RAISE – WP 1
Practices and Narratives of Boundary-making in Everyday Life Institutional Settings

Country Report - Poland

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1. Introduction

The below report presents the research and preliminary findings conducted by researchers at the Centre of Migration Research (CMR) at the University of Warsaw as part of the Horizon Europe funded project entitled "Recognition and Acknowledgement of Injustice to Strengthen Equality" (RAISE) within Work Package One (WP1), which is entitled "Practices and narratives of boundary-making and inequality in everyday life contexts." The RAISE project overall includes six partnering universities, while WP1 involves four of them: Central European University (Hungary), KU Leuven (Belgium), Utrecht University (the Netherlands) and University of Warsaw (Poland). WP1 is led by colleagues based in KU Leuven.

As indicated in the title of WP1 and outlined in the overall introduction to the country reports, the research in WP1 applied a boundary-making lens and methodology (Wimmer 2016; Wimmer 2008) to study the everyday practices and narratives that contribute to boundary-making in the context of public institutions responsible for early healthcare and education for children from birth through around twelve years of age. In Poland, we focused on healthcare clinics for children as well as preschools, kindergartens and primary schools. Rather than studying the interactions among children, our focus was on the adults, especially parents and their encounters with other parents and/or with the staff working in these institutions. The study focused on boundary-making along racial, ethnic, religious, and gender lines, and their intersections, though other factors (e.g. class) were also taken into consideration as the research progressed.

Parenting encounters were chosen as the "site" of the study because they lie in a unique nexus between the private and the public spheres, particularly when the focus is on early care of the youngest children. Institutions responsible for early care of children are likely to be the main formal institutions with which parents with young children have contact during a time when they experience an intimate period of focus on family and raising young children. These institutions, therefore, have unique potential to reinforce or challenge ideas, ideologies, as well as norms and values that parents convey to their children. They can also contribute to shaping the space and environment for parenting encounters beyond the immediate network of family and friends that parents are already embedded in. For these reasons, our study focused on how parents experience interactions and encounters with other parents as well as with the staff of these institutions.

The aim of the research carried out in WP1 was to better understand to what extent the everyday practices and narratives that circulate among adults within the context of these institutions contribute to and/or reinforce group formations and social constructions of differences between social groups. Furthermore, our goal was to examine the extent to which these boundary-making processes could be understood as contributing to processes of inclusion and exclusion, to feelings of (un)belonging, and, ultimately, to institutional forms of discrimination. The following research questions guided the research:

- How are group identities acknowledged and negotiated within institutions?
- What kinds of narratives and practices are enacted in everyday situations that contribute to boundary-making along ethnic, racial and religious lines?
- How do social boundaries impact on the potential for building interpersonal relations?

The research in Poland was conducted over a period between November 2023 and February 2025. During this period, we collected 47 interviews, 37 of these were with parents and ten were with preschool and kindergarten staff. Interviews were carried out in a large city and in two smaller towns. Interviews were complemented by participant observation of events and activities in selected preschools, which offered additional information about and insights into the conditions in which parenting encounters take place.

The below report is divided into three sections. The first section presents background information about the wider context of the research in Poland. The second section outlines the study methodology as it was applied in Poland. The third section presents the general findings from the research in Poland. The conclusion offers recommendations for further studies that could build on the research carried out within WP1 of the RAISE project in Poland.

2. Research context

The research carried out in Poland within the frame of WP1 in the RAISE Project took place after more or less a decade (starting around 2014 with the Russian occupation of Crimea) of progressive demographic changes, which, by 2024, could be grasped as having reached an unprecedented scale (Pawlak 2022; Górny and Van der Zwan 2024). Over the period of a decade, Poland transformed from a country commonly considered to be "homogeneous" (however problematic this description always was) that released more emigrants than it received immigrants, into a country where hearing languages other than Polish on the streets of larger cities is the norm, where the workforce, especially in lower paid roles (Górny and Kaczmarczyk 2018), is dominated by non-Polish speakers (Krivonos 2023, 2025), and where public sector institutions, particularly those responsible for immigration procedures and for basic public services such as education (Stankiewicz and Żurek 2022; Goździak and Popyk 2024; Świdrowska and Stano 2024)[1] and healthcare (Pędziwiatr et al. 2024), experience significant new pressures, particularly after 2022 with the arrival of large numbers of third country nationals from Ukraine.

The single largest event that contributed to these demographic changes was Russia's unprovoked attack of Ukraine in February 2022. It is estimated that immediately following the full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, "approximately 4.5 million people...left Ukraine, two-thirds of them through Poland" (Pawlak 2022: 993), with 1.5 million people ultimately staying in Poland (Pawlak 2022; ACAPS 2022), thus making Poland the largest receiver of displaced persons from Ukraine in Europe (Pawlak 2022; Krivonos 2025). Data collection within WP1 of the RAISE Project took place between the second and the third anniversary of the full-scale Russian invasion, which was a time when many Ukrainians began to realize and accept that the prospect of returning to their home country was unlikely and many were thus beginning to plan for permanent settlement in Poland.

[1] For example, public schools in Poland seen a steadily rising population of students who require the support of additional Polish language lessons and/or cross-cultural assistants. For more information on these issues, see the website of the coalition of organizations advocating for the mainstreaming of the practice of hiring cross-cultural assistants in schools in Poland (pol. *Koalicja na rzecz wzmacniania roli asystentek i asystentów międzykulturowych oraz romskich*). This coalition is led by the Foundation for Social Diversity (*Fundacja na rzecz Różnorodności Społecznej*). Resources are open access and can be accessed online here: https://asywszkole.pl/ and here: https://frs.org.pl/ (accessed: 12.03.2025)

However, other factors also contributed to the demographic changes in Poland. One important factor is the rise in the numbers of third country nationals working on the Polish labor market. A recent report, "Poland's Migration Policy According to Institutional Actors" (pol. "Polityka migracyjna Polski w opiniach aktorów instytucjonalnych"), which was prepared by a group of researchers in order to offer a research-based framework for the Polish government's plans to introduce the country's first migration policy, states that:

> The Polish economy is [now] largely dependent on foreign national employees. This change took place exceptionally quickly: ten years ago, the number of foreigners registered to receive social security benefits according to the Social Insurance Institution [pol. *Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych* (ZUS)] was lower than 100 000 (ZUS 2024). By the end of 2023, however, the number of registered foreigners was 1.12 million…The overall number of foreign nationals who have the right to work in Poland is even higher. At the end of 2023, 1.53 million foreign nationals had a work permit in Poland. The vast majority of foreign national workers in Poland are Ukrainian citizens (759 000). The increase in the number of immigrants from outside the former Soviet Union is significant. The number of work permits granted in 2023 to citizens of the following countries rose significantly compared to 2022: Nepal (35 000 permits, 76% more than in 2022), Philippines (35 000, 29% more than in 2022), Bangladesh (27 900, 106% more than in 2022), Colombia (11 900, 189% more than in 2022), Vietnam (9 900, 67% more than in 2022), Pakistan (7 300, 59% more than in 2022), Zimbabwe (5 000, 516% more than in 2022), and Sri Lanka (3 100, 95% more than in 2022). Moreover, a significant number of work permits was granted in 2023 to citizens of India (46 000), Uzbekistan (28 000), Turkey (26 000), and Kazakhstan (10 000). Consequently, migrant communities in Poland are becoming increasingly more ethnically diverse. (Lesińska et al. 2024: 56)[2]

The large rise in the numbers of foreign nationals on the Polish labor market is, in significant part, the result of the largely unregulated activities of private labor market intermediaries that connect companies based in Poland with potential workforce in countries of the global South. Though the statistical figures referenced above look impressive and may prompt appealing images of a "diverse" workforce, the realities of the working conditions that many of the foreign national workers face in Poland are disappointing and dismal. The vast majority are employed in low-skilled, low-wage positions (e.g. on production lines in factories, on farms, in delivery services via companies such as

[2] Translation from the Polish is my own. Original text: "Polska gospodarka w dużej mierze zależna jest od pracowników cudzoziemskich. Zmiana ta nastąpiła wyjątkowo szybko: jeszcze 10 lat temu liczba cudzoziemców ubezpieczonych w Zakładzie Ubezpieczeń Społecznych wynosiła poniżej 100 tys. osób (ZUS 2024). Tymczasem na koniec 2023 r. było to już 1,12 mln cudzoziemców…Z kolei liczba całkowita cudzoziemców z legalną możliwością pracy w Polsce jest jeszcze wyższa – na koniec 2023 r. wynosiła 1,53 mln osób. Oczywiście, zdecydowana większość pracujących w Polsce cudzoziemców to nadal obywatele Ukrainy (759 tys., MRPiPS 2024c). Jednak dynamika wzrostów w przypadku imigrantów spoza obszaru b. ZSRR jest znacząca: w stosunku do 2022 r. istotnie wzrosła liczba zezwoleń na pracę dla obywateli: Nepalu (35 tys. zezwoleń, wzrost o 76%), Filipin (35 tys., wzrost o 29%), Bangladeszu (27,9 tys., wzrost o 106%), Kolumbii (11,9 tys., wzrost o 189%), Wietnamu (9,9 tys., wzrost o 67%), Pakistanu (7,3 tys., wzrost o 59%), Zimbabwe (5 tys., wzrost o 516%) czy Sri Lanki (3,1 tys., wzrost o 95%). Ponadto znaczącą liczbę zezwoleń na pracę w 2023 r. wydano dla obywateli Indii (46 tys.) Uzbekistanu (28 tys.), Turcji (26 tys.) czy Kazachstanu (10 tys.). Tym samym społeczność imigrantów w Polsce staje się coraz bardziej zróżnicowana etnicznie" (Lesińska et al. 2024: 56).

Uber) with little options for advance and limited opportunities to shift into other labor market sectors. On the other hand, the number of individual businesses set up in Poland by foreign nationals has also risen – from 14 900 in 2015 to 52 000 in 2023 (Lesińska et al. 2024: 62) – which indicates that there is also opportunity for foreign nationals to develop their own business projects and contribute to diversifying the labor market in Poland in terms of business activity.

A second important cause of the increase in the number of migrants in Poland is that, over the past decade, universities in Poland developed offers of English-language study and now actively recruit potential student in countries in the global South. A good illustration of the outcomes of these efforts is the rising numbers of citizens of African countries residing in Poland, many of whom arrive to Poland as students. In 2022, approximately 13 000 citizens from 48 African countries had been granted a residency permit in Poland, compared to 7 000 in 2019 (Office for Foreigners 2023). Similarly, in 2022, 10 000 applications for residency permits submitted by citizens of African countries were under review compared with 4 000 in 2019 (Office for Foreigners 2023). These figures indicate a twofold increase in the presence of citizens of African countries in Poland in a matter of three years. Accordingly, one research participant in this study observed:

> "There are many foreigners because there is that [name of private university] that is open to accepting people from outside of Poland and, at least in my parents' apartment building, there are many people [renting] from foreign countries. It's [names the district of the city] become multicultural." (mother, white Polish, urban setting)

The unprecedented demographic changes that have taken place in Poland can also be recognized in light of the Polish government adopting, after decades of petitioning and advocating by NGO's and other institutions, an official migration policy in the autumn 2024 (Rada Ministrów 2024). The underlying logic of this document, which is evident already in the document's title "Taking Back Control. Assuring Security. A Complex and Responsible Migration Strategy for Poland in the Years 2025-2030" (pol. "*Odzyskać kontrolę. Zapewnić bezpieczeństwo. Kompleksowa i odpowiedzialna strategia migracyjna Polski na lata 2025-2030*") (Rada Ministrów 2024), has been harshly criticized by experts and various social actors,[3] among others for adopting a defensive position that portrays migrants as a problem or as a threat to Poland; however, the fact of a government migration policy being finally introduced reflects the degree to which perceptions about the topic of migration in Poland have changed from it being a marginal issue that most viewed as irrelevant to the country, into a mainstream topic that is felt in the everyday life and that has grown increasingly politicized.

In light of the above, the RAISE Project and the study carried out in WP1 are timely. The WP1 study has the potential to capture a snapshot of how the above-described demographic changes in Poland translate into the interpersonal relations and everyday practices and narratives of boundary-making processes in a time when social diversity has become a daily reality for many in Poland.

[3] See, for example, statements by the Migration Consortium (pol. Konsorcjum Migracyjne): https://konsorcjum.org.pl/10-punktow-krytyki-rzadowej-strategii-migracyjnej/ (accessed: 12.03.2025). A range of statements from different civil society organizations has been collected on a website that also documented a public hearing organized in response to the announcement of the government migration policy, which had not been subject to public consultations, available here: https://wysluchanie-obywatelskie-strategia-migracyjna.mystrikingly.com/ (accessed: 12.03.2025).

3. Methodology

The fieldwork in Poland was concentrated in four main sites. Two of the sites were small towns – Small Town A located c. 27 kilometers outside of the capital, Warsaw, and Small Town B in the East of Poland not far from the border with Ukraine. Two additional sites were two different neighborhoods in a large city in Poland (see District 1 and District 2 in Table 2 below). Moreover, one preschool was selected at two of the sites – in Small Town B and in District 1 in the urban site – and interviews collected at these sites, with both parents and preschool staff, were all associated with these specific preschools. In line with the research design for WP1, selecting specific preschools as the sites of the study aimed to enable insights into the specific dynamics of parenting encounters within specific institutional settings and, therefore, to better understand potential forms of structural discrimination that might be operating in/through these institutions. The two preschools selected as study sites were attended by children ranging in age from three to six years old and each enrolled around 80-100 children.

The four study sites as well as the two specific preschools were selected through purposive sampling. Factors that guided the site selection included: the diversity of the populations at the site in terms of cultural, ethnic, racial and other backgrounds, referrals by experts to the two specific preschools that were included in the study, as well as insights gained from six additional interviews with experts (including with researchers, whose interests focus on similar institutional settings and/or topics, and with representatives of non-government organizations (NGO's) that specialize in supporting equal access to education and/or supporting specific minoritized groups). The expert interviews offered contextual information that helped narrow down the possible research sites, including the specific preschools that were ultimately invited to participate in the study.

We collected two types of data during the study. The first, which was the most extensive data collected during the research, was semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide collectively designed by all four of the research teams involved in WP1 (see Appendix 1). Interviews were conducted with parents and legal guardians of children (e.g. one grandmother was interviewed who had formal legal guardianship over her daughter's child for a period of time preceding the date of the interview with her). Interviews were also collected with staff at the two selected preschools, including with teachers, custodial and administrative staff, as well as the preschool directors. The interviews with parents and legal guardians focused on the research participants' everyday encounters with other parents and staff at the preschools, kindergartens and/or primary schools, which their children attended, as well as at the healthcare clinics to which they took their children for routine check-ups. The interviews with preschool employees focused on the research participants' observations regarding parenting encounters, as well as on their assessment of activities the preschools undertake in order to facilitate encounters and integration among parents and legal guardians of the children.

The second type of data that was collected during study was based on participant observations at the two selected preschool sites. Participant observation was conducted in the physical spaces of the two selected preschools as well as during three scheduled events or activities to which the selected preschools invited the children's parents and legal guardians. These events included Grandparents Day and a holiday event around the period of Lent (both organized in February 2024), both of which were organized by one of the selected preschools, and a summer festival at the second preschool (organized in June 2024). In regard to the observations of the physical spaces in the preschools, the focus was on

the symbolic and material content of the spaces inside the buildings (e.g. posters, bulletins boards, flyers, wall decorations). We also observed the encounters among parents and legal guardians as well as between staff and parents and legal guardians during a typical day at each research site (e.g. in the common spaces inside the building during pick-up time). In the case of the observations of events and activities organized at the preschools, the focus was on the format and content of the events as well as on the interpersonal encounters taking place among those attending.

During the period of data collection (from November 2023 to February 2025) a total of 47 interviews were conducted with research participants, of which 37 were with parents or legal guardians of children ranging from newborns to 12 years old, while 10 were with staff working at the two selected preschools (including preschool directors, teachers, custodial staff and administrative staff). Interviews lasted on average 45-minutes. The below Table 1. summarizes the collected interviews, while Table 2. shows a breakdown of the collected interviews by fieldwork site.

Table 1. Summary of interviews collected in Poland

Total interviews collected	**47**
Interviews with parents, of which:	**37**
Parents who (had) also worked at preschools/schools in some capacity	7
Parents who had experience working as cross-cultural assistants or teacher's assistants (pl. *pomoc nauczyciela*)	3
Parents who were psychologists specializing in supporting people with migration background	3
Interviews with preschool staff	**10**

Table 2. Interviews by fieldwork site

Site	Total interviews	Interviews with parents	Interviews with staff
Urban site	**22**	**18**	**4**
District 1	12	8	4
District 2	7	7	0
Other districts	3	3	0
Small Town A	**7**	**7**	**0**

Small Town B	**18**	**12**	**6**
Total interviews:	**47**	**37**	**10**

Three main channels of recruitment were used to reach research participants. The initial channel was via preschool directors. In one of the selected preschools, the director disseminated information about the study and recommended specific parents and staff to participate in the study. These initial contacts then connected the researcher with further research participants who were willing to interview. In the second preschool, the director disseminated information about the study among the parents and made her approval of the study clear, but was not engaged beyond that in connecting the researcher with research participants. This effort did not lead to interviews and it was only after the second type of channel of recruitment was activated that research participants in the second preschool were reached: information about the study was posted on social media platforms on neighborhood-specific profiles, in response to which individual parents, who had previously received information from the preschool director and who were "followers" of those profiles, contacted the researcher to express interest in participating in an interview. Contacts with other parents were then possible through snowball sampling. A third method of reaching research participants was through NGO's. In this case, contacts with initial research participants were facilitated by local NGO's who disseminated information about the study among their clients. Those clients who contacted the researcher and participated in an interview then recommended their friends and colleagues. It is worth mentioning that three interviews were carried out with research participants who were based in other sites outside of the strict confines of the four main study sites, which resulted from the process of snowball sampling and the priority to include perspectives from diverse research participants.

In line with the WP1 Data Collection Plan, extensive information about the research participants' identity and backgrounds was not collected. However, the information that we did collect about the research participants as well as the insights that emerged during the interviews, are sufficient to assert that the data collected during the study represents diverse perspectives. Table 3 below summarize the available information about the backgrounds of the research participants. In terms of gender, 42 research participants were women and five were men. This gender composition can be understood as a reflection of the tendency for the response rate to be higher among women, but also of the higher tendency among women rather than men to be involved in the education and everyday care of children, a reality that one of the preschool directors and some research participants commented upon in their interviews. All the research participants who were staff of the selected preschools were white Polish women. All male research participants were parents and all were white Polish.

In terms of racial, ethnic, national and cultural backgrounds, the majority of interviews – 37 – were conducted with white Polish research participants. Although we did not ask for participants to self-identify racially, in many cases these research participants more or less directly associated themselves with the demographic majority of white Poles. All of the preschool staff interviewed in this study – 10 research participants – fit into this demographic as well. One of the white Polish research participant was married to a Senegalese national and spoke extensively about her observations and reflections related to her mixed-race children. Ten research participants were not originally from Poland. Six of these interviewees were Ukrainian citizens, three of whom arrived to Poland after the full scale Russian

invasion of Ukraine, two arrived many years prior to February 2022, and one had lived in Poland many years before the war but had returned to Ukraine and then come back again to Poland with her young daughter after the war began. Two interviews were with citizens of Belarus, one with a woman who had been living in Poland for over a decade and who was married to a Polish citizen and the second with a woman who had arrived to Poland with her husband (also from Belarus) around 2018. One research participant was from Tajikistan and one from Kenya. What is interesting and worthy of mention is that seven of the interviewed parents had worked or were still working at the time of their interview at preschools/schools in some capacity. Of these parents, three had experience working as cross-cultural assistants or teacher's assistants (pl. *pomoc nauczyciela*). Additionally, three research participants, all of them having personal experience with migration, were professionally trained and experienced as psychologists specializing in cross-cultural topics and supporting children and/or adults with migration experience.

Table 3. Demographics of research participants

Background		Gender	
		Female	Male
white Polish	37	32	5
Ukrainian	6	6	0
Belarussian	2	2	0
Tajikistani	1	1	0
Kenyan	1	1	0
Total:	**47**	**42**	**5**

With the exception of one interview, which was conducted in English, all interviews were carried out in the Polish language. Interviews were organized in various locations, including in the research participants' homes, in cafes, on park benches, and at the research participants' places of work. Interviews with preschool staff were carried out on the premises of the preschool in a room dedicated for individual consultations (e.g. with the psychologist) or in the director's office; one interview was conducted at the preschool playground. In the preschools in Small Town B, all interviews were carried out in the director's office, which was designed to be a cozy space for casual conversation and included two soft chairs, a coffee and tea nook, and ample natural light from a large window.

Upon receiving consent from the research participants, all interviews were recorded using a standard dictaphone and then transcribed with the help of online resources (Sonix and Microsoft 365). Coding was carried out with the aid of the qualitative analysis software, MAXQDA, and with reference to a general codebook developed collectively by the four research teams (see Appendix 2). This initial

analysis was then further developed inductively in response to the themes that emerged from the data.

In terms of participant observation at the two selected preschools, three events in total were observed during the study. In the preschool in Town B, the first event was an annual holiday event around Lent, which took place in February 2024. The event was organized by the preschool principal for the wider community in the town and was hosted in the building of a local high school. The event was relatively high-profile and attracted not only families from the preschool selected for the study, but also other community members and local politicians and leaders, which made the event a unique opportunity to observe local boundary-making dynamics in relation to the insights collected during interviews specifically with parents and staff affiliated with the preschool. The aim of this annual event was to collect financial and material donations for lower income residents of the town. The fact that the event had community-wide significance and that local government elections were due to take place in Poland in April 2024, meant that it was well attended by high profile local leaders and local politicians who sought to connect with their electorate. The second event that was selected for participant observation at this research site was "Grandparents' Day," which took place at the preschool one week later, also in February 2024. This c. 2-hour event took place in a classroom and included singing and dancing by three- and four-year old preschoolers, which was choreographed by the teachers, followed by snacks and refreshments after the performance. The event was attended by approximately 35 parents and grandparents of the children.

In the preschool in the urban setting, District 1, the event selected for participant observation was an end-of-year summer festival that the preschool director organized for all the families attending the preschool, which included approximately 100 adults and children. The event took place in June 2024 in the expansive garden of the preschool, which included the preschool's playground. The event lasted for approximately 3 hours and included games and activities organized by the preschool staff, hot and cold food and refreshments, as well as a visit by a local fire truck (which, by all accounts, was the highlight of the day).

4. Empirical findings

Below I present a summary and a preliminary analysis of the key findings of the study in Poland. I first discuss the findings related to the research participants' experiences of healthcare clinics to which they took their children for routine check-ups. Subsequently, I discuss the findings related to the research participants' experiences of parenting encounters in the context of educational institutions, especially preschools and kindergartens, but also primary schools. Given the wide-ranging and expansive data collected in relation to the educational institutions, the majority of the below discussion focuses on outlining the boundary-making processes that the study revealed in the educational context.

4.1 Parenting encounters in healthcare clinics

In this study, rather than including selected healthcare clinics as research sites in a way that would be analogous to the selected preschool sites, our approach was to ask about the research participants' experiences of interpersonal encounters within the setting of healthcare clinics during interviews in general. In the majority of cases, both the topics of parenting encounters in the healthcare clinic setting and the educational setting were part of the same interview with the exception of three

interviews, which were exclusively dedicated to the context of healthcare clinics. This approach resulted from the fact that research participants generally reported that they had very limited opportunities for interactions with other parents within the healthcare clinic setting.

The main reason for the limited interactions in the healthcare clinic context was that appointments with healthcare professionals were generally made in distinct c. 15-minute windows with parents arriving with their children slightly in advance of their appointment, while delays in accessing the scheduled appointment were rare. The number of scheduled appointments at any given time was limited, so even if several parents arrived with their children for appointments that started at the same time but with different healthcare professionals and several parents were in the waiting room at the same time, the waiting time was generally short and they rarely interacted with anyone other than their own child or the receptionist. This system of organizing healthcare visits for children meant that parents had relatively few opportunities to meet other parents in the healthcare context or to even observe the encounters of other parents while at the healthcare clinic. One research participant's response to a question about opportunities to meet and interact with other parents in the healthcare clinic was as follows:

> "Honestly, there are few [occasions for interactions]. In the sense that you come with your child for a specific time. Things usually run on schedule, so I don't see many other people there who I can observe and make conclusions about…" (father, white Polish, urban setting)

Another research participant emphasized that even when there are other parents present in the waiting room, there are few opportunities to enter into a conversation or to exchange. "I did see people there, but they didn't talk to me," said one mother as she described the fleeting and distanced nature of these encounters (mother, white Polish, urban setting).

In a more general sense, on the topic of encounters within the healthcare context, an observation common to many of the research participants related to their interactions with the healthcare clinic staff. A number of the research participants noted that they rated the quality of services as higher in the private sector than in the public sector. This assessment related to the quality of services provided by both the medical professionals and the receptionist staff. In the public healthcare system, reception staff were often described as treating patients gruffly. Rather than receiving patients in a friendly manner (e.g. with a smile and taking the time to listen to the patient's needs), research participants described feeling as if they were bothering or interrupting the reception staff. In contrast, in the private healthcare system, research participants interviewed in this study generally expressed appreciation for the friendly manner and accommodating treatment of the reception staff. Similarly, in regard to the medical professionals, research participants noted that in the public healthcare system, medical personnel did not pay particular attention to the children. Rather, they made little effort to make the children feel comfortable and safe, and tended to address the parents over the children. In the private healthcare system, however, medical staff tended to be described as more friendly and better trained to provide quality of service, particularly in how they engaged with the children directly and treated them with respect as also their patients. The tendency for the experience of better quality treatment in the private healthcare system rather than the public healthcare system was consistently experienced by research participants regardless of their background or knowledge of the Polish language. The better treatment in the private healthcare system made parents, across the

board regardless of background, feel more welcome and comfortable while they were at the clinic. This had a generally positive impact on the feeling of belonging in the space of the clinic, but did not seem to change the limited interactions between parents while at the clinics. These limitations were the result of the scheduling practices and not the general feeling of (un)belonging in the space.

Barriers to access to information were a key point of concern among many research participants in relation to the subject of healthcare clinics. Some Polish research participants expressed that, in the public healthcare clinics, they experienced difficulties with accessing information about the available and/or recommended course of treatment for their child or about the general progress of particular health procedures (e.g. the kinds of vaccinations that their child would be required to have, the recommended schedule for administration of the vaccination as well as more medically specific issues such as what the side effects of the vaccinations could be). Not only were reception staff in the public clinics gruff and unfriendly, but they did not make this kind of information easily available or they were not themselves in possession of it in order to share it with the research participants. In the public healthcare setting, these difficulties in accessing information were compounded for non-Polish speakers by a language barrier as the public healthcare clinic staff rarely spoke languages other than Polish. For example, one mother, who migrated to Poland from Kenya, said: "The language barrier is something that has really made us feel left out because, you see, you cannot get the services that you want if you are not able to communicate what you need." She went on to describe a typical situation at the reception desk of her local public healthcare clinic:

> "There is this lady at the admittance desk. Once she sees me, you know, she doesn't speak English. She's like, 'No, wait…,' [laughs] I'm like, 'I'm here, you can just try to explain or even listen to what I want to say.' But she doesn't want to attend to me. She sees me and she's like, "Wait for my colleague." She doesn't even want to try…I try with Google Translate and she's like, 'No, no, no'." (mother, Kenyan, urban setting)

Another research participant, who is a white Polish mother, described observing a situation in her local public healthcare clinic that appeared very similar to the Kenyan mother's experience above. The white Polish mother recounted witnessing as a Black mother with her child attempted to communicate with the reception staff:

> "She [the Black mother] spoke [Polish] a little bit, she was trying…I think she was trying to get some information and somehow they were managing to communicate…but the lady at the reception was speaking very loudly and in all capitals. It wasn't very pleasant, she [the receptionist] was trying her best to convey the information, but I had the impression she mostly wanted to get rid of the patient…I was impressed that she [the patient] even managed to register herself at the clinic, that she came there, that she even knew where to come. I imagine it must be very difficult [when you do not speak Polish]." (mother, white Polish, urban setting)

In terms of access to medical care at the public healthcare clinics, the topic prompted research participants to share a range of complaints about and critiques of the healthcare system in general in Poland. Among others, research participants complained that the availability of appointments was limited in the public healthcare system, which meant that they often resorted to paying for healthcare visits with medical professionals in the private healthcare system instead of waiting for an available

appointment in the public healthcare system, which could be a long way off. For example, one research participant said:

> "The problem with the public system is getting an appointment. Because, you see, this month I was sick and they told me the whole month is fully booked. So I was asking myself, what will happen if you have an emergency, but someone was telling me that if you have an emergency, you have to go to the hospital…so if you are a foreigner, if you don't know how to maneuver around, you can get stuck." (mother, Kenyan, urban setting)

In most cases, research participants needed to resort to the private healthcare system (despite being entitled to benefit from the free of charge public healthcare) when, as the above quote indicates, they had an emergency situation that required immediate intervention (e.g. a child's illness that required an antibiotic prescription) or when they were advised that their child needed to be seen by a specialist. In the former case, research participants shared situations when they were willing to travel long distances to private clinics across town or (for those research participants living in small towns) traveling to a neighboring town in order to access medications (e.g. antibiotics) for their children, which they would have had to wait several days to get if they relied on appointments with medical practitioners in their local public clinic. In the latter case, access to specialists is hindered by long waiting times, sometimes lasting well over half a year, while in the private healthcare system specialists can be accessed within days or weeks. The limitations of access to needed medical treatment or medical specialists decreased the potential for a sense of association or belonging with their local healthcare clinic. Not only did the system for scheduling visits limit the chances for parenting encounters in the clinic setting, but the fact that research participants often sought the care they needed elsewhere additionally lessened the chances that they might meet the same parents or families and have a chance to engage in encounters with familiar faces.

The following section of this report turns to the research participants' experiences of interpersonal encounters within the context of educational institutions, in particular preschools, kindergartens and primary schools.

4.2 Parenting encounters in educational institutions

In general, the research participants in this study indicated that parenting encounters in the context of educational institutions are limited. Parents and legal guardians who shared their experiences during interviews tended to underline that they had limited time, but also little motivation, to engage in relationship-building with other parents. Their encounters with other parents usually revolved around small-talk that was made in passing while picking up or dropping off their children at the preschool. Only in rare cases did parents have more extended interactions that might even lead to deeper relationship-building. In such cases, such relationships tended to develop spontaneously rather than in response to specific activities or initiatives undertaken by the preschool or school or any particular parent.

The most common reason for more involved parenting encounters tended to be when such encounters were mediated by the children (i.e. when one child befriended another child and invited them to birthday parties or playdates, which is when parents had a chance to engage more with each other). However, even when encounters among parents took place in such situations, it did not necessarily translate into the parents becoming friends, the relations between parents would usually

stop when the children stopped being friends or being in touch (e.g. when one child changed preschool or moved up in the school year). The most common situational contexts for parenting encounters were:

- School drop-off and pick-up (e.g. in the cloak-room/locker-room),
- Through children's friendships (e.g. birthday parties),
- Introductory meetings at the start of the school year,
- More or less official events organized by the (pre)school (e.g. holiday gatherings, summer festivals, Grandparents' Day),
- Extracurricular activities (e.g. local play gym).

The participant observations that were carried out during the course of this study confirm this general finding that parenting encounters in the context of educational institution were relatively limited and superficial. Accordingly, participant observation of the three events included in this study revealed, on the one hand, highly structured and choreographed events in which the focus of the adult participants was almost exclusively on the children. For example, during the Grandparents' Day at the preschool in Small Town B, the participating adults were invited to sit in chairs arranged in rows, all facing the front of the classroom. The roughly 2-hour event included singing and dancing by the children followed by light refreshments. Once the performance finished, the chairs were moved so that parents and legal guardians, grandparents and children could sit together in their family units while enjoying tea or coffee and a piece of fruit, cake or a cookie. Mingling across nuclear family units was rare as the adults focused on congratulating their children or grandchildren on their performance and on making sure that the children ate something after, what was for some of the children, a stressful experience. From the perspective of the observing researcher, it appeared that although the children sometimes ran off to play or talk with their friends, the adults seemed hesitant to speak to other adults outside of their family unit. One exception were members of the preschool staff, who the parents, legal guardians and grandparents seemed to be familiar with and easily engaged in light conversation with them. The whole event ended as quickly and efficiently as it began, which all the more meant that there was little time and space for adults to exchange directly amongst each other outside of their nuclear family unit.

On the other hand, larger events that included children and their families from more than just one class/age group tended to be intense and demanding for the parents and legal guardians as they sought to follow the activities and to keep up with their children. The summer festival in the preschool in District 1 of the large city included in this study is a good example of such an event. This event, which was organized for everyone associated with the preschool (children and their families) across age groups and classes and which was thus attended by over 100 participants (including adults and children), brought parents and legal guardians together in a relatively chaotic scene where the adults were largely preoccupied with following their child or children as they circulated among activities (e.g. arts and crafts activities, competitive games for prizes, or a chance to climb onto a real fire truck). There was little time or opportunity for adults to engage in meaningful conversation amongst each other or with the preschool staff, who were themselves visibly overwhelmed as each teacher was responsible for running a particular "activity station."

Despite this general finding about limited space and opportunity for parenting encounters in the educational context, it is nevertheless possible, based on the collected interviews, to grasp the

boundary-making processes taking shape in the context of educational institutions and to better understand how they may facilitate institutional forms of exclusion or even discrimination. In the below sections, I analyze four aspects of the boundary-making processes as they emerged in the study in Poland through:

1. denial or negation of perceived differences;
2. passivity in parenting encounters or avoidance of interactions among parents across perceived differences;
3. institutional passivity or (in)action in response to social diversity;
4. reliance on metanarratives that reify national, ethnic and racial identities, as well as the figure of the migrant and the refugee (Dahinden 2012, 2016; Amelina 2022).

Below, I discuss each of these aspects of boundary-making in turn.

4.2.1. Boundary-making through denial or negation of perceived differences

It was common among the white Polish research participants in this study to speak of themselves as open-minded and in favor of diversity. Many research participants also described their neighborhood or their preschool as diverse and as encouraging ideals of open-mindedness and equality (which were, notably, sometimes associated with being "European"). These ideas about the self and the research participants' context served to link the research participants positively with values of openness and equality that are commonly associated with diversity and cosmopolitanism: as if to say that one is open and egalitarian by virtue of operating in socially diverse spaces. For example, the preschool in Small Town B was attended by local elites (e.g. politicians, community leaders) because it was considered to offer an exceptional standard of care and education. It was preferred over private preschools even among those families who could afford to send their child or children to a private preschool. Among the positive qualities that research participants noted about the public preschool in Small Town B was a modern approach to education that fostered openness to diversity among children attending the preschool. In the case of the preschool in District 1 in the urban site included in this study, the district itself was described as unique for having a long history of multiculturalism as several international schools and diplomatic institutions of foreign states were located there. One research participant described this aspect of the neighborhood in positive terms as making it "more European" compared to the rest of the city. The public preschool that was based in that district and that was included in this study was described as diverse by some research participants, yet the actual demographics of the children attending that preschool and their families were not significantly more diverse than the preschools in other sites included in the study.

One way in which research participants underlined their openness to social diversity was, paradoxically, by minimizing, denying or negating the differences that they perceived among the children and families in their preschool, school or in their neighborhood. For example, one white Polish father in the preschool in Small Town B emphasized that an Afro-Polish/Black[4] child, who had previously attended the preschool, was well-liked by other children:

[4] At the time of the study, the child no longer attended the preschool in question and I was not able to speak to the parents of the child directly. For this reason, I cannot be sure how the children would self-identify so I use two possible ways of referring to the child's identity: Afro-Polish / Black. For more about Black and Afro-Polish communities in Poland, see Balogun and Pędziwiatr (2023) and Balogun (2024).

> "There was a Black child [in my son's class]. That was also something different for the children, you know? **But no,** that child was always smiling and the other kids always liked him." (father, white Polish, Small Town B)

In the first part of this statement, the father acknowledges that there was a "difference" that "was something different for the children" without stating explicitly that the difference relates to skin color; it is only indirectly referred to through the use of the term "Black child" in the first sentence and then signified by the term "something different" in the second sentence. In the third sentence, the father negates the significance of that difference and suggests it made no difference since the Afro-Polish/Black child "was always smiling and the other kids always liked him." The "but no" that opens the second part of the statement is a narrative turn of phrase commonly deployed in a number of the research participants' narratives. It acts to deny or negate a perceived "difference" that had just been recognized. Another example of this kind of narrative turn of phrase is in the following statement by a teacher in the preschool in Small Town B who minimizes the linguistic barriers that Ukrainian children may experience in the preschool where Polish is the standard language of operation:

> "Those children do talk, they talk in both languages, **but mostly** in Polish…I also have one little boy [from Ukraine]. Our contact varies, **but generally** we get what he's saying." (teacher, white Polish, woman, Small Town B)

Here, the teacher acknowledges that a language barrier between herself and the Ukrainian children exists (and presumably also between the Ukrainian children, who do not speak Polish, and Polish-speaking children, though this relationship is not the focus of the teacher's comment); however, through the "but mostly" and the "but generally" the teacher negates the significance of the language barrier and asserts that "we get what he's saying." A perceived difference is negated as if to say that it makes no difference.

This tendency to deny perceived differences made it easier for the research participants to associate themselves with the positive values of openness to diversity and egalitarianism. For example, one teacher in the preschool in Small Town B minimized efforts by the mother of the previously mentioned Afro-Polish/Black child to understand whether her children may be experiencing different/worse treatment in the preschool. The teacher stated:

> "He had a lot of friends. They didn't tease him on account of him being…and even if someone did say something, then the teacher reacted immediately…" (teacher, white Polish, woman, Small Town B)

In this statement, the teacher asserts that the Afro-Polish/Black boy "had a lot of friends" and that "they [the white Polish children] didn't tease him on account of him being…" but she does not state explicitly that skin color was the reason why he may have been teased, instead her voice trails off, literally silencing the "difference," and she concludes with the assertion that "even if someone did say something, then the teacher reacted immediately…". Here, the unspoken difference (i.e. skin color) is portrayed as making no difference, then turned into a hypothetical problem (i.e. teasing), which the teacher assures would be responded to appropriately by the preschool staff. In this way

denial of perceived difference serves to narratively associate the speaker with positive values of openness and egalitarianism.

Even as the above teacher asserted that the white Polish children did not tease this child, she described the Afro-Polish/Black child as badly behaved:

> "The one [Afro-Polish/Black] boy was **naughty**. He was **naughty**. The mom didn't seem to take it seriously that he was **naughty**, that it's him who is disturbing the other children." (teacher, white Polish, woman, Small Town B)

The repetition of the term "naughty" produces a negative image of the Afro-Polish/Black child, while the child's alleged bad behavior is linked to the mother's alleged poor parenting skills: "the mom didn't seem to take it seriously." The teacher went on to explain that when the mother of the child "wanted to know if he really was badly behaved sometimes or if we [the teachers] were picking on him," this line of questioning was portrayed as unjustified with another assertion: "we [the teachers] were all objective [in the assessment of the child as naughty]…".[5]

The tendency to see difference but to assert that it makes no difference effectively reifies perceived differences into mere observable details and ignores or negates the possibility that there is more to explore below the surface of the observed difference. The meaningful issues that would be worthy of further exploration if the perceived difference were honored rather than denied could include: cultural norms and values that give meaning to the perceived difference (and may require additional support), one's own stereotypes or prejudices that inform how "difference" is perceived in the first place (and may need to be addressed with additional training, education or skill-building), feelings of (non)belonging on the part of the person who is perceived as "different" (which may indicate possible avenues of action for the (pre)school). Consequently, the narrative habit of negating or denying perceived difference can contribute to boundary-making processes that can ultimately lead to social exclusion or discrimination.

4.2.2. Passivity in parenting encounters or avoidance of interactions among parents across perceived differences

Another way that boundary-making processes unfolded in the study was through the mostly white Polish research participants' passive stance in moments that presented opportunities for parenting encounters across perceived differences or, indeed, by avoiding interactions across perceived differences altogether. One white Polish father stated: "I don't have any contacts with those [Ukrainian] families. We don't really talk extensively, but also maybe I don't seek the contact, I don't

[5] It is noteworthy that the two preschools sites that were included in this study both enrolled Afro-Polish/Black children and that in both preschools, these children were labelled as exceptionally energetic, dynamic and naughty. Within the scope of this study, it was not possible to confirm to what extent such assessments could have been justified, however, it is difficult to ignore that the only other children labelled in similar terms were Roma children in the preschool in District 1. The tendency to apply such negative behavioral assessments to Black and brown children in the educational system, and the negative impacts that this practice has on the chances of the children in further education, have been extensively documented in other countries, particularly in the USA. It would be inappropriate to directly apply the conclusions from those contexts to Poland, but it would be valuable to explore further how racialized tropes might also influence teachers' assessments of students who are racialized as non-white in Poland.

initiate conversation." Language barriers were sometimes described as the reason for passivity in encounters or for contact avoidance. One mother described her experience in the following way:

> "Honestly, most of the population [in Poland] doesn't speak English and if they don't speak English, or if they speak only a little and they are not confident to speak in English, then they avoid you, not because they don't have something to tell you, but because **they don't want to indulge themselves in this situation where they're supposed to struggle, looking for different vocabularies**. So, in the morning when I'm taking [my son to school], they [Polish-speaking parents] just say 'Hello'…only that…" (mother, Kenyan, urban setting)

While language can be an objective barrier to parenting encounters, the Kenyan mother emphasized her willingness to go out of her way to make contact and her openness to use the tools available to her (e.g. Google translate) to facilitate contact. In her view, this willingness was not reciprocated by white Polish parents. Thus, avoiding contacts with other parents, especially with those who are perceived to be "different," may be better understood in terms of an unwillingness to step outside of one's comfort zone, as the Kenyan mother suggests through her phrasing that "they don't want to indulge themselves in situations where they're supposed to struggle." A Ukrainian mother based in Small Town A described a similar experience to the Kenyan mother:

> "At the beginning, with the Polish parents [I had] no contact at all. You always say 'Hello' when you enter the preschool. 'Hello.' What more can you say?...but with Ukrainian parents, well, we talked about many different things: where we came from, what did we know [about Poland], what happened [to us and our families], where we live [in Poland]." (mother, Ukrainian, Small Town A)

This statement reveals the expanse of potential topics that are available as a basis for developing parenting encounters even across perceived differences: where the family came from, how is the family fairing in Poland, how is the family finding their way in Poland, what is the family's story of having come to Poland. Rather than exploring the scope of topics the parents may have in common, white Polish parents tended to stop at the perceived difference thus giving it a meaning that it may not have or a different meaning than it actually has – i.e. the perceived difference is reified. By focusing on the perceived difference, and often assuming it indicated a language barrier, white Polish parents justified taking a passive stance in relation to parents perceived as different or avoiding contact altogether. By reducing or avoiding contact, however, there was little chance for the research participants to discover that, potentially, the perceived difference is less significant than initially imagined or perhaps that it is meaningful but in ways other than the research participants thought. In a circular logic, however, by not engaging in encounters across difference, assumptions about a language barrier could not be proven wrong and perceived differences remained as (superficial) evidence of meaningful difference.

Furthermore, by taking a passive stance to parenting encounters or by avoiding encounters across perceived differences, research participants could, paradoxically, assert their openness to social diversity and to values such as egalitarianism. For example, a white Polish father in Small Town B, described a typical scene of passivity in interactions between Polish and Ukrainian parents, which took place outside of the preschool on the occasion of a birthday party for one of the preschool children:

> "…the Ukrainians sat separately at the table, the Poles separately. It wasn't cool, but I understand that it could have been because of **a language barrier**…maybe it **wasn't some kind of prejudice**, but just because not everyone can speak Polish, not everyone can speak Ukrainian…and, you now, the group from Ukraine will definitely be friends and **they'll feel better in their own company** than with some parents from Poland." (father, white Polish, Small Town B)

By asserting that he considered that the separation between Polish and Ukrainian parents "wasn't cool," the father also signals his position in support of ideals of social diversity, integration and equality. Yet, he also states that this separation was not related to "prejudice," but to a language barrier. Through this statement, he portrays the scene of boundary-making among parents along cultural, national and linguistic differences not in terms of problems such as failed integration or prejudice, but in terms of a technical issue of a language barrier. Even if a language barrier is a contributing factor to the production of boundaries between the Polish (speaking) and non-Polish (speaking) parents in this scene, the concluding sentence in the father's statement suggests that the arrangement is actually a positive expression of social diversity in action: the Ukrainian parents "feel better in their own company." This assumption about the Ukrainian parents acts as the actual boundary-making mechanism: because this assumption had not been confirmed with the Ukrainian parents in question, it comes across more like a justification for passivity and contact avoidance than as a legitimate explanation for the social boundaries that manifested in this situation.

Importantly, within this study, the not Polish (speaking) and minoritized parents tended to express a willingness and interest in interactions with Polish parents but found it difficult to approach them, a perspective that all the more puts into question the idea that "they'll feel better in their own company." In the accounts of research participants who were not Polish (speaking) and minoritized, the "differences" that the white Polish (speaking) research participants perceived and tended to deny or minimize, did sometimes have a negative impact on the possibilities for the not Polish (speaking) and minoritized parents to fully participate in the social environments and spaces of the educational institutions. One research participant, who is Belorussian, but who had been living in Poland for over a decade and spoke Polish fluently observed the following:

> "I have the sense that they [Ukrainian families] may feel excluded, but it's because of the language. Since the [Ukrainian] parents knew that I also speak Russian, sometimes they asked me questions in Russian. For example, at the very beginning [of the mass evacuations from Ukraine]…they [the school] asked me to translate, so that they [the Ukrainian parents] could better understand what's going on, because they just didn't understand the language." (mother, Belarussian, urban setting)

The earlier observation that the Ukrainian families may "feel excluded" suggests that regardless of the context of the encounter (whether in the private sphere, such as a birthday party outside of the preschool, or in the public sphere of the preschool or school), not being (able to be) a part of the social environment does not necessarily feel good even if one is in the company of others who also do not speak the dominant language or share the dominant culture. The Kenyan mother gave a particularly powerful indication of the feelings of exclusion that passivity in parenting encounters across perceived differences and contact avoidance can cause. She described her experience of attending a class

performance in which her child took part, but which she could not understand: “You feel like, yes, you are [physically] there, but you don’t belong.”

4.2.3. Institutional passivity or inaction in response to social diversity

The tendencies to deny or negate perceived differences as well as to be passive or to avoid encounters across perceived differences becomes particularly problematic when it characterizes the (in)actions of the educational institutions themselves. For example, one white Polish father described the situation of Ukrainian children and their families in the preschool that his child attended in the following way:

> “I think it’s the Ukrainian immigrant children who join a group in the middle of the year that have trouble with integration. In my son’s group, the group was already formed and doing well together, but when the war started and the wave of immigrants arrived to [name of city], then a few Ukrainian children arrived and they sort of just fell into the group. I don’t think there was anything done to help integrate them…[now] I think there are two or three Ukrainian children in my son’s group and they are sort of sidelined, and that means that their parents are as well. The parents weren’t brought into things and the language barrier would have done its part in this [sidelining] too. I can think of one Ukrainian family that wants to be involved and they are eager to take part in different preschool events…but I think the other families are not so integrated.” (father, white Polish, urban setting)

Across the interviews, research participants were asked whether the preschools and schools that their children attended had in any way acknowledged or openly addressed the situation when new children and families joined during the early period of evacuations from Ukraine. Most of the parents interviewed in this study could not recall any such information nor did they know for certain whether the children had received any particular support (e.g. with learning the Polish language). Indeed, some research participants admitted that they could not imagine how such information could be phrased by the preschool or school without further “othering” the Ukrainian families, which can be understood as another iteration of the narrative that negates differences while simultaneously declaring openness to diversity. The Belorussian mother who has been living in Poland for over a decade and who had taken a leadership role on issues of equality and diversity in her children’s preschools and schools, both by virtue of her own migration experience and her profession as a practicing psychologist, described the below situation that points to institutional passivity and avoidance:

> “I wanted to bring our school into this municipal educational program that supports diverse schools, where they offer trainings for children on cross-cultural integration and communication, really great content, and it has been running for a long time in partnership with the Educational Department. I suggested to my child’s teacher that we organize this training in our school. She passed my suggestion on to the school director, but the director didn’t approve. To this day, I don’t understand why. There are kids with migration background in our classrooms…The program is free of charge with really great specialists who run the trainings…The teacher, who is otherwise great, explained to me that ‘our [non-Polish] kids are integrated, they don’t have problems with adaptation, so

> they don't need this training.' I was shocked. The fact that they [the non-Polish children] are well-behaved and speak Polish doesn't mean they don't need support. And Polish kids also need this kind of knowledge about diversity." (mother, Belarussian, urban setting)

In order to grasp the import of the above described institutional narratives that deny or negate perceived differences as well as the institutional practices of passivity and contact avoidance with regard to ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic and religious diversity, it can be helpful to contrast them with the narratives and practices that the preschools and schools implemented with regard to neurodiversity and special learning needs. Some of the parents and teachers in this study openly referred to the presence of neurodiversity among the children in the classroom and had at least general knowledge of relevant terminology and diagnostic procedures. Many of the interviewed parents and preschool staff were able to describe the possible special needs that children may have, the preschools and schools had relevant procedures and tools in place to assess special needs, parents knew about the existence of the procedures and tools, and the preschools and schools had actively implemented the procedures and tools in specific cases. By contrast, no comparable standards and procedures appeared to exist in the case of ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity. Although some of the preschools and schools that research participants spoke about had hired cross-cultural assistants to support the non-Polish speaking Ukrainian children and families in the early period of evacuations, these roles were largely no longer seen as needed at the time of the study (i.e. two to three years after the full scale Russia invasion in February 2022), as the above account from the Belorussian mother indicates.

The lack of knowledge about relevant language and concepts to describe and diagnose differences on the spectrum of ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity, and the lack of awareness about how negating such differences can lead to exclusion or discrimination, was illustrated through the research participants' responses to a vignette, which was a part of the interviews in Poland (almost all research participants in the Polish study, both parents and preschool staff, were asked to reflect on this vignette):

> *In a school hallway, there were two groups of children. Each group was standing in line waiting for their teachers, who were just around the corner. Two of the boys from class A began teasing one of the girls from class B. She began to cry. A child from class B, who did not speak Polish fluently, tried to intervene and yelled 'Stop. Go away.' Then the children from class A began to laugh and one boy confronted the child with the weak Polish language skills and yelled, 'You don't talk right.' The teachers, having heard the laughter, returned to the hallway and quickly moved their classes to the place they needed to go.*

During the interviews, after research participants were presented with the above vignette, they were asked follow-up questions about whether they could imagine this kind of scenario taking place in their child's or children's preschool or school. All of the research participants who were asked this question answered affirmatively, many said that such a scenario did in fact take place in their preschool or school, and then the conversation shifted to discussing what they think would be an appropriate response to this situation on the part of the teachers and the preschool or school as an institution. In most cases, research participants (both parents and preschool staff) considered that the teachers should hold a group discussion with the children in order to make sure they understand that making fun of others is "not nice" and that "everyone should be treated kindly." Although this

framing in terms of "niceness" and "kindness" could be understood to reflect age-appropriate language for preschoolers, when asked to give their own assessments of the problem(s) illustrated in the vignette, the research participants mostly did not recognize the possible gender-based bullying of the little girl in first part of the vignette and the ethnic/national/racial/linguistic-based bullying in the case of the child in the second part of the vignette. Research participants' proposed that the best course of action in response to the situation(s) in the vignette would be that "the teacher should hold a group discussion with the kids and talk about it" or "explain it." When asked what the "it" refers to, most research participants said "to the children making fun of another child" and "to not being nice" or "to making someone cry." This perspective on the vignette suggests a lack of knowledge about stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, as well as a lack of vocabulary that could help name and explain situations that relate to ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity, including a vocabulary that can meaningfully articulate "social differences." Instead, the white Polish research participants' responses tended to abstract the notion of diversity into a value or mind-set that was narratively deployed to reflect positively on them (e.g. all research participants described themselves as open to diversity, minimizing perceived differences undergirded assertions in support of equality despite differences), but became personalized into a problem or a concern when it related to minoritized individuals or communities (e.g. language barriers are for the non-Polish speaking individual to overcome). Moreover, research participants had great confidence in the benefits of "talking through" challenges and problems related to ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity. Yet, it is difficult to imagine how such conversation or dialogue could help address the challenges and problems that can arise in the context of social diversity when perceived differences are denied or negated, when there is a lack of vocabulary for engaging with perceived differences, and in the context of contact avoidance across perceived differences.

In the below final section of the discussion of the research findings, I comment on wider boundary-making narratives that can be seen as a meta-framework for the above-described boundary-making processes in the context of parenting encounters in educational institutions.

4.2.4. Boundary-making through meta-narratives about Europeanness and whiteness

Aleksandra Lewicki has written about how perceived differences between national, cultural and ethnic identities are hierarchically organized in terms of "gradations of 'Europeanness' or whiteness" (2025: 5). Lewicki writes:

> "racial categorizations operate via binaries (such as Black/White, non-/British) but also relate and refer to gradations of 'Europeanness.' They invoke a fluid spectrum of racialized attributions that position people as 'European,' 'not fully European' and 'non-European'." (Ibid.)

In an effort to grasp whether and how more general boundary-making processes might relate to the preschool or school context, in addition to asking research participants about the situation in their child's/children's preschool or school, I also asked about the wider context of their neighborhood or town/city. Below, I discuss how research participants in this study perceived specific national, ethnic or cultural groups in varying proximity to Europeanness and whiteness.

One father described a Ukrainian family who had arrived to Small Town B in the early period of evacuations from Ukraine in the following way:

> "…this man, [name of Ukrainian man], the head of the family that was looking [for housing]…where they could stay and I happen to have this empty house…he had a small daughter, a wife and the boy, said they won't be any trouble…[He was] a bit **argumentative**, I'd say, but they stayed. In the end **I don't think back on that well**, they **didn't behave nicely**, **didn't even say goodbye**. After they left some of **my stuff disappeared**. I didn't believe it, **what people said**…but now I believe it. It's **not as fantastic a nation** as they present themselves to be." (father, white Polish, Small Town B)

The personality traits that the father attributes to the Ukrainian family in this statement (i.e. argumentative, un-nice behavior, the suggestion that the Ukrainian family may have stolen something) serve to distance the Ukrainian family from the (unspoken) norms and values that the man asserts as Polish from his position as a Pole who embodies those norms and values and can diagnose diversions from them. The generalization in the last sentence that extrapolates the research participant's experience with this particular family to Ukrainians in general ("not as fantastic a nation as they present themselves to be") underscores that the "differences" are more than individual, but between Pole and Ukrainians in general. Because the characteristics noted in this statement relate to the sphere of norms and values, the research participant's observations suggest there is a "civilizational" and "cultural" difference that divides Ukrainians from Poles. Moreover, the research participant indicates that negative opinions about Ukrainians circulate in Small Town B: "I didn't believe it, what people said [about Ukrainians]." By asserting that he had initially resisted subscribing to these opinions, the research participant portrays himself as committed to values of social diversity, openness and equality – he resists stereotypes and generalizations. His account indicates, however, that circumstances forced him to recognize that such opinions were to some degree "factual." He thus portrays himself as reasoned and rational in his assessments, which contrasts with the less reasoned personality traits attributed to Ukrainians (e.g. argumentative, impolite). Thus, this narrative framing contributes to reifying specific traits as either Ukrainian or Polish and to distancing Ukrainians from Poles while positioning Poles closer to those norms and values of rationality and reason, civility and cultured behavior, generosity and egalitarianism that are associated with Europeanness/whiteness (see also Lewicki 2022).

Another example of narratives that reify national traits and operate within a wider framework of logic that establishes group hierarchies according to their proximity to Europeanness/whiteness can be found in the following statements from a Ukrainian mother based in Small Town B. The mother described Polish people in the following way:

> "Here people don't have anything to do, except their daily work or otherwise they're retired. So what would they have to talk about? [They talk about how] this one didn't have a Church wedding, that couple was living together before their wedding. But we're in the 21st century! I find this strange…At the shop or wherever, they talk about whether someone goes to Church or about who doesn't go to Church…I respect all religions, but there should be more balance. " (mother, Ukrainian, Small Town B)

This mother's observations about Polish people in Small Town B point to multiple lines along which boundaries between herself as a Ukrainian and local Polish people are being drawn. The mother had evacuated from a large city in Ukraine to Poland and, through her husband's network of contacts, had come to reside in Small Town B. Her experience was that residents in Small Town B tended to

keep to their intimate family units and that, outside the family, the primary space for social interactions was the local Catholic Church. She found the contrast of living conditions between a big city (in Ukraine) and a small town (in Poland) to be difficult to adjust to. She associated the city with bustling cultural life and a cosmopolitan, open-minded mentality, while Small Town B lacked comparable cultural institutions and spaces where people could congregate around common interests, particularly if those interests were "intellectual." She described the challenges she experiences to feeling like she can belong in Small Town B by contrasting her "intellectual" background with the small town context where most of the population engaged in physical labor:

> "I can't reinvent myself. I respect all work, but some can do that [physical labor] and others can't. As someone who always worked intellectually, I needed to learn Polish quickly, learn to write and to show off my skills as best as possible." (mother, Ukrainian, Small Town B)

So difficult was the feeling of not belonging and the adjustment process to a small town that the research participant declared the intention to move her family to a larger city in Poland. What emerges from this account is a boundary-making narrative that is articulated in terms of nationality but is mostly about class, religious practice and an urban/rural divide. The small Polish town, with its religious residents who keep to their intimate families, is portrayed to be in tension with urban norms and values, which are associated with a certain dynamism that relates to cosmopolitanism and intellectualism. Speaking from the subject position of the urban, intellectual and cosmopolitan migrant, this research participant positions herself in closer proximity to Europeanness than the residents of the small town insofar as her urban background reflects the values and norms of openness, cosmopolitanism and secularity that are also associated with Europeanness.

This same research participant portrayed Ukrainians in Poland as hard-working and as making a concerted effort to integrate into Polish society, above all by learning the Polish language and by securing employment or other forms of productive labor market activity (e.g. founding a business). She said:

> "We [Ukrainians] have similar traditions, similar worldviews [to Poles] and we try to learn the Polish language quickly, find a good job and be pro-active. Some already have a mortgage for a house if they already decided that they will stay here…some opened their own business…that's being productive and that's great. People don't let negative experiences get them down, they don't stop trying." (mother, Ukrainian, Town B)

In the interest of portraying Ukrainians as industrious, efficient and treading a sure path toward integration with Poles and in Poland, the previously expressed differences between Poles and Ukrainians (which were more about class, religious and urban/rural divides) are here negated. Instead, the research participant emphasizes "similar traditions, similar worldviews" between Ukrainians and Poles. What also disappears in this second statement by the research participant are the class differences between Ukrainians who "work intellectually" and those who can or must undertake jobs that involve physical labor. Here, again, the boundary-making narrative prioritizes national and cultural identity over other possible identity formations, which produces an image of national cohesion and locates Ukrainians in close proximity to Poles and thus to Europeanness.

Similarly positive portrayals of Ukrainians as industrious and effective at making their way in Poland were echoed by other Ukrainian research participants. Such narratives not only emphasized a positive image of Ukrainians, which contrasted with the negative stereotypes about Ukrainians that have increasingly begun to circulate in Poland as "compassion fatigue" and "war fatigue" settle in (Krivonos 2025), but also underlined the cultural proximity of Ukrainians and Poles. One white Polish research participant, who was based in a large city, also described Ukrainians in this positive light: "I see that they're adapting very well and I'm impressed by their determination, courage and hard work" (mother, white Polish, urban setting). When asked how the research participant can tell that Ukrainians are "adapting," she explained that, in her view, evidence of "adapting" included actively seeking employment, including being willing to work in roles that are below one's qualifications, and sending children to Polish schools[6].

Narratives about "hardworking Ukrainians" that position Ukrainians as being close to Poles (and thus to Europe) can be seen to have grounding in the legal status of individuals who arrived to Poland after the full scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Such individuals have a unique legal status in Poland that defies the existing categories of an economic migrant or a refugee (see also Krivonos 2025 for more about this particular legal situation). The legal right to stay in Poland for individuals evacuating from Ukraine was defined by Polish regulations enacted in response to the Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55 EC) activated by the EU Council Decision (EU 2022/382 of 4 March 2022). This was a new legal construction designed specifically to address the situation of mass evacuations after the 24th of February 2022. Although such individuals were forcefully displaced by the war and must contend with the far-reaching consequences of this event (including the potential of PTSD, the prospect of not being able to return home), unlike individuals who seek asylum in Poland and who normally spend years waiting for a decision on their asylum applications during which time they endure grueling interviews and controls and cannot legally work in Poland for the first six months after submitting their asylum application, individuals who arrived to Poland from Ukraine after the 24th of February 2022 were able to legally undertake work without delay and without seeking additional work permits (Krivonos 2025). Their legal status in Poland is also unattached to their activities in Poland, which contrasts with the visas and residency permits that those who arrived to Poland from Ukraine before the Russian full-scale invasion or those who arrive to Poland from other non-EU countries could apply for. Such individuals can apply for a visa and then a residency permit based on their activity in Poland, e.g. employment or studies. The visa and the residency permit are tied to this activity, so that, for example, if the individual loses their job, they have a limited time to secure new employment. If they are not able to secure a new job within the specified timeframe, they lose their right to legal stay in Poland. In the case of individuals who arrived from Ukraine after the 24th of February 2022, no such condition was applied and people with such legal status could stay in Poland regardless of whether they did or did not have employment or regardless of whether they were or were not studying. This unique legal situation effectively gives

[6] The requirement for Ukrainian children to attend Polish schools, including the preparatory kindergarten class (pl. *zerówka*) that is required before entering primary school in Poland, was introduced at the beginning of the 2024/2025 school year. Prior to that, Ukrainian children could attend schools (mostly online) that ran the Ukrainian national educational curriculum and without having to attend school in Poland. The research participant thus makes the point that evidence of "adaptation" or "integration" is when Ukrainian parents sent their children to Polish schools before this became a requirement. For more about this change in the educational requirements of Ukrainian children in Poland, see: https://www.gov.pl/web/edukacja/uczniowie-z-ukrainy-w-polskich-szkolach-wazne-informacje-dla-rodzicow (accessed: 12.03.2025).

those individuals a more privileged position in Poland than other categories of migrants and refugees, thus "enacting" such individuals, who are overwhelmingly white Ukrainians, as more naturally Polish and European (Amelina 2022; Dahinden 2012, 2016; Krivonos 2025).

These "gradations of Europeanness and whiteness" were evident also in boundary-making narrative in relation to Chechens. One of the longest operating refugee centers in Poland is located in Small Town B and it has historically hosted mostly asylum seekers who are Chechen. When asked about social diversity in the town and about how social differences present in the local context, most research participants mentioned the Chechen community. Most research participants also portrayed Chechens in terms that significantly distanced them from ideas about Europeanness and whiteness. For example, one research participant, who is Ukrainian, expressed the following opinion:

> "**Chechens don't assimilate at all**. They live and keep to themselves in their families…I have such neighbors…A family with four children lives above us. She [the mother] doesn't work. The man works, but she stays at home. I'm used to being inviting toward people, but from this family I only hear: 'I'm good, thank you. No thank you…' **They don't allow others to enter their community**…They say it's hard for them to find a job. Yes, it is hard, because if she [the Chechen mother] were to go to work in a cafe or a restaurant, she'll say I can't work with this kind of meat that they don't eat. Or she can't work because she can't be in a car with another man [other than her husband]. So it's religion that prevents them from assimilating. I understand this and I understand them. If you live according to your religion, then **the religion won't allow you to assimilate to certain things**." (mother, Ukrainian, Small Town B)

This account of the Chechen family portrays Islam as a problem in the process of assimilation/integration and suggests that Islam is incompatible with the space of Europe, generally understood: "religion won't allow you to assimilate to certain things." A similar opinion about Chechens was expressed by a Belorussian research participant who moved to Small Town B from Belarus in search of better work and living conditions for herself and her family:

> "In my opinion, if you move into **the house of Europe**, you have to pay attention to where you are. Which country is it, Poland, Germany, doesn't matter it could be Spain. **You have to observe how people behave here and adjust to them.** For example, it's not pleasant for me when I enter a shop and I see women who you can only see their eyes and they're all covered…it **makes me feel scared** because I imagine that something might happen…" (mother, Belarus, Small Town B)

In this statement, the "house of Europe" is generalized to include a range of countries associated with the European Union (Poland, Germany and Spain), but the distinguishing features of Europe are associated above all with cultural and religious values and norms: how people behave, how they dress (the veiled woman is not of the "house of Europe"), what religion they practice. Similarly, in the earlier quote from the Ukrainian mother, norms related to dietary practices, (in)activity on the labor market, and everyday conversation are deployed to diagnose belonging or not belonging to Poland and the wider sphere of Europeanness/whiteness. In both of the above accounts, the perceived differences that distinguish Chechens are also described as the reason for their lack of integration and inability to conform to local norms and values. In a study of migrants in Germany, Lewicki made similar observation that "the practice of a faith 'different' from Christianity is framed

as a 'source of conflict'" (2022: 928). Indeed, in the second statement, the research participant articulates the expectation that those who are "different" should adjust to "the house of Europe." Failure to adjust is a problem because it is "unpleasant" and even provokes "fear."

The above described boundary-making narratives point to a remarkable consistency in ideas about Europeanness and whiteness and how they represent an idealized standard to which proximity is desired (Narkowicz 2023; Lewicki 2022, 2023, 2024; Kalmar 2022). These narratives were not necessarily consciously or consistently deployed by the research participants, but because they were repeated by research participants of diverse backgrounds and across the different sites in this study, the narratives can be seen to operate as boundary-making devices that portray specific social groups in varying proximity to Europeanness or whiteness, and that, moreover, privilege the groups that were perceived as "less different" from and "closer" to Europeanness and whiteness. When such ideas about "gradations of 'Europeanness' or whiteness" (Lewicki 2025) are operationalized in everyday boundary-making narratives and practices, such as those described in the first section of this report and especially within the frame of institutions, they can actively (re)produce exclusion. When uncritically integrated into the norms and standards of operation of institutions, they can transform into institutional forms of exclusion or discrimination.

5. Conclusion and practical recommendations

The above presentation of results from the study carried out in Poland within the frame of WP1 in the RAISE Project offers a preliminary analysis of the boundary-making processes in parenting encounters that take place in two institutional contexts: healthcare clinics and educational institutions. The collected data and preliminary analysis enable several recommendations for further study and for more practically oriented interventions, which are also planned as part of WP1 in the RAISE Project.

In the case of the healthcare clinics, despite the limited insights into boundary-making processes that emerge from the data collected within this study, the findings point to two potentially fruitful avenues of further research. One relates to the emerging evidence of marked differences in the experience of the public healthcare system among white Polish patients compared to non-Polish patients (see also: Pędziwiatr et al. 2024). These differences are significantly shaped by the language barrier, but it would be worthwhile to explore further the extent to which other factors (e.g. racial, ethnic and religious background) compound experiences of exclusion and barriers to access which only begin with the language barrier. Comparable studies in other countries have indicated that racial and ethnic biases produce significantly lower health outcomes due to lack of appropriate care in the case of patients racialized as non-white. It would be worthwhile to explore in what ways such findings may also be relevant in Poland. Such a study would require gaining clearance and access to information about specific healthcare clinics and to patient information in order to be able address not just the general experience in the context of healthcare clinics, but to study in more detail the issues of access to appropriate and needed healthcare. This kind of detailed study exceeded the scope of the RAISE Project.

The second potential avenue for further research in relation to healthcare clinics is the situation of medical professionals who are not Polish citizens and who practice in Poland. Roughly half of the research participants interviewed in this study about their experiences in the healthcare clinic context indicated that they had themselves been serviced by a medical professional who was not a Polish

citizen and/or racialized as non-white or that they knew of such medical professionals working in the clinics that they attended. Although none of the research participants in this study complained about the quality of care offered by these medical professionals, several research participants recounted instances when they overheard other patients complaining about medical professionals who were not Polish citizens and/or who were racialized as non-white. This observation raises the possibility that the medical professionals themselves may be affected by prejudicial treatment and/or discrimination within the Polish healthcare system, which would be important to explore further.

In regard to the educational context, the findings from the study in Poland suggest that it would be a mistake to understand the research participants' observed passivity in parenting encounters and contact avoidance simply in terms of a lack of motivation or a lack of time on the part of busy parents who rush in and out of the preschool and have only fleeting encounters at drop-off and pick-up times for their children. Underlying these limited and superficial parenting encounters were narrative habits that deny and negate perceived differences, as well as behavioral habits of passivity that effectively minimize parenting encounters across perceived differences. Such narrative and behavioral habits were enabled by a lack of knowledge about relevant vocabulary and concepts that could otherwise help make sense of perceived differences. Moreover, research participants seemed to have an understanding of social diversity according to which diversity tended to be treated as a noun (i.e. as something that can be had or appropriated: to have the values of diversity and equality, to have diversity in the (pre)school) rather than as a verb (i.e. as a process that all the research participants, including the white Polish research participants, are a part of). These narrative and practices furthermore enabled research participants to portray themselves in positive terms as open-minded, cosmopolitan and supporting equality – by minimizing encounters across perceived differences, they did not have to meaningfully engage with those "differences" and thus could assert themselves as open and egalitarian. When such narrative habits of negation and denial of perceived difference, and when such practices of passivity or contact avoidance across perceived difference were legitimized by the educational institutions or enacted institutionally, they could be seen to translate into institutional forms of exclusion or discrimination.

In this light, interrupting patterns of boundary-making could involve a shift in thinking about social diversity as not in terms of a noun (i.e. something we can have), but in terms of a verb (i.e. as a matter of actions or processes that everyone is a part of). This shift would require raising awareness about the narratives and practices that contribute to boundary-making processes and that entrench those processes in the form of exclusion or discrimination. It would also involve learning about and developing tools that render these boundary-making processes visible and counteract them in their everyday operations within the context of educational institutions.

Conversation and dialogue, which the research participants themselves mentioned, are examples of tools and practices that can help visibilize and counteract such boundaries-making processes, and foster greater respect for and understanding of the more complex stories and experiences that are otherwise reduced to superficially perceived differences. The profound power of these tools and practices may well rest in their simplicity. The following account by the Kenyan mother interviewed in this study helps show their potential:

> **Research participant – Kenyan mother:** In the first preschool [where I initially sent my child], there was a parent who was very nice. Every day he used to talk to me, ask me how

is everything…so we used to communicate, he used to update me in case there was anything I needed to know, he used to help me a lot.

Researcher: How did you meet that parent?

Research participant: Oh, I was just dropping my son and he was like 'Hello, good morning' and I was like 'Good morning!' and he said, 'Where are you from?' and I was like 'I'm from Kenya' and we just started from 'where are you from' and the friendship grew…

The power of the ostensibly simple gesture of opening a line of conversation and exchange was also described by the Kenyan mother in the case of her interactions with teachers:

> "Inasmuch as they [preschool staff] don't speak English, they at least try to listen to me, with my broken Polish [laughter]. They give me time and try to understand what I'm saying. They really try to explain to me everything." (mother, Kenyan, urban setting)

A Ukrainian mother recounted similar positive feelings when a teacher in her preschool in Small Town A made the effort to reach out to her:

> "When I went to the first parents meeting, I was very stressed. I thought: 'Will I be able to understand anything?' But the teacher was very nice, my daughter's teacher…I remember that after the meeting, the teacher approached me and she tried to explain, maybe asked me some additional questions…this was nice and helpful and very important to me in that moment." (mother, Ukrainian, Small Town A)

Rather than advocating for individuals to become more motivated or more pro-active about reaching out to those who are perceived as different, the findings of this study suggest that facilitating spaces for and encouraging the practice of conversation and exchange may be the task and responsibility of public institutions (and not the individuals that circulate within them). As such, the following practical recommendations can be offered based on the above-discussed research results:

- Conversation guides or conversation starters could be developed to help parents overcome the awkward moments of taking the first step to engage with another parent who they do not know and/or fear may be "different" in an insurmountable way. Such conversation starters could be part of the handbook that is planned as a practical output of WP1.
- Spotlighting the perspectives and experiences of non-Polish (speaking) parents could be an important way to bring those voices to bear on the narrative norms and practices in the (pre)schools, but it would be important to do so in ways that do not "other" the non-Polish (speaking) parents. In this regard, it is important to remember that non-Polish (speaking) parents have experiences and perspectives that relate to their migration experiences as well as those that are unrelated to them. One concrete example of a way to give visibility to these perspectives and experiences could be for non-Polish parents to become part of the (pre)school parent committees (these committees are responsible for logistics related to some events, but also to holding the class budget and to mediating communication between the (pre)school and the wider community of parents). In the above-described study, it is noteworthy that only two non-Polish parents were part of the committees, both the mothers spoke Polish fluently and had been living in Poland for over a decade. When the non-Polish parents who were not part of such parent committees were asked why they did not join, they

explained, for example, that their Polish was “not good enough” or that they did not feel that they could contribute in a way that would be better than is already done by the current (Polish) parents in their committee. Thus, one way for the non-Polish parents’ perspectives to be heard is for (pre)schools to take a pro-active role in encouraging non-Polish parents to take part in these committees, which could give them a chance to take a leadership role and to have influence over practice and narratives in the (pre)school. In effect, these committees could also then serve as a space in which to deepen encounters and contacts between non-Polish parents and Polish parents. The Podcasts that are planned in the RAISE Project as a practical output in WP1 could be one way of modeling the value and significance of giving non-Polish (speaking) parents a platform.

- Education, training and skill-building for both (pre)school staff and the wider community of parents and children within the educational institutions about issues related to social diversity (inc. migration, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination) was also confirmed as an ongoing need. Raising awareness about such key concepts, vocabularies and processes could facilitate dialogue and conversation, both in the everyday context of parenting encounters and in the process of developing practices, narratives and tools that support social diversity on the institutional level in the (pre)schools.

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