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Public Diplomacy of the Republic of Poland in Eastern Partnership Countries

Dyplomacja publiczna Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w państwach partnerstwa wschodniego

• **Abstrakt** •

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza wiodących cech szczególnych dyplomacji publicznej prowadzonej przez Polskę w stosunku do państw partnerstwa wschodniego. Analizie zostaną poddane główne obszary dyplomacji w tych państwach, do których należą: promowanie wartości demokratycznych, propagowanie informacji, prowadzenie dyplomacji kulturalnej i naukowej oraz wspieranie polskiej mniejszości. W artykule nakreślono poziom zaangażowania Polski w działalność promocji i budowania wizerunku w ramach wielostronnej współpracy. Przedstawione w nim zostaną najważniejsze projekty, inicjatywy i programy edukacyjne promujące polską kulturę i tradycję w państwach partnerstwa wschodniego. Wyniki badań pozwolą na wskazanie poziomu zaangażowania państw partnerstwa wschodniego w programy realizacji polskiej dyplomacji publicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: dyplomacja publiczna, partnerstwo wschodnie, Polska

• **Abstract** •

The aim of the current article is to examine the main peculiarities of public diplomacy of Poland in Eastern Partnership countries. The main fields of Polish public diplomacy realization in those countries, among which are the promotion of democracy values, informational propaganda, cultural and science diplomacy, sustention of Polish diaspora, will be analyzed. The article outlines the level of Poland's promotion and branding activities in the framework of multilateral cooperation. The most important projects, initiatives and educational programs that represent Polish culture and traditions in Eastern Partnership countries will be examined. The research will show which of the Eastern Partnership countries are highly or less involved in the programs of Polish public diplomacy realization.

Keywords: public diplomacy, Eastern Partnership, Poland

Introduction

Before joining the EU, Poland was considered by EU-countries as a bridge between Western Europe and Eastern-European countries. During the membership in the EU “Poland has strengthened its sovereignty (internal and external) and became an active participant of euroatlantic system” (Fisher, 2013). At the current stage Poland is presenting itself as a dependable partner on the international stage. A huge role in it plays its developed and multi-directed public diplomacy. Nowadays Polish authorities are trying to improve current strategy of public diplomacy with the creation of new institutions and consultative centers. One of them is the Polish National Foundation, founded in July 2016, which is to become “an efficient tool of promoting Poland abroad”, according to the Prime Minister B. Szydło (The Polish National Foundation, 2016). Moreover, an important body is the Historical Diplomacy Council (Deputy foreign minister, 2016), attached to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the aim to promote Polish history abroad. Those steps show the great importance and role of public diplomacy among Polish authorities and society.

Those initiatives and complex multi-directed strategy of public diplomacy of Poland already brought some achievements. Particularly speaking, I would like to focus on Polish public diplomacy realization in Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), the initiative of working with which, had come from Poland and Sweden in 2009. During the last 7 years of Eastern Partnership policy, a lot of quantitative and non-measurable results of promoting Poland became noticeable.

Definitions

The traditional meaning of diplomacy as a complex of means and processes, in which countries represent their interests on the international stage, got a lot of modifications and additions nowadays. For example, cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, public diplomacy are used widely in contemporary foreign affairs. All of them have the same idea of promoting national interest abroad but with usage of different fields of activity. Encyclopedia Britannica, one of the oldest and most known encyclopedias, presents diplomacy as “the method of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence” (Marks, Freeman, 2016). Nowadays not only governments determine the way and methods of communica-

tion and cooperation with other countries, but also people-to-people interactions. Officially established tactic of one government in attitude to another does not always reflect the real state of affairs. That is why public diplomacy is in high demand of the international communication process. It is mainly used to show the real situation and mutual attitude of the nations.

The term *public diplomacy* was first used in 1965 by American diplomat E. Gullion that “deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communication” (Cull, 2008).

Adelman defines public diplomacy as “a component of foreign policy” that promotes the values and ideology of a country and creates a favorable environment for their distribution and perception abroad (Adelman, 1981). Fortner (1994) determines public diplomacy as a civilized way of persuasion.

In other words, public diplomacy should be considered as live and open political dialogue between the countries. Sufficiently peculiar approach to the understanding of “public diplomacy” was used by US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy: “public diplomacy is an open exchange of ideas and information what is an indispensable feature of a democratic society, and its global mission is crucial to foreign policy” (*Building America’s Public Diplomacy*, 2002).

Even though the term “public diplomacy” is not a new one to political lexicon, its use became widespread mainly after attacks of September 11, 2001 among many scholars from different parts of the world, including Poland. According to Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, public diplomacy “comprises a broad spectrum of information and communication activities aimed at shaping the positive image of Poland among foreigners, promoting improved and objective knowledge and understanding of Poland and its history, strengthening Poland’s prestige as a global actor” (Public Diplomacy, 2016). B. Ociepka, professor at the University of Wrocław, considered that “today it is the most important tool for managing Polish soft power assets, while coordinating cultural diplomacy, including international broadcasting, and frequently combined with economic diplomacy” (Ociepka, 2014). Poland has multi-directed public diplomacy strategy. Main countries of spreading Poland’s public diplomacy initiatives are Germany and Russia. Taking into account “Russian actions in its “near abroad” has encouraged Poland to target the Eastern Partnership countries with public and cultural diplomacy efforts” (Ociepka, 2014).

Summarizing what has been mentioned above, the author considers public diplomacy in this article as an instrument of forming positive and favorable image of the country among foreign society with the usage of different public communications and non-governmental entities.

Fields of Public Diplomacy Implementation

Regarding the fact that Poland was one of the initiators of Eastern Partnership, at the current stage, its main objective is to bridge the gap between the Post-Soviet states and the EU. In this case, it is quite important to disseminate democratic standards and principles. The author agrees with B. Ociepka that “promotion of democracy is one of several potential niches for Polish public diplomacy, as the Polish government and NGOs have joined in sharing know-how on the transition to democracy with the Eastern neighbors” (Ociepka, 2014). Accordingly, one of the fields of Poland’s public diplomacy realization is democracy promotion. Implementation of those ideas was reflected in the support of local governments’ initiatives and cooperation with NGOs.

Poland is a sponsor of numerous funds that carry out their activities in order to support projects aimed at implementation of democratic reforms in Eastern Europe (Kosolapov, 2016, April 24). One of them is the Solidarity Fund PL that was founded in late 1990s at the initiative of the President of the Republic of Poland with the aim “...to support democracy (including local democracy) in countries undergoing political transformation, by offering assistance in bringing about democratic changes to societies which cannot, under the incumbent regimes, decide their fate, and by supporting observance of human rights worldwide” (Solidarity Fund PL). Recently, the main activity area of the Solidarity Fund PL are the countries of the Eastern Partnership, as well as the Central Asian countries, Tunisia and Myanmar/Burma (Solidarity Fund PL).

This foundation is using Polish experience in the reform of local authorities, for example, in Ukraine. Those activities combine consulting, training and study visits. One of the significant events was the conference organized by Solidarity Fund PL *Decentralization and Community Development in Ukraine* (20–21 April 2015, Chernihiv, Ukraine). Solidarity Fund PL among other fields of activity highly supported democratic movements during Revolution of Dignity (2014) in Ukraine (providing medical aid). The Foundation also carries out a lot of activities in Moldova under the Information Centre for Local Authorities, situated in Ialoveni (Solidarity Fund PL).

The democratic way of the development of Belarus is highly supported by Polish authorities. But antidemocratic movements in this country and human rights violations hamper the cooperation of Belarus in the Eastern Partnership programs and with the EU as a whole. According to European External Action Service (EEAS) “the EU stands ready to develop relations with Belarus further if Belarus demonstrates its commitment to democracy, respect for the rule of law, good governance and the respect for human rights, including minority rights” (European External Action Service, 2017).

The spreading of Polish culture and current news about the country is conducted also through instruments of mass media. Realization of Poland’s public diplomacy in Belarus with means of informational propaganda connected with Belsat TV, which is a satellite television channel that was created from the initiative of Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Polish public television TVP. However, Belsat TV is the only independent TV station that broadcasts in Belarus. According to the official web-page of the Belsat TV, it is a “democratization project with the aim at providing the Belarusian society with access to uncensored information, true account of the history of their country, full picture of the international situation around Belarus. The channel also serves the purpose of building bridges between Europe and Belarus and promoting democratization processes in that country” (Belsat TV, 2017).

One of the biggest percent of Polish-speaking mass media is represented in Ukraine that makes a strong impact on the minds of citizens, while also helping to popularize Poland. According to the official information of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ukraine there are:

- 12 registered official newspapers, 4 radio programs and 1 TV program (Kyiv Consular District; *Wykaz mediów polonijnych*, 2017);
- 3 newspapers, 3 radio programs and 1 TV program (Lviv Consular District; *Media*, 2016);
- 2 newspapers (Lutsk Consular District; *Media polonijne*, 2017);
- 2 newspapers, 1 radio program and 1 TV program (Vinnytsia Consular District; *Konsulat Generalny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Winnicy*, 2017).

Another field of Poland’s soft power is cultural and science diplomacy. In this regard the biggest role is played by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, which is highly involved in promotion of Polish culture abroad. Its main goals are coordinated by the Department of International Relations of this Ministry. All the initiatives of high importance are carried out by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the International Cultural Centre (*Promotion of Polish Culture*, 2017).

The role of the Polish Institutes that are subordinated to Polish MFA should not be ignored. The main purposes of those structures are to build a positive image of Poland and promote Polish culture and academic life abroad. With the help of Polish Institutes, Polish culture is represented through cooperation with local centers of culture and participation in international cultural projects. The main peculiarity of Polish Institutes' activity is a successful combination of presenting historical heritage and contemporary cultural and artistic life of Poland.

In Eastern Partnership countries, Polish Institutes are presented only in Ukraine and Belarus. Activities under the Polish Institute which took place in Kiev are always so much publicized and engage a wide range of public. The Polish Institute in Kiev opens windows of cooperation with cultural institutions and individuals who have interesting ideas and projects for joint implementation. While in Minsk, the Polish Institute presents less activities, compared to Poland cultural life activities presented in Kiev department.

Since joining the EU, Poland considerably reformed its education system and gave great importance to the realization of scientific and educational programs. The initiations and funding of those programs are assigned to Polish MFA and some of the well-known funds. Mainly all of the programs are aimed on promoting democracy, maintaining of civil society development, keeping positive image of Poland and bringing closer other cultures to the cognition of Polish traditions and heritage.

With regards to science diplomacy, the author would like to mention that Poland is taking one of the first places in providing academic scholarships and grants in Eastern Partnership countries. Considering the countless amount of such initiatives, the following are some examples:

- The Krzysztof Skubiszewski Scholarship and research grant that is open to candidates not only from Eastern Partnership, but also from Baltic countries, Balkans, Russia and Central Asia. The scholarship granted to candidates who “have accomplished works of significant importance in the public interest, especially in the areas of promoting democracy and the rule of law” (*Polskyj Instytut Kyiv*, 2016);
- Lane Kirkland Scholarship Program that was founded by Polish-American Freedom Foundation and Education for Democracy Foundation mainly oriented on the countries of Eastern Partnership launching also Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Russia. The Program is targeted on “young leaders with higher education who are interested in the development of democracy, economy and civil society in their countries and in the region” (Lane Kirkland Scholarships Program, 2016);

- Polish Government’s Scholarship Program for Young Scholars coordinated by The Centre for East European Studies of University of Warsaw. The same targeted countries are Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and the states of South Caucasus and Central Asia. The scholarship is offered to post-graduate students of humanities. Under this program young scholars study the Polish language, engage in a scientific project in selected socially important topic of their field of study and in another way become acquainted with cultural and educational life of Poland;
- Gaude Polonia is a program for young artists and interpreters of Polish literature from Central and Eastern Europe, mainly from Ukraine and Belarus. This is one of the most known and highly acclaimed initiative of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The artists from different fields (music, film, monument restoration, visual arts, photography, theatre) can participate in this project (Grant Programs, 2016). In spite of artistic development, this program is a good platform for building reliable contacts and multifaceted cultural cooperation between public societies.

Equally important are the initiatives of universities regarding the promotion of Polish education abroad. In this case it is worthy to mention the project named: “Study in Wrocław”. That was an initiative of the Wrocław city council and some of the local universities. The main purpose of the project was to represent educational offering of “Wrocław universities among young people from Eastern Europe who do not have a Polish Card” (*Teraz Wrocław Project*, 2016).

Also the cooperation between universities brings a lot of benefits in the promoting of Polish higher education abroad. For example, cooperation between University of Warsaw and Baku Slavic University contributes to forming the positive image of Poland among academic society of Azerbaijan. Students and teaching staff exchanges between those universities during last several years laid to a good foundation for the interest of the Azerbaijani side in culture and traditions of Poland. An important role in it plays the promotion of Polish language. In 2014 a Sunday school of Polish language was opened at Baku Slavic University. The course was planned for Azerbaijani students, who are willing to study Polish, as well to Polish-origin individuals living in Baku. The initiative of free Polish language course had come from Polish Embassy in Azerbaijan and was approved by signing an agreement of Polish Ambassador to Azerbaijan and Rector of Baku Slavic University (*Uroczyste otwarcie Szkoły*, 2016).

It should be mentioned that many initiatives are carried out by the Caucasus Bureau of the Centre for East European Studies of Warsaw University. The main field of Caucasus Bureau’s activity is maintaining strong cooperation between

University of Warsaw and South Caucasian universities: “academic cooperation, assistance for researchers, informational base and academic contacts” (*Scientific Cooperation*, 2016).

Another field of public diplomacy realization is traced in the sustention of Polish diaspora abroad. According to the data of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs “this group of people presents a huge potential in terms of efficient collaboration in the area of public diplomacy as implemented by Polish diplomatic missions around the globe. Indeed, there are no better allies in the efforts to shape and boost the image of Poland and the Polish community as a whole” (*Dyplomacja publiczna*, 2014). The strategy of Polish diaspora policy is focused on “Poland’s international strategic aims and the promotion of Poland’s image abroad” (Godzimirski et al., 2015).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland is trying widely to incorporate Polish community living abroad in boosting the “Polish brand” and to form “favourable image of the Polish diaspora and Poles in their countries of residence by means of reaching local opinion-makers, elites and their compatriots in general” (*Dyplomacja publiczna*, 2014). The main focus of Polish public diplomacy activities, where Polish community plays an important role, is directed to USA, Canada and UK. For example, the project *Participation of Polish diaspora in pro-Polish lobbying and promotional measures in North America* with the aim “to involve Poles, as well as Americans and Canadians of Polish origin, in particular the young and well-educated, in various public diplomacy measures carried out by Polish diplomatic missions in North America” (*Dyplomacja publiczna*, 2014).

Quite important in the sphere of public diplomacy realization are activities in post-Soviet countries where communication process with opinion-makers and public society at all is actively accompanied by local Polish communities. In this sphere numerous Polonia minority organizations in Eastern European countries should be mentioned. For example, in Georgia there are eight official diaspora organizations. The most well-known are Cultural-Educational Society of Polish People in Georgia and Society of Polish People in Eastern Georgia that are carrying out informational and educational activities (*Polish Diaspora in Georgia*, 2017).

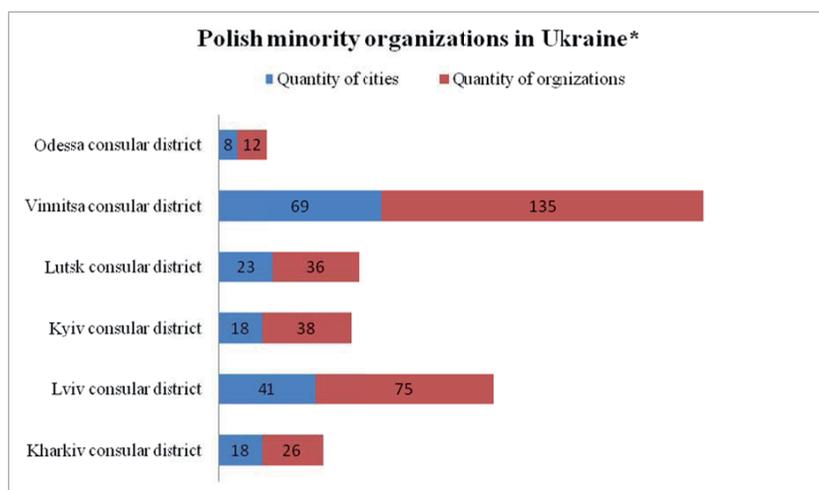
In Belarus, one of the main organizations is the Union of Poles in Belarus. This organization is carrying out cultural initiatives and is used as a powerful instrument of spreading positive image of Poland. It is also worth to mention the contest “Joint Polish-Belarusian Measures” with the aim to build strong relationships between Polish and Belarusian socio-cultural societies. The project covers cultural cooperation from different fields: film industry, theatre, music, literature, etc. (*Dyplomacja publiczna*, 2014). Another project *Presentation of the output of the International Icon Workshops and involvement of Belarusian artists in an undertaking*

organized with Ukrainian artists (*Dyplomacja publiczna*, 2014). The project joined 4 countries: Poland, Slovakia, Belarus and Ukraine. The initiative is giving an opportunity to painters to exchange different ideas and techniques of iconography.

In Azerbaijan there are two main organizations “Polonia-Azerbejdżan” and Polish Centre of Culture “Polonia” (*Polonia w Azerbejdżanie*, 2016). Those organizations follow the main cultural events in Poland and try to perform them in cultural and artistic life of Azerbaijan; especially the Polish community in Baku, which is not so big comparing to other countries of this region. Only 120 people from those organizations (*Polonia w Azerbejdżanie*, 2016).

In Ukraine the situation with Polish organizations is quite different. There are 322 Polish minority organizations in 177 of Ukrainian towns. The following graph shows the distribution of those organizations.

Figure 1. Polish minority organizations in Ukraine



Source: Statistic data was collected and analyzed by the author according to the official information of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 2016).

As it is shown above, the biggest quantity of Polish minority organizations is represented in Vinnitsa consular district that joins 4 regions (Khmelnyskyi, Zhytomyr, Vinnitsa, Chernivtsi). The main city that has the highest quantity of Polish organizations in Ukraine is Zhytomyr with amount of 21 organizations. The most well-known are the Union of Poles in Ukraine and the Federation of Polish Organizations in – “Polish House” in Kyiv.

Polish minority organizations are also represented in Armenia. The most well-known are the Union of Poles in Armenia, Poles' Cooperation "Polish House" and "The Polish Family" NGO). For example, the Union of Poles in Armenia was established in 1996 and nowadays consists of more than 200 members. All the activities are aimed on Poles living in Armenia with the idea of cultural heritage promotion and spreading knowledge about Poland in local communities (*Poles in Armenia*, 2016).

In the same line, among Polish organizations in the Republic of Moldova, there are 20 main organizations that represent Polish culture and main events in the Moldovan society. The Association of Polish Youth, the Union of Poles in Moldova and the Association "Jasna Góra" are the most known (*Organizacje polonijne*, 2016). Their main activities are connected with the studying of the Polish language, support of social programs and promotion of Polish higher education.

Conclusions

It is important to emphasize that Poland is powerfully represented in different spheres of social life in Eastern Partnership countries. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with numerous range of organizations and structures is trying to keep positive image of the country through the support of democracy transformations and implementation of reforms in Eastern Partnership countries, informational propaganda, cultural and science diplomacy and sustentation of cooperation with Polonia. Productive cooperation with NGOs in Eastern Partnership countries gives an opportunity for Poland to implement its cultural diplomacy that sometimes turns into political diplomacy.

There are several institutions that are engaged in Polish public diplomacy realization in Eastern Partnership countries. The initiatives of those structures are mainly spreading on Ukraine and among other Eastern Partnership countries, where geographical position and close interstate relations play the leading role. A good confirmation of this is the quantity of Polish organizations in Ukraine. However, those organizations are concentrated throughout Ukraine. Taking into account fields of public diplomacy realization, cultural and science diplomacy of Poland in Eastern Partnership countries is the most prevalent one. An evidence of this is the increasing number of cultural events, students' exchanges, the formation of Polish associations and organizations in Eastern Partnership countries.

From the perspective of growth of so many initiatives it would be complicated to organize the work of those structures that are involved in public diplomacy

realization. That is why it is quite important for the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in next decade to determine the structure of public diplomacy implementation in Eastern Partnership countries. Considering the experience of some of the EU countries, for example Sweden, it is also quite important to develop new ways of diplomacy, such as digital diplomacy. The presence in the global information space has incredibly changed its character. New media give a possibility of prompt and direct contact with the public. Digital diplomacy is a good way for promoting a country abroad, which can be used by Polish government officials in Eastern Partnership countries as a good accessory to the main public diplomacy concept.

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