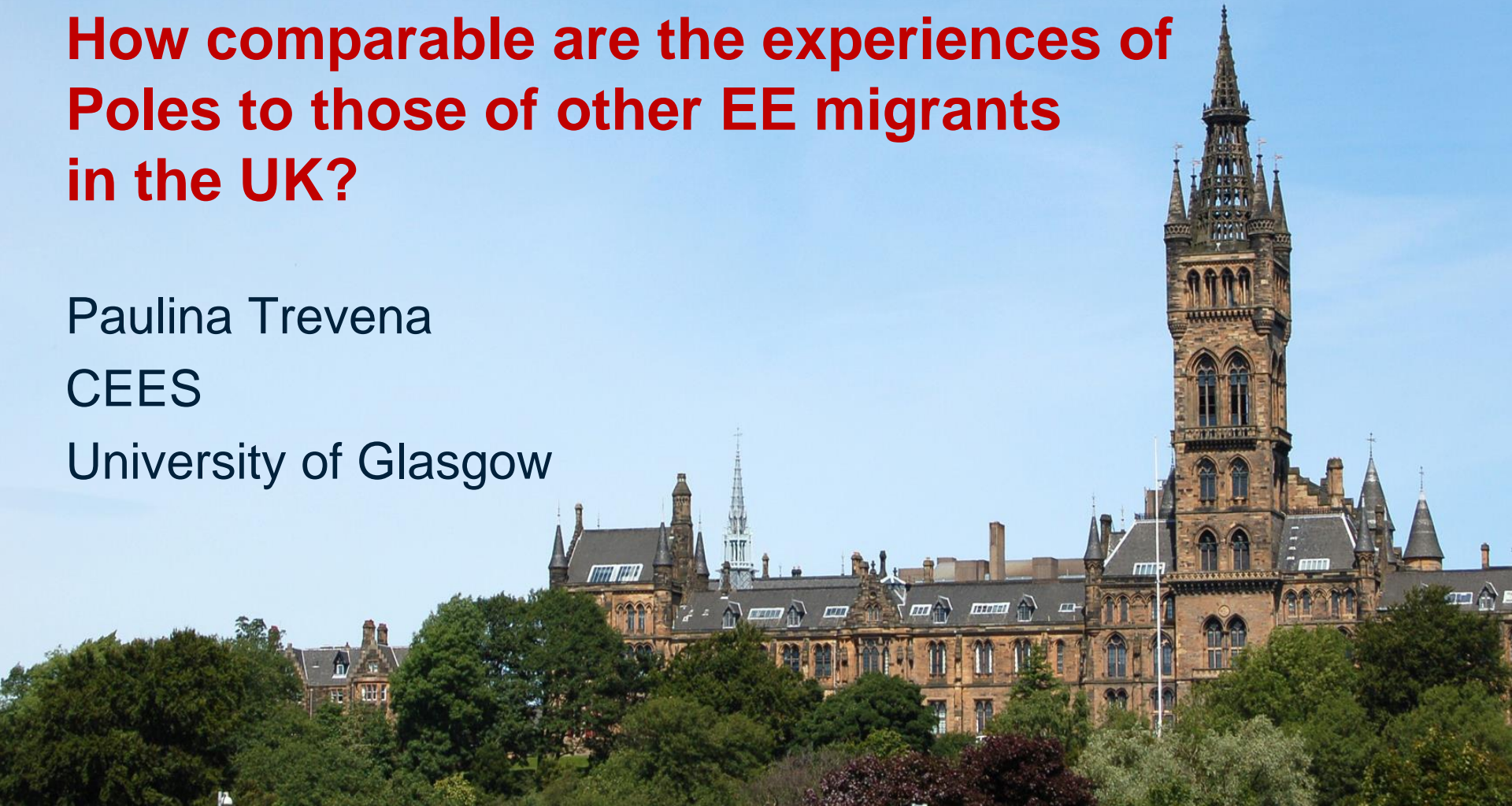


How comparable are the experiences of Poles to those of other EE migrants in the UK?

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SSAMIS project

- CEES, University of Glasgow (2013-2017)
‘Experiences of social security and prospects for long-term settlement in Scotland amongst migrants from Central Eastern Europe and Former Soviet Union’
 - locations: Glasgow, Aberdeen, Angus and Aberdeenshire (small towns and more rural locations – farms, villages)
 - planned: 200 interviews across the sites, 40 visual diaries (audio/video)
 - main fieldwork - ongoing (ar. 130 interviews so far)
 - study participants mainly from Poland, Latvia, Lithuania but also other EE countries (e.g. Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, and non-EU FSU countries, e.g. Ukraine, Russia, Kyrgyzstan)

Background info

- Scotland (2011)
 - Overall population: 5, 295, 000
 - Polish: 61,000 (1.2%)
 - Other White: 102,000 (1.9%)
- None of the other EE nationalities in the top 10 in Scotland
- Cities with highest proportion of Poles: Aberdeen (7,000) and Edinburgh (13,000)

Similarities (1)

- Reasons for arrival
 - across the board: employment opportunities, family reasons (including bringing elderly relatives; children with learning difficulties/disabilities) – NOT welfare!
 - the 2008 crisis (esp. Latvia, Hungary – mortgage crisis)
- Mode of arrival
 - agency work, personal networks, less arriving out of own accord
but
personal networks/chain migration – stronger among the more settled EE communities, esp. Poles

Similarities (2)

- Levels of knowledge of English
 - generally poor levels of English, esp. among the older generation (40+) who did not have English at school
- Barriers to learning English
 - Working and/or living with compatriots or other EEs
 - working patterns, childcare obligations, transport etc.
- Position in the labour market/work patterns
- Limited knowledge of available support services
 - e.g. job clubs

Differences (1)

- Knowledge of the welfare system
 - among A8 migrants esp. Poles highly knowledgeable, A2 nationals less
- Access to language support services
 - speakers of more popular language advantaged
- Availability of online information/support
 - E.g. many online resources, online communities, websites for Poles living in the UK, not so many for other EE nationalities
- Degree of support within own communities (?)
 - less intra-community support reported e.g. by Poles and Latvians who see other communities as more supportive; e.g. Bulgarians and Czechs reported as highly supportive towards co-nationals

Differences (2)

- Visibility
 - in general – Polish presence most visible across the UK; but - in some areas e.g. Russian-speaking nations dominant (e.g. Peterhead and Fraserburgh in northern Scotland)
- Role of language in employment
 - sometimes - other EE nationals forced to learn Polish or Russian in order to communicate with co-workers
 - esp. for migrants from smaller EE communities - often isolation at work resulting from lack of common language
- Role of language in integration
 - nationals from smaller EE communities ‘forced’ to learn English
- Degree of openness towards others (?)

You see Polish girls chatting in their language, and you miss that kind of communication. I don't know. It is in general hard for me to keep contact, or get friends with people, it is quite hard. And when you see Polish girls talking to each other only in Polish, it is also somehow hard. They did not speak much English. Being in the minority, plenty of Poles, few Lithuanians, unable to establish contacts with them, language barrier.

Vilma, Lithuanian, 31 yrs, Glasgow

Intra-EE stereotypes/xenophobia

*If you say that you are Lithuanian, they somehow look at you better, and if Polish – not that good. And **they always ask if you are Polish.***

Do you find that annoying?

Very much so. I was not paying attention at first, though.

Do you think Lithuanians bring particular stereotypes about other nationalities from Eastern Europe?

I (...) noticed that they don't like Polish people. I have never encountered that when I lived in Lithuania, but here I see that somehow they are not liked...

Daiva, Lithuanian, 20 yrs, Glasgow

Summary

- Poles – security comes in numbers but at the same time:
 - intra-national competition, esp. among the less skilled migrants
 - possibly: availability of language support discouraging acquiring the language and in effect working against integration
- Russian-speaking communities – often high degrees of support available as well
- Smaller CEE communities – less informal support available but:
 - possibly – less formal language support facilitates faster acquisition of English and ultimately integration
 - possibly – more direct support from other co-nationals.
- Poles dominating/shaping perceptions of EEs in Scotland.