

The RECLASS project looks at how migrants in Poland experience and understand their place in society. It focuses on how migration impacts people's sense of social class and how migrants navigate new opportunities and challenges in education, work, and daily life, as social class affects people's access to education, jobs, housing, and their overall life chances. But social class is more than money or job title. It's also about how people see themselves and others in terms of status, respect, and belonging. Thus, a key focus of the project is on how symbolic boundaries, the informal lines people draw between 'us' and 'them,' influence feelings of inclusion or exclusion. These boundaries often relate to culture, language, education, and lifestyle, and they contribute to the creation of social hierarchies, the rankings of individuals and groups within society based on perceived worth.

By following young migrants, primarily international students from Ukraine, Belarus, Asia, and beyond, throughout their studies and early career steps in Poland, RECLASS reveals how they navigate these symbolic boundaries and class structures. As Poland becomes a destination for more migrants, particularly from Ukraine, Belarus, and Asia, understanding these changes is more important than ever. International students are a growing part of Poland's education system and future workforce. However, their experiences remain under-researched, particularly in relation to social class and symbolic boundaries, creating new social hierarchies. At the same time, Polish society is becoming more diverse, and public debates about migration and integration are growing. This research offers valuable insights into how young people, both migrants and non-migrants, see themselves and each other in this changing landscape.

The study uses Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR), a method that follows the same individuals over time to understand how their perspectives and experiences develop. It focuses on international students in two types of schools, universities and vocational colleges, in Warsaw and a smaller Polish city. The study focuses on students who intend to remain in Poland for the next 3-5 years, allowing for an exploration of their longer-term educational and labour market trajectories. Researchers will interview these students twice, allowing for a deeper understanding of how their views, goals, and class identities change during this crucial period of transition. Participants will be drawn from different types of institutions (university-track and vocational) and fields of study (such as IT, creative industries, healthcare, and tourism), reflecting diverse class trajectories, aspirations and gendered patterns of educational and occupational pathways. In addition, the project includes focus group discussions with Polish peers from the same institutions. These group conversations will explore how local and international students interact, compare themselves to one another, and shape perceptions of status and belonging within shared institutional settings. This approach allows for a deep look into people's real-life experiences, goals, and perceptions.

The project will shed light on how migration is reshaping social structure in Poland. Furthermore, the findings will help explain how people build their lives across borders and how class differences are expressed or challenged in daily life. More broadly, the project will offer important insights into the social transformations taking place across Central and Eastern Europe as these societies grow more diverse. To ensure the findings reach a wide audience, the results of the research will be published in leading scientific journals and presented at international and national conferences. In addition, they will be presented at open seminars and popular science events, as well as on social media.