

# INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NEW RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN ACQUIRING LEGAL INFORMATION

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## Abstract

The changes in migration flows in Europe have challenged not only those countries which have received a large influx of new residents, but also countries which had less experience of this in practice. One of the reasons is related to the fact that welcoming is followed by an integration process into different spheres of social life. Therefore, this research focuses on migrants' integration into the host countries' legal environment, particularly with respect to acquiring legal information. The study aims to answer what are the internal and external factors that contribute to new residents' experience in acquiring knowledge in the host country's legal environment. The results are based on analyses of the experiences of Ukrainian immigrants living in Lithuania and in Spain, focusing on the research subtopics: a) What are the conceptual challenges faced by new residents while integrating into the linguistic space of legal relations? (b) What are Ukrainians' experiences in obtaining legal information in Lithuania and Spain? and c) What are the observed patterns for the dissemination of legal information? The analysis reveals that new residents face systemic and personal obstacles in accessing and applying information about the legal framework of the host country. Ukrainian citizens residing in both Lithuania and Spain face difficulties in obtaining information on legalities, although the challenges they face are not identical, due to the different institutional characteristics of the countries. The study shows that it is not the institutions, but rather an inner circle of informal contacts, that help obtain, verify and share knowledge about legal regulations.

KEY WORDS: legal information, integration, Lithuania, migration, Spain.

## Anotacija

Migrantų srautų pokyčiai Europoje lėmė iššūkius ne tik didesnius imigrantų srautus priimančiose šalyse, bet ir šalyse, kurios tokios patirties neturi. Vienu iššūkiu nustatomas integracijos procesas, įsipareigojant sudaryti sąlygas naujai atvykusiesiems dalyvauti įvairiose socialinio gyvenimo srityse. Tad vykdamas tyrimą atsižvelgiama į vieną iš integracijos sričių – imigrantų integraciją į priimančios šalies teisinę aplinką, kaip vieną iš svarbių priimančios valstybės socialinio gyvenimo sričių. Ypatin-gas dėmesys sutelkiamas į teisinės informacijos gavimą, siekiant atsakyti į klausimą, kokie išoriniai ir vidiniai aspektai svarbūs imigrantų teisinės informacijos gavimo ir panaudojimo procese. Straipsnyje pateikiama Lietuvoje ir Ispanijoje gyvenančių Ukrainos imigrantų patirčių analizė ir atsakoma į klausimus: a) kokių conceptualių iššūkių imigrantams kyla jiems integruojantis lingvistinėje teisinių santykių erdvėje? b) kokios yra ukrainiečių teisinio pobūdžio informacijos gavimo patirtys Lietuvo-

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je ir Ispanijoje? bei c) kokie yra teisinio pobūdžio informacijos sklaidos ypatumai? Atlikta analizė atskleidė, kad atvykusiesiems kyla sisteminių ir asmeninio pobūdžio kliūčių gauti informaciją dėl priimančios šalies teisinio reguliavimo. Lietuvoje ir Ispanijoje reziduojantiems Ukrainos piliečiams sudėtinga gauti informaciją dėl teisinio reguliavimo, tačiau dėl skirtingos valstybių institucinės sąrangos šie iššūkiai netapatūs. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad atvykusieji informaciją apie teisinius santykius gauna, verifikuoja ar ja dalijasi ne tiek naudodamiesi instituciniu aparatu, kiek pasitelkę neformalius kontaktus.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: Lietuva, integracija, imigracija, Ispanija, teisinė informacija.

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## Introduction

During the last decade, Europe has faced significant changes in migration flows (Geddes et al., 2020; McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024). The increase in migration has been driven by a variety of factors, which include not only economic interests, but also forced migration triggered by war conflicts, especially in Ukraine (Gerlach & Ryndzak, 2022). In this context, the integration of migrants has become a topic of great importance, both in academic and practical realms (Gilmartin & Dagg, 2023; Penninx, 2019). For many countries in Europe, a new reality has been introduced since Ukraine has come under military attack. The next step is to ensure that new residents' integration is successful. However, the process of social inclusion is more than just accomplishing practical tasks or activities necessary for the daily lives of individuals (i.e. 'getting things done'). Real integration can only happen if the proper significance is also given to social, cultural and emotional dimensions inherent in the intercultural communication of migrants with people in the host country (Holmes & Annick, 2008, 52). The literature suggests addressing internal and group levels for acculturation (Berry, 1997, 15), and making sure aspects of social connection (bridges, bonds and links) and facilitators (language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability) are enacted as well (Ager & Strang, 2008, 175). Among the different fields of integration, one of great importance is identified as the realm of the legal-political environment. For example, in the model for integration, among other spheres, R. Penninx and B. Garcés-Masareñ (2016) introduce the focus on legal and political dimensions (Garcés-Masareñas & Penninx, 2016, 16). The suggested model for integration by Spencer and Charsley (2021) identifies the significance of legalities via policy framework (Spencer & Charsley, 2021, 16).

The main reasons for stressing the institutional framework and the legalities derive from their functional attributes, which are primarily devoted to implementing and securing the spectrum of new residents' rights and obligations. Welcoming state institutions in particular employ the field of legalities, whereas legal regulations are the main tools to proceed in this field. Therefore, interacting within and

in this realm urges people to accept the importance of legal information. For example, a knowledge of administrative processes incorporated with legalities is one of the main keys to accessing the institutional sphere of the welcoming country. The scientific literature indicates that in these circumstances migrants face challenges and seldom seek help (Edge et al., 2020; Geoffrion & Cretton, 2021; Gill, 2023).

As for the communication of legalities, the literature suggests that it should be done efficiently. For example, in the context of producing texts aimed at a wider audience, those texts should pass as natural, and maintain a high level of communicative legal competence. This applies to both texts in the native language of the host country and their translation (Witczak-Plisiecka, 2020). In turn, maintaining logic throughout the communication can be achieved with the help of the Cooperative Principle and four conversational maxims proposed by Grice (1975), who set the requirements to meet for all kinds of communicated information. Suggested conversational maxims imply that the information given should be: Not more and not less than required (Quantity); True (Quality); Relevant (Relation); Brief and orderly, which would not contribute to obscurity or ambiguity (Manner) (Grice, 1975). Bearing this in mind, the ideal vision of institutional communication is sometimes difficult to achieve, even with the citizens of the host country, but it becomes even more difficult when it comes to new residents. Given that 'migrants face marginalization in terms of limited legal, financial, political, and social status versus citizens' (Chib & Aricat, 2016) (Yeoh, as cited in Chib & Aricat, 2016). That is, seldom 'laws and policies differentially determine economic, legal, and socio-economic status for migrant labour versus citizens and the elite guests' (Chib & Aricat, 2016, 11).

Scholars have investigated different aspects of communication concerning migrants. Among them, Hamelink and Hagan (2020) view communication as a fundamental human right for new residents, and Cereci (2019) asserted that it is one of the basic needs (Cereci, 2019; Hamelink & Hagan, 2020). Lemish (2022) analysed the experiences of immigrants within academia, their complicated relations with the concept of home, and their otherness as a source of strength that impacts their scholarship and makes unique contributions to communication disciplines (Lemish, 2022). Unlike the majority of researchers who study immigrants' experiences in Western countries, Dounghummes and Zarchi (2022) focus on the linguistically limited intercultural adaptations of Western immigrants in Asia (Dounghummes & Zarchi, 2022).

The current trend for research in communication and migration also provides a series of studies in information and communication technologies, especially in the way new residents perceive and use information and communication technologies. The role of information and communication technologies and their influence

on the integration practices of migrants has been examined by numerous authors (Chib & Aricat, 2016; Hoffmann et al., 2022; Kuneva & Hough, 2023; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2023; Widera, 2021), and a few of them also noticed the negative effects of those technologies (Awad & Tossell, 2021).

Holmes and Janson (2008) noted that in political circles the question was raised as to whether migrants' needs regarding information and communication technologies as a means to facilitate communication within the receiving culture are being met: a kind of communication which implies integration. The trend towards e-governance in postmodern societies raises questions about migrants' participation in knowledge circulation and their ability to benefit from its availability within the society (Holmes & Annick, 2008, 52).

Covering this, we have to agree with the statement that the way new residents 'make use of such technology is important in understanding their access and contribution to the receiving society' (Holmes & Annick, 2008, 51). Information and communication technologies have 'become a key technology of power' (Castells, as cited in Sabaté-Dalmau, 2023). For example in Catalonia (the Spanish region) that our research will address, this gatekeeping mechanism is used 'not only to register and control migrant populations but also to curtail their access to citizenship rights and resources' (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2023, 46), to administrative procedures involved in obtaining the legalisation of documents, for example. As far as the foreign language implications go, research by Sabaté-Dalmau (2023) has also observed that political regimes use language as a basis to dictate who can count as migrants deserving citizenship. The legitimate oral and written language of the nation-state then starts to serve as a barometer of integration, and links to an allegedly proper citizenship-deserving migrant identity. The researcher describes the case of Spain, where linguistic diversity is often approached from a monolingual perspective. This has turned the standard Peninsular Spanish 'into the Spanish government's rule-of-law language' (Sabaté-Dalmau, 2023, 46). Holmes and Janson (2008) point out that in cases when non-native speakers have to communicate in the language of the host country, the difference is seen in terms of ease of communication (Holmes & Annick, 2008, 56), especially if they are not yet very confident speaking that language. For example, when communicating in a foreign language, a more relaxed medium would be email, because it is more convenient and it is easier to avoid mistakes while writing an email compared to talking on the phone. Emailing between linguistic minority migrants and public servants of the host country 'may reduce language confusion and anxiety associated with communicating in another language, thereby making communication clearer' (Holmes & Annick, 2008, 56). At the same time, Holmes and Janson's research highlights another approach, which centres more on time: ex-pats prefer not to use email for

urgent things because face-to-face or phone-mediated communication is 'quicker for resolving issues, rather than emailing back and forth'.

As is evidenced by Hamelink and Hagan (2020), 'migrants have the right to a diversity of languages. This includes the right to express themselves and to have access to information in their own language' (Hamelink & Hagan, 2020, 379). Theorists have explored the concept of language rights (Kymlicka & Patten, 2003), as well as the concepts of linguistic equality and linguistic equity (Yi, 2023). The article by Howard et al. (2018) examines translation policies regarding indigenous languages in some Latin American countries, and uses a case study from Peru to illustrate the need for translation and interpreting services as a way to overcome human rights infringements (Howard et al., 2018). An essay by Burch Elias (2009) argues that the rights of 'old' and 'regional' language minorities and the 'new' linguistic minorities might intersect, and the instruments constructed to protect the rights of the former groups may also eventually be employed to promote the rights of the latter. It would be very natural for migrants who are non-native speakers of the language of the host country to express 'a preference for accessing Web sites and communicating in their first language' (Holmes & Annick, 2008, 55). However, in the monolingual reality, expatriates have to counter the above-mentioned linguistic hegemony of the authorities by developing technological literacy skills through their own efforts, or by looking for linguistic mediators and brokers to help them, for example, with managing administrative services, e.g. visa renewals (Miežanskienė, 2023; Sabaté-Dalmau, 2023, 47).

On the other hand, those immigrants who successfully develop their language skills, expand their knowledge, and through time and effort acquire proficiency in a foreign language, create 'multiple new relationships that transcend ethnicity, nationality, and hierarchy' (Chib & Aricat, 2016, 11). Chib and Aricat (2016) also demonstrate that the transnational experiences of migrants help them to rise above the 'limitations of class, race, education, and gender'. Effectively, they bring to life and strengthen the ideals of cosmopolitanism, even though the cosmopolitanism here so far remains bounded (Chib & Aricat, 2016).

Considering all that was mentioned, this research project focuses on migrants' interactions with institutions and the legalities of the host state. Given the fact that countries with different implementations of immigrant integration policies develop unique integration practices (Solano & Huddleston, 2022), it is relevant to compare those practices in different contexts. Therefore, this research project is focused on two countries: Lithuania, which is indicated to be among the countries with the highest number of Ukrainian refugees per 1,000 inhabitants (Eurostat, 2022; Eurostat, 2024), and Spain, which has long-term experience in facing large flows of immigrants and applying integration programmes. The conducted research in-

investigates the experiences of Ukrainian migrants in acquiring legal information while residing in Spain and Lithuania. It aims to identify internal and external factors that contribute to new residents' experience in acquiring legal information in the host country. It focuses on finding answers to the questions: a) What are the challenges faced by new residents while integrating into the linguistic space of legal relations? b) What are the experiences of obtaining legal information in Lithuania and Spain? and c) What are the observed patterns of the dissemination of legal information?

## 1. Materials and methods

The empirical research aimed to investigate the experience of Ukrainian migrants residing in Spain and Lithuania, and to reveal the spectrum of challenges that Ukrainian migrants face in the realm of linguistics of legal relations in Spain and Lithuania. It also focused on features of the dissemination of legal information among new residents from Ukraine while residing in Spain and Lithuania. The chosen methods and focus are closely related to the selected countries' experience in welcoming migrants. During the period 2013 to 2022, Lithuania was one of the nine EU Member States where the ratio of Ukrainian citizens holding a residence permit per 1,000 inhabitants was above the EU average (3.5 per 1,000) (Eurostat, 2023). At the end of March 2024, the number of temporary protection beneficiaries relative to the EU population was 9.4 per 1,000 people, and Lithuania was among the EU countries with the highest ratios observed. In 2024, Lithuania granted temporary protection to 85,967 Ukrainian nationals. This constitutes a base number of a total 221,800 foreign residents in Lithuania (Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior, 2023). There was a visible Ukrainian migrant flow to Spain as well. Between 2013 and 2021, Spain was one of the main places for applications for asylum by Ukrainians (14,900). Based on the recognition rates (positive decisions as a share of all decisions) and the number of asylum seekers, Spain accounted for 8.9% of the positive decisions taken in the EU between 2013 and 2021 (Eurostat, 2022).

On 9 March 2022, an emergency procedure aimed at the recognition of temporary protection for Ukrainian citizens was activated in Spain. On that date, the ministries for Home Affairs and Inclusion, Social Security and Migration signed an order implementing an extraordinary protection mechanism, complying with a decision handed down by the Council of Home Affairs Ministers of the European Union five days earlier, when all EU countries unanimously voted to activate the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time in the EU's history. As of 26 February 2024, more than 200,000 Ukrainian citizens have been granted tempo-

rary protection in Spain. The four autonomous communities which identify the highest number of temporary protection applications are: the Valencian Community (55,835), Catalonia (45,150), Andalusia (29,588), and Madrid (28,087) (Eurostat, 2024).

The conducted investigation followed a qualitative approach, whereby ten Ukrainian migrants residing in Lithuania and ten Ukrainians residing in Spain were invited to participate in face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews. While aiming to represent the experiences of the Ukrainian diaspora in the host country, the selection of the participants was designed to cover a range of different aspects, such as: a) age, which varies from 19 to 52; b) gender; and c) marital and family status (the participants in the research were married and single, and were living with and without children); d) linguistic competencies (the participants could communicate in their native language (Ukrainian) as well as in additional languages, such as Lithuanian, Spanish or Russian. It is worth stressing that all the participants were linguistically diverse, being native speakers of Ukrainian and Russian, and coming from different regions in Ukraine. The majority of participants could speak English, and a few of them could also speak some Lithuanian and Spanish); e) residing in areas of the host country (city, town, village) (the administrative areas of the division of Spain and Lithuania differ in size and migrant population; therefore, the scope of the interviews in Spain covered different autonomies of Cantabria and Catalonia. However, some of them also had experience in communicating with public institutions in other autonomous communities like Madrid and Andalucía. Participants from Lithuania were residing in the main cities of Vilnius and Kaunas); f) occupational status (the interviews covered the experiences of new residents who were not involved in any economic activity, and of those who were employed or had other economic activities to cover their living expenses).

A set of questions was prepared to establish the biographical details of the participants, as well as the general attitude of refugees towards the legal and institutional environment of the two investigated host countries. All the participants were asked to describe situations in the past when they had to obtain legal information from a public institution in their respective host country. In particular, attention was drawn to the use of technology and foreign/native languages in the process.

The research was conducted in April and May 2024, with the permission of the Research Ethics Commission of Kaunas University of Technology No M6-2024-07. Interviewees were introduced to the description of the research via the Participants' Information document, and signed an Informed Consent as a part of an agreement to participate in the research. During the interviews, participants were asked to describe situations about acquiring legal information from public institutions in their respective host countries. The questionnaire included experience

of communication with law enforcement and related agencies, as well as public institutions. Particular attention was drawn to ways of obtaining information and aspects of foreign/native language usage.

The main limitation of the conducted empirical research is data on the experience of Ukrainians in the set of different autonomies in Spain, which is 17. For subsequent research, it would be beneficial to investigate new residents' experiences in all the autonomies as well. The research conducted benefits in this direction by revealing particular areas for further scientific inquiry.

## 2. Results and discussion

### 2.1. External factors that contribute to new residents' experiences in acquiring legal information

The experiences of new residents in acquiring legal information in the host country can be characterised by a range of multiple factors. Addressing the source of their origin and within the broadest distinction, we find them to be classified as internal and external factors. The conducted analysis of the interviews revealed that these factors are often revealed in the form of challenges and ways of their resolution. Therefore, this research indicates particular spheres of challenge, which lead to naming particular external factors that contribute to new residents' experiences (Table 1). They constitute, but are not limited to: a) integration via an introduction to the institutional system of the host country; b) access to full-range legal information; c) the quality of the acquired information; d) the scope of channels for information provision. Considering the source of their origin (mainly the institutional sector), these aspects were identified as external.

*Table 1.* External factors contributing to the process of acquiring legal information

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Field of challenges</b>	<b>Elaborations and examples</b>
1. Integration via an introduction to the institutional system of the host country	Lack of a migrant-oriented introduction to the institutional system of the host country	New residents are expected to find a source of information that they are not aware of. For example, a website with an explanation about the system and scope of medical services
2. Access to full-range legal information	Lack of equivalently translated information.	Institutions provide information which, in certain cases, is not sufficient and does not stand as an equivalent



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Factor	Field of challenges	Elaborations and examples
3. Quality of the acquired information	Lack of specifics and accuracy in the content of information provided by institutions	The generally accessible information might not address the necessary aspects and provide answers to questions, while taking the specifics of migrants' situations into account
4. The scope of channels for the provision of information	Not assuring the range of different channels for information provision	The preference for communication is by personal contact or telephone, which is not accessible or provided by the system. It also refers to the fact that legal information might be complicated to understand and has to be explained additionally

The first aspect which has been identified as an external challenge is related to migrants' integration via their introduction to the institutional system of the host country. It reveals the provision of a general understanding of the structure of institutions and their operational principles. It is noted that unknown patterns of administrative institutions' communication with people and the differences experienced may become obstacles to new residents' further integration. For example, an interviewee from Spain indicated that he does not understand the system and it is complicated to proceed with: 'I don't understand this system. It is very different from ours, and I would say that in our country it is organised better than here. Somehow, everything is more complicated here. You have to wait for those "citas" for months. And finally, the time of the appointment arrives, and we go there and they say "Now we will redirect you to another specialist" and again you have to wait for a month' INT3/F/S. This experience, as well as many others, also reveals not being able to plan on the sequence of actions, and is likely to enhance the feeling of anxiety in migrants' lives. It indicates that knowledge about the work of institutions should be part of the integration strategy, as it would mitigate expectations and prevent subsequent challenges.

Another aspect refers to the accessibility of information. The conducted research revealed that there is some specific information that in many ways might be very sensitive to new residents, because it is related to economic security. It is visible in the monetary sphere, and revealed within the legal framework of taxation policy. The lack of this particular kind of information might lead to not being able to integrate, and feelings of disappointment or anger. The lack of accessibility of information towards this particular sphere of regulation is visible in an interviewee's description of the situation he was in: '...only a few months ago I found that information that is in my contract said I must change the per cent of taxes. Because I am not paying enough ... I didn't know (this) because in Ukraine we have

a system where your company already pays for you, like 20% or 18%. But here, if you don't ask to change this percentage they pay only 2%. And at the end of the year you will find that you must pay 1,000 euros, because you don't pay 16% every month ... For example, it's easy to pay 100 euros every month, but it's really hard to pay 1,000 at the end of the year. Because 1,000 (euros) feels like Wow, you've stolen my money! Yeah, I didn't know about it' INT5/F/S.

It is also worth mentioning that the pattern of distribution of information to migrants might not be equal either. Firstly, new residents might not have access to information, and secondly, they might not have a clear vision of how much time and energy they need to devote in order to proceed with the institutions to get it. Overall, this situation cuts the general idea of a unanimous system of welcoming new residents, and a clear understanding of what to expect from each of the institutions. In other words, the expectations about the provision of information must be adapted solely according to the institutions new residents have contact with. As one of the Ukrainians says: 'Only the police, and actually SOC [Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya/Public Employment Service of Catalonia] have instructions in Ukrainian' INT2/F/S. Therefore, we find institutions' communication to be one of the factors that determines the content and extent of obstacles in acquiring legal information.

The quality of the information acquired is the third aspect which has been revealed as highly relevant to new residents. It encompasses the lack of specifics and accuracy in the content of institutions' information provided, which might be the source of the challenge as well. For example, one of the interviewees explained: 'The biggest problem is that they don't have any good explanations of what you should do to receive some things. So only to receive information on how to make [...] of my documents, of my school diploma, I had to phone them like... 30? 50? I don't even know or remember how many times. Only to receive the email address, where I wrote, and they answered me in, like, two weeks. And then, like, we were chatting a little bit with some consultants via email. And in a few weeks, I had all the information [...] and to get to know these people, to understand how to contact them, you should work hard ...' INT9/M/S. The consideration of working hard to access the institution to get the right information repeats the same need to address the primary knowledge and the institutional working patterns. This is revealed by the words of two interviewees residing in Spain. One lady pointed to the need for correct information: 'I know how it works here. Not all people who work in the organisation know all the information. It is a huge problem. I find that a lot of people, they work in their sector, a small sector and don't know the information about something else. So sometimes you are asking and they are, like, deciding to give you an answer, but it's not always the right answer' INT5/F/S. Another lady's

insight is about the lack of clarity in the information which is given: 'So it's not really clear with all the information and where you can find it. And on a website, they sometimes write it in, like, you know, a scientific way, sometimes it's hard to understand. Because even with a translation you're like "Ugh, what do you mean?" Sometimes it's hard' INT5/F/S.

The final important external factor refers to the scope of channels for information provision. The research indicates that Ukrainian residents tend to set their preference for communication using personal contacts. This would involve acquiring legal information by getting answers to questions via the telephone, or other ways, as long as it is based on human connection. This tendency is closely related to the fact that legal information might be complicated to understand and has very important leverage to determine outcomes, for example, the validity of residence. An interviewee who has been living in Spain refers to this as: 'The most horrible thing is that they don't have consultations in person. So, either via email or via telephone. Telephone: it's impossible to access. It's impossible. Yes, they pick it up, but it's impossible. Really. It's like winning a lottery to receive some consultation here via telephone. Because they have few specialists. It's constantly unavailable, they say we have a lot of demand, please call us later' INT9/M/S. Another resident's shared experience revealed that these 'waiting gaps' when migrants are not able to get the information they are seeking give the impression of an inefficient system. In the interview, he mentioned: 'I decided to call them and no one picked up the phone for three days [...] And then I decided to do it on the internet. Because as usual, it's not so hard. Just call them and take a "cita", because these documents are quick documents. But, three days, no one picks up the phone. I don't know, it was not a holiday, not some celebration, no, nothing, just no one picked it up. So I have no idea what they are doing there. But not working' INT5/F/S. One of the aspects that was stressed by interviewees from Lithuania and Spain was the benefit of native language proficiency. They say: 'We're speaking about my case where I speak Spanish and understand Spanish. When you don't understand Spanish, you can't receive normal services at all. You can forget about normal services' INT9/M/S. 'I think it's very important to speak the languages of the country you're living in. No doubt, it simplifies the process of communication and getting information. Because sometimes even if there's a translation into Ukrainian, sometimes there could be technical mistakes, or some misunderstanding' INT2/F/S. The challenges in acquiring legal information come in line with the feelings of not knowing how to interpret the situation, whether it is manageable or it might cause a certain threat.

Amid the challenges, the new residents use the help of the non-governmental sector and the help of natives. The welcoming culture of the host country seldom reveals its importance through the mitigation of the challenges. The research re-

veals that in the presence of communication challenges concerning administrative processes in the host country, cultural hospitality might cover the shortage of necessary institutional information for migrants.

The research conducted indicates that the external factors that play a role in acquiring legal information are derived from the administrative practices and the cultural hospitality of the host country. The particularity of administrative practices is highly relevant, as they predetermine whether the legal information will be: a) accessible, and b) clear and easy to understand for its further implementation. The experiences of new residents reveal that the external challenges of acquiring legal information are directly related to the institutions' communication strategy with migrants.

### 2.1. Internal factors that contribute to new residents' experience in acquiring legal information

Internal factors in acquiring legal information in the host country refer to personal aspects, for example, the new residents' previously acquired competencies and other features. It ranges from, but is not limited to: a) knowledge of local or other languages that might be used in the host country (for example English, French, Russian); b) the knowledge and ability to apply digital technologies; c) inclusion in non-formal social groups; d) personal preferences for the form of communication (for example, the tendency to get information in person); e) sensitivity to particular aspects (for example, Russian language usage while providing services to Ukrainian war refugees); and f) social connectivity (Table 2). These factors might determine how and if the legal information will be found/accessed and subsequently used in the following practice.

There might be more than one aspect which increases the possible tensions in new residents' integration process. One of them is feeling and admitting the differences in the new legal environment. These feelings of distance and not understanding certain processes might prevent newcomers from being involved actively in social and economic life as well. Institutional help might be offered, but it does not mean that new residents are able to use it accordingly. For example, one of the interviewees revealed this by saying: 'It was difficult for our understanding because this is a different country. Somehow everything was very different, and we couldn't immediately understand how it all works. Now it is already a bit easier to understand, but at the beginning it was very hard, even though they explained everything to us' INT3/F/S. Institutional help might not always be the most helpful if it triggers sensitive aspects such as language usage. For example, sensitivity to language usage might be driven by previous experiences. When the preference is set only for the Ukrainian language it might reduce the scope of possible ways to

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obtain the information. For example, refusing interpretation services in the Russian language. New residents from Ukraine also face hardship while acquiring legal information because of sensitivities and a lack of useful linguistic competencies. These experiences vary: for example, in Lithuania the useful languages are indicated to be English and Russian, though in Spain the preference is to communicate in the Spanish language.

Table 2. Internal factors that contribute to new residents' experiences in acquiring legal information

Factors	Field of challenges	Explanations, elaborations and examples
1. Personal competences	Challenges in the application of e-competencies.	The use of digital means of communication offers inclusion in social channels as well as quick access to institutional information. Knowledge of a foreign language might be beneficial in acquiring information which is not acceptable in other ways, or in cases where the path to obtaining it is unclear
	Lack of linguistic resources	
2. Sensitivities	Sensitivity to language usage	Sensitivity to language use might be driven by previous experience. When the preference is set only for the Ukrainian language, it might reduce the scope of possible ways to obtain the information. For example, refusing interpretation services in the Russian language
	Sensitivity driven by legal status	The unclear future urges us to know more about the environment, and the lack of information deepens the feeling of uncertainty
3. Social connectivity	Lack of ties in the local community and/or diaspora life	Social connectivity creates possibilities for unclear legal information to be explained, elaborated, or directed towards needed action

Another important aspect is the sensitivity driven by the legal status and a feeling of needing to claim rights. It is well portrayed in one of the interviewees' experiences in Lithuania. In a case where she had to defend her rights, she mentioned: 'I went to the police, I wrote a statement. But, well, I withdrew my statement immediately because I was scared, that is, I was alone in Lithuania. I didn't want it to be like, you know, I'm in a foreign country, I came to escape from a war, and here I am, facing this kind of story. I was thinking "Oh my God! Whatever! What, I will not be able to earn that money [in another place]?" But I was offended, of course' INT5/F/LT. In this case, a person acquired information which was necessary to proceed with the right defence, but there was no emotional support which was needed at that particular time, which is considered an internal sensitivity.

Sensitivity and confusion followed by a lack of information in a foreign country might determine the course of migrants' actions as well. It might discourage them from proceeding with the necessary documentation, as is the case in Spain, where an interviewee explains: 'Even for, like, Europe, it was not a usual situation. So it wasn't normal. But still, we were all in confusion, changing our lives, country, city. A lot of people were, like, in shock. So we need someone who can inform us that you must do this, this, this. The steps, yeah? But yeah, a lot of people just didn't know what to do. So a lot of people just take the paper and say they don't need a card. But yeah, I'm taking the card. I, like, decided to take it just in case' INT5/F/S.

The research also indicated the crucial role of personal competencies in acquiring legal information, namely digital skills or linguistic competencies. The use of digital means for communication offers inclusion in social channels as well as quick access to institutional information. Knowledge of a foreign language might be essential in acquiring information which is not acceptable in other ways, or in cases where paths to obtaining it are unclear. This is well described by one interviewee's comment: 'Well, in Spain it is Spanish. They really don't perceive English, and also it is desirable to speak Catalan besides Spanish' INT3/F/S.

Discussing features of the dissemination of legal information among new residents from Ukraine residing in Spain and Lithuania, the research also reveals a few important aspects. The dissemination of legal information among new residents is very vibrant. This is the first feature of the dissemination of legal information among new residents. It might occur in the form of personal contact or via electronic means, but the main problem with this was indicated to be the correctness of the content. This is the second aspect to be indicated and discussed. The aspect of the reliability of information might be neglected, which might lead to subsequent negative outcomes. One of the key elements for further discussion might be a scientific inquiry into why new residents believe the information to be trustworthy enough to follow, and how the correct answers are acquired. One of many interviewees portrayed part of what was mentioned. One lady said: 'For example, last year, I had not made a declaration. Why? Because, like, no one explained to me that I should do it. And, for example, I asked some people and they're like, "No, only if you have, like, in one year 22,000." And I'm like, "Okay, I do not have, so I'm not worried." But this year I had a meeting with a lawyer and she's like, "No, it's not true. At first, 15,000. And secondly, if you, changed job this year, so just because of you finding another job, you must turn it in." I'm like "No one informed me about it, so I didn't know!" ... We don't have this information. It's because, just my friend, she's like "Oh, today we are free, let's go and speak with a lawyer." Just because we were bored' INT5/F/S. As is obvious in this case, the interviewee already had some of the information, which was obtained via an informal chan-

nel, and she got the correct answer to her question also via an informal channel, a friend who suggested using the services of a lawyer. This could be indicated as the third feature of the dissemination of legal information, namely, informal contacts might provide access to correct information, but it might not be at the proper time (timely information) to comply with the order and the legal requirements of the host country.

The analysis conducted has revealed a range of Ukrainians' experiences in Lithuania and Spain regarding obtaining legal information. It has also led to identifying a set of factors which contribute to the experience in acquiring legal information. This research is beneficial as a future resource for input into integration policies aiming to reduce new residents' institutional distancing.

## Conclusions

1. The conceptual challenges faced by new residents while integrating into the linguistic space of legal relations are related to their ability to obtain primary knowledge of the legal framework and to proceed in institutional administrative practices. Internal and external factors can be identified that contribute to new residents' experience in acquiring legal information. External factors constitute, but are not limited to: a) integration via introduction to the institutional system of the host country; b) access to full-range legal information; c) the quality of the information acquired; d) the scope of channels for the provision of legal information. Internal factors refer, firstly, to personal competencies such as knowledge of local or other languages which might be used in the host country, and the knowledge of and ability to apply digital technologies. Secondly, particular sensitivities or preferences: for example, a form of communication such as the tendency to get information in person, or sensitivity to particular aspects, such as Russian language usage while providing services to Ukrainian war refugees. Third, inclusion in non-formal social groups while enhancing the possibilities to access legal information that could not be obtained via institutional services.
2. In the process of acquiring legal information in the host country, new residents rely on two pillars of formal and non-formal communication channels. Pre-set administrative practices predetermine whether or not legal information will be accessible. As new residents face challenges in using formal/institutional channels for acquiring and perceiving information, the informal way of gaining information also provides access to information. However, it might not be obtained at the proper time (timely information) to comply with the order and the legal requirements of the host country (the issue of correctness).

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