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**CAN POLITICAL EDUCATION CHANGE ATTITUDES
TOWARDS REFUGEES: A CASE STUDY OF LATVIA AND
POLAND**

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ABSTRACT

The European Union is experiencing a societal challenge as the 2015 refugee crisis caused a division of opinions between the member states. Different reactions towards the influx of refugees entering European borders and relocating strategies – such as the notorious refugee quotas – are the illustration of how diverse the attitudes towards the refugee crisis and immigrants in general are, depending on the country. The diversity is even wider between factors that are influencing the formation of these attitudes. This paper, however, focuses on education, as it is one of the main cornerstones of shaping the knowledge and extending worldviews of an individual. In particular, it takes an in-depth look at political subjects taught in schools. The aim of this paper, is firstly to estimate the link between political education and attitude formation towards refugees. Secondly, to determine what improvements should be made regarding the political education in schools, to raise a better understand on refugee topic for students.

The hypothesis of this paper is that the more political education youth receive on migration topics while studying in school, the more positive social attitudes towards immigrants are in the corresponding country. In order to draw the exact link between both – political education and attitude towards refugees – the method of case study is used, comparing Latvia and Poland. Comparison sets out what are the public attitudes towards refugees, gives an insight of quantity and content of political education that students in schools receive in the two countries and what recent changes Latvia and Poland have experienced in education systems, regarding curriculums.

Keywords: refugee crisis, social attitudes, political education, Latvia, Poland.

INTRODUCTION

Only a few decades ago globalisation was deemed to be an inevitable and unstoppable force. “Rejecting globalisation,” as American journalist George Packer once wrote, “is like rejecting sunrise” (Saval 2017) and so the world is still learning how to cope with the many sides of it. Globalisation is a process that causes a host of socio-demographic transformations and one of the key elements of it, is the human face of globalisation: international migration. In 2015, over 1.4 million people – refugees, displaced persons and other international migrants – were either forced or induced by fear and oppression or because of economic reasons in their home countries to cross the borders of the European Union (UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency 2018). With the rapidly growing numbers of people mostly from the Middle East entering Europe, it surely caused a lot of public attention and was extensively displayed in social media, news portals, television and radio – practically every single channel that connects people from one country to the rest of the world, was talking about the migration crisis in one way or another. Furthermore, the migration crisis is not a phenomenon that will pass quickly and the consequences of it will be relevant for Europe in decades to come.

Today, most people have developed a certain attitude towards refugees and the refugee crisis, regardless of how much information they have read or heard on the subject. Societies’ attitudes towards the newcomers further influence not only the refugee’s integration process, but also refugee policies. Understanding public attitudes towards refugees in their host communities therefore is an increasingly important task for several sides, such as international and national NGOs, academics, think tanks and civil society. However, what might be even more important – to realize what are the main influencing factors of those attitudes and how they shape society’s view on refugees, especially after the 2015 crisis ignited. Knowing the factors that influence attitude formation can facilitate the adaptation to a multicultural society and diverse population in today’s globalization context.

Attitudes towards immigration have been closely studied for a long time, but the focus on this subject in Europe has been growing since the 2015 migration crisis as well as Brexit. This is also a time when Europe witnesses rising anti-immigrant sentiments in different forms – both amongst the elites and civil societies. Across the continent, right-wing populists have managed to gather large amount of support as in a wave of elections in – France, the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Italy – where openly xenophobic parties are occupying more and more seats in parliament (Timsit 2017). Meanwhile the Visegrád group¹ countries and their refusal to adhere to the EU's obligations regarding refugee quotas has led to intervention by the European Court of Justice (Barigazzi 2017). A weakening of democratic governance, rise of social clashes and ethnic cleansing – are only some of the possible consequences of growing anti-immigrant sentiments.

Studies that explain the determinants of society's attitudes towards immigrants and refugees are diverse as is the amplitude of those determinants. Some of them focus on the importance of economic competition while others emphasize such aspects as employment status, religion, income level, age and marital status, as well as living location and many more. Most of these factors, however, can be divided in external – the impact of politicians, government policies, the media and civil society – and internal factors, such as personal values and emotions. This paper will focus on one particular factor – education – which is an external factor as the information students receive in school is coordinated by government and given by teachers. However, whatever information about social issues it is that one receives, the further judgement on those topics are processed individually, so it also has the ability to influence one's worldview and emotions. The aim of this paper is to look into the value of political education and estimate its importance when it comes to changing society's attitudes towards refugees. This aim is reached by several means: overviewing the existent researches that have studied the correlation between education and particularly political education and attitudes towards refugees, as well as by looking closer into curriculums of political subjects in two European countries and what topics, relevant to understanding migration crisis and raising understanding towards refugees, are existent. The second aim is to point out what improvements should be made regarding the political education in schools, to raise a better understand on refugee topic for students and promote suggestions for these improvements.

¹ The Visegrád Group – a cultural and political alliance of four Central European nations – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, that are members of the European Union.

This paper uses a comparative case study method in order to examine the importance of political education, in forming attitudes towards refugees. Latvia and Poland have been chosen as two countries with similar historic paths, as both have been under Soviet occupation and share a close geographic location. However, there are many aspects in which Latvia and Poland could not be further from each other, including the experience with the aftermath of refugee crisis. While the Polish government has strictly pointed out that it will not meet the EU's mandatory refugee quota (*Ibid.*), Latvia is trying to understand whether refugees are rushing to leave the country only because 'the grass is greener' in other European countries or the main reason is the integration problem as most immigrants find it incredibly hard to settle down in Latvia (LSM 2017). The public attitudes in Latvia and Poland towards immigrants are generally negative as most people admit that they are not willing to accept any more people in the corresponding countries, however, the reasons behind the resentfulness differ and are further examined in the paper. Secondly, these European countries are extremely relevant for this study as both are experiencing major changes in their school curriculums that are also affecting the content of civic-education students will receive in the near future.

This thesis sets out the hypothesis that, the more political education people receive on migration topics while studying in school, the more positive social attitudes towards immigrants are in the corresponding country. The truthfulness of it is tested by answering to two research questions – what are the social attitudes in Latvia and Poland towards refugees in comparison to each other and to what extent students in Latvia and Poland are exposed to political education in school? Many scholars have drawn a correlation between education levels and social attitudes towards immigrants, however very little has been studied about the extent of education on migration people receive while still being in school or what effect it has on people's attitudes towards refugees. It is an increasingly topical question in the social media era, where youth 'educate' themselves on subjects that are not taught in school, in social media or news portals. Furthermore, this issue of not receiving the necessary information, can be addressed as one of the big sources of xenophobia – the fear of the unknown – which is considered the cornerstone of most negative social attitudes towards refugees (Norris 2005, 166).

This paper uses 'refugees' and 'migrants' as a general term to describe people who are on the move and crossing borders, since it is assumed that factors forming attitudes towards migrants and refugees in most cases can be similar. In cases when this paper is referring to polling data

or other literature, the language in the polling questions or study is used for the sake of accuracy.

The first chapter of this paper offers an overview of the main sources of concerns in societies' attitudes towards refugees. As mentioned before, low levels of education often correlate with stronger xenophobic attitudes, therefore the author provides a theoretical background on education as a factor in forming social attitudes towards immigrants. Human capital theory is used to analyse the influence of education on attitude towards immigration and refugees. Furthermore, this paper introduces political education, as one of the main driving factors when forming social attitudes. It first defines political education, giving the context of how it is involved in school curriculums and discusses what is tried to be achieved in the minds and actions of youth via political education. Secondly, the influence of political education on social attitudes is examined.

The second chapter introduces the comparative case study of Latvia and Poland. Firstly, this paper gives an overview for Latvia and Poland separately, analysing the state reaction to migration crisis, as well as social attitudes expressed in public polls in these two countries. Secondly, this chapter will discuss the content and quantity of political education in Poland and Latvia, focusing on schools. The chapter finishes with a comparative overview on both countries.

The third and final chapter gives an outlook for future, regarding migration topic in education systems. Firstly, the recent reforms regarding education content in Latvia and Poland are introduced and the impact of these reforms on attitudes towards refugees are estimated. Secondly, the final chapter discusses how political education, that focuses on migration subjects, could raise comprehension towards refugees in European societies. It offers recommendations on what topics should be involved in a school subject that is a politically oriented one and how to better explain migration and its consequences to a youth audience. Ultimately, it is important that young people are informed on this issue.

1. FORMING SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES

1.1. Negative social attitudes: sources of concerns

The rapid increase of refugees seeking asylum in the last few years has emphasized society's attitudes towards immigrants entering their home countries. Moreover, it highlights different trends in different hosting countries, as reactions from European countries and elsewhere were, and still are, varying largely from sympathetic and welcoming to judgmental, fearful and malicious. To comprehend how the attitudes towards refugees are formed and why they are more negative or positive, it is vital to highlight the driving factors that form society's attitudes towards refugees and migrants. The negative attitudes reflect on public's experiences and notions that people have on certain world issues, especially on large scale migration and the impactful social transformations that follow up, such as globalisation and multiculturalism. However, it has to be remembered that even though these attitudes are partly based on personal experiences and emotions, most studies are describing immigration as a 'state of the nation' issue. Meaning, that attitudes towards immigrants are mainly formed and built based on one's concerns about their country or community as a whole, rather than on something that concerns themselves personally. (Hatton 2016)

One of the most talked about concerns in the context of rising immigration, is the economic aspect. The phrase 'refugee burden' has become more and more used in social media as well as it has firmly rooted in the vocabulary of governments. Over thirty years ago in ICARA 1 (International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, 1981) the term 'burden' was brought up, highlighting the economic hardships that refugees place on their hosts: imposing additional costs on already hard-pressed public and social welfare budgets, arresting economic growth, avoiding tax payments, distorting markets and overall putting political strains on the hosting countries. (Zetter 2012) An International Organization for Migration (IOM) report, conducted in 2016 and presenting global Gallup data, shows that people who see their country's economic situation as 'fair' or 'poor' are nearly twice as likely to think that migration should

decrease than those who rate it 'good' or 'excellent'. The most recent studies, conducted in 2016 by The Tent Foundation (TENT) in 11 countries worldwide (TENT 2017, 21) and by Pew Research Centre (Pew) in ten European nations, both found that approximately half of those surveyed were worried about refugees imposing an economic burden on their country. Pew showcased that half or more in five nations say refugees will take away jobs and social benefits, with Hungarians, Poles, Greeks, Italians and French identify this as their greatest concern (Wike *et al.* 2016). Based on this, the connection appears also in studies that show how Europeans prefer taking in refugees and migrants who they judge to be economically beneficial to their country. For example, a recent study by Bansak showcases that people tend to be more accepting towards asylum-seekers who are high-skilled and are experienced doctors or high-tech workers, additionally preferring younger migrants as they have greater potential for economic contribution (Bansak *et al.* 2016).

Another concern that has to be highlighted in this matter is the cultural concern – racial prejudice and xenophobia play a crucial role in attitude formation (Hainbueller, Hiscox 2007). People who have negative feelings towards certain ethnic groups are more likely to be reluctant towards immigrants and support more restrictions towards migration in general. These attitudes are often connected with negative stereotypes against certain ethnic groups, thus people who hold cultural concern as priority, would always prefer accepting migrants from culturally similar groups, if accepting them at all. (Burns, Gimpel 2000) These concerns are mostly intersecting with the fear or uneasiness one feels towards a different race, cultural specifics or religion, thus the growing concern that these refugees and migrants would not be capable of successful integration. Ipsos MORI, a study that gathers answers from nearly 18'000 respondents all over the world, conducted a poll in 2016 and the data is showing that, the European public seems less confident about the migrants. For example, when answering a statement – “I'm confident that most refugees who come to my country will successfully integrate into their new society” – Belgium and Sweden both had only 4% people who agreed very much with it. Overall, in the 22 countries from all over the world that were surveyed, only two fifths agreed with this statement. (Ipsos Mori 2017, 22)

Even though refugee integration is a 'two-way street' and efforts should be expressed by both sides, often the lack of belief in integration comes exactly from the hosting public, because there is no conviction that refugees see integration as important. Research by TENT in 2017 found that people would feel more empathy and openness towards refugees if they knew more

cases where refugees from similar countries had integrated well or saw more willingness from the refugees that they wanted to work in the hosting country. Many other researches, including a recent one done by the Overseas Development Institute, shows that learning the language of the hosting country is one of the main measurements how the hosting country's public evaluate a successful integration. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents from ten European countries prioritized 'being able to speak our national language' as the main determinant of national identity, while 48% of respondents admitted it is 'sharing national customs and traditions' (*Ibid.* Wike). TENT survey, however indicated that the most prominent cultural concern was that refugees might not accept the hosting country's "laws and customs". These findings clearly point to the expectations people have towards refugees and migrants who seek to integrate, however the fear people have that refugees would not even want to integrate seems to have another source. Many Europeans, even if they are aware of the bad living conditions that most refugees are trying to escape, still believe that refugees coming to Europe are looking only for economic benefits (*Ibid.* TENT 2017), therefore they do not have any desire to get familiar with local language, traditions, laws, etc.

Lastly, it is essential to mention the security concern which has emerged as another key factor that shapes attitudes towards refugees and migrants. After major terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Nice, Istanbul, Barcelona and other European cities that were all claimed by the Islamic State (IS), another wave of racism spread. Contradictory to the little amount of substantive evidence that directly link refugees to recent terror attacks in Europe, many polls show how far this connection has reached in the public's mind, a Pew's survey of ten European countries illustrates how the refugee crisis and rising terrorism in their countries are both very much related to one another in European's minds. In eight out of ten, half or more admitted they believe incoming refugees increase the likelihood of terrorism in their country (*Ibid.* Wike). Similarly, TENT survey revealed that most (90%) of respondents thought that accepting refugees could lead to an increase in security risks, where fear over 'an increased risk of terrorism' was prominent again, with over 6 in 10 (65%) respondents selecting this (*Ibid.* TENT). With the growing prominence of jihadi terrorists in Europe, there are also growing anxieties relating to Islam. In 2017, a poll, conducted by Chatham House, the semi-official foreign affairs institute in Britain, surveyed around 10'000 people in ten European states and the results were quite striking. When people were confronted with the blunt statement "all further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped", an average of 55% agreed with it. (Catham House, all further migration...)

It is clear that the sources and factors that are influencing people's attitudes towards immigrants, are diverse and depend on many circumstances. Thus, it would be foolish to assume that negative attitudes towards refugees are only based on the lack of information or misinformation about immigration flows and their causes, however it is certainly a very impactful aspect. By information on immigration flows in this case, should not be understood only the basic facts that can be read in online news portals, such as numbers of refugees entering European countries or a military conflict described in numbers of casualties and a brief description of the conflicting sides when mentioning the countries refugees are coming from. While this information might be essential for the very basic knowledge, it does not 'paint the full picture' of the refugee crisis. To comprehend the diverse manifestations of migration, it is also important to gain perspective on different cultures, religions, political systems, historical and economic aspects of different world regions where refugees are mostly coming from, and many more. As far as this kind of comprehensive knowledge goes, it is directly connected to knowledge students get in school and higher education institutions.

1.2. Human Capital theory and attitudes towards refugees

The term itself – human capital – has roots in the early 1960s, when Schultz (1961) stated that human capital consisted of the “knowledge, skills and abilities of the people employed in an organisation”. However, this definition has certain limitations, including the fact that it did not consider the concept of ‘value’ in human capital. Thus, two decades later, Schultz (1981) renewed his own definition and redefined human capital as “...all human abilities to be either innate or acquired. Attributes...which are valuable and can be augmented by appropriate investment will be human capital”. Another decade later, Becker (1993) defined human capital as the “knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals”, adding the extra factor in terms of health of people.

Human Capital theory is based on the idea that personal income depends on the amount of investment in human capital, that is, the education and training undertaken by individuals or groups of workers. Furthermore, a widespread investment in human capital creates the skill-base labour force needs, to reach economic growth and human capital arises out of any activity which is able to raise an individual's productivity. The theory postulates that any individual is

willingly bearing the costs of education, such as university tuition fees, because they expect that this is an investment that will create future benefits for them – higher productivity and thus higher wages (CIPD 2017, 5). However, the productivity is also dependent on the quality of education, as the study by Psacharopoulos and Patrinos “Human capital and rates of return” (2004) concludes that “educational quality, has a strong impact on individual earnings, moreover educational quality has a strong and robust influence on economic growth with “truly causal relationships”.

Regarding Human Capital Theory and attitudes towards refugees, the theory poses that natives with lower education level will be more likely to have anti-immigrant attitudes, meanwhile those with higher level of education have higher tolerance, therefore these people are more supportive and sensitive towards refugees in general. Additionally, people with higher education do not feel threatened by refugees and immigrants in terms of competition in labour market as refugees are generally considered with lower education levels, therefore looking for simpler and more abundant jobs. (Mayda 2004) Even in the case of immigrants having higher education levels or them gaining the education and skills in the hosting country, it is noted that it still does not change the highly educated native’s attitudes towards them significantly (Butkus *et al.* 2016).

Human Capital Theory comes down to saying that people with higher education have a better position in the labour market and higher incomes. Higher education, however is also related to more socializing with other people and having a broader set of experiences. Sometimes it means travelling or meeting people from other countries or regions in their own state, which lead individuals to be more exposed to different cultures, customs, traditions and religions. Whether it is through a direct communication in school or through media, consequently seeing immigrants as part of their own society and getting more familiar with their stories, makes them see immigrants as less of a threat or something unknown. (Rustenbach 2010)

Human Capital theory is perhaps one the most widely tested amongst all the theories and most studies have significant findings, however they have several reservations. For example, it stays unclear if human capital is directly related to attitudes towards refugees and their skills at all times or if it’s the case where individuals with lower human capital are simply more prejudiced towards low skilled refugees for other reasons. Another reservation seems to lay in the

tendency that the effect of human capital on attitudes towards refugees appears to be decreasing in last decades (Gang *et al.* 2002)

1.3. Factors influencing social attitudes: political education

1.3.1. Defining political education

Political education is a term that rarely is understood well by adults, not to mention youth itself. It bears a stigma and triggers negative associations, with many people still strongly believing that politics should be kept away from education and only appear in parties, interest groups, social movements or other social organizations. Harwood mentions that the resentment to include political topics in school curriculums also come from teachers who feel that they cannot trust their own knowledge in the field of politics and that the notion of it, is mainly associated with conflict and lack of consensus, therefore too controversial to unfold it in school (Harwood 1985, 12-17). Meanwhile parents' fear stems from the perception that political education is an instrument to teach certain political beliefs to youth, and students would be 'tuned in' towards a political view a political party, certain political leader etc. (Jones 1980, 407).

In the broadest definition, political education means all the processes that affect people's beliefs, commitments, capabilities and actions as members of a society (Callan 1997, 7). Even though it takes places in all stages of life in different ways, there are several important reasons for the emphasis to be on schools in this context. Firstly, there is empirical evidence that shows how civic values and mannerisms change relatively easily and can be comprehended while people are still young (Sherrod *et al.* 2002, 267), thus to educate children and youth through schooling is an effective way to provide this knowledge. Having a subject in school that is dedicated to political topics, is also the only way to assure a mandatory information flow to youth, before they graduate from high school and make their next life choices depending on personal interests. Secondly, in many countries, schools have a particular mission to educate students for citizenship, therefore in most cases, the political education is defined as civics education. It is a unique subject in the way that it appears differently, depending on cultural traditions of each education system. (Dag *et al.* 2015)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1998 published "*Culture of democracy: a challenge for schools*", which sets out three main

objectives of civic education: educating people in citizenship and human rights through an understanding of the principles and institutions (which govern a state or nation); learning to exercise one's judgement and critical faculty; and acquiring a sense of individual and community responsibilities. (UNESCO 1998) These objectives point out several synergies as they correspond both to educating individuals as a subject of ethics and law, and educating citizens of a state. These include relations between individuals and society – individual and collective freedoms and eliminating any kind of discrimination; relations between citizens and the government and relations between the citizen and democracy. Overall, it strengthens the responsibility of an individual in the international community.

Nowadays it is getting harder to define whether political education is formal or informal since most youth get part of their political knowledge by informal means such as family, friends and media. The topic also often appears in informal way in schools, when teachers mention political concepts in a passing by manner to children during primary school and sometimes discuss it more deeply in the secondary school. However, this is usually an initiative of teachers themselves, not because of what is written in curriculums. Often political matters are included in other school subjects such as history or geography, however do not have a separate subject – dedicated to political topics only. (Denver, Hands 1990, 263) Furthermore, people form their own opinions and attitudes based on these information channels on different political matters, therefore most people consider political education as an informal subject.

No matter what are the perceptions of political education in school, studying these processes through theory and practical exercises, broaden students' understanding of what political activities entail, accordingly, “who gets what, when, and how” in political decision-making (Crittenden 2013). Thus, political knowledge, can not only put youth in a position where they have much more critical thinking, regarding different political activities and consequences of those on the local and international level (Dahal 2014).

1.3.2. The influence of political education on social attitudes

Empirical studies constantly prove that people with higher education have more liberal immigration attitudes, however to this day there is little to no agreement on the interpretation of this correlation. One of the first researches done on Western European countries on this

link, conducted in 2017, tested low levels of education as predictors to anti-immigration sentiments. The question was addressed by exploiting six major compulsory reforms in five Western European countries – Denmark, France, the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden – and these reforms, on average, increased a student’s secondary schooling by 0.3 years. Pooling across countries, this study found out that reforms including individuals to remain in secondary education, significantly decreased their hostility to immigration. Instrumental variables demonstrated that additional year of secondary schooling substantially reduces the probability of believing that immigration and immigrants erodes a country’s quality of life, as well as feel closer to the far-right anti-immigration political parties. On average, an additional year of schooling reduces support for immigration reactions by 8% and the belief that immigration makes the country a worse place to live by 18%. (Cavaille, Marshall 2017). However, it is beyond studies like this, to pinpoint the influence of political education in particular, as it was concluded in the previous chapter – the interpretation of political education differs not only from country to country, but from school to school. Thus, there are still several elements that stand behind political education which have been, indeed, proved to have a strong correlation with social attitudes regarding immigration.

One of the theories advocates that the link between political education and ant-immigrant attitudes is causal by arguing that political education “explicitly promotes tolerance, improve knowledge and appreciation for foreign cultures and helps comprehending different social networks”. Thus, it generates more pro-immigrant sentiment among those individuals who are more educated in political subjects, especially migration (Hainmueller, Hopkins 2014, 79). This theory is part of the broad list of “education as character shaping” literature which focuses on experience of education in general and how it is directly connected to attitudinal differences. It states that education, already from the first classes in school, changes world outlook and provides “one of the few known social breaks against intolerance and other antidemocratic sentiments” (Napier, Jost 2008, 614).

Another reason why political education is related to more positive attitudes towards immigrants is that it gives individuals a wider perspective on different political issues, such as political parties, political leaders, different political regimes and so on. For students, to receive education which is apart from their inter-group views that circulate in friend groups or in family circle, is indeed essential. Often there is a certain negativity spreading in between a group of people, which one person is advocating and the rest are ‘bandwagoning’ because they do

not have a different perspective. (Espenshade, Hempstead 1996, 535-536) Another point is that this broader perspective through education also helps individuals to stay away from categorizing people in classifications. It gives an ability to see the world issues in a wider context, thus notice different nuances and factors that also are related to refugees and their conditions. (D'hombres, Nunziata 2016)

In 2011, during the national debate called “Young Europeans” organized on the occasion of European Youth Week in Warsaw, described youth who do not have an access to political education in schools “as citizens – unaware; as voters – wavering in decisions, detached from reality, less “sophisticated”, therefore susceptible to demagoguery and illusory catchwords, little interested in politics”. The debate also concluded that youth are socially immature as citizens, because of expected social attitudes in case of lack of comprehensive and actively taught civic education in schools. In the same summit, the authors of “Civic education in schools” presented the most important conditions for the existence of a mature civil society and many of those are directly connected to raising understanding towards refugees. Those include – horizontal relationships between people and the fact that every person has the same dignity, the same responsibilities, the same rights, and equality between people is written into the law; mutual trust between the people and desire to associate to fulfill collective goals; mutual respect and tolerance towards diversity, despite differences in views and laws. (Pietrzyk 2013)

Negative social attitudes towards refugees are often connected to racial prejudices, thus it is relevant to mention the impact of political education on inter-group or racial attitudes. The debate on how much political education can influence racism in a society has been a popular topic between social scientists in the United States, but unfortunately lacks strong evidence from the European countries. Nevertheless, the empirical data from the United States’ researches are quite comprehensive, thus worth mentioning. Political education is indicated to have a profound influence on inter-group attitudes (Apostle et al. 1983, Hyman and Sheatsley 1964, Quinley and Glock 1979), as according to this view, political education fosters a more open-minded world outlook, which is built on commitment to democratic values of equality and tolerance towards other racial groups. Another multi-cultural analysis, conducted in 2012, used data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, yielded a total sample of nearly nine thousand Americans. It showed that for all racial groups, political education is the factor that endorses meritocratic and individualistic values, at least when questioned on racial policies. Those who have received any sort of political education, tend to be more supportive to such

activities as special job training and are more oriented to radical approaches to tackling racial inequality. (Wodtke 2012) This research unfortunately did not distinguish in which educational stage the person has received the political education, thus it is not possible to conclude whether it was in school or higher education institutions.

Another research, conducted in 2015, looked into whether political education affects trust attitudes in the society. This is an important aspect in case of shaping attitudes towards refugees, as the previously mentioned sources of concerns also deal with the fear of unknown and the lack of trust in people who are coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds than their own. In this paper, the data from 14 countries² from the European Social Survey were used and the compulsory schooling reforms in these countries to examine the causal impact of political education attainment on one's trust attitudes. The results of the research show that individuals with higher knowledge level in political education show more trust in terms of perceptions of other people's trustworthiness, fairness and helpfulness, in the meantime it is more likely that these people are more likely to care for others and show loyalty to close people around them. (Kan, Lai 2015)

² Namely Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the U.K

2. CASE STUDY OF LATVIA AND POLAND

2.1. Methodology and methods

As mentioned, this paper is using the comparative case study method, in order to be able to closer analyse social attitudes and the extent of political education that youth in school is exposed to in a country. For this case study, Poland and Latvia were chosen as two European countries that share similar historic paths and geographic location, however they have had different state and public reactions regarding 2015 refugee crisis. Additionally, both countries have several differences that are important factors to attitude influence towards refugees such as religion hegemony, minorities in the society and others, which are furthermore discussed in this chapter.

The case study is conducted in two parts. Firstly, each country is analysed individually by reflecting on their reactions to migration crisis – briefly overviewing the response of the state and then closer looking into the social attitudes towards refugees and the possible determinants of these attitudes. Attitude analysis is done by gathering the data from the biggest data centres that offer information on social attitudes, regarding immigrants and the related topics, such as World Values Survey, European Social Survey, European Values Survey and Eurobarometer. In the case of Latvia, however, mostly local surveys are used, as Latvia is not included in most of the mentioned data sources. When choosing the dataset, the main determinant was that the survey involves questions that reflect on attitudes towards migration crisis and immigrants, as well as that the dataset has a large number of respondents in order to make stronger conclusions based on the gathered data. On the second part, both countries are compared by two aspects – once again by social attitudes towards refugees (using a dataset that involves both Latvia and Poland to make a direct comparison) and the quantity of political education in schools. The later is achieved by content analysis, using curriculums as the base material for both countries.

The determination of which subjects in the curriculums are considered as providing political education relevant to migration topics, are done by the author, when examining the subject overview, provided by the state documents. In this case, civic education subjects were equalled as political education. Additionally, other subjects are taken in to account, if they involve topics that can raise understanding and tolerance towards refugees, for example, cultural diversity. Then the quantity of subjects is determined by whether the political subjects are obligatory or optional in school and the minimum amount of political education classes that are set to be taught to students.

2.2. Reactions to migration crisis: Latvia

When in 2015, the European Commission (EC) first posed the idea of the refugee quotas, Latvia's stance was more negative, than supportive. Besides Ireland, the UK and Denmark which have exclusive rights in certain policy areas envisaged in the Treaties of the EU³, Latvia, together with Hungary and Estonia were the only member states that initially stated that they were against refugee quotas and supported the voluntary principle of distribution of refugees. Without even knowing the details of the quota plan, two of the three political parties in the coalition (The National Alliance, officially the National Alliance "All For Latvia!" – "For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK and Union of Greens and Farmers) pointed out its negative attitude towards it, not being able to state the actual arguments of why. (Barisa-Sermule, Nadezda 2015)

A few months later, the arguments were brought up when members of the European People's Party from Latvia sent an official letter to the Commission for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, expressing their concern about the new mechanism for the distribution of refugees offered by the EC. (Kalaus 2015) The most negative position about the refugee reception was expressed by The National Alliance (abbreviated to NA) which is a right-wing populist and national-conservative political party in Latvia. Board member of the NA, Imants Parādnieks, as one of the main arguments of why Latvia should not take in any refugees, brought up the fact that the country still feels the consequences of Soviet occupation. He stated that "there are

³ In general, the law of the European Union is valid in all of the 28 member states, however, occasionally member states negotiate certain opt-outs from legislation or treaties of the EU, meaning that they do not have to participate in certain policy areas. Ireland, the UK and Denmark all have opt-outs from the area of freedom, security and justice which includes the refugee quota subject.

still 260'000 non-citizens in Latvia, factually – immigrants and until the consequences of this occupation have not been eliminated, other EU member states should understand that Latvia cannot participate in this plan". (Ambote, Barisa-Sermule 2015) Another member of the party pointed out that in today's financial situation of Latvia, child allowance is 171 euros, but pensions even smaller, it seems unreasonable to spend 260 monthly for every refugee as an allowance (*Ibid.*) Regardless of the tense discussions in the Parliament, in July 2015, government agreed to take in 250 refugees in two years time, but already in September the agreed number of refugees was 776 (Līcīte, Leitāns 2015).

Until 2015, Latvia had a very negligible experience with refugee acceptance which can be seen as one of the influencing factors why the state had the initial negative response to refugee quotas, and the public is having struggles as well. From 1998 to 2014, overall 1440 asylum seekers sought for international protection in Latvia, however, during this time period, refugee status was granted only to 65 individuals, while the status of subsidiary protection was granted for 127 persons (Golubeva, Rikša 2015). Because of the poor experience with refugee hosting until 2015, the state had to create a conceptual action plan, including the solutions for refugee accommodation, integration plan and decide from what financial sources to fund this plan and its implementation. (*Ibid.*)

Latvia stated that it will take in refugee families with children and people who know at least one foreign language, at the same time stressing that Latvian language teaching as the number one necessity to all asylum seekers therefore they are provided with free language training 120 hours 2 times a week (Eiropas Parlaments 2016). The Action plan was created promptly, at the same time splitting tasks between different ministries, NGOs and religious organisations. As much as it had re-invented the system of refugee acceptance and added many vital integration processes to the system, the economic circumstances for refugees in Latvia are still one of the most unfavourable in Europe. While the asylum applications are being processed, which is a matter of months, each refugee gets 2,15 euros per day for food. The refugee allowance, in 2015 was reduced from 256 to 139 euros monthly (the minimum wage in Latvia is 370 euros). (*Ibid.*)

In 2017, data from the Ministry of the Interior reported that after the two-year term, from the 346 refugees that were taken in, only 20 had stayed in Latvia (Rozentāls 2017). Even though refugees are not asked where are they headed when they leave the asylum house, it is no secret

that many travel further to Germany (Latvijas Televīzija 2016). When comparing the economic conditions in Latvia and Germany – welfare system as well as average wages – it is quite self-evident why most people do not choose to stay in Latvia. Especially in families with younger children, parents are seeking for better lives for their family and therefore a chance to earn more money. Often problematic is also the language situation, because in most cases in the labour market in Latvia, good Latvian language skills are needed and rarely it is enough to only know English language. However, often refugees admit that it is also hard to integrate in Latvia because of the closed attitudes Latvians have towards refugees. (Sytas, Gelzis 2016)

2.3. Attitudes towards refugees in Latvia

In the case of Latvia, strong anti-immigrant attitudes towards refugees were not noticeable before 2015, thus overall, Latvians did not show much support towards immigration either. In 2008, a research initiated by the European Refugee fund was done in Latvia, involving nearly one and a half thousand respondents from all around the country. One of the first issues that stood out was that Latvians have little to no knowledge about the terminology of migrants as 2/3 of the population admitted they do not know the difference between refugees and asylum seekers and only 8% of the respondents said that there is enough information about this subject available and given to them. Regarding attitudes towards refugees, mostly respondents said that they think Latvians have neutral (30.3%) or indifferent (21.7%) attitude towards immigrants, every sixth person said it is positive, but 5% of people thought that the attitude is even too subservient. 20% however admitted that they think that Latvians have negative attitudes towards immigrants. Overall, to the question on whether Latvia should take in more refugees, one third of respondents (33.4%) answered supportively, while 43.8% was negative. However, when asked if Latvia should provide benefits and social assistance to refugees, residents of Latvia were more positive than negative, as the statement was supported by 45.4%, but 34.5% disagreed. (Kvalitatīvo pētījumu studija 2008)

Similarly, as in other European countries, the situation changed after the 2015 migration crisis and public attitudes became more negative towards refugees. According to a survey conducted by the market and social research company “GfK Baltic” in cooperation with the agency LETA, in late 2015, Latvia's position to welcome 250 refugees is supported by 16% of the population, 4% believe that more refugees should be accommodated, 20% think that a smaller number of

refugees should be taken, while more than half or 56% consider that Latvia should not accept refugees at all. When finding the attitudes of the Latvian population towards the reception of refugees, it was also revealed that it is mostly not supported by people of middle age and citizens of other nationalities than Latvian. Among the age groups, the most negative attitudes held people that are 45-54 years of age. Among nationalities, 49% of Latvians expressed a negative attitude, but 66% - non-Latvians. (LETA 2015) In 2016, slightly lower numbers of negative attitudes were noticeable. According to a 2016 survey conducted by Norstat in cooperation with the United National Refugee Agency, 45% of Latvian residents supported taking in refugees (LSM.LV Majority of Latvians...2016).

In January, 2017, the learning centre “EVA-93” together with ERASMUS+ project “Information and Educational Materials for Refugees and Immigrants” organized another survey on attitudes towards refugees that did not cover a large amount of respondents (142 people), but significantly showcased that nevertheless of the high education levels for respondents (52% of the respondents have higher education and 48% - the secondary education), 64.1% of the people still claimed that know very little about refugees and only 21.1% said they have a preliminary knowledge on refugee subject (e.g. main differences between a refugee and asylum seeker). This indicates that people with higher education can still have very little understanding on topics related to migration or refugee crisis. Reflecting on the 2008 survey, nearly two thirds from respondents in this survey claimed that they do not support the cultural diversity that immigrants bring with them and 87.3% said that refugees should not keep their national peculiarities, but have to accept the social norms, customs and traditions of Latvia; revealing that the concern about cultural diversity is even higher than a decade ago. (EVA-93, ERASMUS+ 2017)

Communication Coordinator at the UN Refugee Agency – Regional Office for Northern Europe mentions that the immigration topic in general is sensitive in Latvia, especially after regaining the independence in 1990. When taking it in the historic context, in public space often immigration brings up negative associations from the Soviet Union occupation period, when thousands of Russians were strongly encouraged to migrate to all three Baltic states. To this day, in Latvia there is still a cultural suspense between Latvians and Russians as well as political and social conflicts that involve the Russian ethnic minority, therefore the immigration waves may bring the perception of forcefulness and danger to its national identity. For this reason, it might've been more triggering to Latvians, as the trauma of totalitarianism regime is

still existent and the EU refugee quota system had the same “shape” of something being centrally forced to member states “from the top”. (Melbiksis, Rozītis 2016)

Another aspect, mentioned by cultural sociologist Bertane, is that most information that Latvians have about the refugee crisis, the regions these people are coming from and their stories, is collected on TV or social media. These can be negative influencers, as previously discussed, media channels can play a great part when attitudes are formed, for example when in 2015 most images that were used for refugee crisis in both TV and online news portals were with masses of people. This, furthermore gave the perception that masses of people would also arrive in Latvia, when in reality, most of the Latvians still have not met a single refugee who came to the country as part of the refugee quota program. The suspense intensified when political individuals started to state reasons against taking in refugees, before even finding out details of the refugee quota plan or later explaining these details more to the public. (Lastovskis 2015)

As mentioned, Latvians have very little to no experience with refugee acceptance, especially from the Middle Eastern and African regions. The Islamic religion is still quite “exotic” in Latvia, with a few thousand Muslims in the country and only around 500-600 actively practising the religion (International Religious Freedom Report 2015). The largest religion in Latvia is Christianity, but it is also a country with the 8th biggest percentage of population that does not associate itself with any religion (Pew Research Center 2015). With a little knowledge of the religion, as well as cultural specifics, it brings back the idea of Latvians feeling more threatened of these people bringing in other languages and cultural customs into the country. More recent data which analysed Latvian emotions towards refugees reported that one of the most common emotions Latvians have towards refugees coming from the Middle Eastern and African regions are caution and suspicion, pointing out again, that it is more a fear of the unknown, other than negativity or hatred (Murašovs 2017).

Professor and director of the Institute of Latvian History, Guntis Zemītis, mentions that even though Latvians consider themselves patriotic and proud of their country, especially because of its small territory and historic struggles, they are no strangers to economic migration as well. Many travel to other countries in hope for better income, therefore, Latvians can relate at least partly to the idea of refugees who are seeking for the same in Europe. Zemītis says, it is rather

“an unwinding act of overprotectiveness towards Latvian cultural values which is a “blast from the past” when outside forces tried to cleanse Latvians as a nationality”. (Zemītis 2015)

2.4. Reactions to migration crisis: Poland

Poland started off with a supportive stance towards 2015 migration crisis and helping other European countries to relocate refugees. Polish Prime Minister of that time, Ewa Kopacz, announced that “accepting migrants escaping to save their lives is our duty” (Reuters 2015). In July, 2015, Poland agreed to accept more than 2,000 refugees from Syria and North Africa, but according to the updated plan, Poland was required to accept almost 10,000 more. The period of cooperation with the EU and agreement to accept the refugee quota was very short though, as later in the year, the socially conservative and nationalist Law and Justice party (PiS) won the elections and reversed the decision. (Dearden 2017)

The newly elected Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki instantly announced that the Polish government will not meet the EU’s mandatory refugee quota and take in refugees from the Middle East. Meanwhile Jaroslaw Kazynski, the head of PiS has repeatedly criticized the EU’s relocation plans, saying that “we have not exploited the countries from which these refugees are coming to Europe these days, we have not used their labor force and finally we have not invited them to Europe. We have a full moral right to say ‘no’” (The Guardian 2015) Regarding refugee quotas, Brussels set a deadline for Warsaw to start accepting migrants under the plan and ease burden on Italy and Greece, however Poland refused to obey and in June, 2017, the EU launched legal action against Poland (together with Hungary and Czech Republic) and took these countries to the Court of Justice of the EU (DW 2017).

PiS has kept their position strongly and reacted scornfully to all the threats and sanctions from the EU. Kaczyński has called the EC’s ultimatum “amusing” and insisted that most of the relocated migrants should be sent home because they are not people who need international protection, but people who are looking for economic benefits. PiS leader has also been widely criticised in Europe for claiming that asylum seekers arriving to the continent could cause “epidemics” due to “various parasites and protozoa, which don’t affect their organisms, but which could be dangerous here” (EURACTIV 2017). The Interior Minister Mariusz Blaszczak

told the reporters in Brussels that “in agreeing to take in refugees, the previous government put a ticking bomb under us and we’re defusing that bomb” (Cienski 2017).

Despite the critical backlash from the western world, PiS has remained the most popular party in Poland – in 2016 polling at 38% which was higher than all the other parliamentary parties put together (WNP 2016). However, the social attitudes towards the party decisions are ambiguous as there have been several protests against the new government. The protest movement – the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD) – were organizing several protest marches as many protesters are alarmed about the way their country is governed and see it as a threat to Polish democracy. While protesters have brought up the concern about the derogatory treatment of minority groups, they have mostly avoided the topic of refugee hosting or expressing direct attitudes towards refugees and migrants. (Stevens 2016)

2.5. Attitudes towards refugees in Poland

Most of the data available today, showcase that before 2015, public attitudes towards immigrants in Poland did not stand out as particularly negative and in some cases, indicated to be one of the most positively tuned in towards immigration in Europe. In 2014, European Social Survey (ESS) posted the results from Round 7 of their research which contained a module of questions exploring different aspects of public opinion about immigration. When evaluating whether a country is made a better or worse place to live in as a result of migration in 2002 and 2014 (0 = Worse, 10 = Better), Poland charts with one of the top scores for 2014 – 5.5 and a littler lower – 5.2 in 2002 (ESS Figure 1). These results placed Poland as the country with most positive attitudes towards immigration right after Northern European countries, lagging behind minimally in score from Finland, Denmark and Norway. This survey also presented the percentage point gaps between the young highly educated and the older less educated in support for allowing migrants from poorer countries outside Europe. In this case, Poland scored a medium result in between the rest of the European countries, with 60% of younger and highly educated Poles supported the idea of some/many migrants entering the country while for the older and less educated it was 34%. (ESS Figure 6)

ESS also presents data from 2014, regarding society’s preferences in European countries on the immigrants that are entering their countries. One of the charts showcases percentage of

population that believe it is very important that immigrants speak the country's official language compared to the percentage that believe it is very important that immigrants are committed to way of life in the country. Poles, once again, charted in the medium level between the other European countries, with 59% respondents saying it is important that immigrants are committed to the way of life in the country and 56% saying that language knowledge is the most important factor, being one of the few countries that estimated both of these aspects almost equally. In comparison, Hungary, Czech Republic and Belgium scored the highest, with over 80% people admitting that it is important immigrants are committed to the way of life in their countries. (ESS, percentage of people that believe it is very important...)

The World Values Survey (WVS), which is the largest global network studying the changing values and their impact on social and political life, covers a large dataset from their latest wave of study. The 6th wave for years 2010-2014 involves results from nearly 100 countries all over the world, including Poland. Several questions also deal with measuring values and attitudes covering immigrants and people with different cultural backgrounds. For example, one of the questions asked which group of people respondents would not like to have as neighbours, then setting out several groupings. Only 7.2% of Poles mentioned "immigrants/foreign workers" as the group they would not want as their neighbours, 5.5% mentioned "people of a different race", only 4.6% people of a different religion and 3.2% people who speak a different language. These results scored as one of the lowest ones between all the other European countries, as in comparison, 37.5% Estonians, 21.4% Germans and 19.6% of the Dutch mentioned immigrants/foreign workers as the group of people they would not prefer to be their neighbours. (Inglehart, Haerpfer *et al.* 2014)

When looking back at the sources of concerns for today's societies, regarding refugees, it is also relevant to take a look at what concerns about their country the Polish society had before 2015. The top issue in Poland's case seems to be the economic conditions, as to the question – what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years – 58% of Poles answered stable economy, only 5% said it is strong defence forces, meanwhile 25.8% admitted that they are somewhat worried about terrorist attacks. This indicates that back in the period of 2010-2014, Poles were not as concerned about the security or borders of their country. This study also compares society's trust in people of another religion and in Poland's case, 46.5% of respondents said they somewhat trust people with different religious beliefs than their own and

25.9% do not trust very much which once again, was one of the lowest scores between the other European countries that were involved in the survey⁴. (*Ibid.*)

The situation changed in Poland as well, once the 2015 migration crisis took over Europe. Opinion polls from 2016, show that about three-quarters of Poles are against accepting refugees from the Middle East and Africa (CBOS 2016). During Poland's Independence day in 2017, an estimated 60'000 of nationalist demonstrators marched through Warsaw, chanting such xenophobic phrases as "white Europe of brotherly nations!", "pure Poland, white Poland!" and "refugees, get out!". Additionally, far-right symbols appeared in many marcher's flags and posters, as the meaning of those symbols date back to 1930s. (Taylor 2017)

Besides the sources of negative attitudes towards refugees that Poland share with many other European countries, such as "refugees being a burden on the social system" or "fear of losing jobs to immigrants", there are factors that are exclusive for Poland. One of them is the fact that Poland is one of the most homogenous countries in Europe – it is overwhelmingly Polish and Roman Catholic. Before 1939, about 10% of the population was Jewish, as well as there were large Ukrainian, Belarusian and other minorities: only up to two-thirds of the country were ethnic Poles (even though today the number of foreigners is relatively small, about 1 million Ukrainians still reside permanently in Poland). The appalling ethnic cleansing during World War II, created a racially pure Poland for the first time in history. (*Ibid.* Cienski) Ever since then, there is little to none desire in Poland to create a West-European endorsed multi-ethnic society. Today, migration in Poland is rather regional and only concerns migration from neighbouring countries, mostly the former Soviet Union states. Therefore, for many Poles, the idea of otherness regarding immigrants from further countries and different continents is challenging, because these generations are not used to the presence of racially and ethnically different nations.

Another aspect is certainly the strong political influence the Catholic Church continues to hold on the Polish population. It is one of the most religiously homogenous nations in the EU, as the majority of citizens declare their affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church. It also determines the uniqueness of Polish culture and the importance of Catholicism in Poland's

⁴ European countries that were involved in the WVS Round 6: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine.

history, which makes it distinct from other nations. Because of the religious homogeneity, there have not been many conflicts regarding religious grounds in Poland and the idea of inviting Muslim immigrants into the country is raising many concerns. Historically, there have been many examples of clashes between Christian and Muslim cultures which have had crucial and lasting consequences. Today, nothing has changed in the sense that people with different cultural backgrounds still have problems to understand each other, or do not have the will to understand each other in case of the other person having different beliefs or world views. From the religious point of view, Biblical teachings do call for compassion towards those in need, which is also emphasized by Polish Church in their preaching. Based on this, Poles often express their willingness to help Christian refugees, justifying it with the fact that this is the only way how successful refugee integration can happen. (Hodor, Kosinska 2016)

Lastly, Poland's geographical location also causes some types of problems that other EU member states do not necessarily experience. Poland's eastern border is also the EU's external border which poses challenges for the security of the state in the context of migration crisis. The Russian aggression on Ukraine causes threats from the East as well as an influx of Ukrainians in Poland who are escaping for their safety. Regarding Ukrainians, Poles have not shown a negative attitude and rather supports their integration into Polish society, which can be explained by both – the need to help sustain good relations with Ukraine in the case of military conflicts in the region, and also because Ukraine is the neighbouring country to Poland. (Sillberman *et al.* 2012, 142).

2.6. Latvia and Poland: comparative overview

2.6.1. Public attitudes towards immigrants in Poland and Latvia

Attitudes towards immigrants before 2015 were less negative in both Latvia and Poland, as in many other European countries they changed, based on the influx of people entering Europe's borders. However, data shows that Poles had a more positive outlook on immigrants, in some cases the public opinion being one of the most affirmative towards the inflow of refugees, lagging just a bit from Nordic countries. In the case of Latvia, attitudes were quite negative already a decade ago.

The data from Eurobarometer, yearly surveys conducted by the European Commission on public opinion, shows society’s attitudes towards refugees for both Latvia and Poland in 2017. Answering question, whether immigration from outside the EU is more of a problem or opportunity, in Poland 37% and in Latvia 41% see it more as a problem. However, quite interestingly, a relatively high number in both countries consider that the integration process is successful in their countries (Poland 48%, Latvia 39%). Regarding these responses, Poland has a slightly more positive attitude towards immigration than Latvia in the corresponding countries, however it switches when it is asked to look closer on the impact of immigrants on society. (Eurobarometer (469) 2018)

When asked to point out the statements the respondents agree on, regarding the impact of immigrants on society, the majority of Latvians agreed with the more negative statements – “are a burden on our welfare system” (55%) and “worsen the crime problems” (49%), but only 34% said immigrants have an overall positive impact on the economy and 30% thought immigrants bring new ideas and/or boost innovation in Latvia. (*Ibid.*)

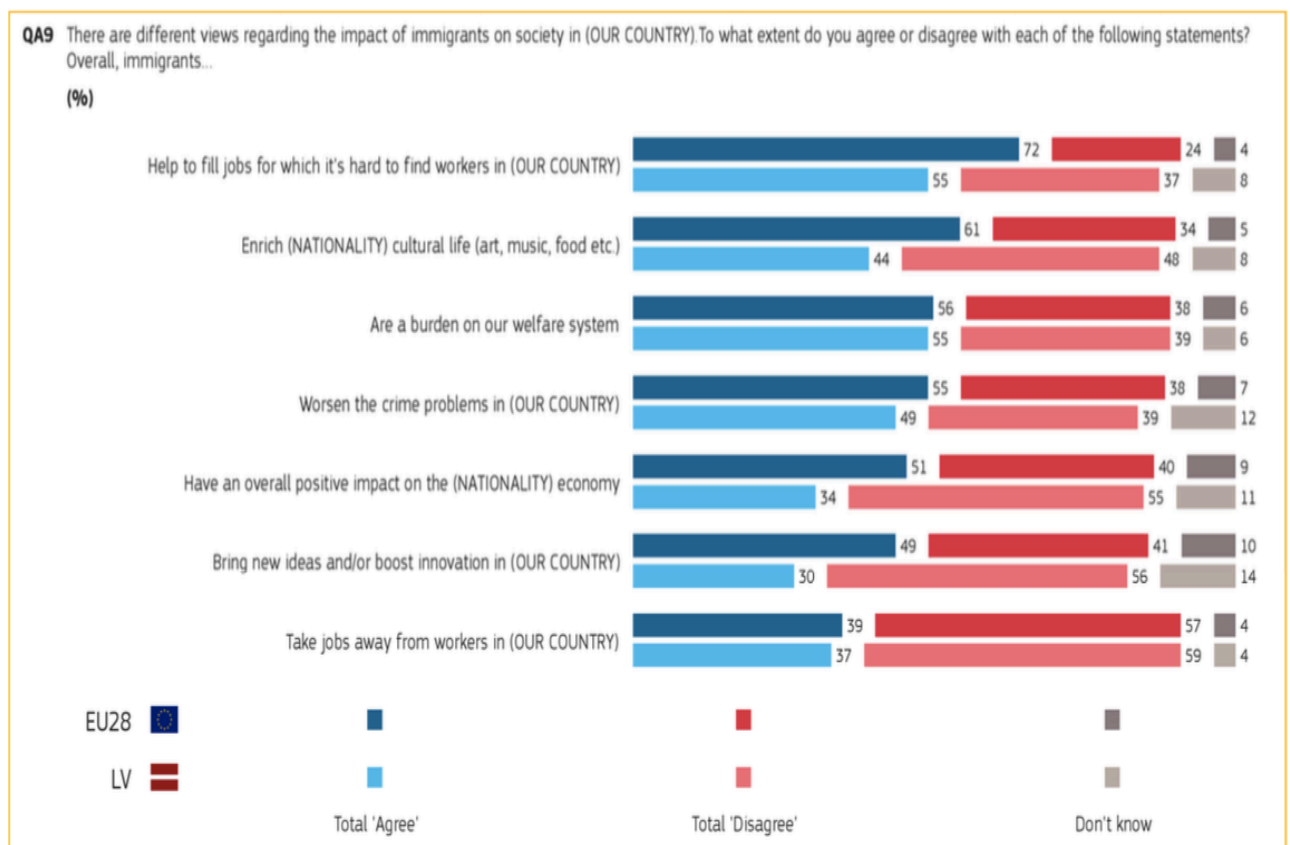


Figure 1. General perception of and attitudes towards immigrants in Latvia
Source: Eurobarometer (2017, 469)

In Poland's case, the results are quite contradictory, as both, the positive and negative attitudes reflect strongly in the answers. 59% of the Polish respondents consider immigrants are a burden on the welfare system, 54% that they worsen the crime problems and 52% said they think immigrants are taking jobs away from Polish workers. Meanwhile, over a half (52%) answered that immigrant enrich their national cultural life and (57%) said that immigrants have an overall positive impact on the national economy.

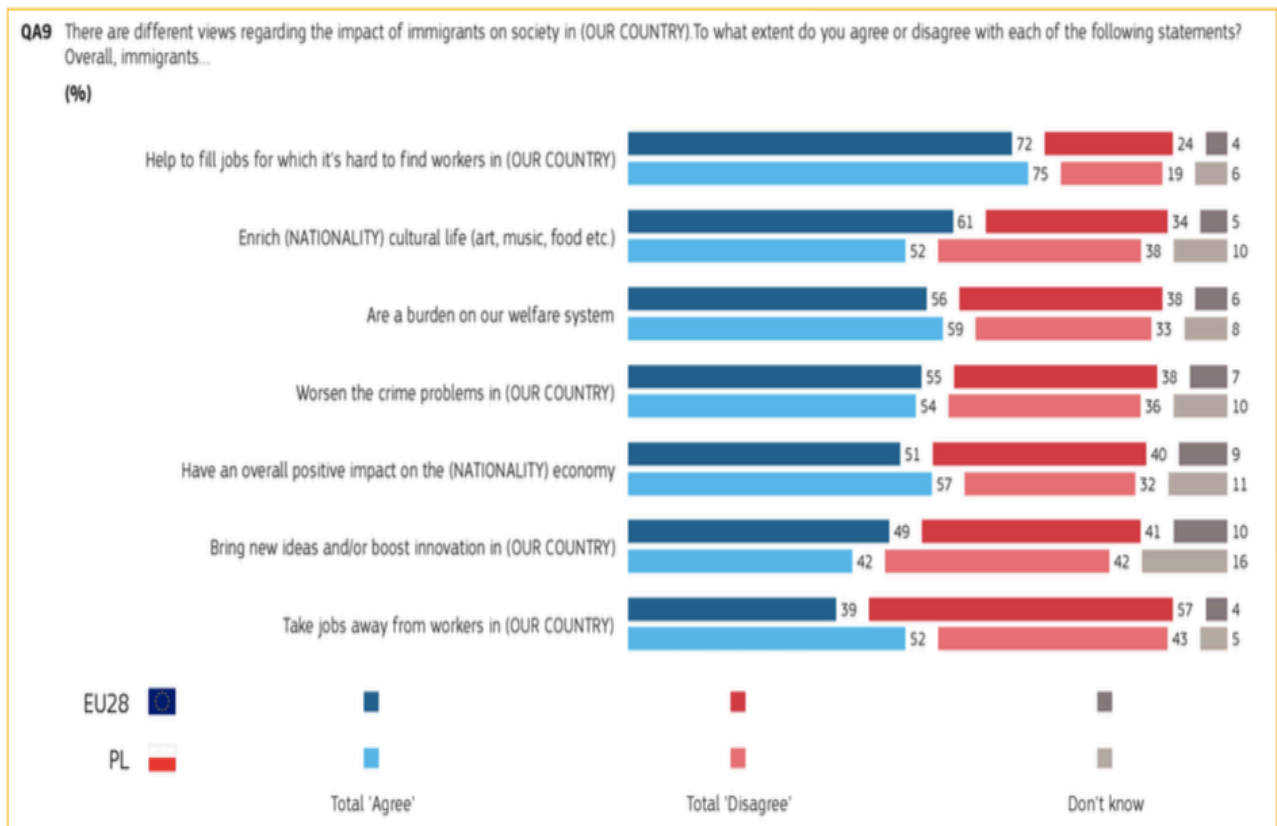


Figure 2. General perception of and attitudes towards immigrants in Poland
Source: Eurobarometer (2017, 469)

These results show that overall Latvia sees the impact of immigrants on society more negatively than Poland, as the Polish respondents had high percentage in both – the negative, but also positive aspects and benefits – that immigrants bring to their countries. In both Poland (75%) and Latvia (55%), however, the largest proportion of respondents admitted that immigrant role is mostly to help fill jobs for which it's hard to find workers in the corresponding countries. (*Ibid.*)

Lastly, respondents were also questioned on the integration processes and how to improve those, regarding immigrants. In both cases, mostly people answered that in order to improve

the integration, the taken measures have to be connected to language knowledge (offering or improving language courses / making integration programmes and language courses mandatory). Thus, the least supportive respondents in both countries were on statement “giving immigrants the right to vote at local elections”. (*Ibid.*)

Significantly, in both countries, around half of the respondents, answered that they are not very well informed about immigration and integration related matters (Latvia 51%, Poland 44%) and only 4% in both cases answered “very well informed”. Additionally, in Latvia and Poland, around one third of the respondents, could not answer what is the proportion of refugees in their country at the moment. However, in Latvia on average respondents estimated the proportion quite close to the real number (gap was 4%) while in Poland the respondents estimated the proportion of immigrants at 10% while the real figure in 2017 according to Eurostat was only 1.1%. The results showcase that both countries, especially in Poland, have a lack of information, regarding immigration topic. (*Ibid.*)

Overall, these results show that Poland still holds more positive views on immigrants, than Latvia. Additionally, the public opinion in Poland is seemingly more versatile, meaning that as many people reflect on immigrants and their effect on society negatively, there are nearly as many people who rather point out the benefits that immigrants bring to the country. In order to understand this polarization better, it would be necessary to see closer the characteristics of respondents (gender, age, education, income level etc.) and try to pinpoint the regularities.

2.6.2. Political education in Latvia and Poland

When looking back at the historical development of both countries, regarding civic education, both Latvia and Poland had to start from the scratch after regaining their independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was a time full of transformations and changes, including the education system and curriculums. Both countries instantly included subjects that concern civic and political knowledge in the school curriculums, as it was essential to teach the early generations of society about the basics of democracy and democratic state.

Civic education can be a cross-curricular theme, a separate subject or it may be integrated into broader subjects or learning areas (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2017). Latvia is

one of the countries that uses the most widespread model which is to have the integrated approach combined with some teachings as a cross-curricular theme, and elements of it are implemented in subjects “politics and rights” and “culturology” – both of these subjects, are meant for the secondary school and are optional subjects for students. The obligatory minimum amount both them is one class per week for one year, but can be more, depending on the individual choice by school. (LIKUMILV 2013)

Politics and Rights is a subject which in its essence is a civic education class and is part of the curriculum in Latvia – in secondary education programme. The main tasks of this subject are to create an insight into the possibilities of socio-political activities; to develop a systematic understanding of the political processes in society; to form a clear idea about the rights of an individual and rights in practice; to develop an understanding of the world processes and problems; to see the regularities in the field of political science and law. (Catlaks 2011) Additionally, in the syllabus it is suggested to explain the main differences between democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Students are also introduced to different political beliefs such as liberalism, conservatism, fascism, socialism, communism, nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism and others. The component “Cultural environment in time and space” part is particularly valuable to migration topic as it talks about political responsibility, compatibility of politics and moral concepts as well as culture and religion as causes of ethnic conflicts. Furthermore, this component also discusses international politics – international politic system, conflicts and solution tools, international organizations (transnational and non-governmental) and Latvia’s participation in international processes. (Izglītības satura un eksaminācijas centrs 2008)

Another subject in the curriculum of secondary educational program that applies to migration topic and refugees is Culturology. This subject is new and was first included in the education content programme in 2013, and is also planned for students in secondary education level classes. The programme intends to draw connection between the cultural processes and intercultural relations by explaining globalization and the dialogue between Western and Oriental cultures and principles of cultural equality and equivalence. (Izglītības satura un eksaminācijas centrs 2013)

In Poland, however, civic education has been added into the school subjects and established a prominent place in the national curriculum at different levels of school system. Social and civic

education begins already in elementary school (grades 1-3), however then it is part of the integrated education and there is no particular subject. In classes 4 to 6, elements of political education are included in the subject “History and Society”. In secondary schools, however, there is “Knowledge about Society” which is a separate obligatory subject and which is obligatory in either lower or upper secondary school, depending on the school. (Eurydice 2010) Students can also choose “knowledge about society” as one of the subjects to pass the final examination, meanwhile in Latvia neither “politics and rights” or “culturology” is in the list (Nacionālā Izlītības Iespēju Datubāze 2017). Additionally, in Poland, the subject religion/ethics that also concern elements of civic education are provided as core curriculum options throughout the whole general education pathway.

The national curriculum for “Knowledge about society” in Poland determines six main objectives or requirements: 1) Using and creating information on public life (e.g. „The student finds and uses information on public life; expresses their own ideas on selected issues of public interest and justifies them; remains open for disparate ideas.”); 2) Identifying and solving problems; 3) Cooperating on public issues; 4) Understanding and using rules and procedures of democracy; 5) Knowing fundamental rules of the Polish political system. “Knowledge about society” is also one of the subjects that students can choose to pass the *matura* exam: the most important external examination in Polish education system. (Pacewicz 2004) The minimum obligatory number of teaching hours for this subject over a period of three years is three classes, meaning one class per week in each of the three secondary school years. (*Ibid.* Eurydice)

As described, the subject syllabus includes many noble and extremely important aspects when it comes to respecting other cultures, realizing the responsibility of the global citizenship and comprehends the importance of social sensitivity. However, it is still very dependable on teachers’ personal will what to bring out in such subjects. In a 2016 survey, teachers from Poland were questioned about the meaning of civic education and one of the questions were about which issues are beneficial and important for citizenship education in primary schools. A larger part of the teachers placed bigger emphasis on topics of patriotic nature, such as Polish national symbols, cultural heritage and Polish national holidays. Mostly history and social studies teachers also mentioned that they try to explain their students the organisational structure of their schools and local communities. Meanwhile others mentioned tolerance, respect for privacy, social rules and the concerns about environment as part of the teaching processes aimed to shape social attitudes. A significant number of teachers also mentioned the

issues of European citizenship and the role of Poland in Europe (*Ibid.* Bacia). With the diversity of answers, it can be noted that no matter what are the directions government set on teachers regarding civic education, it is not driving the main teachings that students receive on political education. It still very much relies on teachers themselves, their chosen methods and world views.

Content wise, Latvia and Poland share the bases of information which is included in the curriculums regarding civic education subjects – students gain knowledge on the fundamentals of the political system of the corresponding countries, rules and procedures of a democratic state and the necessity of cooperation on public issues. In both cases, the curriculums also touched such topics as tolerance towards others, social sensitivity and responsibility, feeling of kinship in the national community. (*Ibid.* European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice) What stands out as a disparity, is the bigger visibility regarding cultural diversity topics in Latvia's curriculums, comparing to Poland's. The subject "culturology" as well as particular topics in "politics and rights" stress the principles of multiculturalism and the meaning behind cultural equivalence.

What is lacking in both cases, is a deepened insight of migration as an integral part of today's global processes. In neither of curriculums, there is a section that teaches students the diversity of reasons why people choose to migrate. In Latvia and Poland, people mostly face one motivational aspect to migrate to other countries which is the low wages, compared to other Western European countries, therefore do not face the same circumstances as most of the refugees who left their countries during migration crisis. Even though, as mentioned previously, today most people in Europe are aware of the main reasons why people are leaving their home countries in the Middle Eastern regions and South Africa, to be aware is only one part of the necessary knowledge while the other one – to understand the scale of conditions people are trying to escape and the consequences of those – is left unspoken, even though equally important.

Besides the content of these subjects, it is noticeable that in Poland, students in school are more exposed to political education than in Latvia. Firstly, in Poland, elements of political education are integrated in already earlier years of school, as part of the school subject "History and Society". Both Latvia and Poland includes a political education subjects for students in secondary school, but in Latvia these classes are optional to be added to the syllabus. Besides

the obligatory subjects that have to be taught in school in Latvia, the school administration then chooses at least three subjects from the list (Health Education, Economics, Philosophy, Geography, Psychology, Politics and Rights, Household, Ethics, Culturology) to be taught additionally (*Ibid.* LIKUMILV). This accordingly minimises the possibility of political education to be taught in Latvia. Unfortunately, there is no data available on how many Latvian schools have chosen to include Politics and Rights or Culturology in their syllabus. In Poland, however, the subject is obligatory for everyone in secondary school. Additionally, the political education class in Poland is set to be taught either three times per week for one year or one time per week during three years, while in Latvia the subjects are both set to be taught once per week only for one year. Overall, this shows that in Poland, all students that finish secondary school have studied the political processes included in the subject curriculums, however, in Latvia it is only some part of students.

3. MIGRATION TOPIC IN EDUCATION: FUTURE OUTLOOK

3.1. Reforming the content of education

The changing environment of today's world has pushed many countries, Latvia and Poland included, to reform their education systems and add education content reforms. Migration crisis and rising issues because of multiculturalism is one of the main aspects that encourage countries to re-think what knowledge is necessary for today's youth.

In the case of Poland, it underlines the current course of the country which is led by nationalist government. The content reform which was first introduced in the school year of 2017/2018, is focusing on the national values, stressing all that is close to Poland – culture, historic accomplishments and the importance of Catholic values in Polish society. On December 2017, the Polish government released a draft curricular program for History subject in primary schools, which is planned to be implemented already on September, 2018. Possibly, the sentence in which the essence of the new curriculum is best captured is telling that “the main goal of history as a school subject is to learn important moments from the history of the Polish nation, particularly through the acts of great historical figures, and also to become familiar with national, state, and religious symbols, to be able to explain their meaning, and to develop respect for them.” (Porter-Szucs 2017)

The topic of refugee crisis has also found its way into the new curriculums and Polish textbooks. In the seventh grade, students during the “Knowledge about science” class learn that migrants have positive or negative effects. A teacher from Warsaw, Jacek Staniszewski, also a member of the European Association of History Educators (Euroclio) mentions that this is “textbook example” how to tune children's attitudes and understanding towards refugees from

further countries negatively. It is mentioned in the methodical materials that migrants from Ukraine can fill gaps in the Polish labour market, while those who come from other cultures and religions are categorized as those who cause social conflicts (Scherle, Heinrich 2017).

Regarding the influence these changes will have on the student's comprehension of refugee crisis and migration processes, it can be crucial. The sway towards patriotism and nationalistic elements certainly does not encourage one to be more open-minded towards immigrants coming to Poland. This case also fosters the possibility of raising xenophobic attitudes towards refugees and Poland's youth to have the same values as the ruling party are promoting through different channels. While it is necessary to understand and value the historical accomplishments and cultural heritage of one's own country, it is essential to remember that each country in the world plays its own part in the history, values, traditions and customs.

Meanwhile Latvia is also planning to strengthen awareness of national identity and cultural heritage through the education content reform. It will be done in the context of cultural diversity and globalization, focusing on the espousal of communication with people with different cultural backgrounds as well as being able to analyse and estimate different information sources about global events in media. The project of National Centre for Education of the Republic of Latvia (NCE) "A Competency Approach to Learning Content" also called as "School 2030" (*Skola 2030*) will start off with school year of 2018/2019 in schools and preschools (from 1,5 to 18 year olds). (NCE 2018)

Some of the biggest changes are also expected in the study content in the field of cultural diversity and education. One remarkable section of this new content is also dedicated to cultural diversity and globalization and this particular section will aim to raise an awareness and understanding of cultural diversity and globalization processes to every student, realizing the connection between cultural differences and conflicts as well as foster the respect towards intercultural communication. Not only the subject of globalization and cultural differences will be brought to curriculums for the first time, but they will be implemented as early as from the first grade in school. (*Ibid.* NCE)

The programme lays out the cornerstones of the knowledge that is important for children, regarding different cultures and learning to accept the unknown. For example, by the end of 6th grade, children should recognize the risks of co-operation arising from cultural diversity and

globalization, identify different values and beliefs to different social groups and have the skill to gain information about global processes and their development in the world – in the digital environment – and begin to learn how the same event is displayed in different media channels, to recognize which information channels are trustworthy. When finishing elementary school in Latvia, the new content foresees that students are capable of characterizing how the global processes influence their personal lives, creates tolerant relationships with people regardless of their cultural background, purposefully researches and reflects on the manifestations of cultural differences in intercultural interaction and assesses these situations from the view point of people with different cultural backgrounds than their own. (*Skola2030* 2016)

Overall, this section applies to several subjects that can positively influence the attitudes as well as raise an awareness of manifestations of migration and migrant backgrounds. The new content not only encourages children from young age to be aware of diversity of cultures, customs and traditions in the global context, but also teaches about the power media channels own in today's world and how they can influence one's views on world events. Thus, comparing the education content reforms, the one in Latvia can be predicted to raise understanding towards refugees and that the overall attitudes on immigration would become more positive, while in Poland, the reform might do the opposite and bring more cleavages in the society and anti-immigrant sentiments.

3.2. Recommendations on civic-education curriculum changes

An idea of migration as a separate school subject is rather unnecessary and ineffective when talking about children and youth. Instead, when looking into the future, it should be closely analysed, in which already existent subject or subjects it would be integrated in. As it is a process with many dimensions, it could be separated by the following two – migration taken in the context of the 2015 migration crisis – causes of it, impact on local societies and the ongoing processes such as refugee integration. Secondly, the social acceptance of refugees, including the formation of positive and open attitudes towards people from further countries with different backgrounds. The two blocks of information – political and cultural – could be integrated in different political school subjects, depending on the curriculum programs. These subjects should undeniably fall under the compulsory status, otherwise it reduces the chance of fully informing and engaging the young audience on refugee topics.

It is known that each school and teacher have different approaches to any subject, therefore to fully depend on what is written in the curriculums and strategic documents and assume that it is displayed entirely and to its detail in all the schools, would be foolish. However, the guidelines of education curriculums and content reforms are the first impulses to a change in education system. Regarding the latest content reforms in Poland, it is possible to see how political directions can affect information contents in school. As a domino effect, that further leaves an impact on students and their viewpoints towards several global issues, migration crisis and refugee influx being one of them. The ways how to foster the implementation of such tricky topics as refugees and multiculturalism has to be done the same way as whenever introducing new topic to education system – through the education of teachers. Migration is a process that involves aspects of several spheres put together – geography, history, sociology, political science – which can be extremely confusing. For this reason, it would be needed to first create and introduce a content and methodology plan regarding migration crisis, additionally offering teachers seminars and trainings, rather than depend on the existent knowledge.

In such cases as Latvia's, where both subjects that are concerning migration topic and forming attitudes towards refugees are structured in the schooling system for secondary education students, it should be encouraged to change. Many social studies have proven that the cognitive thinking regarding civic learnings and understanding such topics as democratic principles for example, forms in way earlier stages in life. (*Ibid.* Harwood) It also has to be pointed out that in today's world, thanks to internet, children are exposed to different images of the outside world much earlier. Therefore, all the pictures that media is using when touching the migration topic – whether those are masses of people in small boats or harrowing pictures from war zones – are also seen by younger children. For this reason, it is vital to involve a subject that concerns migration matter in the elementary school stages.

Regarding the curriculum in education system, the key word is methodology. The suggested syllabus plans for civic education subjects are very comprehensive – in theory they cover many topics that are essential to understand migration in all its diversity, such as the difficult synergies between the power of state and society, different governing types, policy forms and tools as well as the base of cultural and religious differences. However, it has to be kept in

mind, that not all teachers stick to the suggested syllabus principles in theory, but even more important, many do not integrate practical exercises in their teaching.

While the theoretical base is essential, especially when explaining the foundations of democracy or totalitarianism, or one's understanding of their duties and responsibilities as a citizen, in the case of better understanding of migrant situation, there is a definite need for practical exercises. These could include role plays or discussions, such as what would one do in the case of military invasion, or organizing meetings with refugees, possibly an "exchange of experiences" event, where students tell a story of their lives and refugee children share memories from their home countries. This could also be a chance to reduce the fear of differences as a personal interaction is one of the main helping strategies to do so. This, however could be a difficult exercise to get approval on from the parents, thus the school should come up with an optimal strategy (such as, for those students who are willing to, they can have personal meeting with the refugees, but those who are not – can have a different exercise in school during the same time). Another idea for more practical exercises can be movie watching and reviewing, on the topic of 2015 migration crisis as there are many sources of educational video materials available. This can also be added in the syllabus of History or even Literature class. Whatever the methods, it is vital to remember that only the provision of information, cannot give one the full comprehension of what some refugees in today's world are experiencing. For this reason, it is needed to add practical exercises that foster today's youth to imagine themselves in the place of refugees, as well as see them more as peers, not individuals with different skin colour, language, religion or cultural background.

CONCLUSION

The first aim of the paper was to discover the links between political education and attitudes towards refugees, therefore both of the aspects – political education and social attitudes towards refugees – were examined closer. There is a broad variety of factors that impact social attitudes, especially when examining such as disputed and ever growing factors as migration or multiculturalism. However, when analysing the most mentioned aspects in social studies, polls and mass media, there are several sources of concerns that largely stand out when examining social attitudes towards refugees. Firstly, the economic aspect or the refugee ‘burden’ – people thinking that refugees impose an economic burden to their country, steal jobs from the locals or that refugees “lay” on top of social benefits; aspect which is related to racial prejudice and people who feel negatively or uncomfortable when it comes to living next to different ethnic groups or people with different cultural backgrounds; and the security issue, which is commonly used as a tool of expressing negative attitudes towards refugees not only by political elites, but public as well. Besides these factors, there are other influencers that are necessary to mention, such as the power of mass media in today’s society and its impact on social attitudes, strong political leaders and the aspect that this paper looked deeper into – education.

Political education is hard to define as it cross-overs a wide range of topics from the bases of democracy and voting principles to globalisation and diversity of political regimes, religions, races. Therefore, one of the links that connects political education and attitude formation towards refugees, is that it gives a perspective on different political matters and issues in the countries that most of the refugees are coming from and helps youth to avoid categorizing different people in prejudicial classifications. Importantly, school is a place where students can hear information regarding political subjects given to them by teachers, who are from outside of their inner-friend circle or family members. Secondly, it has an impact on racial attitudes, since political education fosters more open-minded outlook, based on democratic values of equality. Thirdly, empirical evidence shows that political education has an impact on society’s

trust attitudes, which raises positivity in attitudes towards refugees to those who struggle accepting and trusting on people with very different life experiences than their own.

To test the hypothesis of this paper – the more political education youth receive on migration topics while studying in school, the more positive social attitudes towards immigrants are in the corresponding country – this paper analysed closer the curriculums of two countries – Latvia and Poland – as well as looked closer into the attitudes towards refugees in these countries. Social polls indicate that public attitudes in Latvia towards immigrants have been negative already a decade ago. However, data also showed that Latvians at this time were very unaware of topics related to migration and refugees, which can be explained by the fact that Latvia has had a very negligible experience with taking in refugees in general. This also leads to one of the determinants that shape the attitudes towards refugees in Latvia, as Latvians are quite unfamiliar with the cultural backgrounds of people from the African regions or Middle East. Another determinant is the Russian minority living in the country factually as immigrants, as the consequence of Soviet occupation. Lastly, those are the economic problems that Latvians still feel on their own skin, such as the low children allowances and pensions which cause the initial fear of state spending money on refugees.

Data shows that before 2015, Polish society had a rather positive stance towards refugees, in many aspects even ranking at the very top between other European countries when it comes to being positive on immigration. In Poland's case, there are also particular determinants that stand out as the ones shaping social attitudes towards refugees, such as Poland being one of the most homogenous country in Europe, and the migration in today's Poland is only regional. Additionally, Poland is extremely religiously homogenous, thus another impactful factor is the strong political influence of Catholic church in the country and with the high percentage of Catholic people living in Poland, there is a fear of religious clashes in case of refugees coming from Middle Eastern countries.

Similarly, the attitudes towards refugees became more negative in both Poland and Latvia after 2015. A comprehensive dataset from Eurobarometer 2017, showcases that over a one third of both Latvians and Poles consider immigration from outside the EU as more of a problem than opportunity. Meanwhile other results indicated that overall Poland still holds a more positive outlook on immigrants than Latvia. In such sections of the poll as estimating the positive value of immigrants bringing into the corresponding countries, it showed that nearly half of the

correspondents could point out the positive impacts while in Latvia it was only a little over one fourth. These results also showed how polarized the views are that Poland holds on immigrants.

Political education is existent in schools in both Latvia and Poland, however, in quite different forms. In Latvia, there are two subjects that involve topics that concern migration and refugees – Politics and Rights and Culturology. Both subjects are structured for secondary school students and both are optional, with minimum one mandatory class per week for one year, if the school chooses to include the subject in their curriculum. In Poland's case, civic education distinctively appears during grades 4-6 when there is an obligatory subject "History and society" that involves aspects of political education, however subject that mostly touches the migration topic is introduced in secondary school. "Knowledge about society" is a separate obligatory subject, with the minimum obligatory amount – one class per week – throughout three years. When comparing, it is noticeable that political education is more evident in Poland. Undeniably, each school and teacher can shape the content of subjects differently, therefore there is a chance that in either country, teachers in schools are not keen at all to mention migration topics and they are excluded of the syllabuses.

The second aim of the thesis, was to determine what improvements should be done regarding the political education that students are receiving in schools to raise better understand on refugee for students. One of the main recommendations regarding political education curriculums in schools is the necessity to involve it in as early as the first grade in school. Children start learning the principles of democracy, socializing and recognizing the differences of others in the first few years of their lives, thus it seems more than late to offer political education for students in secondary school. Secondly, there should be educational trainings planned for teachers, regarding refugee crisis: to inform teachers on migration subjects and latest developments of refugee crisis; to help come up with the best ways of integrating this topic in the class, instead of fearing it. Thirdly, the methodology of political education should be strongly suggested to be based mostly on practical exercises. While the data of this paper showed that it is also important to teach terminology (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers), this subject cannot be executed successfully by formal classes, because it does not foster the understanding of refugee life experiences.

Through the case study, it was possible to test the hypothesis of this paper that the more political education youth receive on migration topics while studying in school, the more

positive social attitudes towards immigrants are in the corresponding country which proved to be true in the comparative case study of Latvia and Poland. Polish students indeed are more exposed to political education as the subject in secondary school is obligatory and throughout all three schooling years, while both subjects in Latvia are optional and only for one year with minimum one class per week. Secondly, nevertheless the government's widely expressed negative stance towards refugees, datasets showcase that the attitudes in Poland are still more positive than in Latvia.

There are many possibilities how to extend this research in the future as there is not much research done which links political education with attitudes towards refugees. To test the hypothesis furthermore, it is encouraged to examine deeper the content in subjects that cover political matters in schools of the studied countries. As mentioned previously, the advised syllabus by the state agencies does not assure that teachers will indeed, choose to involve the topics of refugees in their classes. For this matter, it would be necessary to dedicate a social study on school teachers and how do they address or are planning to address particularly the refugee topic as part of the new curriculums. Another future step, is to test the hypothesis repeatedly, once any of the largest data centres posts comprehensive surveys on social attitudes towards refugees reflecting on the latest years (since 2015), which include both Latvia and Poland as for this paper one of the biggest struggles was the lack of data which reflected on Latvia's social attitudes. Also, it would be interesting to see whether or not the education reforms have influenced the social attitudes in five years time. Thirdly, to gain better assurance of the truthfulness of the hypothesis, it would be necessary to conduct case studies in all the European countries.

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