



POLAND NEEDS A CLEAR MIGRATION STRATEGY!

Events at the Polish-Belarusian border, where a group of refugees tried to enter Poland illegally, are a test of the efficiency of our state. The Warsaw Enterprise Institute believes that the reaction of the Polish government, which is trying to prevent illegal border crossings, is correct. However, this occasion also reveals the need to review the work of the Polish Border Guard and, if necessary, to strengthen its resources - so that responses to similar crises in the future do not resemble improvisation. At the same time, we would like to point out that the issue of border security should be separated from the issue of immigration policy. Poland should finally develop a clear framework so that the influx of immigrants - especially from Ukraine - alleviates the problems of the Polish labor market and demography. Immigrants who wish to work and live in Poland should be able to do so.

The crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border has heated Polish public debate, becoming a subject of political games. Meanwhile, in those areas where the security of the state is at stake, in this case, the security of the national (and at the same time EU) border, it would be advisable for different circles to speak with one voice. Poland must not become hostage to the policy of Alexander Lukashenko, who may use refugees to blackmail our country and, in so doing, force Poland to accept the policies of the Belarusian regime towards its citizens, which are advantageous to him. The Belarusian dictator would like to turn human trafficking or human smuggling into a political tool and a source of his profit.

In regards to the problem of refugees on the border with Belarus, we are convinced that the reaction of the Polish authorities was appropriate. There is no doubt, however, that we must come to terms with the fact that mass migration from poor regions of the world towards the European Union will become an increasingly frequent phenomenon. Events such as the Taliban taking power in Afghanistan are just one of many imaginable triggers that could set off an avalanche of migration. The main cause of migration, however, will always be the search for a better life in the material sense, and the result will be the mixing of different cultures.

The Polish state should prepare its institutions for these phenomena, bearing in mind that:

- openness to immigrants is a necessity resulting from the phenomenon of an aging society and a shrinking local labor force;
- openness to immigrants does not imply uncontrolled open external EU borders, but only clear procedures for taking up employment and living in Poland
- nor does openness to immigrants imply targeting them with social policies;
- the issue of refugees, i.e. people fleeing persecution and war, should be solved based on accepted international agreements and conventions.

- refugee crises should not change our perception of migration as such. A clear immigration policy is currently lacking in our country. This aspect has been neglected in the government's demographic strategy, even though without immigrants we will not rejuvenate our society, nor will we solve the problems of the labor market.

Poland is already a de facto immigration country. As of 1 January 2021, there were officially 457,000 foreigners in Poland, and more than half of them (244,200) were Ukrainians, followed by Belarussians (28,800). In reality, the number of immigrants working in Poland but not included in the official statistics is much higher but still insufficient. And this is why a clear immigration policy is needed that would make it easier for them to come and work in Poland.

The Warsaw Enterprise Institute recommends the following solutions:

- develop as soon as possible substantive foundations for migration policy in the perspective of at least the next decade, taking into account the European and global context,
- simplifying procedures for accepting Russian and Belarussian citizens in Poland and on the Polish labor market;
- speeding up the process of examining applications in voivodeship offices;
- simplification of procedures for recognition of diplomas of highly qualified employees;
- it is necessary to include all citizens of Russia and Belarus working illegally in Poland in the abolition procedure.