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 framework

• 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

• 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 😊

• 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