

In this project, I would like to address the issue of the agency (ability to influence their own situation) of a particular group of refugees, i.e. unaccompanied minors, in the face of Polish law. "Unaccompanied minors" are defined by Polish law - following international human rights and EU regulations - as minors migrating in search of asylum without parents or other legal guardians. In my study, I will focus on the point of view of adolescents belonging to this group - discovered through field research (interviews and workshops).

Since mid-2021, much has changed - and continues to change dramatically - in the fields related to forced migration to Poland. The first factor influencing this is the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, which began in August 2021. The second is the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, one of the consequences of which is the mass exile of people from Ukrainian territories. According to information obtained from district courts by way of public information, approximately 1,300 persons recognised - temporarily or for a longer period - as unaccompanied minors passed through the territory of Poland in 2018-2022. As of 24 February 2022, they have been joined by tens of thousands of children and adolescents from Ukraine, who, however, have been protected under special provisions other than those I will deal with.

The Polish case is therefore all the more interesting, as the legal situation of unaccompanied minors coming from Ukraine and all others is different, due to the introduction of the Act on Assistance to Nationals of Ukraine. This in turn raises questions about similarities, differences and risks of secondary marginalisation.

Among other things, I will be looking for an answer to the question of whether - and possibly in what way - recognising someone as an 'unaccompanied minor' affects their self-perception. Furthermore, I would like to take a closer look at whether and how these people try to influence their own situation, in this case their legal status - and what factors influence the actions they take. I am aware that agency (the ability to influence one's own situation) is often relational - and therefore may be largely seen as a result of the social networking of the subject. Therefore, I will also pay attention to how other social actors involved in the procedures help: institutions, NGOs, courts, etc.

In order to find an answer to the research questions stated above, it is necessary to refer to very diverse research methods. At the moment, I am at the stage of analysing the legal framework in its broadest sense (from international law, tribunal decisions to Polish national law and policies and guidelines) and the files of proceedings concerning unaccompanied minors before the district courts. Most important for my project, however, will be the perspective of the adolescents themselves, which I plan to explore through workshops conducted with them in the spirit of participatory research. In addition, I also plan to interview adults - experts in various fields dealing with this topic.

It is worth emphasising that the proposed project is innovative both in terms of the topic of research - unaccompanied minors have so far been of little interest to the Polish legal literature. Already reconstructing the number of foreign minors residing in Poland in recent years was a challenge. The methodology applied will also be innovative, drawing its inspiration from foreign ethnographic- and anthropological-legal research. It will be one of the pioneering studies in Poland when it comes to legal research involving children, especially foreign children.