



HANDBOOK
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

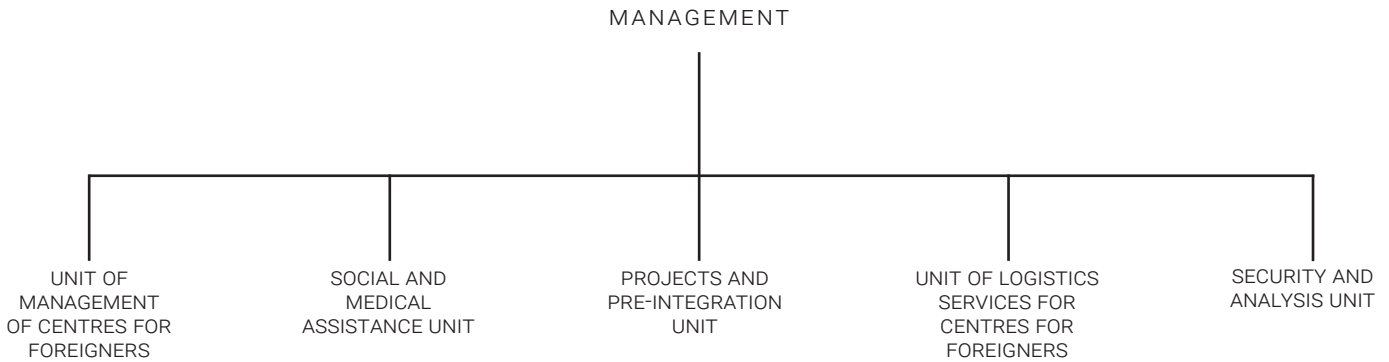
This handbook contains the most important information on the activities of the Department of Social Assistance of the Office for Foreigners:

- organisational structure of the Department,
- tasks performed by the Department (scope of social assistance provided to foreigners applying for international protection within the territory of the Republic of Poland),
- safety of foreigners,
- cooperation with non-governmental organisations.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Department of Social Assistance (DPS) is one of the organisational units of the Office for Foreigners.

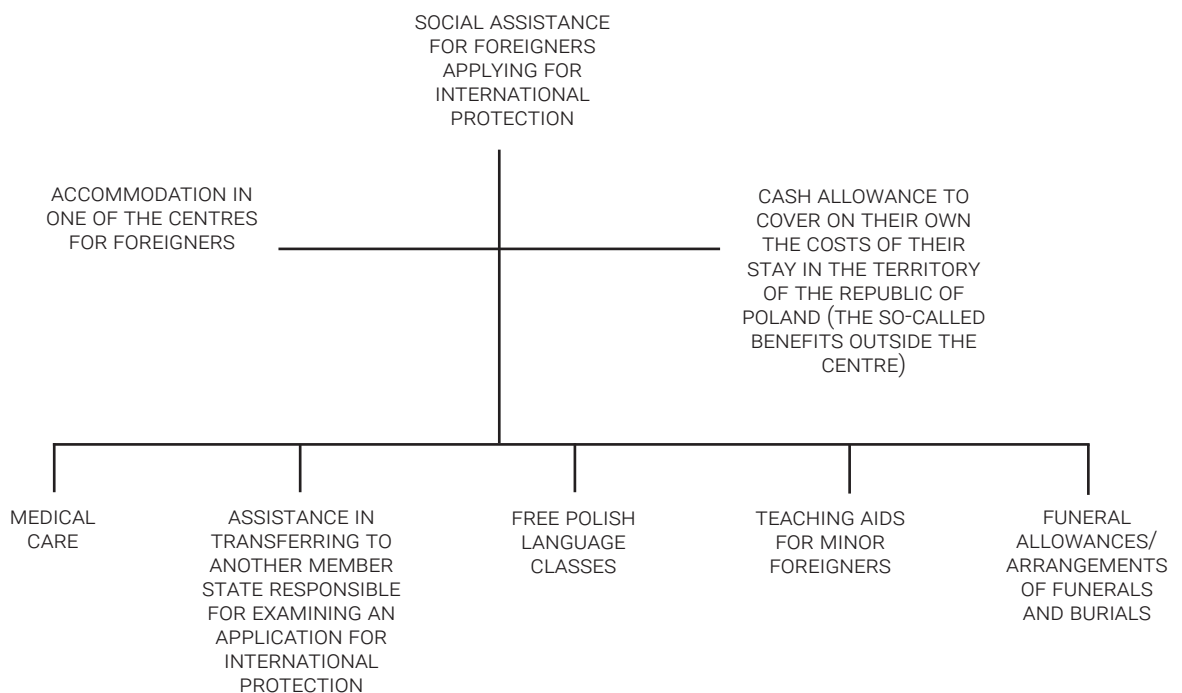
The headquarters of the DPS is located at ul. Koszykowa 16 in Warsaw. The Department of Social Assistance has the following organisational structure:



TASKS OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Department of Social Assistance performs the tasks of the Head of the Office for Foreigners related to granting social benefits to foreigners applying for international protection in Poland, within the scope defined in the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland.

The main statutory task of the DPS is to coordinate and organise the work of centres for the sake of foreigners applying for international protection.



CENTRES FOR FOREIGNERS APPLYING FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

At the moment, the DPS has 9 centres for foreigners, including 4 own centres and 5 rented centres, as well as the Foreigners Service Point run at the Office's premises at ul. Taborowa 16 in Warsaw.

Own centres include:

- centre for foreigners in Podkowa Leśna – Dębak
- centre for foreigners in Biała Podlaska
- centre for foreigners in Czerwony Bór near Łomża
- centre for foreigners in Linin

The centres in Biała Podlaska and Dębak function as reception centres from which foreigners are transferred to residence centres.

The remaining **five** facilities are rented from external parties on the basis of contracts concluded as part of public procurement procedures.

The centres mentioned above are:

- centre for foreigners in Białystok
- centre for foreigners in Bezwola
- centre for foreigners in Horbów
- centre for foreigners in Łuków
- centre for foreigners in Grupa near Grudziądz

As part of its tender procedures, the Office for Foreigners pays particular attention to criteria aimed at improving the standard of foreigners' stay in the rented leased facilities. A number of elements have been introduced into the criterion of accommodation conditions which all facilities must fulfil (e.g. have common rooms for men and women, kindergartens, a room enabling the maintenance of religious practices, recreational areas, school rooms, meeting rooms, provide an adequate number of fridges, washing machines and hoovers for use by foreigners) and elements which are additionally scored (e.g. facilities for the disabled, bathrooms in rooms, good condition of the building façade, additional equipment in the playground, retrofitting of recreational areas with equipment for team sports). The above changes have significantly improved the standard of stay of foreigners in the centres.

The scope of assistance at the centre includes:

- accommodation,
- all-day collective catering in accordance with the cultural norms of foreigners,
- permanent cash allowance in the form of the so-called pocket money,
- permanent cash allowance for the purchase of personal hygiene products,
- one-off cash allowance for the purchase of clothing and footwear,
- funding of transport to:
 - take part in the international protection proceedings,
 - attend medical examinations or vaccinations,
 - in other justified cases.
- Polish language classes and basic learning materials,
- providing teaching aids, i.e. school starter kits or vouchers for their purchase, as well as textbooks for those pupils who do not receive them at school,
- providing a cash equivalent in lieu of food (this applies to children up to 6 years of age and primary and secondary school pupils),
- covering, as far as possible, the costs of children's extra-curricular and recreational activities.

SOCIAL AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE CENTRE

All centres for foreigners run by the Office are open institutions. Foreigners who have been granted social assistance are accommodated in double, quadruple or multiple rooms depending on their family situation. Foreigners are required to observe cleanliness in their rooms and common areas. Persons accommodated in the centre receive full board in the canteen: with the exception of the centre in Czerwony Bór, where all foreigners receive an equivalent in return for board. Moreover, in all centres for foreigners, children up to the age of 6 and pupils of primary or secondary schools, in accordance with the provisions of the Act on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland, are entitled to a cash equivalent in exchange for food.

All residents of the centres are obliged to comply with the legal norms in force in the territory of the Republic of Poland and the rules of stay in the centres for foreigners, constituting an annex to the Ordinance of the Minister of the Interior of 23 October 2015.

The diversity of religions, cultures, traditions and historical conditions of the countries of origin of applicants for international protection means that the Office, in addition to carrying out tasks aimed at providing foreigners with decent social and living conditions, pays a lot of attention to the issue of respect for religion and cultural distinctiveness, and - in cooperation with other authorities - takes care to ensure security and public order in the centres and in their immediate vicinity.

Social assistance may be provided in the form of a cash allowance to enable covering on one's own the costs of the foreigners' stay in the territory of the Republic of Poland, where organisational reasons require it or it is necessary for:

- ensuring the safety of the foreigner, with particular attention to the situation of single women,
- law enforcement,
- the protection and maintenance of family ties,
- to prepare the foreigner to lead an independent life outside the centre, following a decision to grant refugee status or a decision to refuse subsidiary protection.

Foreigners receive assistance in the amount set out in the Regulation of the Minister of the Interior of 16 October 2023 on the amount of assistance for foreigners applying for international protection. The amount of aid depends on the number of family members:

NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS	DAILY AMOUNT PER PERSON	MONTHLY AMOUNT PER PERSON
1 PERSON	PLN 25	PLN 750
2 PERSONS	PLN 20	PLN 600
3 PERSONS	PLN 15	PLN 450
4 PERSONS	PLN 12,50	PLN 375

MEDICAL CARE

Medical care for foreigners applying for international protection is provided pursuant to the principles set out in the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland and covers health care services within the scope in which persons covered by obligatory or voluntary health insurance are entitled to benefits under the Act of 27 August 2004 on health care services financed from public funds with the exception of health resort treatment or health resort rehabilitation.

Medical care for foreigners applying for international protection in Poland is provided by a medical entity on the basis of a civil-law agreement concluded with the Office for Foreigners.

Medical care is provided at medical points in all centres for foreigners and in the Foreigners' Service Point at ul. Taborowa 16. Each point includes a doctor, a nurse and a psychologist who provide basic medical care as well as referrals for specialist tests. Medical care for foreigners living away from the centres is provided through facilities in the voivodeship cities.

ASSISTANCE TO BENEFICIARIES OF THE TEMPORARY PROTECTION

Pursuant to Article 112 of the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland, the Head of the Office shall provide a person enjoying temporary protection who has been issued a certificate on the exercise of temporary protection within the territory of the Republic of Poland, upon their application, medical care and grant assistance by way of accommodation and meals or assistance in the form of a cash allowance. Where it is not possible for the Head of the Office to provide assistance by means of accommodation and meals, the Head of the Office shall provide a cash allowance. The Head of the Office shall provide medical care and assistance to a foreigner under temporary protection who performs work or carries out an economic activity, taking into account the amount of the foreigner's income. Foreigners enjoying temporary protection who have been granted assistance in the form of a monetary benefit pursuant to Article 112 of the Act receive assistance in the amount specified in the Regulation of the Minister of the Interior of 6 October 2023 on the amount of assistance for foreigners applying for international protection. The amount of assistance depends on the number of family members.

Foreigners benefiting from temporary protection, together with the application for medical care and the granting of assistance in the form of a cash benefit, shall submit a declaration concerning the amount of monthly family income per person in the family and the possession of entitlement to publicly funded health care benefits on account of work or business activity.

If a foreigner benefiting from temporary protection is entitled to publicly financed health care services due to the performance of work or economic activity, the foreigner is not provided with medical care. In the case where the amount of monthly income per person in the family of a foreigner covered by temporary protection is higher than the amount of income entitling to cash allowances within social assistance as defined in the Act on Social Assistance of 12 March 2004, the foreigner and family members covered by temporary protection may be granted assistance only in the form of accommodation, Polish classes and basic materials necessary to learn this language, as well as teaching aids for children receiving education and care in public institutions, primary schools or secondary schools.

Foreigners under temporary protection who receive assistance in the form of accommodation and food are additionally entitled to:

1. permanent cash allowance for the purchase of cleaning and personal hygiene products or cleaning and personal hygiene products,
2. assistance in the form of Polish classes and basic materials necessary for learning the language,
3. teaching aids for children receiving education and care in public institutions, primary schools or secondary schools,
4. funding for public transport:
 - a) needed for medical treatment or vaccination,
 - b) in other particularly justified cases.

POLISH CLASSES FOR FOREIGNERS UNDER THE CARE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OF THE OFFICE FOR FOREIGNERS

Polish classes are provided for both children and adults under the care of the Office for Foreigners. Polish language classes for children consists with elements of school language education, including help with homework and remedial classes. Children starting or continuing compulsory education in Poland can participate in preparatory activities aimed at facilitating their adaptation to the school community. A curriculum has been developed for this group, taking into account their specific communication needs and including, among other things, simulated communication situations at school. It emphasises the acquisition and consolidation of knowledge concerning the basics of communication and the rules of the Polish school.

Polish classes for adults are based on standardised teaching material at levels A1, A2 with B1 elements and B1 with B2 elements. The programmes take into account the specific communication needs of applicants for international protection in Poland, including real-life and socio-cultural content, and include the acquisition and development of basic skills such as introducing oneself and one's family, as well as simulating communication situations. In addition, they provide an opportunity to enrich vocabulary in the above-mentioned area, learn about customs and traditions, the administrative division of Poland and tourist regions.

Polish language classes are intended for both residents of the centres and foreigners receiving cash allowances to cover the costs of their own stay within the territory of the Republic of Poland.

In addition, on the territory of Warsaw, there are Polish language classes held for adult foreigners who receive a cash allowance to cover the costs of their own stay within the territory of the Republic of Poland and who reside in Warsaw and its surroundings. At the same time, a possibility was introduced to participate in the above-mentioned classes in a remote form; it is offered to foreigners under the care of the Office for Foreigners and residing throughout Poland.

INDUCTION COURSES FOR FOREIGNERS UNDER THE CARE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OF THE OFFICE FOR FOREIGNERS

The so-called induction courses are organised in the centres for newly-arrived foreigners as well as foreigners under the care of the Office for Foreigners, during which information is presented on topics related to social assistance provided by the Department of Social Assistance of the Office and the basic functioning in Poland, i.e. norms, customs, traditions, education, medical care and employment issues. Induction courses are conducted by age group, i.e. separately for children, adolescents and adults.

EDUCATION ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OF THE OFFICE FOR FOREIGNERS

The Office also provides minor foreigners under the care of the Office for Foreigners and receiving education and care in public institutions, primary and secondary schools with teaching aids in the form of a school starter kits, as well as the purchase of textbooks for those pupils who do not receive them at school or in an institution (i.e. children completing compulsory annual pre-school preparation and secondary school pupils).

ASSISTANCE IN VOLUNTARY RETURN

A foreigner who wishes to return voluntarily to his country of origin or to another country to which he has the right of entry should apply for assistance in voluntary return. Assistance may be provided if the procedure for granting international protection has been concluded by a decision:

- discontinuance of the proceedings;
- refusal to grant refugee status and refusal to grant subsidiary protection;
- the inadmissibility of the application

The Commander-in-Chief of the Border Guard is responsible for the organisation of voluntary returns. If a foreigner has received a decision to discontinue the proceedings or to refuse to grant refugee status and to refuse subsidiary protection, and is receiving social assistance and medical care provided by the Head of the Office, the application for assistance in voluntary return should be submitted through the Head of the Office for Foreigners. In other cases, an application for assistance in voluntary return should be submitted to the commander of the Border Guard unit or the commander of the Border Guard post, competent for the place of residence.

The application must be submitted within 5 days from the date on which the decision to discontinue the proceedings became final or 7 days before the expiry of the 30-day period for voluntary return, if the foreigner has received a decision refusing to grant refugee status and refusing to grant subsidiary protection or declaring the application inadmissible. If the application is not submitted on time, the Commander-in-Chief of the Border Guard will leave the application without consideration.

Voluntary return assistance includes coverage of:

- travel costs;
- administrative fees related to obtaining a travel document and necessary visas and permits;
- travel food costs;
- costs of accommodation prior to travel;
- travel medical costs;
- costs of organizing voluntary return by an entity whose statutory duties include organizing voluntary return;
- other costs related to ensuring a safe and humane return.

Voluntary return assistance may be provided to a foreigner once every 2 years.

If an application for assistance in voluntary return has been submitted directly to the Commander in Chief of the Border Guard, but the foreigner still wants to use benefits from the social assistance provided by the Office, foreigner must inform the Head of the Office of this fact in writing.

ASSISTANCE IN RELOCATION TO ANOTHER MEMBER STATE

Pursuant to Article 75a of the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland, the Head of the Office may provide a foreigner who has received a decision on transfer to another Member State as the country responsible for examining the application for international protection with assistance in relocation covering the foreigner's travel costs, food costs and costs of medical care during the journey. The condition for obtaining this aid is to submit an application within 30 days from the date on which the decision on transfer to another Member State becomes final.

SAFETY OF FOREIGNERS

The Office for Foreigners cooperates with the Police and Border Guard on an ongoing basis on security issues and takes immediate action in the event of a threat to the safety of foreigners applying for international protection. The safety of foreigners in the centres is supervised by the security staff employed there. In the centres run by the Office, companies providing security services for persons and property are also selected by public tender. In the rented centres, on the other hand, physical protection is assumed by the entity running the centre, with which the Office for Foreigners has signed a contract to run the centres. Security staff are on duty in shifts; the security is provided 24 hours a day. It should be noted that all employees of the centres show particular care and sensitivity to matters related to ensuring the safety of foreigners in the centres.

Since 25 March 2008. The Office for Foreigners has been a party to the Agreement on Standard Operating Procedures for Recognising, Preventing and Responding to Cases of Sexual or Gender-Based Violence against Foreigners Detained in Centres for Applicants for International Protection. The parties to the Agreement are the Head of the Office for Foreigners, the Commander-in-Chief of the Police, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the La Strada Foundation, and the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Centre. Cooperation between the parties to the agreement takes place within the Local Interaction Teams (LZW). They include, among others:

- an employee of the Office, responsible for the centre concerned,
- an officer of the local police unit in the area of which the centre operates,
- a representative of the NGO party to the agreement or any other NGO invited to cooperate.

The Local Interaction Teams also work together with medical staff, the centre administrator, representatives of the refugee community.

The tasks of the Local Interaction Teams under the above-mentioned Agreement include:

- Prevention:
 - ensuring adequate security conditions in and around the centre (providing physical protection on the premises of the centres, monitoring of the security situation in the centre by employees, regular visits of the police to the centre and patrols around the centre, immediate reaction of centre employees and police officers to potential and existing emergencies in the centre),
 - informing foreigners staying at the centre about the phenomenon of violence, methods of preventing violence and responding to cases of violence (distribution of information materials, individual consultations – informing foreigners about the phenomenon of violence),
- Recognition:
 - documenting incidents of violence and communicating information to all team members,
 - collecting documentation, drawing up an analysis of the risk of violence,
- Response:
 - taking measures to ensure the personal safety of the victim of violence or potential victim of violence and his or her relatives (transfer to another centre or granting of cash benefits for living outside the

centre, limiting the access of the perpetrator or the person posing a risk to the victim of violence or potential victim of violence by transferring the perpetrator or potential perpetrator to another centre, depriving the perpetrator of the assistance provided at the centre),

– taking measures to address the health, psychological and social needs of the victim of violence and their relatives (providing appropriate medical assistance, access to psychological counselling, and enabling contact with support groups),

– providing the victim of violence with legal assistance to initiate criminal proceedings (informing the victim of the possibility of filing a criminal complaint – explaining the consequences of filing a criminal complaint and the rights of the victim in criminal proceedings, providing assistance in contacting an organisation that provides legal assistance to victims of violence, ensuring that a statement is taken from the victim of violence by a person with specific characteristics).

PLACE DEDICATED TO WOMEN AND MOTHERS WITH CHILDREN

Taking into account the needs of single women and women with children, the Office for Foreigners has separated one of the buildings of the centre in Dębak, which is intended to accommodate single women and women with children, to improve the security of this group of foreigners.

POLICY OF PROTECTION CHILDREN FROM ABUSE IN CENTRES FOR FOREIGNERS

The Office for Foreigners, in cooperation with the Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę Foundation, has adopted and introduced the document Policy for the Protection of Children from Abuse in Centres for Foreigners.

The policy was developed as part of the project 'We protect children in refugee centres – a comprehensive system to protect children from violence and abuse', co-financed by the National Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Programme and the state budget (Project Number 16/2-2015/FAMI).

The introduction of the above-mentioned Policy in November 2016 obliges all employees of the Department of Social Assistance of the Office for Foreigners, as well as employees of companies and organisations that work on behalf of the Head of the Office on the premises of the centres or run projects in the centres aimed at their residents to take measures to ensure the safety of all foreigners' children.

The document sets out standards and procedures for dealing with:

- raising awareness of the importance of protecting children from all forms of abuse,
- providing guidance and defining the course of action and responsibilities in all child safety activities,
- ensuring children's safety through preventive action - aimed at educating children on the protection of their rights and minimising the risk of child abuse, as well as intervention action – aimed at taking appropriate steps when child abuse is suspected or identified.

An integral element of the Policy is the handbook We protect children in centres for foreigners addressed to employees of the Department of Social Assistance of the Office for Foreigners working in the centres. The handbook is divided into two parts. The first one is devoted to an analysis of each of the standards. Guidance, ideas, specific tools and information on what is available have been developed for each standard to facilitate its implementation. The second part is intended to help enhance the knowledge of programme implementers on the identification of violence, the legal aspects of protecting children from abuse, as well as legal and psychological intervention.

Periodically, all staff and associates of the Office receive child protection training which includes familiarisation with the centre's Policy of Protection Children from Abuse. The centre provides parents with educational materials (leaflets, brochures) on children's rights, non-violent upbringing, protection of children from violence and abuse, protection of children from peer violence and, where possible, educational classes are held for parents on the above issues. Similar activities, where possible, are periodically held by the centre for children, who are furthermore informed about who they should ask for help and advice in the event of abuse or exploitation.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE POSSIBLE MASS INFLUX OF FOREIGNERS

The rules for responding to threats related to mass migration and the actions of individual services and institutions in the event of an escalation of the phenomenon are undertaken in accordance with the scope of tasks indicated for implementation in the Standard Operating Procedure - 9 (SOP-9): Actions in case of a mass influx of foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Poland, which is part of the National Crisis Management Plan. Poland has defined and provided for actions to be taken by the central and local administrations in the event of a mass influx of foreigners on the Polish territory. These activities are secured by the Police, Border Guard, State Fire Service, voivodes or the Office for Foreigners with the support of military forces. The contractors identified in the procedure include in their crisis management plans detailed ways and methods of implementing their own projects. The plans and procedures of the Office for Foreigners and its Department of Social Assistance, which indicate in detail the ways of implementing the tasks set out in the National Crisis Management Plan, describe the process of accepting foreigners declaring that they are seeking international protection on the territory of the Republic of Poland and are universal in nature, i.e. they can be applied both in the case of a mass influx of foreigners from across the eastern border and other groups of foreigners.

COOPERATION WITH PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATIONS

The Office for Foreigners mainly cooperates with non-governmental organisations in two areas, namely:

- legal counselling – where counselling is provided on the premises of the centres, but also at the premises of the above-mentioned organisations or remotely. Legal advice is provided by, among others: Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej (Association for Legal Intervention), the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Caritas Poland, the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Centre (Centrum Pomocy Prawnej im. Haliny Nieć) and the Rule of Law Institute Foundation (Fundacja Instytut na rzecz Państwa Prawa), the Ocalenie Foundation, the EMIC Foundation.
- pre-integration activities, which are aimed at organising leisure time for children and young people and helping them with their studies. Some activities are also addressed to adult foreigners, including, for example, Polish classes and psychological counselling. The aforementioned activities are led by, among others: Dialog Foundation, Ocalenie Foundation, Caritas Poland, Polish Migration Forum (Polskie Forum Migracyjne), Association for the Earth (Stowarzyszenie dla Ziemi), Volunteer Centre Association (Stowarzyszenie Centrum Wolontariatu), EMIC Foundation, Vox Humana Association, Sant'Egidio Poland Foundation, American School and "Dobro Czynić" Charity Mission.

CENTRES FOR FOREIGNERS IN POLAND

PODLASKIE

Białystok

Zajazd „Budowlani”, ul. Bitwy Białostockiej 7,
15-102 Białystok
tel. / fax 85 675 00 91

Czerwonny Bór (Centre of the Office for Foreigners)

Czerwonny Bór 24/1, 18 – 400 Łomża
tel. 86 215-35-34, 86 215-00-28

MAZOWIECKIE

Linin (Centre of the Office for Foreigners)

Linin 35, 05 - 530 Góra Kalwaria
tel. 22 736-16-14, 22 736-27-98

Dębak (Centre of the Office for Foreigners)

Podkowa Leśna – Dębak, 05 - 805 Otrębusy
tel. 22 729-80-71
fax 22 729-80-87

LUBELSKIE

Kolonia Horbów

Horbów 26 A, 21-512 Zalesie
tel. / fax 83 375 73 84

Bezwola

Bezwola 107, 21-310 Wołyń
tel. / fax 83 342 26 99

Biała Podlaska (Centre of the Office for Foreigners)

ul. Dokudowska 19, 21-500 Biała Podlaska
tel. 47 811 22 01
fax. 83 342 17 25

Łuków

Hotel „Polonia”, Al. Kościuszki 29, 21 - 400 Łuków
tel. / fax.25 798-25-43

KUJAWSKO-POMORSKIE

Grupa

ul. Libeckiego 1, 86 - 134 Dragacz
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