



WIELKOPOLSKA
REGION



Polish Standing Conference on the international cooperation of local self-governments

Experience and perspectives regarding the role of polish local self-governments in the strengthening of the local and regional dimension of the Eastern Partnership

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POLISH STANDING CONFERENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS

Second session in Poznań, 28 June 2013

EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVES REGARDING THE ROLE OF POLISH LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN THE STRENGTHENING OF THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSION OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Conference proceedings



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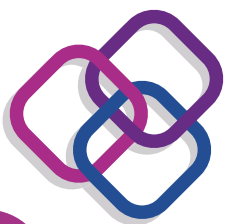


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CONFERENCE AGENDA

Marek Woźniak
Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I welcome most cordially the participants of the Second Polish Standing Conference on the International Cooperation of Local Self-Governments, a platform for dialogue of central as well as local and regional administration and all entities committed to this cooperation and its implementation. I am especially pleased by the attendance of our international guests and have no doubt that your presence will significantly contribute to today's debate.

International cooperation is a permanent and extremely important element of the operation of regional and local self-governments. However, for many years we lacked a clear signal that the work carried out by local self-governments is appreciated and seen as an integral element of Polish foreign policy. Often our activities were not coherent, we were unable to discuss the issues of particular concern and there was no support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is therefore with a great joy and hope that we welcomed the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland concerning the development of the self-government and civil aspects of Polish foreign policy and the allocation of appropriate finances for this purpose. The assumptions, introduced by Minister Radosław Sikorski on April 20, 2012, opened up a new chapter of cooperation of local self-government and central administration in the implementation of international cooperation. The emphasis of the importance of our work and the statement that "citizens have a powerful impact on the development of a country's perception and hundreds of initiatives launched by civil society



and local self-governments over the past few years have contributed to the perception of Poland as a serious and constructive member of the European family" fully correspond with our efforts and experience arising from everyday contacts with international partners.

We are also gladdened by the content-related and financial support of the Ministry of Administration and Digitization. Let me add that this concerns, among others, the Polish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions, which significantly enhances the efficiency of our activities on a pan-European level.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

How did the idea of the Polish Standing Conference on the International Cooperation of Local Self-Governments come about? As I said before, we missed periodic meetings and opportunities for a speedy discussion of problems and doubts as they arose. Therefore we decided to create a standing and stable platform of contacts

for all those involved in international cooperation. The first conference was held on November 15, 2012 in Poznań. It was meant to sum up the experience of local self-governments in the area of international cooperation and to provide answers to the question of what we should do in this area in the future. I am glad that this idea has been so favourably responded to and today we have declarations of participation in the work of the Standing Conference both on the part of local self-governments, among others representatives of all local self-government corporations gathered in the European Affairs Unit to the Joint Commission of the Polish Government and Territorial Self-Government, which I have the honour to co-chair, and on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which allocates now and will continue to allocate substantial outlays for local self-governments initiatives that cater to international cooperation, such as conferences, discussions, debates, and analyses.

Importantly, we have managed to agree on a preliminary agenda and topics of such meetings in the foreseeable future. We have decided to hold the following meeting next year in Łódź. It will be dedicated to the cooperation of Polish local self-government and China, first of all on the economic level. We also have a declaration of the Świętokrzyskie Region, interested in holding the Standing Conference later. I believe that this interest and willingness to participate on the part of ever new local self-government entities is a good omen for the initiative and its importance.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The conference held on November 15, 2012 and the presentations confirmed the many and varied activities of international local and regional self-governments. We decided to focus our today's meet-

ing on initiatives related to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. In my capacity as the chairman of the Polish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions and taking advantage of cooperation with a team from Łódź University headed by Dr. Izabela Skomerska-Muchowska, I commissioned specifically for today's conference an expert's analysis on the cooperation of Polish local self-governments with local and regional authorities and other entities in the countries of the Eastern Partnership Initiative. During the presentation, introduced by its author, Dr. Jolanta Taczyńska, you will be familiarised with the major relevant local self-government initiatives and projects. The presentation will moreover flag the necessary steps to be taken in the coming years so that the Eastern Partnership might fulfil its role.

Allow me to express my special joy because of the presence at today's conference of Mr. Staffan Herrström, Ambassador of Sweden, which along with Poland initiated the Eastern Partnership on the European forum. Mr. Ambassador's attendance is invaluable and we will attentively listen to his reflections and suggestions.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The choice of topics related to the Eastern Partnership for our today's debates is connected first of all with the prime significance for the implementation of this idea of the collaboration of local self-governments from Poland and the Eastern Partnership states. By way of example, I wish to indicate the initiatives taken by the Wielkopolska Region, which from the start was very actively involved in the implementation of the idea of the Eastern Partnership, fully realising its import for the policy of the entire European Union. As early as 2006 we started cooperation with our partners, first with Georgia, later with Ukraine,

and more recently with Armenia. We cooperate in the realisation of particular projects which bring about tangible benefits in the public sphere of those countries. Poland has ample experience in the transformation and democratisation of the state. We wish to share this experience, if only to somehow pay off our debt to our partners in Western Europe, who supported us during the difficult time of transformations.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The choice of the Eastern Partnership as the topic of our Second Conference is moreover tied with the experience of my activity in CORLEAP, or the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership in the local self-government field. The founding conference of CORLEAP took place in September 2011. I had the pleasure and opportunity to suggest the organisation of this first CORLEAP conference in Poznań and to motivate a bit my colleagues from the Committee of the Regions to set up this body,

which had been mentioned as early as 2008 in the Communiqué of the European Commission, but which for one reason or another had to wait for a very long time for its implementation. And in truth our Polish statement issued in Brussels: "Let's do it at last! Let's do it in Poznań, let's do it in September 2011, during the Polish Presidency" proved effective and the conference took off. I am proud that Poznań has become a permanent element of this initiative.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

In conclusion I wish to mention one more issue of paramount importance for us, residents of Poznań and Wielkopolska. Today's date has a certain symbolic meaning. June 28 marks another anniversary of the Poznań Riots of 1956, of the vociferous "No!" against the totalitarian system and the communist regime. Here, in Poznań, in 1956, workers took to the streets for the first time in post-war Poland and voiced their discontent with the system which violates human rights



and which ruthlessly exploits the human being. Many people lost their lives as a result of the bloody struggle, many were persecuted, but it was then that the foundations of a democratic Poland were laid. A few decades later Poland's example ushered in the transformation process in the states of Central Europe. Today, in this family of democratic states we can jointly build a democratic Europe. In this democratic Europe we will wait for our colleagues from the Eastern Partnership states, in the hope that a day like that will come. That is why I wished to stress the symbolic significance of today's date.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I wish to extend my gratitude to all our partners who collaborated during the organisation of this and the previous conference. I am especially indebted to the Ministry of Administration and Digitization, Minister Michał Boni and Minister Magdalena Młochowska, for the support offered to us and their patronage over the previous and today's conference.

I want to address special personal words of acknowledgement to Minister Jerzy Pomianowski for his consistent, efficient and committed implementation as of April last year of the successful plan of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to start dialogue and to establish the foundations of adequate cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Polish local self-governments. Regrettably, the Minister leaves the Ministry, assuming the position of the Executive Director in the European Endowment for Democracy. I must admit this is a loss that we regret but at the same time we are glad that the Minister will take charge of the issues that are extremely important for us and will successfully implement them. Minister, I am thankful for our cooperation and congratulate you.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I wish you interesting and fruitful debates and a lot of inspiration for your continued work.

Jerzy Pomianowski
Undersecretary of State, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
Executive Director, the European
Endowment for Democracy (EED)

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am especially pleased to be here with you today, on the last day of my official position as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The kind words I heard from both Marshal Woźniak and many people I have met today are the most precious experience I can gain from this cooperation; direct contacts with particular people provide a unique context that allows me to sum up the two years of our cooperation.

We have among us the Ambassador of Sweden. His presence is not a matter of coincidence on two counts, since it was Poland and Sweden that jointly put forth on the forum of the European Union the Eastern Partnership initiative and the Swedish model was a great inspiration for me when in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we hammered out the form and construction of cooperation between the Ministry and local self-governments. I am indebted for this inspiration.

While naturally there is still a lot to do, I wish from this very personal perspective to mention a person who is no longer with us, but who was present with us during the first meeting – Professor Michał Kulesza. Invariably, his stand was for me personally a unique source of inspiration as to the understanding of the role of local self-governments and the relation between local authority that directly represents citizens and institutions of central administration and the significance of these relations for the construction of the state and the quality of democracy.



Professor Kulesza, when he was with us during the first meeting here in Poznań, told me a few very much telling and critical words. He said: "Minister, I am glad to hear that you announce support for local self-governments and launch mechanisms of dialogue between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local self-governments, but we should have done it 20 years earlier". He was absolutely right. In a sense, our activities with Marshal Woźniak and with all of you catch up with the delay and it is good that we use the past tense; the mechanism is at work and brings about effects.

Perhaps it is too early to come up with summaries as this is but a second meeting of this kind and the mechanism of supporting the civil and self-government aspect of Polish foreign policy has been in operation for a mere two years, but I wish to say that we are together here, and convening here we represent ample experience of all kinds of cooperation, which have existed and did exist even earlier. Suffice it to mention the Forum of Regions Poland – Russia, Poland – Ukraine, or a recent meeting in Gdańsk of the regions Poland – China. These are examples of very advanced undertakings where the cooperation between Polish diplomacy and civil and self-government diplomacy called for coordination and mutual trust, but also for very mature cooperation.

The mechanism which was launched allows our cooperation to take place along institutional lines. In each big city and in each region we have set up Centres for International Debate, which tapped the earlier experience of the Centres for European Information. These are places where we wish the transfer of the debate to proceed in two directions and where both what local self-governments and local communities have to say to the Ministry and what the Ministry wants to communicate to local self-governments should take place in a smooth, local-based and quality manner. This is the purpose of the centres. These are not government agendas. These are non-governmental organisations which have embarked on their tasks, commissioned by the Ministry. It is of vital importance that all the partners of the process in the regions act in unison and that the centres really become platforms of meetings of all major actors who implement projects of international cooperation.

There are multiple projects of this kind in each local community. We are talking here not only about marshal offices, heads of central administration in regions or mayors of major cities. We are talking here about local associations, non-governmental organisations, business ones included, universities and institutions of culture. This is therefore a group of important actors who have their own tasks but who perform those tasks also within the aspect of international cooperation. As long as they better coordinate these tasks, the Polish state will be more efficient in the realisation of its strategic objectives, and the level of international cooperation between citizens, local and regional communities will bring tangible effects for both Polish partners and their counterparts in the states with which they cooperate.

The mechanism of cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local self-governments is founded on the universal economic principle of a balanced demand and supply. In order for the Ministry to implement its mission of stimulating debate and international cooperation, there must be willingness and interest in this debate and cooperation. As of today I can safely say that the demand is greater than the supply. We wish to catch up with all the needs submitted to us by local self-governments. What we receive is not only requests for financial support, since local self-governments allocates substantial outlays to these tasks on its own. What is expected of us is first of all interest, competent advice, cooperation and co-participation. Naturally, at a time when the public opinion demands a reduction in the number of civil servants and in the expenditure of central administration, it may happen that the capacities and numbers of people remaining at our disposal will not allow us to respond to every invitation from across Poland. However, we will do our utmost to be as active as possible, both as regard the protocol, i.e. assuring adequate representation, and with respect to content, assuring experts offering their expertise in individual areas of cooperation, sharing it, being inspirational as well as listen, i.e. receive information, suggestions and lessons which are significant for the formulation of the strategic directions for the development of Polish international cooperation and Polish foreign policy.

In summary, I wish to say that the mechanism is already founded on very solid ground. There is a sizeable group of assigned personnel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose job description is dedicated to this cooperation. There is a mechanism of a call for proposals for projects submitted from the regional level, which will be

held on an annual basis. We have a mechanism of a permanent budget allocation to support this cooperation and finally we have on the part of local self-government more and more systematic mechanisms of dialogue, such as for instance our today's conference, which is becoming both periodic and itinerant, i.e. a conference which will change its location. This will activate individual regions and this is predominantly thanks to Marshal Woźniak, an author of such a mechanism, who defined it, provided it with a political and institutional framework which is important from the perspective of local self-governments.

To sum up, I wish to thank you again for offering me this opportunity of being with you. Even though this is my last day in the Ministry, it does not mean that the promises I have made need to be reiterated in a special manner by my successors, since state integrity calls for the creation of permanent mechanisms which operate irrespective of who is in charge of them at a given moment. I am supremely confident about it. Second of all, I am pleased to announce my new capacity as the Executive Director of the European Endowment for Democracy, in particular in the context of the subject matter of today's meeting, of which we will talk about during the panel debate. The Endowment constitutes a new European mechanism, which similarly to the Eastern Partnership was set up on the initiative of Poland with the great support of our Swedish friends. This mechanism will likewise be used by Polish local and regional self-governments. This is because the resources earmarked for the support of pro-democratic activities and mechanisms enhancing democracy in the Eastern Partnership states invariably lead to the use by partners and organisations in those countries of Polish, Slovak and Czech lessons, of lessons of the immediate

neighbours such as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. These are the natural partners since our experience of democracy and of the reforms of local self-governments is invaluable for all the activists and organisations operating in Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, or even in the hard conditions in Belarus or Azerbaijan; they like to deliberately tap this experience which, because of cultural proximity and a similar historic background, is easily transferable and comprehensible. Therefore the funds of the European Endowment for Democracy will also support your activities and contacts with your counterparts in the Eastern Partnership states.

I am thankful for your attention and once again for all the nice words addressed to me. Still, without the support of my boss, Minister Radosław Sikorski, the entire project of launching the new support mechanism for international cooperation of local self-governments would not be possible, therefore I will pass the words of acknowledgement and appreciation I heard here to Minister Sikorski.

Thank you!



Magdalena Mlochowska
Undersecretary of State,
Ministry of Administration and
Digitization of the Republic of Poland

Ladies and Gentlemen!

First of all I wish to thank you for your continued everyday activity. I fully realise the magnitude of tasks you need to perform on a daily basis. I have the pleasure to observe some of your work, or rather its results, at the Joint Committee of Central and Local Government. We know that at present there are many projects that your attention is drawn to: a new system of waste management, your financial standing, six-year-olds in schools, or amendments in the Teachers' Charter. They are hot issues that generate much debate on a daily basis; rightly so, since these are naturally important subjects. They are linked with many tasks that you need to implement every day. I therefore wish to thank especially warmly those units of local self-government which apart from their ongoing work imposed on them by law decide to do something more. You go beyond those duties and get involved among others in issues like international cooperation or partnership, in this case the Eastern Partnership. This is especially important since e.g. international cooperation is a task which cannot be measured in financial terms despite the many and varied benefits of such partnerships. As I have already indicated, these are often intangible benefits and without figures to back us up it is hard to persuade councillors, for instance, to get involved because a given activity will result in some tangible budgetary increases.

Here I want to express my gratitude to you for creating an image of Poland abroad. This image



does not depend on state government alone but to a great extent reflects your activities as units of local self-governments or actions of civil society. As a result, year by year our perception in other countries is increasingly favourable and we are appreciated for our flagship product, namely the reform of local self-government.

As Mr. Marshal observed, the project implemented within the Operational Program Human Capital takes place with the aid of the representatives of the Committee of the Regions, Polish representatives to the Committee of the Regions. At this point I wish to extend my words of gratitude to those representatives since this is in fact a multidirectional action. On the one hand we offer you support to the best of our abilities, also in the form of assistance on the part of expert academics, on the other hand we learn a lot from you. We are jointly working out modalities of operation in order to represent Poland in the Committee of the Regions as effectively as possible and to be efficient in this forum to have our say in major decision processes.

Furthermore, as Mr. Marshal observed, a questionnaire was created on whether and which units of local self-government participate in the Partnership – all kinds of partnerships – first of

all in the Eastern Partnership. The questionnaire indicated the dominant role of the European Union Member States in partnerships of Polish local self-governments. This is the experience which helped us enormously when we entered the European Union as a new member and local self-governments of the Western countries led us by the hand, showing how to move about in the European Union. Another group of countries of major importance for partnerships is precisely the group of the Eastern Partnership states. 15 regions indicated cooperation with this group of countries. I am very curious to know which region has so far not been involved in this cooperation, but I do hope this will change in the near future. Add to this 58 counties and 174 communes. Dominant in this Partnership is Ukraine, which seems only natural given that this is our immediate neighbour and a big partner.

With respect to the fundamental tasks implemented together with our partners, they look different at the level of regions and at the local level of counties and communes. At the local level we more often deal with cultural exchange, an exchange of good practices and modes of implementation of certain tasks. Interestingly, some tendencies in Europe, such as demographics, are common to all of us. There are more and more tasks related to care for the elderly and life-long learning. This is a forum for the exchange of experience on methods of joint and efficient task implementation. This looks a bit different at the level of regions. Here we more often witness economic and commercial cooperation. The results of the questionnaire will be discussed in greater detail later today, so I will not dwell on them in my address.

Once again I wish to thank you all!



PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT

COOPERATION OF POLISH SELF-GOVERNMENT ENTITIES WITH REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND OTHER UNITS FROM EASTERN PARTNERSHIP STATES



* Full version of the report available at:
<http://www.umww.pl/polish-standing-conference-on-the-international-cooperation-of-local-self-governments>

COOPERATION OF POLISH LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT ENTITIES



with regional and local authorities
as well as other units from

Eastern Partnership states

Eastern Partnership states

as well as other units from
with regional and local authorities

ENTITIES

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЕ

with regional and local authorities



Analysis scope

EP and Polish self-government units

- **structure and institutional framework of cooperation between EU member states and EP states** (review of available mechanisms and support instruments at the EU and national levels, including those on the initiative of the Republic of Poland)
- **significance of regional and local authorities in the new approach to the European Neighbourhood Policy**, in particular EP and the relevant role of the Committee of the Regions and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)
- **activity of Polish local self-government**, broken down into specific types
- **guide** of initiatives and mechanisms for EP available for Polish local self-government units



Dr Jolanta Taczyńska

Assistant professor in the Chair of European Commercial Law, Faculty of Law and Administration, Łódź University



System project "Good law – effective governance"

Measure 5.2 Operational Program Human Capital

The Project is part-financed by the European Social Fund

Expert's analysis drawn up on request by Marek Woźniak
Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region and Chairman
of the Polish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions

Analysis objective

- definition of the uniqueness of the activity of Polish local self-government units in areas covered by EP
- determination of motifs of cooperation with EP states by Polish local self-government units
- definition of the subject and scope of this activity
- identification of difficulties and related challenges

Methodology

SURVEY STUDY

Addressed via the Ministry of Administration and Digitisation to:

- 16 marshal offices
- 314 county authorities
- 2479 commune authorities
- Union of Polish Metropolises, Union of Rural Communes of the Republic of Poland, Union of Polish Cities, Union of Polish Towns and the Union of Polish Counties

A high interest in participation in the survey.

Filled out questionnaires obtained from:

- 803 communes (including municipalities)
- 112 counties
- 15 regions
- 2 corporations of local self-government



Directions of international cooperation of regional and local self-governments

Cooperation with EP states comes **second, after EU member states, as to the geographic activity** of Polish self-government units

- Polish self-government units cooperate the most intensively with entities from **Ukraine (100% of regions and close to 90% communes and counties** involved in international cooperation)
- Cooperation with **Belarus** is less intensive
- Cooperation with **Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan** is negligible

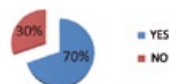
International cooperation of regional and local self-governments

The highest at the level of regions (100%)

Are you involved in international cooperation?
COMMUNES



Are you involved in international cooperation?
COUNTIES



Reasons for starting cooperation

- related to the political system
- social
- economic
- areas of "shared interest"
- geographic, historical and cultural
- pragmatic



Subject areas

Communes and counties:

- cultural cooperation, in the area of young people and sport and tourism, territorial cooperation

Regions:

- commercial and economic contacts, mobility of students, scientists and academics, all levels of education

Important in both cases are areas of key importance for the implementation of EP objectives, such as developmental assistance, local democracy and strengthening local self-government.

Partners and organisational and legal forms of cooperation

Partners:

- direct relations between agendas of administration
- non-governmental organisations
- cooperation with corporations of local self-government

Forms:

- agreement or letter of intent
- implementation of joint projects

Typology of activities

Self-government units on their own initiative seek potential partners, information on available forms of cooperation and their financing – they use proven instruments (reconnaissance visits, exchange of good practices, joint conferences, etc.).

Activities taken:

- activities for the benefit of the broadly-construed own potential of self-government units
- activities of social character
- economic activity

Self-government units see cooperation with entities of EP states as **mutually beneficial**, for both local and regional authorities and citizens and entrepreneurs.

Cooperation in EP Subject Platforms

- **Although local self-government units do not directly participate** in the activity of individual EP Subject Platforms, their choice of activity areas corresponds with the main objectives and areas of interest of EP structures.
- **The highest dynamic** can be found in areas of **Platform 4 (Interpersonal contacts)**, followed by those of Platform 2 (Economic integration and convergence with EU policies) and 1 (Democracy, good governance and stability).
- **Platform 3 (Energy security)** turns out to be the **least popular**.
- **Activity areas of local self-government units are rarely associated with the subject matter of EP Platforms.** Conclusion – inadequate familiarity with issues of international nature weakens the possibility of a bottom-up impact on the development of the neighbourhood policy in its regional aspect.

Difficulties in starting and implementing cooperation

Chief obstacles

- financial difficulties
- inadequate number and skills of personnel
- difficulties in access to information and adequate training
- terms of office of authorities (i.e. a lack of continuity of representation at the international level)

Mechanisms that potentially facilitate international cooperation

The highest number of indications

- new possibilities of financing
- raising administration personnel qualifications by:
 - trainings related to European Neighbourhood Policy, including EP
 - language courses
- information campaigns dedicated to businesses, NGOs and other entities active in culture, science and education

The lowest number of indications

- raising administration personnel qualifications by information campaigns
- active role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Self-government units as international actors?

In the opinion of counties

- self-government aspect of foreign policy is first of all connected with territorial self-government at the level of communes and counties

In the opinion of communes and regions

- self-government aspect of foreign policy is in equal measure connected with territorial self-government at the level of regions and at the level of communes and counties

Both counties and communes do not see this area as the domain of self-government corporations.

The role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- **acutely insufficient** (92% indications among 89 counties, 86% indications among 602 communes and 9 in 15 regions - 60%)
- at the level of communes and counties, in most cases **there is no answer as to the support forms from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs** used previously (10 out of 15 regions responded)
- **support forms used** at the level of communes and counties - substantive support
- **desirable support forms** - financial support in the form of umbrella projects and standing annual budget for areas cooperating as euroregions

Consideration of the EP aspect in Priorities of International Cooperation of the Region according to the knowledge of self-government units

- **60.8% respondents in counties indicated the presence of such consideration (54.3% of indications by respondents in communes),** 11.8% counties indicated its absence (in communes 9.8%), while 27.5% of the counties polled did not have relevant knowledge (in communes the index of "I do not know" replies was 35.9%).
- **in the 15 regions** polled there were **only 5 replies (33.3%) confirming the presence of the EP** aspect in the Priorities of international cooperation of the region and 9 negative replies. One of the regions polled did not respond to this question.

A need for multilevel synergies of activities

Involvement of all interested entities.

On the one hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should provide substantive and financial support for international activities of local self-government, and on the other hand local self-government should embark on activities taking into account the "Priorities of Polish Foreign Policy 2012-2016".

- Analogous **links** should exist **between regional self-government and the self-government of communes and counties.** This will assure the coherence of international activity within regions, with adequate respect of – legally guaranteed – independence of lower tiers of local self-government.
- **Priorities of international cooperation of a region should be, without the violation of the autonomy of communes and counties, a starting point for lower-tier local self-government units.** This will ensure – indirectly – a greater synergy between self-government and central government levels. It is regions that are responsible for cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it is them that should take care of the correspondence of international cooperation with the priorities of the foreign policy of the state. In turn, self-government units in communes and counties should count not only on the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also of regional self-government. This will make up an efficient multilevel self-government dimension of foreign policy, where on the one hand the autonomy of all levels is preserved and on the other hand there is a synergy of activities.

PANEL I

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AT A NEW STAGE OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP – CONCEPTS AND POSSIBILITIES OF INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION



Maria Przelomiec
Editor of *Studio Wschód* at TVP Info

Fragments of the debate – moderator's summary

Minister Pomianowski mentioned today the late founder of the Polish reform of local self-government, Professor Michał Kulesza. He would tell that in 1990 the France–Pologne Foundation held two-week study visits for a few hundred Polish commune mayors. All of them went to different places across France and returned to Poland, bringing back information and experience, which were to become the seed capital of Polish local self-government.

The Polish reform of local self-government, for all its deficiencies, was one of the more successful and this is the capital that Polish local authorities may share with our Eastern neighbours. They may and they do share it, which is important in that I personally see cooperation between units of local self-government as one of the most efficient ways of bringing former Soviet Union member states closer to the European Union. At this point I wish to refer to my own experience. A few years ago I visited the city of Kutaisi in Georgia and the local self-government representatives told me about a training in Poznań. Within a few weeks they learned from their colleagues in Poznań far more about the attraction of foreign investment, applying for European projects or even drawing up city budget than during a course in Brussels.

It is therefore fit and proper that local self-governments is increasingly involved in the Eastern Partnership program, set up for 6 East European states.

This is witnessed by the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Part-



nership, set up two years ago by the Committee of the Regions. As Mr. Marshal said, CORLEAP was “born” in Poznań. It is composed of 36 people, i.e. 18 representatives of the EU Committee of the Regions and 18 representatives of the Eastern Partnerships states. Its tasks are greatly significant: they draw up the assumptions of cooperation between local self-governments of EU Member States and the Eastern Partnerships states. Three areas were singled out as priority issues: **a reform of public administration, fiscal devolution or a maximum autonomy from central budgets and territorial cooperation.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, four years down the road it is hard to unequivocally say that the Eastern Partnership is a success. Unfortunately, in some countries the situation has changed, not necessarily for the better. I refer here to Georgia, Ukraine and also to some extent Moldova, although the unrest taking place there, i.e. the rebellious pro-Russian Transnistria, cannot be regarded as the fault of the Moldovan authorities. Still, at a time when EU governments do not have that much impact, there is an increase in the role of local self-governments, non-governmental organisations and local contacts.

This is precisely what we are to talk about in relation to **“Local self-governments at a new stage of the Eastern Partnership – concepts and possibilities of interregional cooperation”**.

How do the panellists see the role of local self-governments at the new stage of implementing the Eastern Partnership? Is the involvement of local self-governments used properly and adequately? What should be continued and what calls for changes?

I pass the floor now to Marshal Marek Woźniak.

Marek Woźniak – Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, Chairman of the Polish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

As regards the Eastern Partnership, Wielkopolska Region has managed to implement a number of projects with Georgia and Ukraine, and more recently also with Armenia. Some of the projects were held with our own resources, without the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was clear to us that we should share both knowledge and experience. It seems to me that in the case of local self-governments the latter element, i.e. experience, is the most important. There are many institutions and associations with eminent experts with the appropriate knowledge, yet local self-governments offers some additional element: its own experience which is a kind of knowledge not to be learned from books. Often this is personal experience of overcoming the hardships of everyday life which we encountered during the two decades of implementing the procedures of local self-governments in Poland. In my opinion the biggest challenge for the Eastern Partnership member states is the struggle against the post-Soviet mentality, which deprived those people of the sense of responsibility for themselves, the sense of responsibility for their own decisions and has stripped them of the spirit of initiative and the ability to set up their own project. This mentality imposed the conviction that authority is

omnipotent and has to be asked for everything. This continues to be a burden and although it is increasingly a thing of the past in many places, struggle against it is not easy. It will not be possible at the level of state-to-state relations. Relations at lower levels are needed; the lower, the better. The involvement of local self-governments is seconded by that of NGOs and members of the civil society.

Acting at the regional level we cannot lose sight of Brussels. As Polish representatives of local self-governments, we try to comprehend the logic of the activities of local self-governments in Europe, to reflect on what the local self-governments of the European Union may do for our partners in the East. We, the countries of Central Europe, can easier fulfil the role of leaders of such projects, as for a few decades we had the same experience as the Eastern Partnership states. The leadership role is a huge responsibility which we gladly take on ourselves.

It was not easy to win the Eastern Partnership states to the idea of setting up a Conference of Local and Regional Authorities; most of the EU Member States preferred the South and only the disappointment in the Arab spring helped change perspective. CORLEAP needed some time to work out concrete tasks. These are three activity areas: **a reform of public administration, fiscal devolution or a maximum autonomy from central budgets and territorial cooperation.** Without a reform of public administration there will be no empowerment of local authorities in the Eastern Partnership states, and without autonomous disposal of funds there will be no autonomous decisions. The two pillars of this financial devolution are own local taxes on the one hand and a fixed, guaranteed participation in state taxes on the other.

Furthermore, territorial cooperation means openness to international projects. Resources can be obtained but are hard to access and therefore CORLEAP suggests to lower own contribution to absolute minimum, even to zero. It is hard to imagine that local self-governments in the East will find money for its own contribution. This suggestion has not been fully implemented yet.

At any rate, there is willingness to continue in the future the CORLEAP formula as a forum of cooperation of the European Union and the Eastern Partnership states. The role of the conference is appreciated by the European Commission, which regards CORLEAP as a major agenda of opinion concerning activities in Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, I wish to mention local self-governments corporations. We encourage our partners in the East to set up such corporations. Together it is easier to participate e.g. in talks with central authorities or international partners, it is easier to carry out a successful dialogue concerning e.g. legislative processes. This is the general message addressed to all representatives of local self-governments.

We also want the voice of local self-governments to be taken into account in association agreements of the European Union with the Eastern Partnership member states. Such agreements might have a separate chapter dedicated to local self-governments, a chapter which will commit partners to implement devolution measures.



Jan Tadeusz Tombiński – Ambassador of the European Union to Ukraine.

All boils down to the construction in Europe of a democratic society and democracy, and local self-governments, or local democracy are the cornerstone. Following this rationale, we need to seek instruments to build this democracy and stability. On the one hand, this is civil education, on the other hand the conviction of those in charge of local policies that problems are solvable.

One of my first experiences learned after 10 months spent in Ukraine is the conviction that this is really crucial and that our partners should be offered the sense of “You can do it”, “You yourselves are able to change your own reality”. Experience is really important here – Polish, Czech, Hungarian or Lithuanian, in a word the experience of all the countries which have recently been through the transformation period. This experience speaks louder than the experience of countries of long-established democracy, uninterrupted by communist experiments. Of paramount importance here is the role of the countries of Central Europe and their cooperation with the Eastern Partnership states. I can see this in Ukraine in many aspects. Starting with so-called people-to-people contacts, through projects concerning e.g. protection of common cultural heritage (incidentally, a group of archaeologists from Wrocław is as of these words working with the Ukrainians on the ruins of the Kudak stronghold built by King Ladislaus IV), such projects are a perfect tool to overcome stereotypes from the past and help identify shared elements of history.

We should remember that in Ukraine we deal with a certain unique situation. The state pursues its own objectives, but there is no definite telling

whether the state objectives tally with the objectives of society. As a result, such social identification should be built which will facilitate the overcoming of past differences. This direction may be built also via actions of local self-governments. The available instruments have already been indicated.

The good news is that the European budget has been finally formalised for the next 7 years and the budget will allocate ample resources for cooperation with external partners. EU speaks today about the promotion of in-house policies outside its border. We live in a global world and what happens on the EU financial markets has its impact on the situation on the external markets. In a similar fashion the external markets influence the EU markets. The same is true about food safety, ecology, and transportation and migration policy. All of these



instruments will be present in the EU external relations, i.e. we will be able to make use of these projects also for activities with our partners, including those in the East.

The third element that contributes to cooperation with Eastern Europe is the element of very practical solidarity. Our accomplishments of the past 20 years call for paying off our debt. We need to give back what we received as assistance from others in the early 1990s from the French, Germans, Austrians, and Swedes. The time has come for us to transfer the capital gained elsewhere. This is not a transfer only but a joint investment. We call it a win-win situation. Just like our partners in the West benefited from what Poland is now, we will also benefit the stability, opportunities for economic development and trade if our partners in the East follow the same principles as us, if people communicate with one another, if we are able to effectively combat corruption and protect the interests of those active on the Eastern markets. If we simply stabilise the entire European area.

Staffan Herrström – Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Poland.

I believe that the Eastern Partnership program is a fantastic experience, a perfect example of Polish-Swedish cooperation. As to the topic of our today's debate, you ask about our experience. I believe that the cooperation of local self-government units may enhance the transformation process in the neighbouring countries, in particular as regards the construction of democracy. Of great importance for the creation of civil society is, e.g. the creation of the civil service, also at the local level; here the European Union may offer its experience and best practices.

As for practical matters. When I was Director for Central and Eastern Europe in the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), one of the major donors of multiple programs for this region, especially for Ukraine, followed by Moldova, we tried to allocate money for cooperation with local self-government. Many Swedish local self-governments authorities carried out their projects with the East. I repeat: changes often start from local communities from local self-governments.

As early as 1989 we tried to get involved in so-called twinning projects in the Baltic States. These actions were a great success. At present we try to get Russia involved in such programs. These contacts have a transparent and open character and are not limited to meetings or conferences; they contribute to the implementation of concrete projects. Democracy is not only debate and political concepts but also concrete activities and hands-on experience. It is therefore crucial that the cooperation of local authorities, ranging from authorities of capital cities through self-governments of small towns, be continued in the Eastern Partnership states.

Obviously, our experience includes not only cooperation with local authorities but also with communities. As Ambassador Tombiński indicated, it is crucial that people from a country such as e.g. Poland cooperate and share their experience with Eastern partners. I remember when during our visit to Georgia, the Georgians pointed out that while a visit to Sweden and learning our experience was very interesting for them, only when they visit Estonia, for instance, which had also at one time been part of the Soviet bloc, can they see that all of this is achievable, also by



themselves, in Georgia. They see that they can effect similar changes. It seems we need very concrete activities and concrete results.

Jerzy Pomianowski – Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Executive Director, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED). Prof. Kulesza was quoted as saying some time ago that we launched a systematic cooperation with the East 20 years belatedly. In this situation the unsatisfied feeling of representatives of many self-government units as to the earlier activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs might be justified. On the other hand, we receive signals that the new opening to cooperation with local self-governments has already produced very favourable results. The Ministry assures a sense of security since there are people in the Ministry who can be called and asked for advice concerning cooperation with Eastern European states. Naturally, all of this takes time, but the mechanisms are already

in place. I refer here to Polish programs of developmental assistance or democracy support, programs financed by expenditure for developmental assistance. These activities have been taking place since 2005, 2006.

It may have happened that interesting self-government projects may not have received the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, not because they were bad but because of the limited resources, while we hoped that the richer self-government units might finance such projects on their own. Still, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does all in its power to support similar local initiatives, especially recently, when many projects connected with the Eastern Partnership states have appeared, submitted by such institutions as e.g. the Marshal Office of Podkarpackie Region, the Assembly of Pomorskie Region, the City of Poznań, the Marshal Office of Wielkopolska Region, the Marshal Office of Lubuskie Region, and projects submitted by individual communes.

There are also other mechanisms that cater to this cooperation more indirectly. Take, for instance, the program of assistance for the Polish Diaspora abroad. In many of the Eastern Partnership states, in particular in Ukraine, Poles who are citizens of Ukraine play a major role, transmitting knowledge about Europe and about what happens behind Ukraine's western border.

Meetings of young people from Poland and Ukraine, attended by young Poles from Ukraine, or by the Ukrainians living in Poland, are an additional mechanism, and such meetings almost always take place on the initiative of local self-governments, very often with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Multiple support mechanisms are addressed at programs connected with the Eastern Partnership. It is our role as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to foster better synergies between different projects and activities.

As far as the expectations of Polish local self-governments concerning my new capacity as the director of the European Endowment for Democracy, here we will deal with a slightly reverse situation as the Endowment will allocate its funds to partners in the Eastern Partnership states. Applicants from the East will need to indicate their partners on the Polish side, e.g. representatives of local self-governments, with whom they wish to implement the projects financed by us. It may turn out that there is a great demand for partners from Poland for all kinds of projects in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia and thus Polish local self-governments can become indirect beneficiary of the funds which the European Endowment for Democracy will allocate to the countries of Eastern Europe.

This also means that we will have an area of cooperation connected with the functioning of various groups within Polish local self-governments. I refer here first of all to those directly neighbouring on Belarus, where we deal with the activity of groups which cannot operate within their own country. I mean here first of all Belarus democratic opposition. Many representatives of this opposition movement are active e.g. in Białystok. They will obtain support from the European Endowment for Democracy and therefore the burden of care over them, currently borne in large measure by local authorities, will be slightly reduced. In other words, the Endowment funds allocated directly to the Eastern Partnership states



will indirectly enrich the potential of activities of Polish local self-governments.

Ewa Synowiec – Director of the European Commission Representative Office in Poland.

This is an extremely interesting conference for me since on a daily basis I do not have that much information about the operation of local self-governments. I can see that we should reflect on how to intensify cooperation in this area. Naturally, on behalf of the European Commission I can pledge that the European Commission attaches great importance to cooperation with the Eastern Partnership states at the local and regional levels. Stable and prosperous neighbourhood guarantees stability of the entire UE. The local self-government aspect is extremely interesting also in the context of the European Year of Citizens; it is worthwhile to export good practices to our neighbours. The future cooperation at the level of local self-governments, however, will be determined by the

formal framework which we hope to be soon completed, i.e. association agreements which guarantee political association and economic integration. This framework will anchor first of all certain reforms at the central level, which should also be reflected at the regional level. I believe this will moreover increase the potential of Polish local self-governments. However, the European Union will not offer new funds for Polish local authorities. The funds will be given to local self-government units in the partner states. This is the same pattern as the one defined by Minister Pomianowski with respect to the European Endowment for Democracy.

To enhance this cooperation we need to bear in mind one important aspect of the mobility of persons. Apart from the above association agreements, of importance in this context is work facilitating movement with visas or actually abolishing the visa requirement. There will be no mobility until this question has been resolved. This is not easy, however.

Assistance geared to the development of regional cooperation has in principle been

launched within the last two years. At the very beginning of the Eastern Partnership, cooperation at the local level was not seen as very important. All the initiatives mentioned also by Commissioner Štefan Füle have been launched within the past two years.

Naturally, we are impatiently awaiting concrete solutions concerning the new EU budget for the successive 7 years. We cannot be sure about the details and we do not know what funds will be allocated to international cooperation, including the European instrument supporting our immediate neighbours. The funds were meant to increase from 11.2 billion euro to 18.2 billion euro, but at this point we cannot say what the ultimate amount will be. Nevertheless, the Commission believes that cooperation at regional and local levels should be continued in order to obtain the synergy effect. EU funds is one thing and what individual Member States can do is another issue. It is satisfying indeed to hear about the great number of interesting Polish initiatives; if the other countries neighbouring on the Eastern Partnership area were equally active, something really interesting might be created.

Now, where can our local self-government partners seek information? Of major importance here will be EU Representative Offices in individual states as well as bilateral embassies to those states. They should become a transmitter of information.

Poland is setting up an entire system of special units in individual regions and major cities which will be cooperating with local self-governments in the area of international policy. We as the European Commission also have an information network known as Europe Direct and I believe that the Polish Europe Direct centres, even though this was not their priority so far, might be sensitised to providing information to local self-governments about what takes place at the pan-European level concerning the Eastern Partnership and related opportunities.

Prof. Roman Kuźniar – Advisor to the President of the Republic of Poland. Personally I believe that local self-governments and autonomy are one of the major components of European identity. Self-government means a certain degree of independence and autonomy of individuals or social groups from the authorities. Self-government is then an element of the civil values of Europeans. This has become a distinguishing feature of Europe, making it different from other parts of the world and this has led us to democracy. Therefore, when after World War II such institutions as the Council of Europe or the European Union were established in Europe, cooperation at the level of local and regional self-governments and trans-border cooperation were one of the components of the unifying Europe. Documents were drafted,



institutions set up and finally concrete forms of cooperation were developed.

After 1989 I observed with pleasure the joy of Polish representatives of local self-governments, able to tap without restriction the experience of their western colleagues. I had the chance to observe it closely since I designed the Carpathian Euroregion uniting many local communities in Eastern Carpathian Region in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine, later on also in Romania. It was fantastic to witness the cooperation and I must say that representatives of local self-governments who had this experience were later on more efficient in leading communities in their own territories.

Now we try to stare all of those lessons with Eastern Europe. Such issues cannot be resolved at the highest level, via meetings of President Komorowski with his counterparts in Eastern Europe. Also because the leaders of Eastern European states such as Viktor Yanukovych, Vladimir Putin, not to mention Alexander Lukashenko, simply do not comprehend self-government and are moreover afraid of it. The experience of local self-governments may only



be shared via self-government units, at the local level. I am confident that the Eastern Partnership will succeed inasmuch as it will bear fruit precisely at this local level. It will succeed provided our European self-governments are able to share its experience and provided this experience is adopted in the East.



PANEL II

THE POLISH EXPERIENCE OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS FOR THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES – THE TRANSFER OF KNOW-HOW, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE



Małgorzata Nocuń
Deputy Editor-in-Chief
of Nowa Europa Wschodnia

Fragments of the debate – moderator's summary

The panel **“The Polish experience of local self-governments for the Eastern Partnership countries – the transfer of know-how. Opportunities and challenges for the future”** was meant to present and summarise the activities of Polish non-governmental organisations and representatives of Polish local self-governments in the Eastern Partnership states.

The launching of the Eastern Partnership (an extended program of the European Neighbourhood Policy) took place in 2008. The structure and the profile of the new EU program were significantly influenced by the events taking place at that time in the post-Soviet countries. Let us mention among others the disillusionment of Ukrainian society with the “Orange” government (which led to increased chaos in the state, antagonised the governing elites, did not lead to the promised reforms and indirectly contributed to an increased popularity of the “Blue” camp and to pro-Russian sentiments, since Russia was seen by members of the general public as a guarantor of stability in Ukraine); the war in Georgia (August 2008); ineffective efforts of EU diplomacy (including Polish diplomacy) in Belarus (forced dispersal of peaceful demonstrations in Minsk in 2006).

Warsaw took an active role in adopting the assumptions of the Eastern Partnership program; its efforts were seconded by the Czech Republic and Sweden. Right from the start the initiative had its many adherents and opponents. The former



believed that this is the one and only coherent program dedicated to the post-Soviet countries. The Eastern Partnership offered to address the cooperation of the European Union with the post-Soviet states, encouraging reforms so that the Eastern Partnership states might systematically move closer to Europe and collaborate with it ever closer. The opponents of the new UE initiative were of the opinion that in this way the European Union separates itself from the post-Soviet states with a new “golden curtain”. The assumptions of the Eastern Partnership did not stipulate the integration with the European Union of the Eastern Partnership states, focusing instead on cooperation and bringing the six beneficiaries closer to the EU. The opponents of the new EU initiative also stress the fact that one program has come to cover six totally different countries. The “common denominator” of the Eastern Partnership states is solely their past, as all are former Soviet states of varying degrees of authoritarianism. However, the degrees of



democratisation in Ukraine and for instance in Azerbaijan are incomparable. Kiev has recently taken major steps forward, coming closer to the European Union, while Baku ostensibly shows that adopting EU standards is not in the interest of Azerbaijan.

The first question asked to the panellists concerned the relation between the EU-led Eastern Partnership program and regional and local self-government and non-governmental organisations. The debate participants were asked to demonstrate the interrelations between “micro” policy (implemented by local self-governments and the third sector) and global politics (Polish and EU). The exchange of ideas highlighted the role of social, cultural and scientific diplomacy, the domain of local authorities and NGOs.

Regional and local self-governments as well as the Polish third sector are involved among others in social diplomacy, more recently one of the major fields of Polish diplomacy. Thanks to the

increased importance of social diplomacy, the activities of Polish local self-governments, the third sector, and representatives of culture and science have become more significant in post-Soviet territories. We can in fact observe that the above entities take active and important part in the implementation of Polish foreign policy, and moreover participate in a debate on Polish foreign policy. Recommendations of the third sector and local self-governments are increasingly important during the debate on the development of Polish foreign policy.

The lessons learned in the course of implementation of foreign policy (more broadly: EU policy) in the countries of the Eastern Partnership program indicate that traditional diplomacy (most often founded on bilateral relations with decision makers in a given state) is inefficient. Poland (as well as the European Union) has an ever decreasing impact on what happens in the former Soviet territories. Increasingly, hard policy is replaced by soft power.

Ukraine has been singled out among the countries of the Eastern Partnership as a country which has recently come the closest to the European Union. Although the events taking place in Ukraine in recent years (the fight against the opposition and against independent communications media) give no grounds for optimism, Kiev stands a chance to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union during the autumn summit meeting of the Eastern Partnership states in Vilnius.

The panel experts paid attention to the efforts taken by Polish diplomacy in Ukraine contributing to the construction of civil society and a greater democracy. For a long time Warsaw was regarded as the advocate of the Ukrainian cause in the European Union.

Moldova is another state covered by the EU-led Eastern Partnership program where Poland is especially involved. The country, currently in conflict concerning Transnistria, merits special attention since the analysis of the transformation process taking place in Moldova might prove important and precious for other Eastern Partnership states. A critical analysis of reforms, the conduct of government elites and the opposition in Moldova may moreover help avoid similar mistakes in other Eastern Partnership states.

The panellists stressed the role of “grass-roots” policy as concerns societies. This policy is the domain of local self-governments, active individuals (often representing non-governmental organisations, as well as artists and committed scientists). This policy plays an important role both in Poland and abroad, including the East. This policy is often little appreciated, so what is its actual significance?

The projects with the greatest degree of visible effectiveness are conducted by Warsaw in states with the highest level of authoritarianism. A case in point is the “Polish cow in Tajikistan”: Polish assistance projects offered cows to Tajik families (they offered subsistence but also allowed the development of enterprise – dairy products, etc.). However, there are far more minor projects that testify to the substantial role of “grass-roots” policies and they are implemented in all of the Eastern Partnership states.

During the debate of experts the panellists answered the question of how the Polish transformation lessons (the experience of reforms and the construction of civil society) may be transferred to the Eastern Partnership states.

The panellists (who were both the beneficiaries of Polish projects and their authors) reflected on which of the Polish initiatives really hit the target. Are these the developmental, educational or assistance projects? How to conduct a market analysis of those countries and their needs?

Filip Kaczmarek, a Member of the European Parliament, Chairman of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with Belarus, a Member of the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly stressed the importance of the regional aspect of the Eastern Partnership (the regional character of the project is valuable not only for the beneficiaries but also for the European Parliament itself). According to MEP Kaczmarek, especially in the context of Belarus some initiatives may be taken exclusively at the regional level since relations with representatives of higher state authorities in Belarus are sim-



ply impossible. However, at the local level, many Polish local self-government units have working contacts with their counterparts in Belarus. As many as fifty eight units of local self-government have signed agreements with their counterparts in Belarus. At the local level the Polish-Belarus cooperation is, therefore, feasible.

MEP Kaczmarek sees the following challenges to the Eastern Partnership: a gradual decrease of interest in the cooperation between Poland (and more broadly: Europe) with Minsk and a stagnation at the political level, since the Eastern Partnership states focus on their own internal problems. MEP Kaczmarek pointed to mobility programs of people as an asset of the program; its intensification contributes to the transfer of the Polish transformation lessons.

Karolina Zelent-Śmigrodzka, Deputy Director for Implementation of the Development Cooperation Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented



the perspective from the European frontiers and from Poland. Ms. Karolina Zelent-Śmigrodzka stressed the fact that the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is willing and determined to support the process of change in the societies of the Eastern Partnership program. The projects (their implementation) must, however, involve also citizens of the Eastern Partnership states; only then will such initiatives be viable. This proves the importance of regional and local self-governments in the implementation of projects in the East since self-government units – as part of their relations with partners – may overcome barriers and counter stereotypes. Exchange programs (such as scholarships or study trips to Poland) allow our partners a “hands-on” experience of change, to see the course of the Polish transformation, its results and the people who were responsible for the Polish reforms. Important for project implementation is administration, local self-government and non-governmental organisations; Ms. Karolina Zelent-Śmigrodzka believes that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to match partners.

Serhiy Tatusyak, Chairman of the Vinnitsa Regional Council stressed the role of local government authorities and of contacts between Polish and Ukrainian NGOs. It is the third sector that contributes to success in international diplomacy. According to Mr. Serhiy Tatusyak, the contribution of Germany is important for the co-operation between Kiev and Warsaw.

Representatives of the Vinnitsa Region have realised dozens of projects with their Polish partners. Ukrainians studied the organisation chart of local authorities in Poland. Debates, panel discussions and informal meetings helped develop Polish-Ukrainian relations which have been beneficial to this day. Many agreements have been signed and relations established which helped implement the reforms in Ukraine, some of them based on the implementation of the Polish experience. It is important for Ukrainians to familiarise themselves with the processes which took place in Poland, with the Polish transformation (in particular with respect to regional and local authorities and the carrying out of the local self-government reforms). According to Mr. Serhiy Tatusyak, the lessons of the Polish transformation helped Ukraine conduct education programs introducing the pattern of Polish reforms of local authorities in Ukrainian regions.

According to **Andriy Fedoruk, Chairman of the Donetsk Regional Council**, the reform of local authorities is the most important reform taking place in Ukraine at present. In this context relations with Poland are of inestimable value. Poland teaches Ukraine how to move closer to Europe; thanks to the knowledge of the Polish transformation Kiev is able to avoid the mistakes committed by Poland. Warsaw



continues to be Ukraine’s advocate in Europe. According to Andriy Fedoruk, it is of prime significance to maintain relations at the level of cities, communes and villages so that Polish-Ukrainian relations might take place not only at the level of global politics but also in the context of social diplomacy. Mr. Fedoruk stressed that Polish partners help Ukrainians assure a very high level of joint projects.



Ugo Poli, Project Manager from the Secretariat of the Central European Initiative,

recalled that Poland is a member of the Central European Initiative, which organisation groups the European Union Member States and states from outside the EU. Mr. Ugo Poli stressed the fact that the organisation he represents pays attention to the exchange of experience between the European Union Member States (who have successfully completed their transformation) among others with former Soviet states. Of importance are exchange programs and workshops. Mr. Ugo Poli stressed the importance and weight of human capital, as international cooperation depends on people. The European Union should care for the observance of European standards in cooperation with the Eastern Partnership states.

Andrzej Porawski, Director of the Association of Polish Cities Bureau

observed that Polish cooperation with partners from the Eastern Partnership states should be seen in the context of the past few years. Much potential has been unleashed over this period. The cooperation with Ukraine is very intensive, as around three hundred towns and cities from Poland and Ukraine have signed cooperation agreements. There are also agreements at the level of communes and counties with Belarus, where for political reasons cooperation is more difficult. Cooperation with Georgian local self-governments is growing, too.

According to Mr. Andrzej Porawski, Polish-Ukrainian relations have the biggest potential. Director Porawski highlighted the fact that in Ukraine we share the experience of Polish cities concerning waste management and health services. There are multiple levels of cooperation and these are

concrete activities. Furthermore, Andrzej Porawski indicated the growth of cultural exchange and stressed the need for intensifying those contacts. This is because cooperation with Ukraine is easy to continue as at present we have a ten-year history of contacts with the organisation that gathers Ukrainian cities.



According to Director Porawski, relations with Belarus are sensitive. Contacts with Minsk should be as much apolitical as possible. For instance, budgets of Polish communes should be presented to demonstrate how funds may be obtained and spent.

During the panel the experts put forth particular recommendations concerning the development of Polish (and, more broadly, EU) policies concerning the Eastern Partnership states. They summed up the earlier cooperation of the European Union with the initiative beneficiaries. First and foremost, however, the debate focused on the presentation of the role of local self-governments and NGOs in the development and implementation of Polish foreign policy and on demonstrating how Polish transformation lessons are transferred to the East.

POZNAŃ 28 JUNE 2013

POLISH STANDING CONFERENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS

PROGRAM



2nd Session

Experience and perspectives regarding the role of Polish local SELF-governments in the strengthening of the local and regional dimension of the Eastern Partnership

- 10.00 a.m. **Inauguration of the conference:**
Mr. Marek Woźniak – Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, Chairman of the Polish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions
- 10.15 a.m. **Presentations by honorary guests**
Mr. Štefan Füle – European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy: video message
Mr. Jerzy Pomianowski – Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Executive Director, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED)
Ms. Magdalena Młochowska – Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Administration and Digitization of the Republic of Poland

Presentation of the report:

„Cooperation of Polish local self-government entities with regional and local authorities as well as other units from Eastern Partnership states”

Ms. Jolanta Taczyńska, PhD – Department of Commercial European Law, Faculty of Law and Administration, University of Lodz

PANEL I Local self-governments at a new stage of the Eastern Partnership - concepts and possibilities of interregional cooperation

Speakers:

- **Mr. Marek Woźniak** – Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, Chairman of the Polish Delegation to CoR
- **H.E. Jan Tadeusz Tombiński** – EU Ambassador to Ukraine
- **H.E. Staffan Herrström** – Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Poland
- **Mr. Jerzy Pomianowski** – Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Executive Director, the European Endowment for Democracy (EED)
- **Ms. Ewa Synowiec** – Head of the European Commission Representation in Poland
- **Mr. Roman Kuźniar** – Prof. – Advisor to the President of the Republic of Poland

Debate moderator: **Ms. Maria Przelomiec** – Editor of *Studio Wschód (East Studio)* program at TVP Info

Time for debate

1.00 p.m. Coffee break /press conference

PANEL II The Polish experience of local self-governments for the Eastern Partnership countries - the transfer of know-how. Opportunities and challenges for the future

Speakers:

- **Mr. Filip Kaczmarek** – Member of the European Parliament, Chairman of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with Belarus, Member of the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly
- **Ms. Karolina Zelent-Śmigrodzka** – Deputy Director for Implementation of the Development Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland
- **Mr. Serhiy Tatusyak** – Chairman of the Vinnitsa Regional Council
- **Mr. Ugo Poli** – Project Manager, Central European Initiative
- **Mr. Andriy Fedoruk** – Chairman of the Donetsk Regional Council
- **Mr. Andrzej Porawski** – Director of the Association of Polish Cities Bureau

Debate moderator: **Ms. Małgorzata Nocuń** – Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Nowa Europa Wschodnia (New Eastern Europe)*

Time for debate

around 3.00 p.m. Lunch

The conference will be held under the honorary patronage of



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Ministry of Administration and Digitization of the Republic of Poland
The Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership

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