

Theme 2 Early Stage Researcher Documentary Films

A Women's Forum: collective agency through the voices of Polish migrant workers



Director: Karima Aziz (London Metropolitan University)

9 mins, Polish with English subtitles

Logline: This short film shows how female Polish migrant workers in the UK come together to deal with difficulties in their migration experiences, how they help each other and how a trade union branch served as space and support to realise collective agency.

Synopsis: The film introduces us to three different Polish women, who live and work in the region of Yorkshire in the UK. Iwona and Martyna both joined with their children their husbands, who had already been working in the area, during which time the women were working and taking care of their children in Poland by themselves. Gosia however came alone to the UK after not being able to find work in Poland and seeing an ad for a job as a care worker. In the UK their lives also took different pathways: Gosia was promoted in her job and quit after acquiring further qualification to become an English teacher, Martyna found a job in her profession and Iwona won a dispute with the factory she had been working for. They all come together in their women's forum of a Polish workers' trade union branch, where they help each other, find social contacts and offer and use each others' services and support.

Our Kingdom



Director: Radoslaw Polkowski (University of Strathclyde)

19 mins, Polish with English subtitles

Log-line: A 'migrant' woman and a 'local' man who have never met but are brought together by their shared story of fight for dignity and respect at work. Their stories bring up also vital problems facing communities across Northern Ireland as well as the newcomers to these communities who are trying to make them better not just for themselves but for everyone.

Synopsis: Forced by unfortunate circumstances, Joanna - a middle-aged women from Poland – goes for work in England but she ends up at a mushroom farm in Northern Ireland. Experiencing exploitation in her workplace, she takes matters into her own hands and organises a trade union to fight for respect and dignity for herself and her colleagues. Her story interlaces with the one told by a local trade union activists who himself remembers working in a mushroom farm as a young boy before the new EU migrants arrived. Combined together, the two stories highlight a larger problem faced by their community which is the long-lasting reliance of employers on the community's most vulnerable members: children, unemployment benefit claimants, and now migrants. In illuminating Joanna's daily life in her community and her struggle in the workplace, the film illustrates how migrants are adapting to but also changing the complex realities of this part of the country.

Part of you



Director: Ben Egan (KU Leuven)

10 mins, English

Logline: New arrivals into an already divided community find that sometimes it is harder than expected to make a new start.

Synopsis: This short film contrasts the experiences of two Bulgarians living and working in Northern Ireland with the anticipations and expectations placed upon them by the community groups already established. Interviews with those involved, as well as footage from the wider area including trade union demonstrations, are used to tell the story of an ongoing division within Northern Ireland where the distinction between new arrivals adopting to, or being adapted by, these long-standing problems are not always clear.

Flower of Europe



Director: Mateusz Karolak (University of Wroclaw)

7 mins, Polish with English subtitles

Log-line: A story how a woman from beyond the Iron Curtain became a European.

Synopsis: The owner of a small Polish bistro at the heart of Brussels spins a tale about dark and light sides of migrants' life. The unexpected meetings with the top EU officials make the main protagonist think over her identity and sense of belonging. Her individual story exemplifies a transition experienced by thousands of Eastern Europeans who overnight formally became European Citizens, however often adopted ambivalent attitudes toward other migrants groups.

A labour of care



Director: Nina Sahraoui (London Metropolitan University)

18 mins, French and Spanish with English subtitles

Logline: 5 women in 3 European capital cities tell their stories. They came from all around the world to Paris, London and Madrid to take care of elderly persons. Joy, sadness, love and grief are their daily reality.

Synopsis: In this video 5 migrant care workers in London, Paris and Madrid tell about their experiences in residential and domiciliary care for elderly people. They came from the Ivory Coast, Ecuador, Portugal, Cameroun and the French department of Guadeloupe and narrate their lives as care workers. Against the background of an ageing Europe, European capital cities rely increasingly on migrant workers to provide care to older people. Through their stories, these women invite us into the world of care work, so central to our lives yet so invisible. They share the joy, sadness, love and grief that fill their daily work.