that I'm not around, we don't go away anywhere, we don't do anything, because all the time either we're at some Polish community events, or we are getting ready for Polonia events, or if I go away, there are some conferences, some meeting of a committee ... and in general it takes over everything. Now we were supposed to be going to friends for the weekend to Poznań, but we can't because I have been invited and I'm supposed to be at an exhibition in an art gallery, well we could have gone on Saturday, but we don't know if it's worth it, and that's how it starts... We are putting it off for a week and in a week's time probably something else will come up and that's how it... (RK5)

Thirdly huge involvement of the leader in the activities of the organisation can lead to the “burn out” syndrome – loss of enthusiasm and keenness to work. This can – especially in organisations which are not very highly institutionalised, based principally on the leader – cause the organisation to collapse or lead to a crisis.

But I can say honestly that there is a certain apathy among the older people working for the organisation because there he used to be here and now he isn't, he went away and he didn't come back [...] and that is how people... The leaders were predominantly people who were successful in some way within that community. Well there is the doctor [...], who has now finished his third area of specialisation, he is opening ... So now he has to ... He is running some kind of business there, and also political activity and now he has to consider how much of his time that is designated for his professional practice he has to give up. Because here there is no... At some cost. (RK5)

The fourth type of cost relates to the political consequences cited by one of the persons that took part in the research, working for an organisation.

I mean it should be said clearly that membership of Polish organisations is a barrier to a political career [...]

Why is it a barrier to a political career?

Simply because the Germans have not changed. (NON4)

Personnel

A huge problem facing Polish organisations in Germany is the lack of paid staff, which means that the level of professionalism is very low. The majority (27 out of 42) of the associations that took part in the research do not employ paid staff. Only 6 organisations employ staff on permanent employment contracts, while 9 make use or have made use over the last year of paid services on a freelance basis.

In some cases staff are employed on special conditions – for example on the basis of reimbursement of costs of travel in the cases of teachers in the Polish schools.

No-one has paid staff. It is on the basis, for the sake of illustration, of [name of organisation], isn't it? You can call it paid staff when a teacher works and in fact receives something for that, i.e. is reimbursement of travel costs, but... and nothing apart from that. And she makes her contribution towards the work, she has to prepare for them... etc. etc. (RK5)

Organisations with charity status can also employ unemployed German people.

At the moment they have a number of employees but this is only due to the fact that there is high unemployment and the employment offices are trying to put some of these people in charity organisations, which are there for free, and which supposedly are now disappearing. The employment office pays them for that, but they are taken off the unemployment welfare benefit list. Only as if from a different pool. (RK5)

The lack of paid staff is due primarily to financial considerations. These organisations do not have the financial means to keep employees.

But [name of organisation] does not have any paid staff, does it?

No, no... [laughs] We do everything on a voluntary basis [...]. After all we would not even be able to pay anyone. (LA9)

We haven't got secretaries, we haven't got anything, because we don't have the money for that [...] So that means that we don't employ anybody full time here because we simply can't afford to. (CK3)

The main consequence of this state of affairs is limited potential of an organisation in its activities. This also means that in most cases the organisations are managed and led by members who usually also have a normal professional life. An organisation's activities therefore often take place "after hours", which can undermine its effectiveness. The lack of paid staff also gives rise to less specialisation within associations – usually there are no people of the appropriate education or know-how in the performance of particular tasks that are vital from the organisation's point of view (obtaining funds, looking after the image, etc.). Also, the lack of support staff means that even the most trivial (correspondence) and technical (book-keeping) tasks have to be performed by members of the management board or active members.

So in general we simply meet at home [...], which is our property, we meet there but we can't have a secretary to do the paperwork. It has to be the chairman or the vice-chairman or organisation secretary. Someone of the management board. (CK3)

At least an accountant or secretary should be employed full time to do the paperwork. A secretary in the broad sense, like we have at work, to obtain forms, make contact with those people, those people and those people, I put those contact details in, and give her jobs to do and she does them. And then I don't have to stay for long periods on the telephone, call here and call there, look for something here or do this [...]. I don't have time for that and I don't think any of us has time for that. (CK3)

Table 4 – Paid staff in organisations

Has the organisation employed paid staff or paid for work performed for the organisation in any form over the last year?	number	percentage
Yes, paid staff work for the organisation on a permanent basis	6	14.3
Yes, there have been occasions on which we have made use of paid work on a one-off basis	9	21.4
No	27	64.3
Total	42	100.0

Table 5 – Organisations' plans for employment of paid staff

Are you planning any of the following over the next 12 months:	number	percentage
To employ staff / increase the number of paid staff	2	5.0
Not employ staff / leave the number of staff unchanged	20	50.0
Get rid of staff/reduce staff	5	12.5
Difficult to say	13	32.5
Total	40	100.0

Two organisations did not respond to this question.

When the organisations that took part in the study were asked about their plans with regard to employment of staff for the next year, it turned out that a large portion (20 out of 40, which responded to this question) were not planning to take on new staff or increase staff. Only two associations declared that they wanted to employ new staff or increase staff. Among 15 organisations that do employ staff as many as 5 were planning to reduce staff. It can be assumed therefore that in the near future there will be even less paid staff in organisations than now.

The problems that arise due to a lack of paid staff could be mitigated using volunteers, but only 18 of the organisations that took part in the research make use of volunteer work. The average number of volunteers involved in work for an organisation at least once over the last year is 17²², and the lowest number of volunteers is 4. In the case of half of the associations who said that they make use of help of this kind, the number of volunteers was 10 people or less. Only in the case of one organisation was the number of volunteers above 50, and the figure was 100 people. In total only 272 volunteers worked for Polish organisations in Germany in 2008. This is due to the fact that even this source of workers for the Polish movement in Germany is poorly developed and rather cannot be seen as significant compensation for the shortfall in associations' human resources.

²² Median = 9.5.

Table 6 – Number of volunteers involved at least once in an organisation’s activities over the last year

Range	Number	Percentage
Up to 10	9	56.25
11-50	6	37.50
Over 50	1	6.25
Total	16	100

Two organisations that declared that they make use of volunteers did not respond to this question.

Conclusions

There are no mass associations among the Polish organisations; the largest of the organisations that took part in the study has 800 members. The average number of members in the organisations that took part in the study is approximately 100. The leaders of the organisation feel that the level of involvement of Poles living in Germany in the organisation’s activities is rather not very high. Particularly worrying is the lack of young people willing to become involved in an organisation’s activities, which means that organisations are “aging”. The important and perturbing phenomenon of the “aging” of an organisation can also be seen during analysis of data pertaining to the composition of a management board. In more than half of the organisations that took part in the study there are no persons under the age of 35 on the management board. This means that there is no transition from generation to generation in organisations. Particularly worrying is the fact that there are not many organisations that are made up predominantly of young people – which indicates that young people do not want to found their own organisations. This may mean that a membership crisis awaits the entire Polish movement.

The reasons for the unwillingness of Poles to become involved in an organisation’s activities should be sought above all in the avoidance of permanent ties to organisations, a lack of interest in unpaid work on a voluntary basis and lack of time. The range of services offered by some organisations might be perceived as inadequate due to the fact that there are no specific benefits of membership. This can be seen clearly in the example of cultural organisations, whose offers are becoming less and less attractive in light of the ever greater access to Polish culture.

A membership and participation crisis does not however necessarily mean that the entire movement is affected by crisis. It should be understood that the time of mass organisations has come to an end and

that it will probably not return. Organisations that focus on membership were attractive in times when they mainly met the need for integration or building of a community. In today's climate not only has social integration become less attractive but other options with regard to keeping in contact with fellow countrymen now exist resulting in a natural increase in the relevance of organisations that have set themselves specific goals. These organisations fulfil specified functions for the community. On the one hand this means that there is less need for members, while on the other it forces upon them instrumentalization and professional running of the organisation. A large portion of Polish organisations in Germany will probably have to undergo a process of evolution from membership/attendance oriented organisations to organisations working towards specific goals, which will allow them to gain greater significance among the Polish community living in the BRD, but will not be accompanied by increased involvement on the part of Poles in their activities.

Data pertaining to the management of organisations suggests also that a large portion function mainly due to strong leadership. This means that a relatively small number of organisations are institutionalised – operating actively regardless of who at any given time is fulfilling the role of chairman. On one hand this link between a person and the function fulfilled seems to be beneficial. A strong charismatic and active leader assures a high level of activity of the organisation. On the other hand however the negative implications of such a scenario should not be forgotten. It gives rise to the risk that when the leader ceases to be active, for various reasons, the organisation will cease to exist or will reduce the scope of its activity considerably. This dependency can even be seen in the case of the large and old organisations. The problem of institutionalisation of an association is to a certain extent a reflection of the immaturity of an organisation and the entire Polish movement in Germany. Although they date back to pre-war times the majority of organisations are relatively new and were founded in the 1990s.

A particularly important problem relating to Polish organisations in Germany is the very low level of professionalisation. The majority of organisations that took part in the research do not have paid staff, and only 6 of them employ staff on the basis of a long-term contract of employment. The principal consequence of this state of affairs is a limitation of their potential for activity. Firstly, it reduces the number of projects implemented. In most cases persons working for the organisation also have additional commitments (above all career-related). Work for an organisation "after hours" must evidently be less efficient than work on a full-time basis. Secondly the low level of

professionalism might also lower the quality of the activities that the organisation undertakes. Most tasks – even those requiring specialist knowledge or specific know-how or training – are performed by the members (mainly the members of the management board). Thirdly the lack of well-trained staff also causes the organisation problems with the professional preparation of applications for funding that bring the desired effect, which has a negative impact on their financial standing. The low level of professionalization does of course have its benefits, and these need to be emphasised. This is above all that organisations that do not employ staff are more “civil minded” – perhaps less effective, but usually more focused on their mission.

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Abstract

Migrant organizations are said to fulfil important functions for the immigrant communities as well as for the host societies. One of the conditions that influence realisation of those functions are sufficient resources. The aim of the paper is to show, with the example of Polish organisations in Germany, that scarcities in human resources: members, professional staff as well as leaders might be important factor reducing effectiveness of organizations and limiting their utility for the immigrant community.