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The situation in Poland

- In Poland there are mainly refugees from Ukraine, Russia (Chechnya), Azerbaijan, occasionally from Georgia
- Many of these people have been the victims of racial persecution
- Most common psychological problems: generalized anxiety, PTSD, depression, dependencies
- In the last few years there has been substantial increase of refugees, from Ukraine with severe PTSD syndrome.

Legal framewrok

- People with temporary or permanent residency in Poland have psychotherapeutic care provided as any other Polish citizen.
- Some NGOs also provide range of psychological/psychotherapeutic assistance (ie. culturally sensitive service) ensuring long-term therapeutic support.

Treatment of refugees

- Refugees often require long-term therapeutic support
- Psychologists and psychotherapists have additional training/ areas of expertise that is so important in working with this group of clients,
- eg. special training in work with torture survivors, PTSD or mental illness
- They undertake trainings organised by experts in specific fields.

Treatment methods

- CBT, eg. For instance, therapeutic work with refugees suffering from PTSD is often based on Edna Foa approach
- Mindfulness training
- Motivational Interviewing
- Stepped care (small change is also very important)
- Psychotherapy as a way to demonstrate positive people skills which can have uplifting, encouraging, helpful effects

A way forward

- Lots of needs
- Serious psychological disorders (fear of loud noises, airplanes etc.)
- Problems with trust, openness
- Language (some refugees are surprised that in Poland we speak Polish, not enough translators, therapists have to learn Russian, English)
- Not enough time (frustration)

Needed change

- Ensuring that the asylum procedures are done faster
- Ensuring that people with special psychological needs do not fall through the gaps in the system of care
- Building awareness of often harsh reality of day to day living in a foreign country.
- More cooperation between different centres providing care for refugees
- More coordination of different services (health, social services etc.)

New horizons

- We need to form a positive narrative towards refugees
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 - Refugees need friendly environment and people to talk to
 - Empathy so we understand thinking, values, and what gives people hope
 - Normalization, eg. 'I would prefer to go back to Nigeria' – 'You miss your family and wish to be with them'
 - Even small change can be important 😊
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- So it is very important how we react
 - Our attitudes are important – a refugee is not an undesirable alien
 - Non-threatening compassionate approach
 - Sharing of acceptance, respect, dignity and solidarity