

# **Migration Narratives in Europe**

## ***A Social Media Intelligence Study***

*Country report for the Republic of Poland*



**A Bakamo Public**  **Project for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung**

**- 2019 -**



# Context to the Polish Discussion on Migration

- The **Republic of Poland** has been a member of the European Union since 2004, with a population of 38,005,614 in 2015. The country received a relatively steady flow of **asylum seekers** in the migration crisis since 2015, and currently they **make up only 0.04% of the local population, which is one of the lowest ratio in the EU.\***
- Public social media conversation in Poland around migration in one year consists of ~68,500 posts. Compared to population size, **the conversation on migration in Poland is the smallest in the EU.**
- The Polish government is lead by prime minister **Mateusz Morawiecki**, who is heading the right wing, **national-conservative and Christian-democratic** party “Law and Justice” (PiS).
- The Polish government represents an **anti-migration stance** in the European Union, in cooperation with Hungary and other Visegrád Four countries.



\*Source: [europarl.europa.eu](http://europarl.europa.eu)

# Introduction | PL

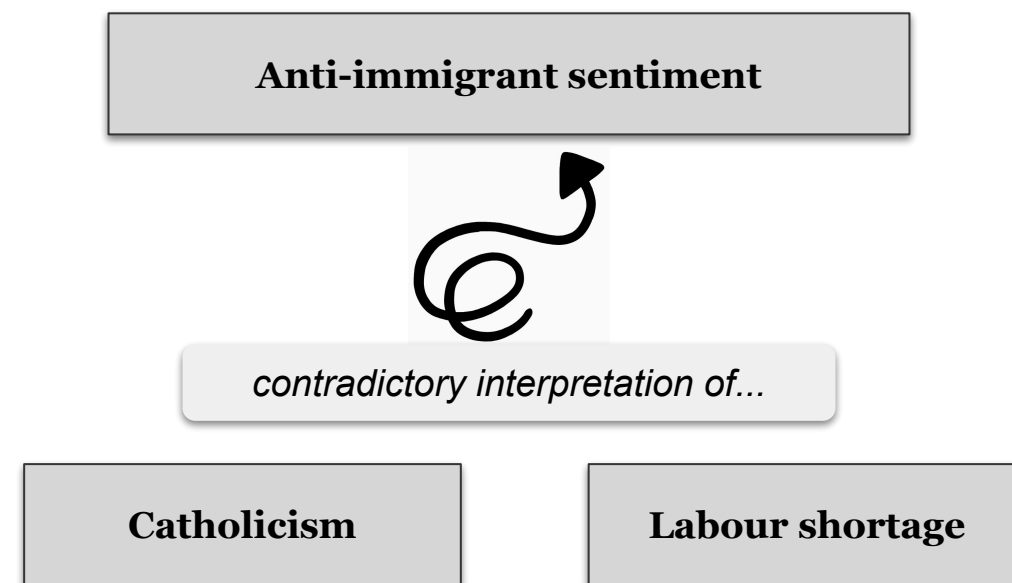
## Poland: Land of Contradictions

Poland receives one of the smallest number of migrants in Europe, and people's attitude to them is influenced by two key factors: religion and labour shortage.

Most Poles are deeply Catholic and while church nobilities encourage the support of refugees based on the Catholic value of compassion, most believers claim that the **difference between Islam and Christianity is too crucial to support those with Muslim faith**. If anything – argue many Poles – helping and welcoming Muslim refugees will only increase crime rates in the country.

In the meantime, **Poland suffers from severe labour shortage. To soothe the problem, masses of Ukrainian guest workers have been allowed to enter Poland** for years, with the assent of most locals. However, the resentment against applying foreign workers with Asian or African origin remains intense.

All this contradiction in public points of view is palpable in the government's actions: while criticizing a quota system and Germany's *Willkommenskultur*, they actually grant asylum to more than 7000 refugees. These conflicting deeds are often called out by the Polish public, denouncing the government as traitors of Poland.



# How and where do Polish people discuss migration in the social media space?



## Size of Pan-European Narratives

A strong majority of Poles discuss the **security** aspects of migration, fuelled by fear of crime perpetrated by migrants. The **humanitarian** aspects (with both pro- and anti-migrant voices) make up 8% of the conversation, while economic, demographic, and cultural implications are barely discussed.

## Local Issues

The Polish migration discussion is underpinned by two local circumstances: deep roots of the **Catholic religion** in locals' customs, and **the presence of millions of Ukrainian workers** in Poland.

## EU & Domestic Politics

**Presence of political references depends on the topic:** security issues are more discussed in an international political context, while the tiny conversations around cultural, humanitarian, and demographic aspects of migration are underpinned by both domestic and international politics.

## Discussion Tone

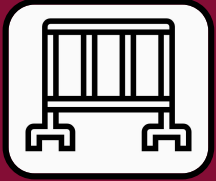
Although the Polish conversation appears to be mainly reserved, **security and economy issues do trigger intense emotions.**

## Conversation Channels

The majority of the Polish conversation takes place on **Twitter**. Most influential users appear to be politicians and journalists, while some users' frantic activity implies the presence of bots.



# Pan-European Narratives in the Polish Context



Security is the **biggest** topic around migration in Poland, and most of it is **fuelled by fear** of crime committed by migrants. In line with public sentiment, the government follows an anti-migrant agenda and opposes the EU quota system.



**Despite the religious call** to support those in need, Poles express a **strong anti-immigrant sentiment** in the humanitarian narrative.

Many people also argue that by welcoming a large amount of Ukrainian guest workers, Poland fulfilled its humanitarian obligations.



The conversation around the cultural implications of migration is tiny, but many Poles assume that the **integration of Muslim migrants into a deeply Catholic Polish society is hopeless**.



**Labour shortage** is a pressing issue in Poland, and many people accept foreign workforce to soothe the problem.

In the meantime, some argue that efforts should instead be made to attract emigrated Poles to return home.



Very few people discuss the cost of welcoming migrants in Poland, but those who do are concerned about the **disproportionate size of the support migrants receive**.

# + *Pan-European Narratives in Poland*

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1.



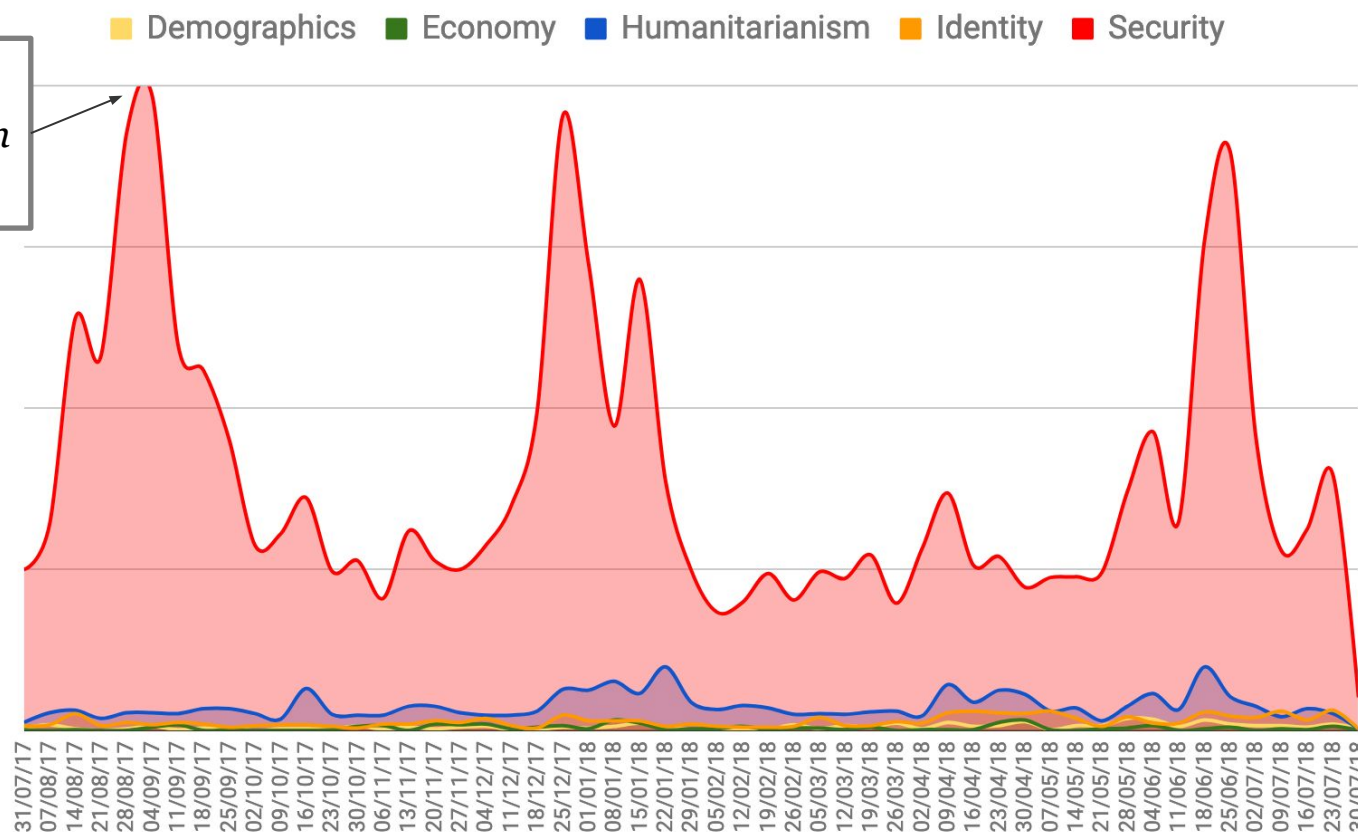
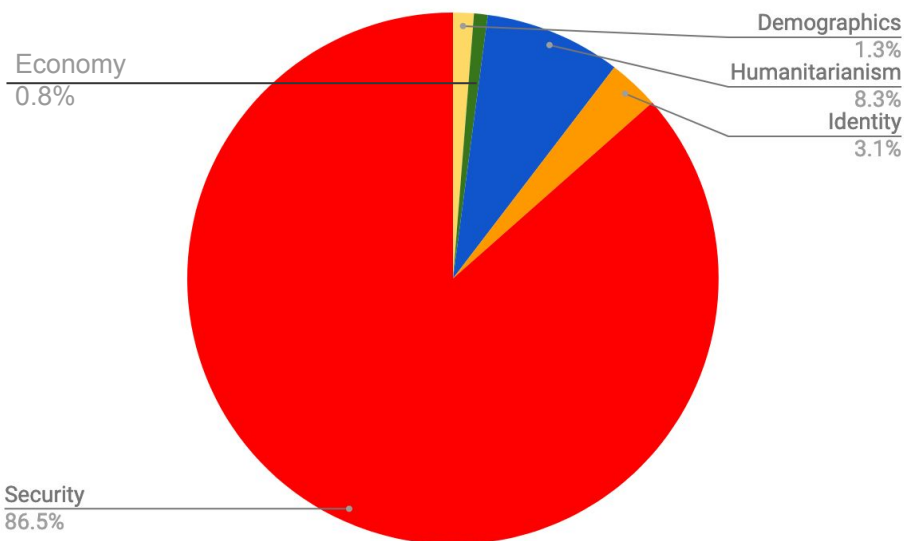
## The shape of the migration discourse

Despite the small number of asylum seekers in the country, the Polish conversation is dominated by the fear of migrants.

The humanitarian aspect of migration is discussed by a small minority of people, while the cultural, economic, and demographic implications hardly appear.

**Results:**  
**~68,400**

*“Shocking results of the survey by WP.pl: The news site’s readers prefer to leave the Union than to accept refugees”*

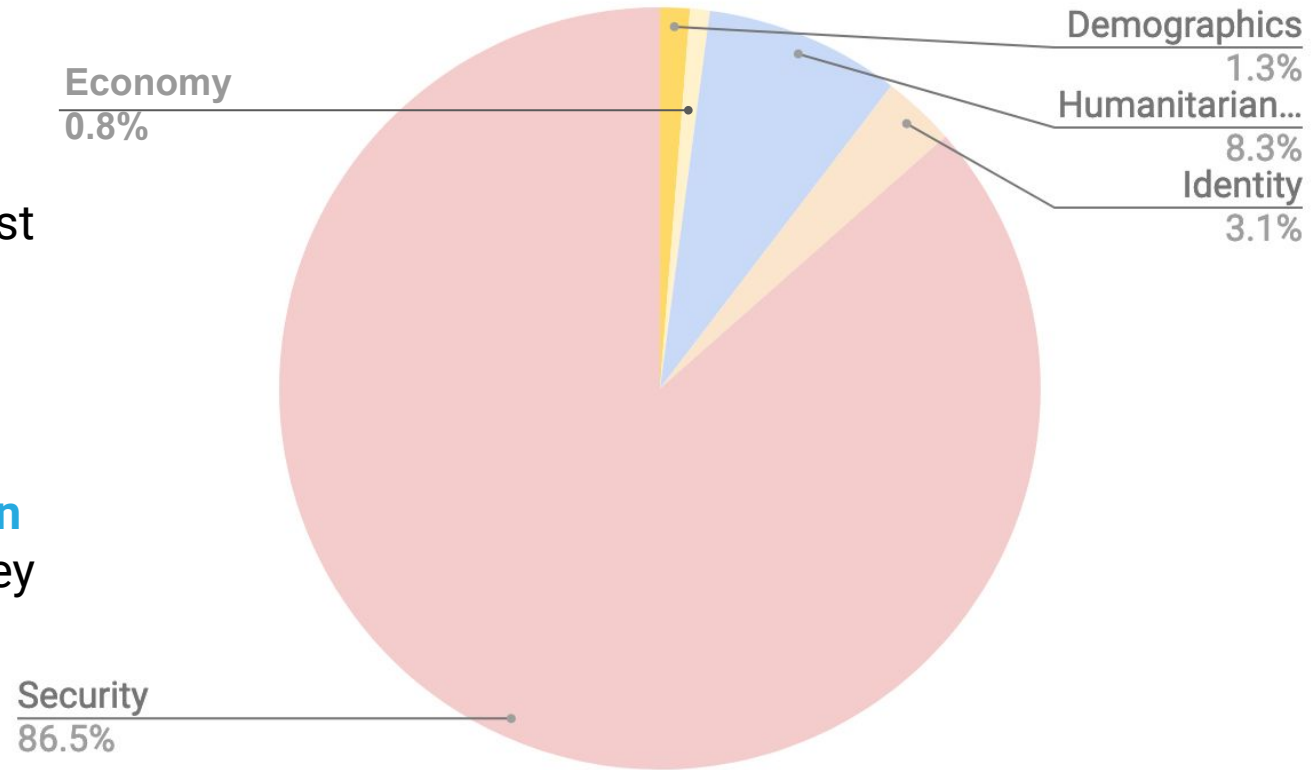




# Demographics (1): Labour Shortage Eased by Workforce from Overseas

Labour market shortage is a pressing issue for the Polish economy, and most people accept that immigrant workforce must be applied. Polish companies are already inviting talent from overseas, and experts warn that the legislative environment must be adapted to accommodate large number of immigrant workforce.

However, some Poles oppose immigrant labour and the government's heavy expenditures to invite foreign workers. Instead, these people demand that the money be spent on inviting emigrated Poles back home.







# Pan-European Narratives | PL

## Demographics (2): Quotes

### ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Inviting refugees to manage labour shortage is opposed

*The government wants to fight the labour shortage. The new migration policy, to be announced in September will cost 2.9 billion PLN. So **basically the anti-Polish PiS government intends to spend 3 billion of our money to attract immigrants to Poland.** And there are fools who call PiS a 'patriotic party'?*

### PRO-MIGRANT VOICES

Poland is in need of immigrants, potentially from Asian countries

*The Minister of Investment and Development, Jerzy Kwieciński, believes that in 2030 there will be a shortage of 1.5 million people on the Polish labor market, so the migration must grow (...) **Ukrainians can not patch up the labor market, thus Asian countries (including Muslim countries) will be a new goal for Polish companies.** The largest companies in Poland are already attracting immigrants from Nepal or Bangladesh.*

### NEUTRAL VOICES

Poland must adapt its public policy system to the growing number of immigrants

*The level of labor immigration to Poland is growing. During the year, the number of work permits issued for foreigners from outside the European Union increased by almost 100%. Almost one million employees from the East are already on the labor market. This means that **Poland faces big challenges in the field of creating migration policy, clear procedures for hiring, shortening the waiting time for a work permit,** or making the migration policy more consistent with other areas.*

*The arrival of Ukrainian migrants is a challenge for the labor market (...) We are dealing with the largest influx of migrants in recent decades, especially from Ukraine; this is a challenge, from the labour market's point of view.*

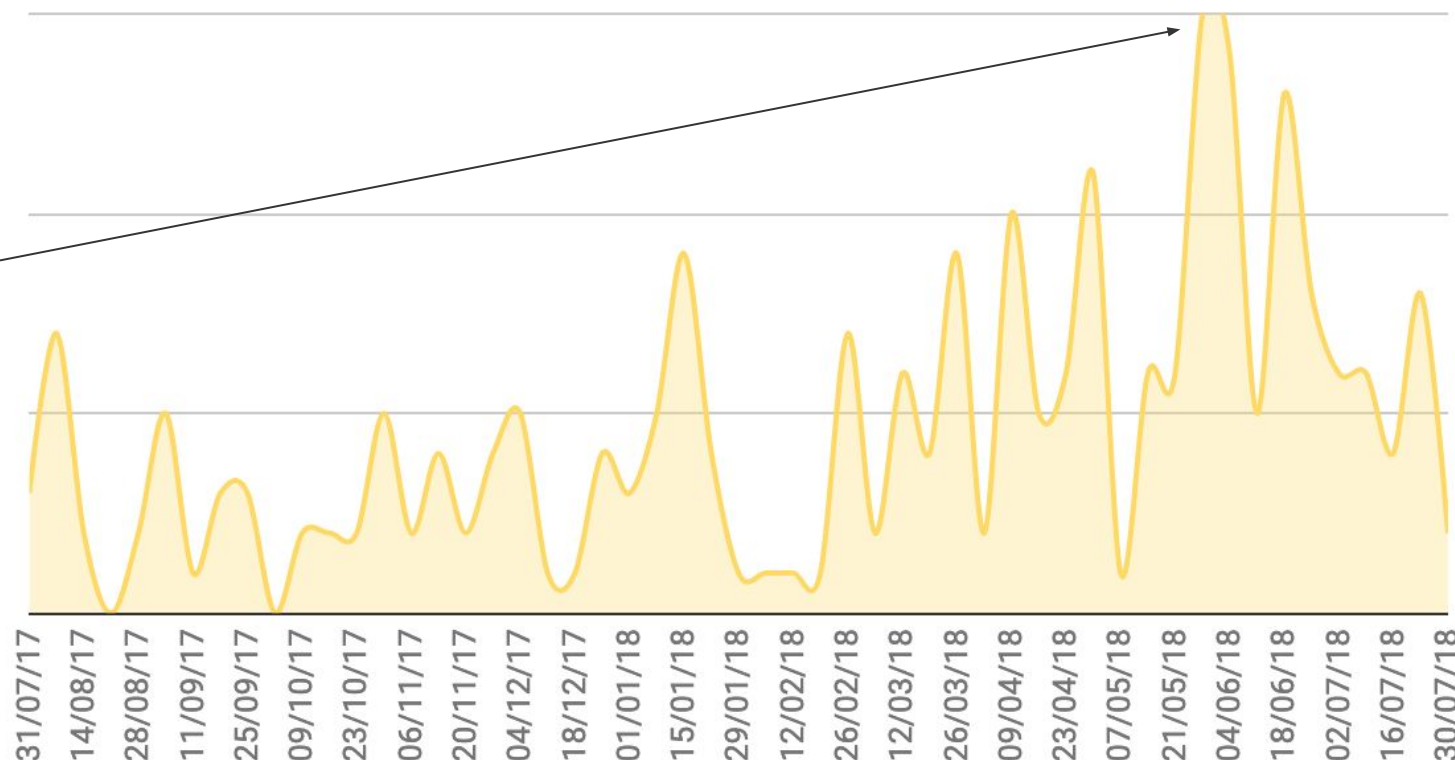
# Pan-European Narratives | PL

## Demographics (3): Top Stories

The government's contractionary policy to allow immigrants from various foreign countries to ease labour shortage triggers substantial interest among locals.

**Results:**  
~860 (1,3 %)

*PiS's scheme is pretty clear: Step 1: 40% taxes for salaries. Step 2: Say that all workers emigrated and now nobody is paying taxes. Step 3: Bring in immigrants. Step 4: Discover with amazement that immigrants work illegally. Step 5. Invite more immigrants.*



Demographics

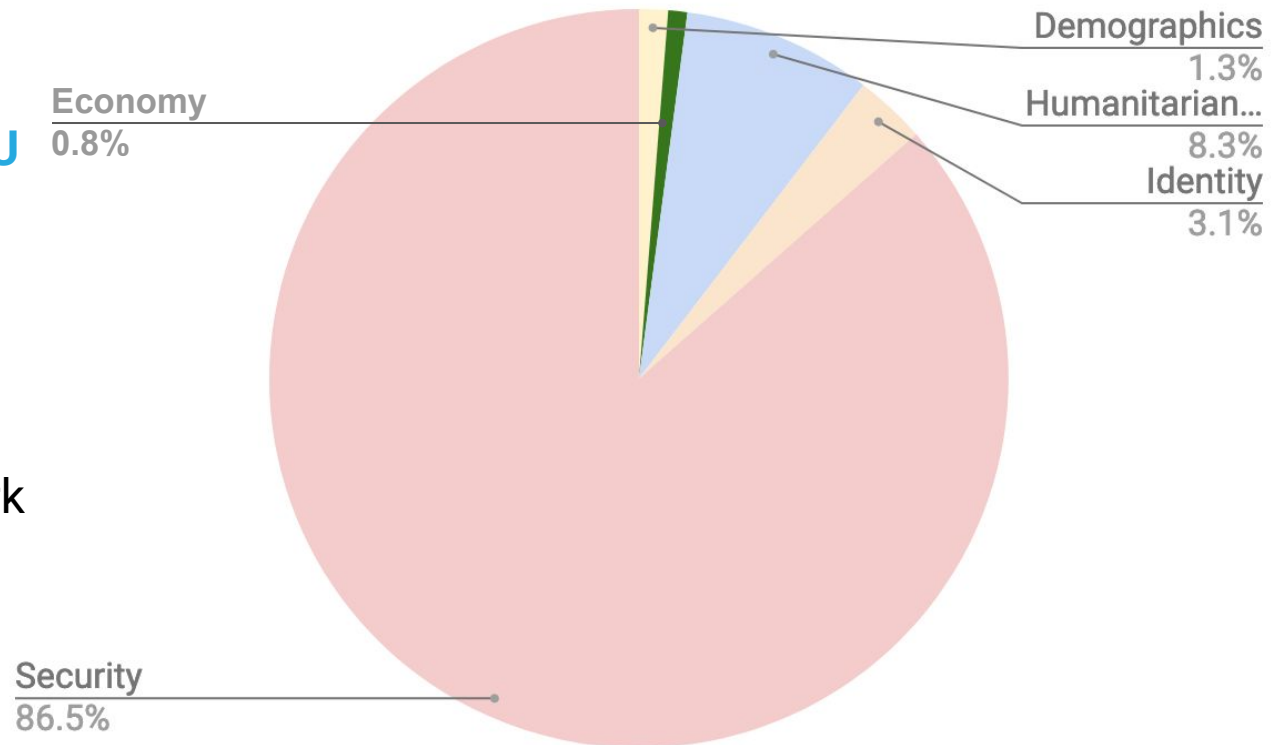


# Pan-European Narratives | PL

## Economy (1): Zero-sum Game Against Migrants

Only a tiny fraction of the conversation addresses the economic implication of accepting refugees, and most of it expresses a strong anti-migrant attitude based on the zero-sum thinking. **People are outraged over the help immigrants receive both in Poland and in other EU countries** – especially in Germany – and demand all that money to be spent on locals' welfare instead.

In similar fashion, people demand a more effective pooling system to recognize economic migrants and point to examples of how refugees are unwilling to work for the benefits they receive.



## ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

### Immigrants are actually well-off

*"Poor" refugees of #Merkel: "17 years old" **Afghan man**, Hussein Khavari, who raped and murdered 19 years-old student girl in september 2016 #Freiburg **had super new iPhone6S**.*

### In Germany, refugee aid is unfair compared to the social benefits locals receive

***In Germany, Merkel's "guests" costs 3553 eur per month each, with accommodation and all else covered.** In the meantime, German pensioners collect returnable bottles, and many German families need a second job to survive.*

### Refugees are unwilling to do difficult jobs

*A side effect of the Polish family support "500+" is that now nobody goes to Germany to collect asparagus. **Yes, refugees could do it, but somehow they don't want to do such a hard job.***

### Economic migrants should not be granted asylum

*We shouldn't participate in the relocation of economic immigrants (...) In my opinion, **Europe has a problem with checking properly those who reach its borders.***

# Pan-European Narratives | PL

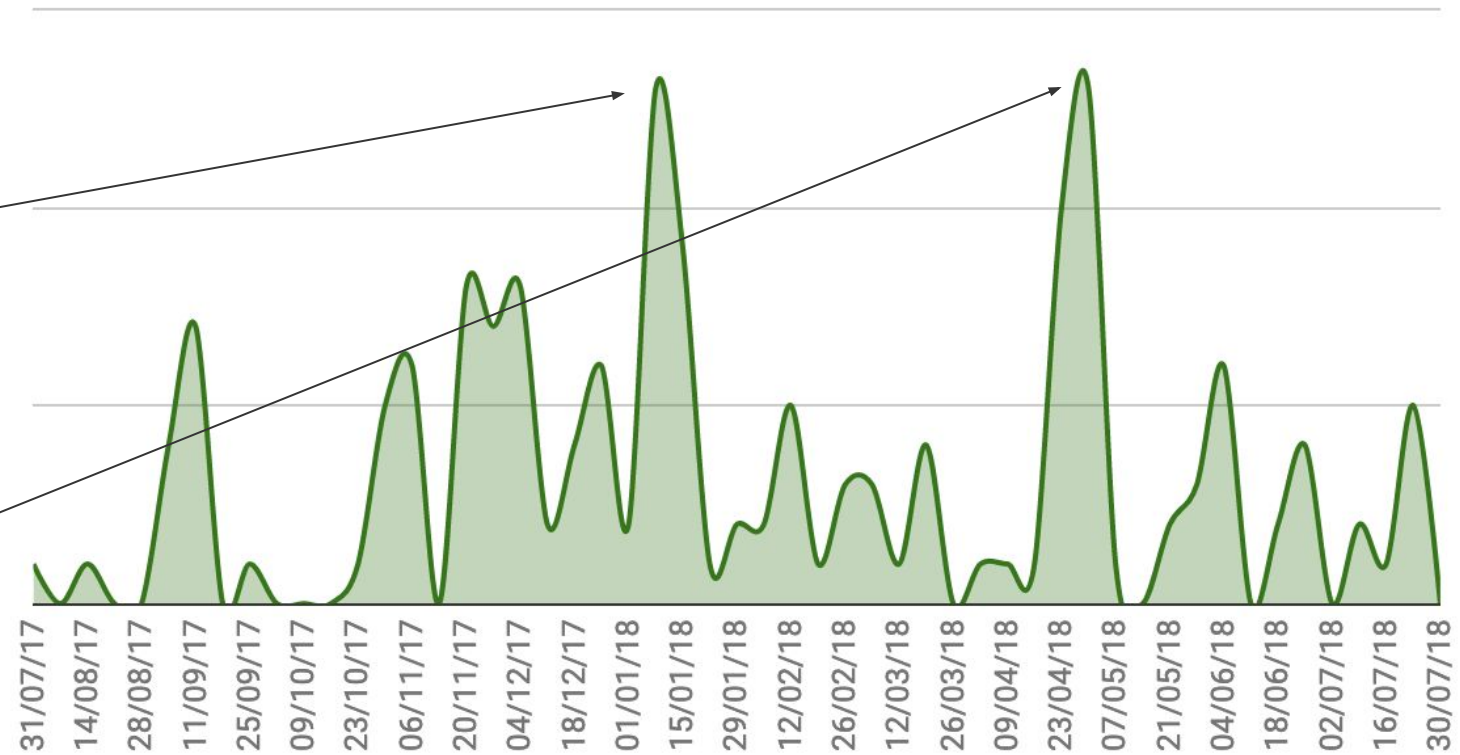
## Economy (3): Top Stories

Polish people express outrage over the help provided for immigrants, which is perceived as unfairly large. Furthermore, some Poles point out that charity organisations use refugees as a tool for self-promotion.

**Results:**  
**~560 (0,8 %)**

Germany under the pressure of lazy immigrants, whose maintenance costs billions, and **the country is heading towards a financial disaster.**

During the Brussels conference on the situation in Syria, **Poland declared 48 million pln** for humanitarian aid for the citizens of this country. In addition, Poland will allocate 12.5 million eur to help refugees in Turkey. **All this money spent on migrants instead of Poles...**



Economy

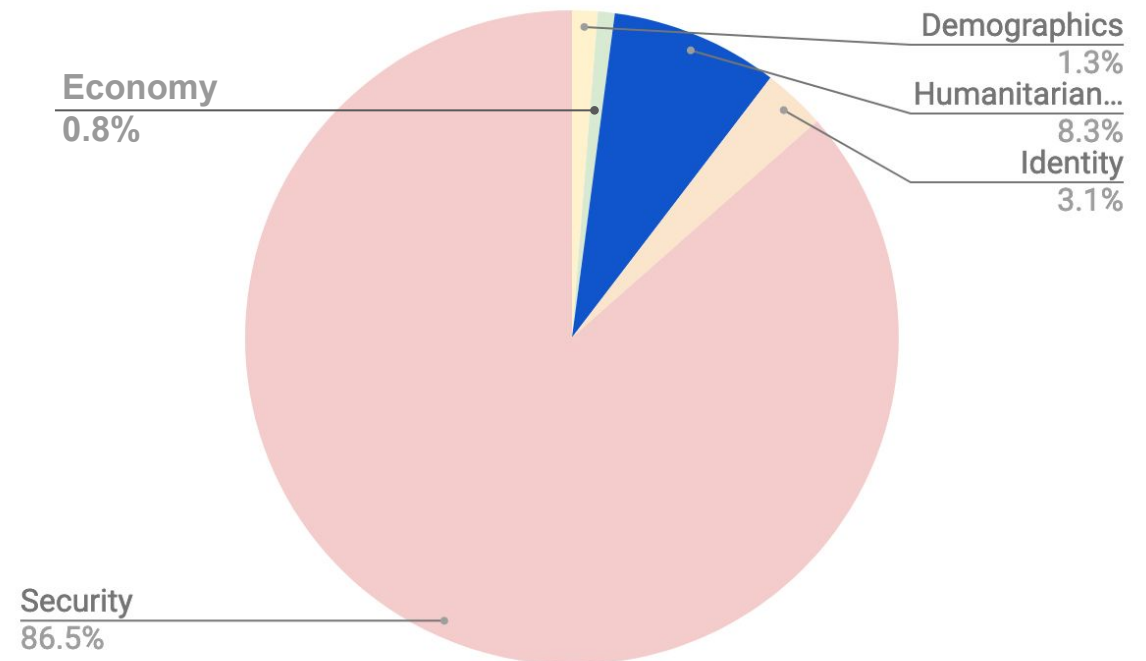


# Humanitarianism (1): Religious Obligation Without Action

The **directive of the Catholic church to support migrants** based on the religion's core commandments are echoed in Poland by church nobilities, **while the public is reluctant to follow up these commands with action**. Liberal cities such as Poznan organize events to better understand refugees' circumstances, but most Poles think that helping migrants with camps set up close to their homeland is the most effective method of humanitarian assistance.

Anti-migrant voices are explicit in the conversation: **many Poles feel that by welcoming Ukrainian immigrants, the country fulfilled its humanitarian obligations**.

Also, **media coverage on refugees' sufferings are often deemed as propaganda** intended to increase pro-migrant sentiment.







# Pan-European Narratives | PL

## Humanitarianism (2): Quotes

### ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Poland fulfilled its humanitarian obligations by welcoming migrants from Ukraine

*The most welcoming country in Europe that welcomed the most migrants? Poland! **Yes, most of them are Ukrainians, but many of those are fleeing a war. We do not want any more migrants!!***

Exaggerated coverage of migrants' suffering is just propaganda

***The left media shows a dead refugee child drift ashore for weeks**, while the child who was killed yesterday in Barcelona in a migrant attack is censored. This is just pure propaganda...*

### PRO-MIGRANT VOICES

Provision of aid to those in need is a religious obligation

*On the World Refugee Day, Pope Francis tells us how we can find Jesus. **"Every foreigner who knocks at our door is an opportunity to meet Jesus."***

Some Polish cities stand up for refugees

*We would like to show that **Poznań is a city open to foreigners. We do not have room for xenophobia and hatred.** Unfortunately, we notice slight approval from the currently ruling government for xenophobic attitudes towards refugees, but we want to express our objection.*

Help refugees close to their own land

*@ Morawiecki declared a 10 million USD aid for the construction of modular homes for Syrian refugees in Lebanon. **The Polish government wants to increase expenditures on humanitarian aid for refugees who want to stay as close to their country as possible.***



# Pan-European Narratives | PL

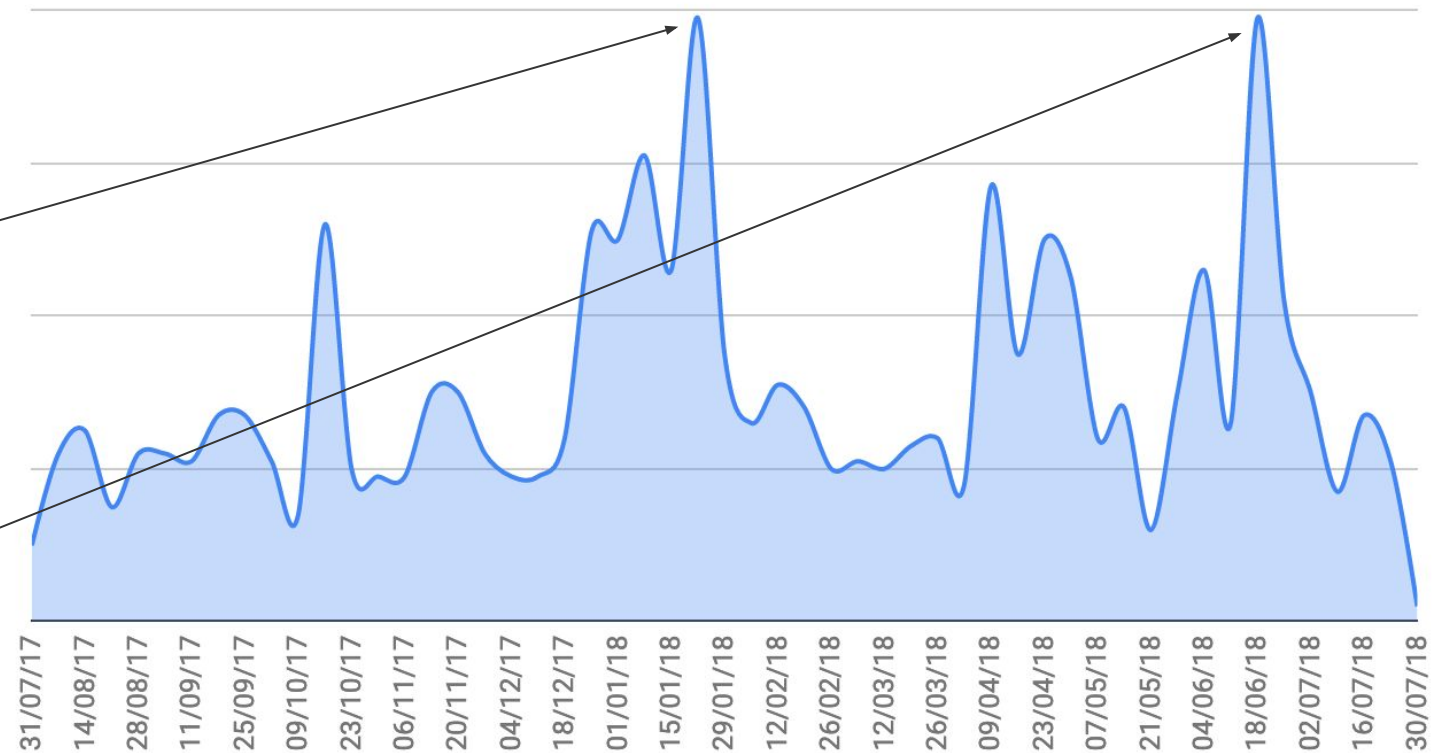
## Humanitarianism (3): Top Stories

Despite the country's religious background, in accordance with the public's general sentiment, the government aims to reach international agreements that will not compel Poland to welcome migrants.

**Results:**  
~5,700 (8,3 %)

Debate over the compliance with the Dublin Regulations, as the Visegrad Four countries jointly oppose the EU's immigration quota

EU Migration Summit, celebrated as a success for Poland, for avoiding the submission of immigrants to the country



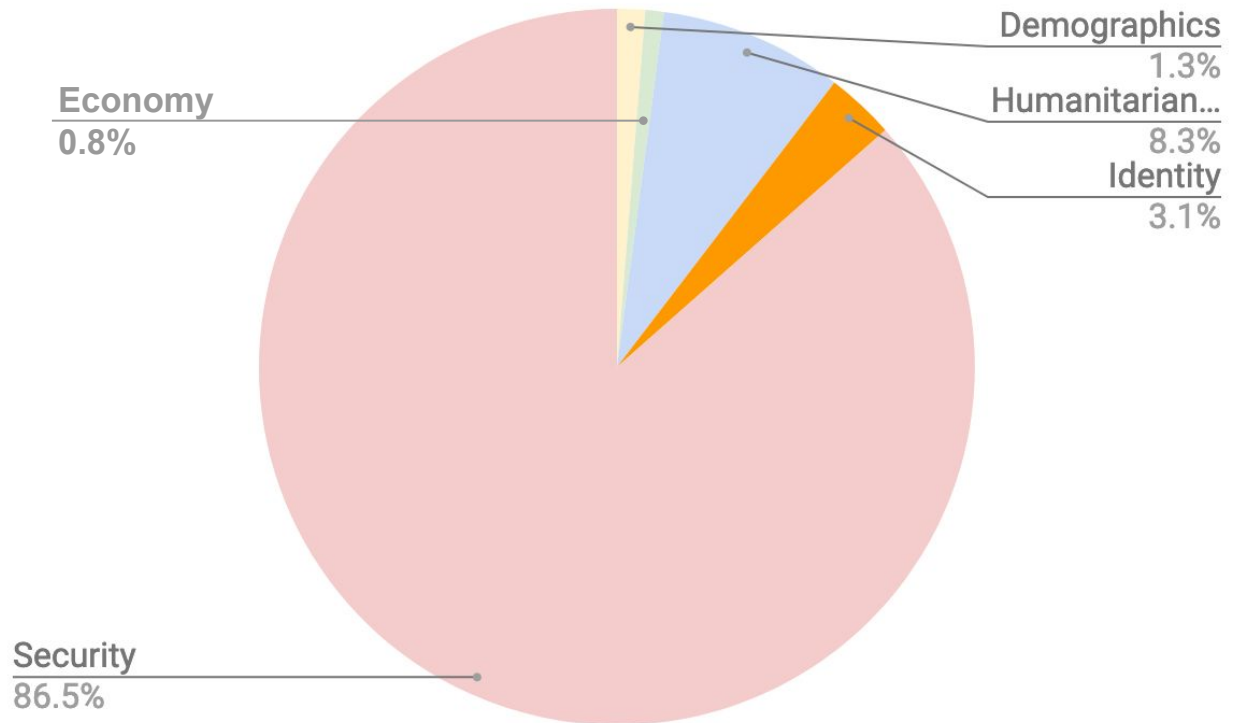
Humanitarianism



# Identity & Customs (1): Polish and Catholic Culture Perceived to be Under Threat

Most Poles are certain that the **integration of Muslim immigrants to a deeply Catholic culture is hopeless**, and they claim that Muslim refugees are prone to radicalism and are unwilling to assimilate in Poland. This sentiment is shared also by people who were born in Poland to immigrant parents.

People not only speak about the impossibility of integration in general, but condemn the government for granting residence permit to asylum seekers with religions other than Catholic.





# Pan-European Narratives | PL

## Identity & Customs (2): Quotes

### ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Integrating Muslim migrants in Catholic Poland is impossible

*Immigrants will never blend into the culture and religion of this environment because they have their own, deeply implanted in them. NO for immigrants!*

*It is not true that we will ever be able to assimilate migrants. There are too big cultural and social differences, and on top of that, they are keen to radicalism.*

Polish customs are under threat by the arrival of immigrants

*Izu Ugonoh, African-Polish boxer: " I feel safe in Poland (...) I can understand that Poland does not accept immigrants. (...) It would not be good if people came to Poland without respect for Polish culture and tradition*

The government is criticized for granting asylum to refugees from non-Christian countries

*The government must be out of its mind. PIS was not chosen to allow thousands of immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and other Muslim countries!!*

# Pan-European Narratives | PL

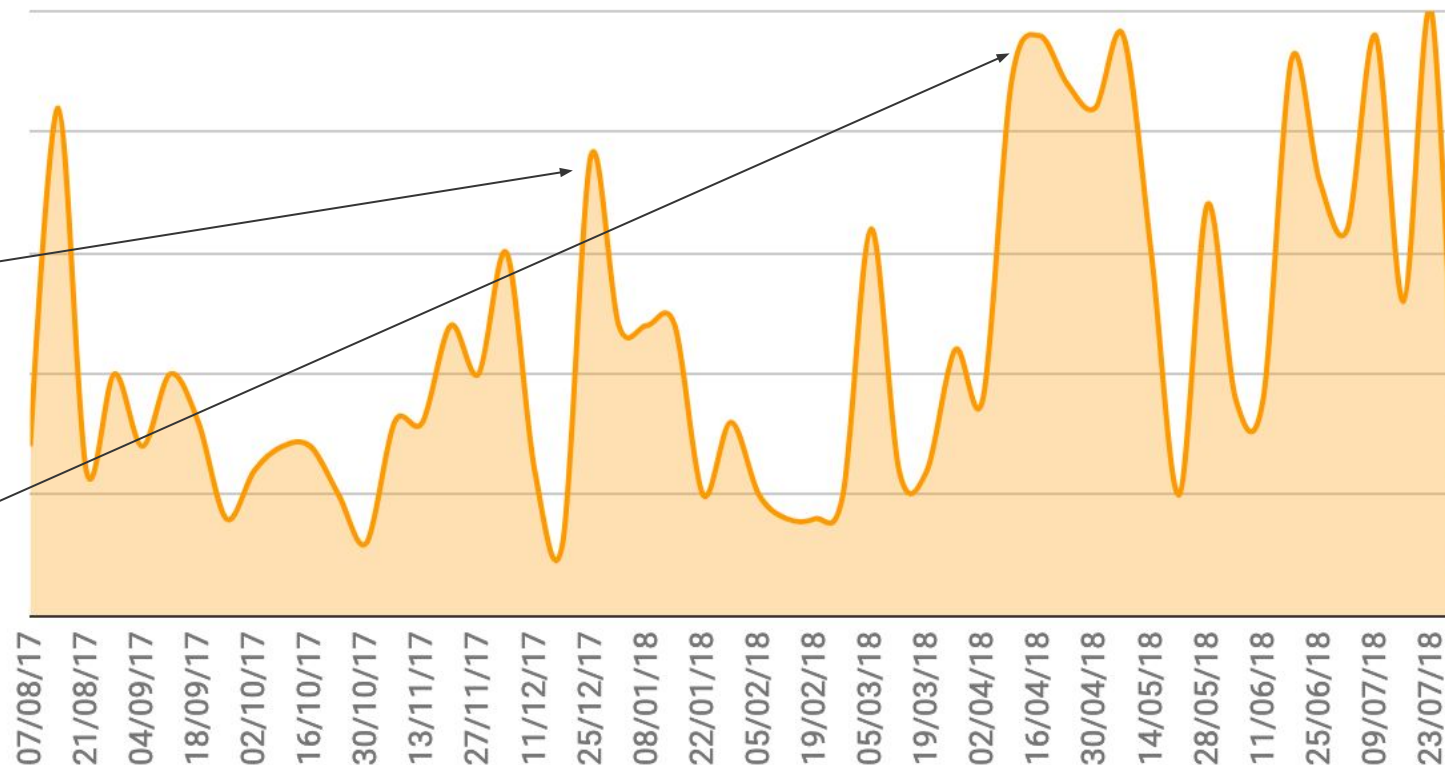
## Identity & Customs (3): Top Stories

Poles participating within this conversation deny the obligation that other EU countries pose on them, and are unwilling to welcome migrants whom they believe are impossible to integrate.

**Results:**  
~2,100 (3,1 %)

As articulated by prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Poles refuse to accept Muslim immigrants

*“Show me another country like this, to which other EU member states tell what to do. Everyone tells us what we should do: accept refugees, pay to the Jews, do not demand money from the German...Fuck off!!!”*



Identity



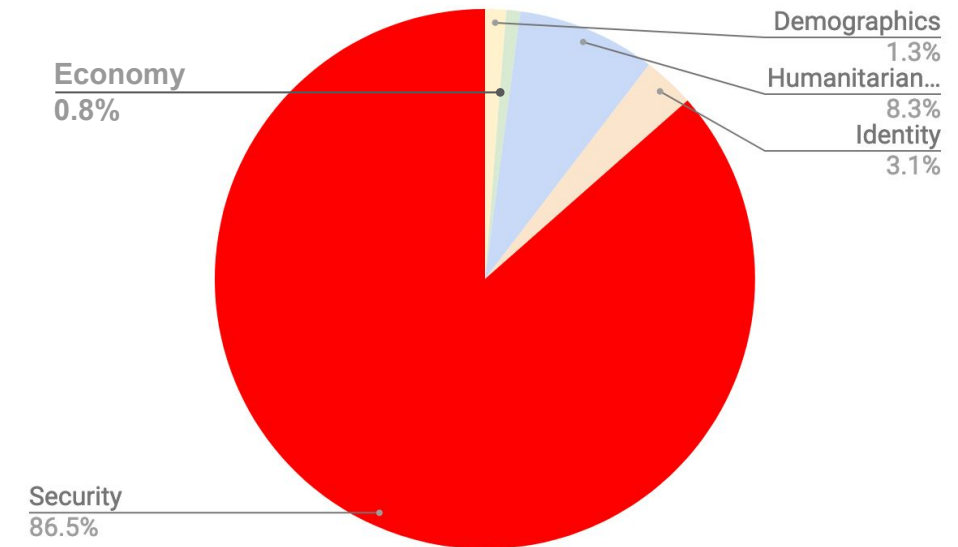
# Pan-European Narratives | PL

## Security (1): Anti-migrant Sentiment Above All

Security implications are the most important factor for Poles when it comes to migration. Many people oppose welcoming refugees, and they'd rather have Poland contribute to the EU's migration fund than accept asylum seekers to the country.

This sentiment is based on the **widespread impression that all migrants are criminals, conveyed by international crime cases committed by migrants** and the Rimini rape case where the victim was a Polish couple. Although some people call for caution in generalizing criminal deed to all migrants, most people are convinced to an extent that their fear of attacks may override even their religious obligation to help refugees in need.

This contradiction is reflected at governmental level as well. In its communication, the right-wing PiS **government follows the anti-migrant agenda, joining forces with other Visegrad Four countries against the EU's refugee relocation plans, and claiming that Poland already took its share of welcoming migrants – from Ukraine**. In the meantime, however, the government did grant asylum to some 7000 refugees, which act is criticized by the public and the far right All-Polish Youth (Młodzież Wszechpolska).





### ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

In political communication, the Polish government (teaming up with other V4 countries) refuses to change the Dublin Regulations of refugee relocation, and is against welcoming migrants...

*On Thursday, before the EU summit, the Prime Minister #Morawiecki together with the V4 group will meet with @JunckerEU and the Prime Minister of Italy to talk about immigration. **Poland does not accept refugees, but generously contributes to the immigration fund.***

*Kaczyński attacks Merkel sharply. **It is Chancellor Merkel and Germany who should bear the consequences for "opening Europe" for refugees - not Poland!***

*Already in 2015, German politician Manfred Weber (head of the EPP faction in the EP) claimed that **"What Poland has done for Ukrainians should be included in the distribution of refugees"***

...while in reality, the government does accept applications of asylum seekers in Poland.

*It was just an empty rhetoric for the masses. **In fact, the government accepts refugees, migrants and Islamists.** Without any control or plan what to do next*

*Can Prime Minister Morawiecki explain the decision to the public, that **"the government is open for immigrants"**. It will reflect in the polls...*

*This is updated information. From the beginning of 2018 to today (July 25), **8.3 thousand residence permits have been issued for migrants from Muslim (Arabic), Asian (mostly Muslim) and African countries!***

# Pan-European Narratives | PL

## Security (3): Quotes

### ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Muslim immigrants are perpetrators of crime

*Muslim immigrants in the EU behave in the same way as the Red Army in Poland used to behave: they **destroy the country and rape women**.*

*We are fighting for a **safe Poland without immigrants!** In the interests of all women.*

*Not so long ago **I was riding the subway, sitting in front of a dark-skinned guy, probably Arab**, who looked heavily sleepy or stoned. He held a cigarette in his hand and clearly tried to light it up. He was looking for a lighter, but he could not find it. **At one point he unbuttoned his jacket and a weapon appeared to my eyes**. I do not know the types of weapons, maybe it was a dummy, maybe not. The old lady who was sitting next to me was terrified. You hear a lot about the fact that Poland is perfectly prepared for immigrants, and that there is no danger. Well, after this incident, I have many doubts...*

### ANTI-MIGRANT VOICES

Help based on religious belief should not overshadow that immigrants are criminals

*I'm religious. But **if I had listened to God and allow migrants in the country, then we would face a huge raise in crime rate**.*

*This is outrageous!! **How come that Archbishop Gądecki says that "The safety of a refugee who needs help is more important than national security"???***

### PRO-MIGRANT VOICES

The stereotype that "all migrants are criminals" should be avoided

*Will all immigrants rape and blow themselves up? On the principle of "every drunk is a thief"? **Maybe just start thinking instead of repeating stupid stereotypes!***

# Pan-European Narratives | PL

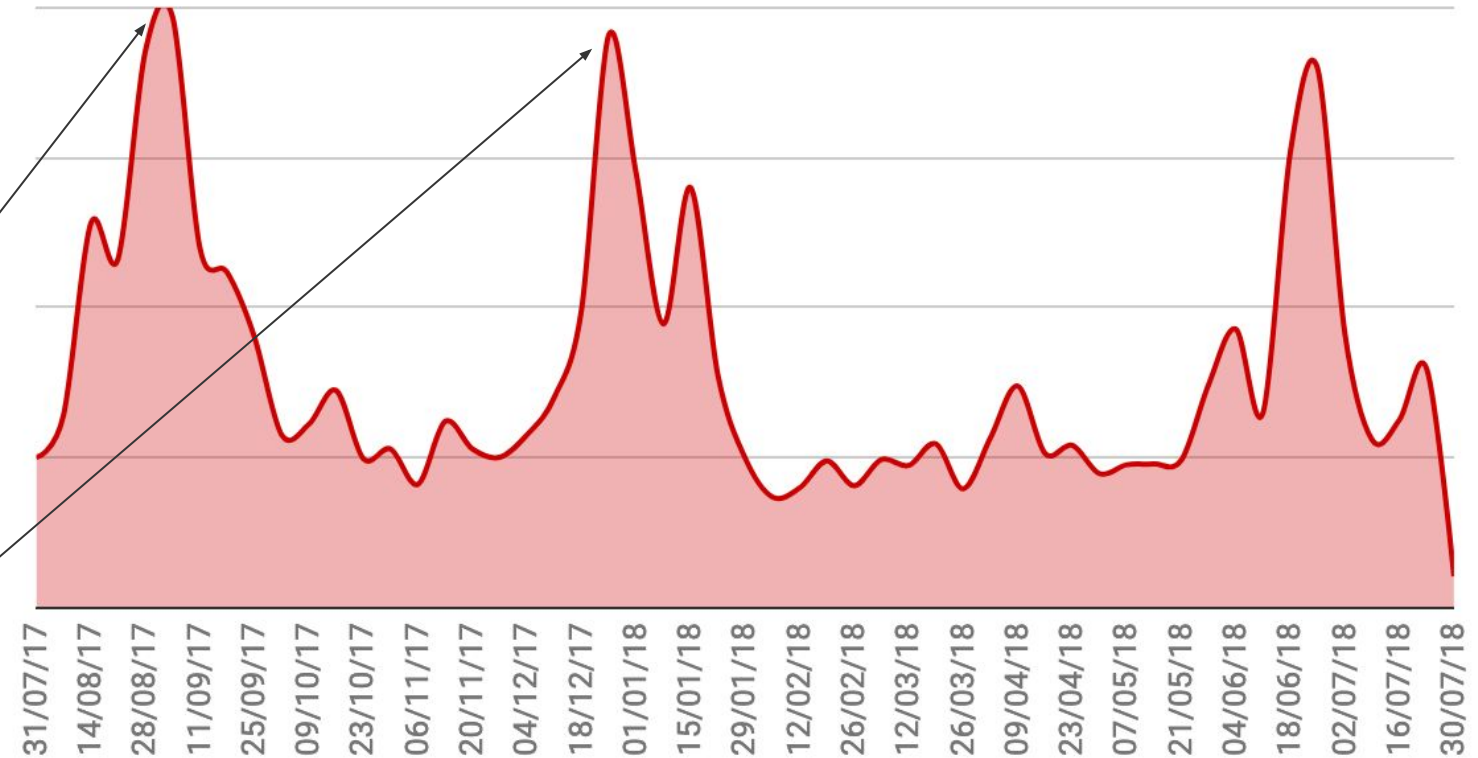
## Security (4): Top Stories

International attacks trigger strong anti-immigrant sentiment in Poland, which is shared by a large portion of the Polish society.

**Results:**  
~ 59,100 (86,5%)

Research conducted by news portal wp.pl reveals that majority of the site's readers would rather leave the EU than welcome migrants.

Poles remember the New Years' Eve attacks that occurred in Germany.



Security

# + *Local Issues in Poland Around Migration*



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# Local Issues | PL

## Role of Catholic Religion

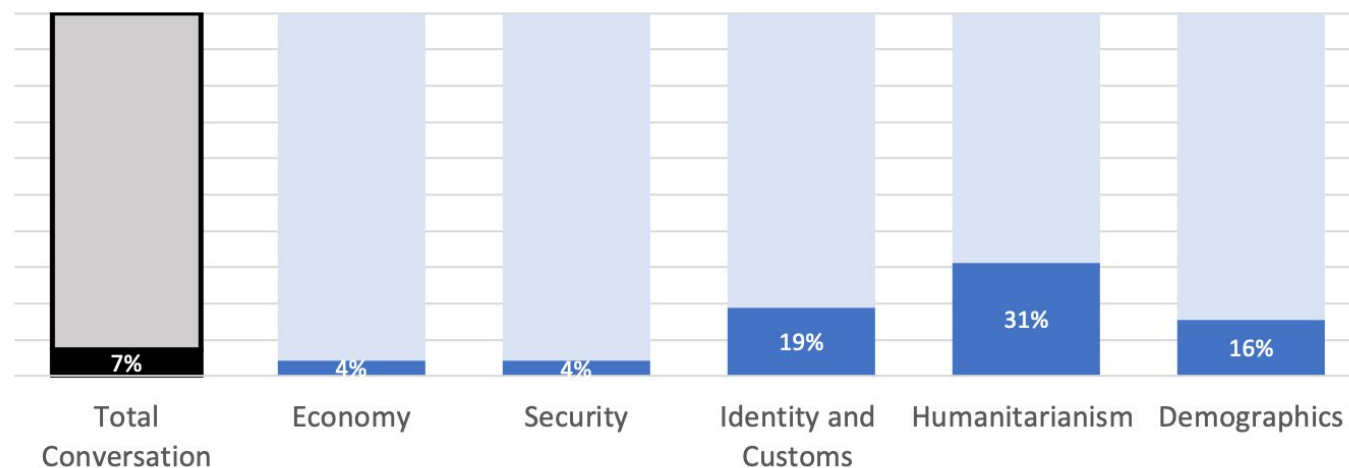
Religion plays a central role in Polish identity, and this has implications to the country's attitude towards migration.

On one hand, religious leaders of the Catholic church constantly emphasize the humanitarian obligation believers have towards migrants, citing the Bible to argue help for those in need.

On the other hand, Polish people are strongly against migration, and condemn their own religious leaders for calling on support for refugees. They claim that people of Muslim faith can not be integrated into Polish society, and thus helping them is against Poland's interest.

*True Christianity is measured through the attitude one adopts in dealing with refugees.*

*The Pope's teachings represent multiculturalism instead of the values of Catholic education. **There are no theological arguments that support migration or mixing cultures**, and no Catholic principle says that it is good for migrants to be far away from their homeland and resettle into an alien culture.*



■ Share of comments within the narrative in the context of Catholic religion



# Local Issues | PL

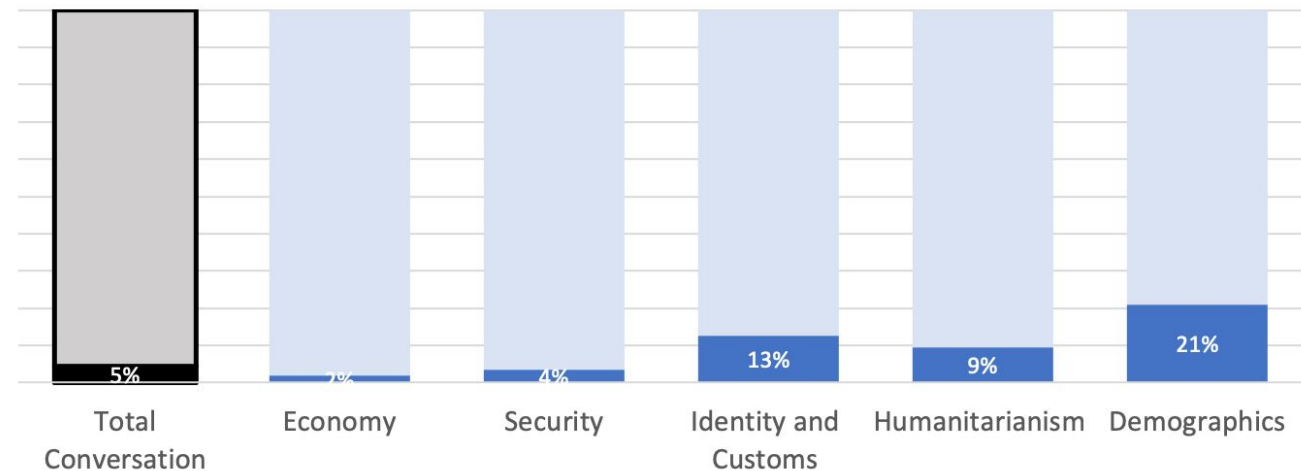
## Ukrainian Guest Workers

For several years, labour shortage in Poland has been in part eased through accepting Ukrainian guest workers.

This wave of migration and the welcoming attitude Poles demonstrated is often cited in the arguments with the EU on refugee relocation, as Poland claims to have met the relocation quota by welcoming millions of Ukrainians.

There is also a more pragmatic reason why Poles are open to Ukrainian immigrants: due to their Christian faith and similar language, their integration to Polish society is assumed to be smoother than that of refugees from Muslim countries.

*As far as migration is concerned, **we have fulfilled our obligations by accepting more than one million Ukrainians** who work, educate and assimilate in Poland. We also care about the tightness of the EU's eastern border. I do not understand why the European Commission does not recognize this.*



■ Share of comments within the narrative in the context of Ukrainian immigrants



# + *Migration in the Context of European- and Domestic Politics*



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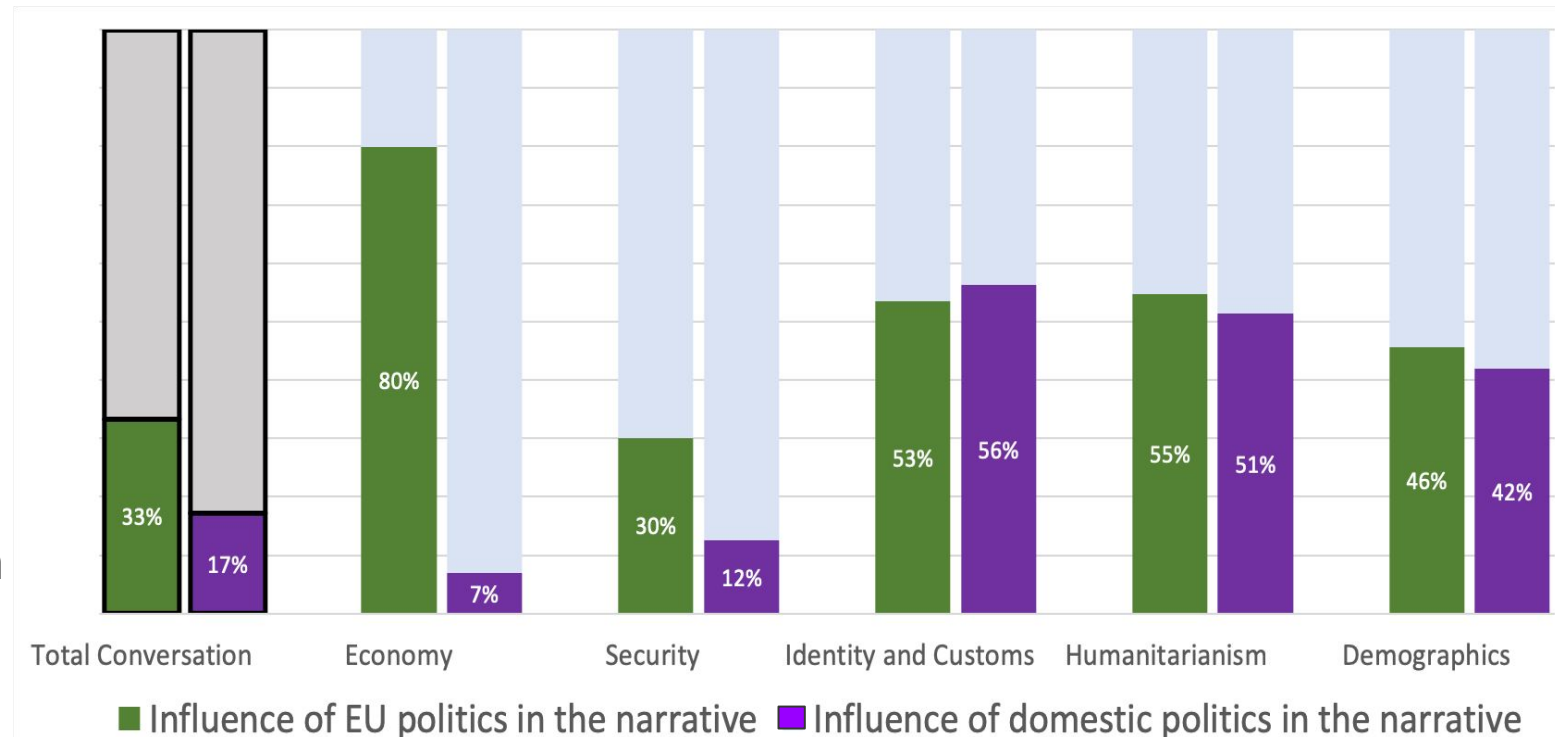
# European and Domestic Politics Context within Narratives | PL

## Role of Political References Depends on the Topic

Domestic and international references in the Polish discussion differ largely by the specific aspect of migration. An overwhelming majority of the public online conversation revolves around the security threats posed by migration, and many of the listed arguments are based on international examples of crime cases or other EU states' strategies to manage the crisis.

In the meantime, the humanitarian, cultural, and demographic aspects of migration (which are discussed to a much lesser extent) are more embedded in the local political context, while international examples are also often used to back up arguments.

Very few Poles appear to be moved by the economic consequences of migration. However, those who are, often complain about the disproportionately large economic support of migrants in other countries.



# + *Discussion Tone in Poland*



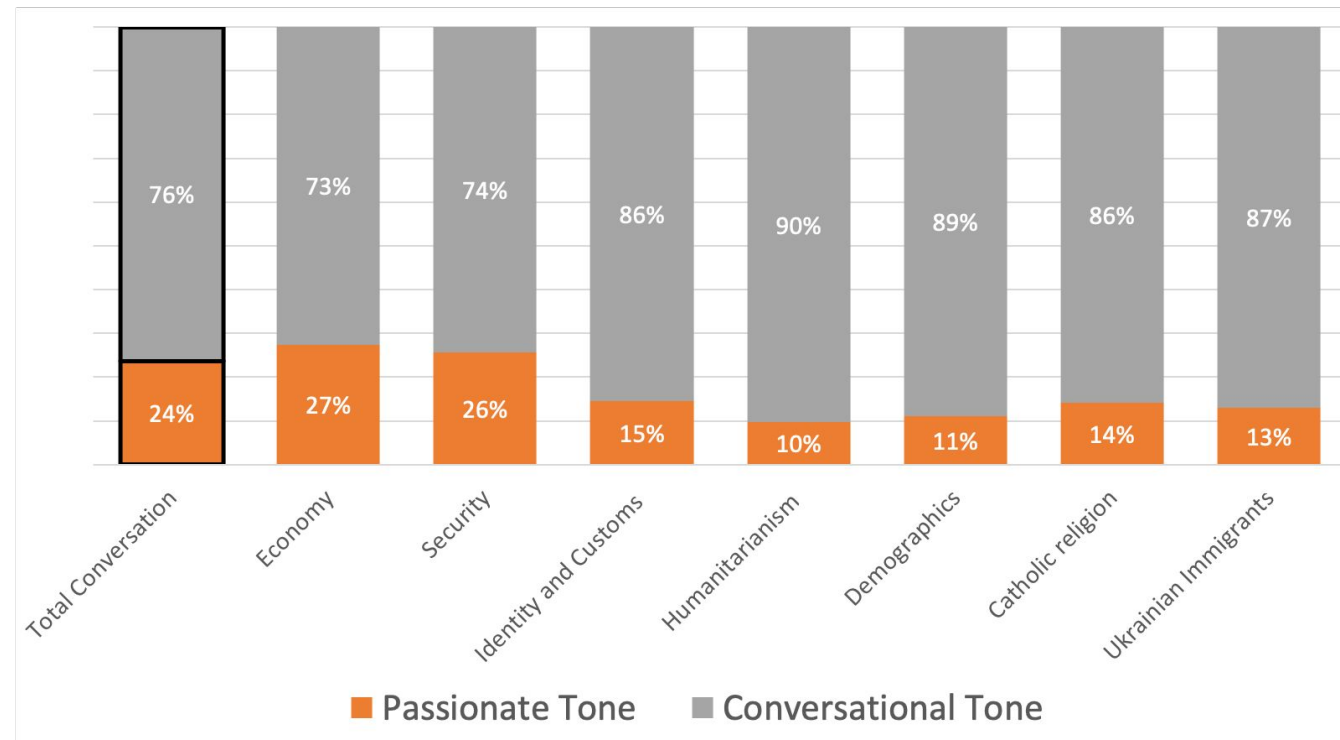
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4.



# Security and Economy Triggers Intense Emotions

The Polish conversation appears to be largely reserved. The most passionate comments are triggered in the largest and in the smallest narrative: security threats and economic implications of migration fuel relatively fierce passion in Poland.





# + *Conversation Channels*



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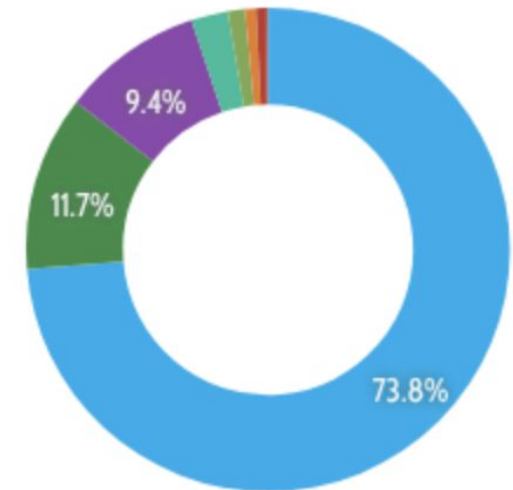
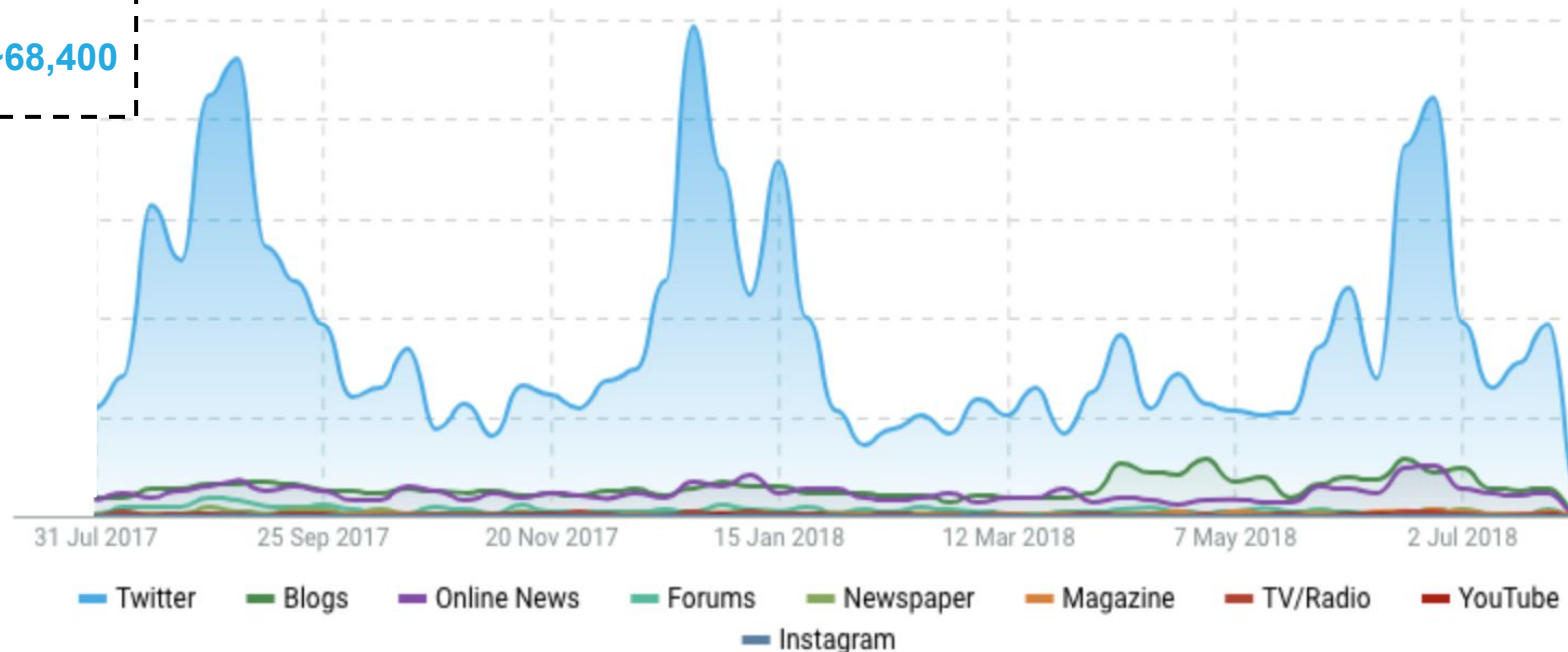


## Channel Distribution | PL

# From the Analysed and Publicly Available Data, Twitter Dominates the Debate

When it comes to addressing migration in the public online sphere, Polish people most often use **Twitter** to share their views. This platform **captures more than 70% of the public conversation**. The remaining discussions can be found on blogs, online news sites and forums.

Results: ~68,400



- Twitter
- Blogs
- Online News
- Forums
- Newspaper
- Magazine
- TV/Radio
- YouTube
- Instagram





# Most Influential Authors | PL

## Politicians' Posts Trigger The Highest Engagement

The highest engagement on Twitter is triggered by Polish politicians and journalists.

However, it is worth noting that these authors post a relatively rarely. Most active authors on Twitter post an unrealistic amount of content on a daily basis, which implies the strong presence of bots in the Polish online sphere.

### Most Influential Twitter Users in the Overall Conversation

@wszewko	university lecturer, journalist (Democratic Left Alliance)
@PolskaLiderem	nationalist, right-wing content
@tygodnik	Roman Catholic weekly newspaper
@jbrudzinski	Politician in PiS
@sbalcerac	journalist
@pietruszkankatki	individual user
@MosinskiJan	politician, trade union activist
@krzysztofbosak	far-right politician, vice president of the National Movement
@StZerko	historian
@zelazna_logika	right-wing news site

### Most Active Twitter Users in the Overall Conversation

		Tweets per day
@Anakreontyk	right-wing, nationalistic content	148
@czarymarybun777	right-wing, nationalistic content ("telling the truth")	224
@urwis1977	anti-German, nationalist profile	423
@Olgacy	retweets only	246
@laweta34	nationalist content	141
@Guraido6	retweets only, anti-PiS user	157
@TD28771438	anti-Muslim, nationalist user	143
@sbalcerac	journalist	7
@Kgb08Maria	retweets only	263
@jaras808	link sharing only	188