

## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PUBLIC DEBATES

held within the programme

**4th Polish Standing Conference on the International Cooperation of Local Self-Governments “ *Poland-Nordic countries. Self- government dimension of international cooperation.*”**

### DEBATE

#### **“THE ROLE AND COMPETENCES OF SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION”**

**Date: 17 November 2015**

**Venue:** The International Centre of Cultures in Kielce (The Świętokrzyska Philharmonic Hall), 12 Żeromskiego St, 25-369 Kielce

**Chaired by:**

**Mr JERZY STĘPIEŃ** President of The Foundation in Support of Local Democracy, Constitutional Tribunal Justice Emeritus, President of the Constitutional Tribunal (2006-2008), Senator of the Republic of Poland (1989-1993), co-author of the Polish administrative reforms of 1989-1999, Pro-vice Chancellor of the Lazarski University in Warsaw.

Experts taking the floor during the debate:

**Mr JACEK BENDYKOWSKI** Co-Chair of the Panel on International Affairs of the Joint Central and Local Government Committee from self-governmental side, Councillor of the Regional Assembly of the Pomorskie Voivodeship.

**Mr MAREK WOŹNIAK** Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, Head of the Polish Delegation to the European Committee of the Regions.

**Mr DARIUSZ WRÓBEL** Head of Polish delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Mayor of Opole Lubelskie.

**Ms KRYSZYNA WRÓBLEWSKA** Representative of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation Conference, Deputy director for international cooperation – Economic Development Department, Marshal Office of the Pomorskie Voivodeship.

**Ms ADRIANA SKORUPSKA**      Analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs

**Ms MAŁGORZATA SAMUSJEW**      Acting Director of the Bureau for the Association of Communes of the Republic of Poland, Euroregion Baltic.

#### **CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DEBATE:**

- Polish self-governance- Polish self-government reform is an excellent “Polish export commodity,” especially for Central and Southeastern Europe. The self-government reform is basically the only Polish reform deemed a success; although, there is still a lot to be done in self-governments, *inter alia*, increasing civic participation in self-government activity; rebuilding social capital, including social trust for authority, or increasing effectiveness of activities for the inclusion of business environment; non-governmental, educational and cultural organizations into international cooperation,
- in the last 25 years, the activity of Polish local government units in the development of international relations has risen unprecedentedly. It is the proof of increasing maturity, openness and modernity of Polish self-governments. Increasing pragmatism regarding international relations in self-governments has been noticed, a project-task approach towards international cooperation as well as courage in undertaking difficult decisions to abandon ineffective foreign contacts,
- in recent years, Polish government authorities have paid attention to the role and significance of self-government diplomacy, *inter alia*, by establishing a financial instrument for the support of self-government and civic dimension of international cooperation, or the intensification of a dialogue with self-governments within the Joint Central and Local Government Committee, the inclusion of representatives of self-governments in the composition of official foreign visits of the government representatives, and also in the preparation of Polish presidency in the Council of the Baltic Sea States. There is still a lot to be done in the sphere of legal regulations concerning foreign relations of self-governments, *inter alia*, regional self-governments; increasing the

coordination of government and self-government activities in the international arena- to ensure an effective flow of bilateral communication, substantive support for self-government officials in order to obtain the effects of synergy as well as adopting a Polish unanimous stance in sensitive issues for the Polish reason of state and creating a positive image of Poland abroad, or deepening the self-government-government dialogue in issues concerning shaping and pursuing Polish foreign policy, and increasing the financial outlays for its self-government and civic dimension (in case of small Polish self-governments, financial aspects or shortages of staff who have a good command of foreign languages still pose difficulties in the development of international cooperation). Issues concerning the possibilities of the development support, including humanitarian one on the part of Polish self-governments addressed to eastern partners, for instance, rehabilitation and treatment support for the victims of the Ukrainian crisis, require regulations or perhaps some flexibility. The procedures regarding the use of funds for international cooperation (e.g. Interreg) should be made far less bureaucratic.

- Self-government diplomacy is beneficial to self-government communities, it supports and lends credibility to business, scientific and cultural communities in the international arena despite sharp criticism from the media. It also helps to retain an international dialogue in situations of intergovernmental relations crises- it can be observed in relations with Russia, or at present with Germany and France with whom we have different views on migration issues, or growing nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes sparked by brutal terrorist attacks.
- Both self-government and civic diplomacy contribute significantly to breaking stereotypes concerning Poland and Poles, thus strengthening a positive image of our country abroad. Poland's aid for Ukraine in the field of creation of self-governmental structures will lead to the enjoyment of full citizenship by Ukrainians in their country, which will establish western civilisation there and, as a consequence, will profoundly bolster the peace processes.
- The activity of Polish self-governments in the international structures, for instance, Euroregions (e.g. in the Baltic Euroregion) or international

networks of cooperation (e.g. the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation Conference) brings a lot of benefits, among other things, it shapes the attitudes of openness, deference and understanding towards other nations, it teaches the ability to work out compromises and cooperation in multicultural and multi-faith environments, on condition that self-governments clearly define their goals connected with the activity in networks or international associations as well as actively participate in their actions in order to reach the goals they set. There is a need to change the way of perceiving the role of international cooperation by self-government politicians/decision makers in their self-government activity as well as greater understanding and support for the media in this sphere.

- The International cooperation of Polish self-governments allows them to acquire good practices from foreign partners, but also to share effective solutions and interesting initiatives with the others. Still, there are some differences in the scope of structures and tasks of self-governments between various countries, which may pose some difficulties
- The necessity to pursue cooperation among different levels of Polish self-governments in individual regions as well as in the arena of the whole of the country is as crucial as the need of cooperation of the government with self-government over international issues. In the nationwide arena, the exchange of expertise is ensured by the Polish Standing Conference on the International Cooperation of Local Self-Governments, which has already been entered into the calendar of self-government-self-government and self-government-government relations, as well as by the tools of cooperation created in the regions with the financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for instance, the Wielkopolska Network of International Cooperation or the Świętokrzyska Platform of International Cooperation.

## DEBATE

### “POLISH RELATIONS WITH THE NORDIC COUNTRIES-CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE AND THE TOOLS OF REALIZATION”

**Date: 18 November 2015**

**Venue:** The International Centre of Cultures in Kielce (The Świętokrzyska Philharmonic Hall), 12 Żeromskiego St, 25-369 Kielce

#### **PART I- SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXTS**

**Chaired by:**

**PROF.ZW.DR HAB.**

**RYSZARD CZARNY** The head of the Department of Northern European Countries at the Faculty of Management and Administration, The Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce, former Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to the Kingdom of Sweden, the Kingdom of Norway and to the Republic of Iceland.

Experts taking the floor during the debate:

**H.E. Mr STEEN HOMMEL** Ambassador of the Royal Danish Embassy

**PROF.ZW.DR HAB.**

**WŁODZIMIERZ ANIOŁ** President of the Board of the Foundation Norden Centrum

**PROF.ZW.DR HAB.**

**KRZYSZTOF KUBIAK** Professor in the Department of Northern European Countries, The Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce

**Mr ALI RASHIDI** Director for International Cooperation, FolkUniversitetet in Uppsala, Sweden

**Mr DARIUSZ GELLER** President of the Executive Board of the Polish-Norwegian Society

**Ms KINGA DUDZIŃSKA**  
Affairs (PISM)

Analyst at the Polish Institute of International

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

- Rapprochement, frequent common positions over many issues between Poland and the Nordic countries create new opportunities and areas of mutual relations at different levels. Poland is an important, influential and decision-making partner for the Nordic countries in the European Union, chiefly in the field of maintaining UE28 and shaping security policies in connection with the Ukraine-Russia crisis as well as migration problems. Moreover, Poland is a crucial economic partner with big growth and investment potential for the Nordic countries.
- The European Neighbourhood Policy together with joint Polish-Nordic initiatives towards third countries facilitate the development of the Polish-Nordic relations. The Polish-Nordic relations have vital significance in the realm of the so-called high politics (cooperation in the area of the Baltic Sea, the Arctic Ocean and the Barents Sea or in the structures of the EU, NATO, etc.), also in the scope of bilateral relations ( the coordination of activities connected with the emerging challenges, for instance, common policy towards Russia, security policy in the region of the Baltic Sea, or more broadly related to the wave of migration; energy policy, environmental policy or the coordination of development assistance for third countries, the implementation of interesting bilateral initiatives, for example, Polish-Swedish cooperation in the Visegrad-Baltic-Nordic format. They are equally important in the so-called low politics or life politics, where there are huge developmental resources for self-government, government, business and other relations connected with the possibility of transferring the Nordic expertise (best practices) in the scope of implementation of different public policies to Poland, or the possibility of transferring Polish and Nordic practices including Polish experiences from the transformation period, the development of self-governance as well as the Nordic models of public policies to third markets, for instance, to the eastern part of Europe- i.e. Ukraine. In the present turbulent and unpredictable global situation (redefinition of Russia's policy, clear-cut cracks between the north and the south in the

EU, erosion of the role of Germany as a leader in the EU, a tide of migration, a dangerous collision of civilizations, especially a cultural and religious confrontation), it seems necessary to strengthen and redefine the Polish-Nordic relations in the defense sector and newly-defined security policy extended by the cooperation with the police forces assisting the operations of already existing international institutions, for example Interpol. There is a need to strengthen Polish-Nordic cooperation- perhaps the development strategy of the Polish north policy should be drafted.

- In this context, regional and local cooperation is gaining increasing significance for the development of mutual Polish-Nordic relations. At this stage, it requires not only strengthening but also new stimuli. The idea is that the relations should not only be confined to neighbourly ones, but on the basis of the experiences to date and the areas of mutual complementarity do important and good business to the benefit of our countries as well as regions and the world.
- Such a stimulus regarding the strengthening of Polish-Nordic relations at local and regional level can be a multifaceted programme of Polish-Nordic cooperation focused on regional and local cooperation embracing all local partners, i.e. business, scientific and social communities. It could be, for example, “The Nordic Year in Poland” programme, inspired by Polish-Swedish governmental activities in 1997 and 1999, or initiated by Polish self-governments and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland in cooperation with the Nordic partners, which was then continued by the Nordic countries in their politics as the Polish Year, but more importantly, in the economy of individual Nordic countries. It would require a common decision and activity of Polish self-governments at regional level and far-reaching support from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland as well as all Nordic countries, Ambassadors of the Norden countries accredited to Poland, an interest from the regional and local Chambers of Commerce and Industry both in Poland and in the Nordic countries along with the involvement of the Polish and Nordic self-government authorities.

## PART II- ECONOMIC CONTEXT

### Chaired by:

**Mr TADEUSZ PĘCZEK** Honorary Consul of Finland in Kielce, President of the Management Board of EPRD Office for Economic Policy and Regional Development Sp. z o.o.

Experts taking the floor during the debate:

**H.E. Mr STEEN HOMMEL** Ambassador of the Royal Danish Embassy

**Mr SANTERI ERIKSSON** First Secretary in the Embassy of Finland

**Mr ARKADIUSZ BAŁ** Chair of Regional Assembly of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, former Deputy Minister of Economy

**PROF.ZW.DR HAB.**

**WŁODZIMIERZ ANIOŁ** President of the Board of the Foundation Norden Centrum

**Mr THOR SVERRE MINNESJORD** CEO of Green Business Norway

### CONCLUSIONS:

- **Poland is an attractive and important business partner with substantial growth potential for the Nordic countries.** Tax exemption, system of financial support or skilled staff are not the prerequisites for the Nordic entrepreneurs. It is the transparency, stability and predictability of cooperation with Polish business partners, and also the support of reliable Polish self-government authorities, regional agencies for particular business endeavours.
- Furthermore, **the Nordic countries enjoy a very good reputation in Poland.** Poles want and willingly make use of the expertise, organizations, methods of cooperation and the Nordic technologies.
- **While developing Polish-Nordic cooperation, intercultural disparities ought to be taken into consideration-Poland and the Norden countries are completely different worlds in terms of**

**mindset or cultural and religious aspects.** However, this issue should be treated as a challenge and an opportunity, not as a threat to Polish-Nordic relations. The Nordic culture is a culture of participation, cooperation and consensus. Norden has a rich tradition of corporatism, i.e. the dialogue of social partners, a well-developed civic society- the tradition of large social movements, social economy, cooperative activity, rural cooperatives, the participation of partners/ users of social services in public institutions management-user boards; the traditions of broad political coalitions at central and local level. In the Nordic countries the culture of pragmatic reformism has evolved- the preference of evolution, not revolution and permanent modernization without shock therapies, consistently adjusting to the changing external conditions in all phases of the public policy-making process. There is a lack of a such approach in Poland; this is something to be learnt from the Scandinavians. The Nordic approach resembles Nordic walking-a collective, steady, rhythmic march forward of all essential partners and spheres fully involved.

- **Products of Polish-Nordic cooperation comprise a good export commodity for third countries**, e.g. for Ukraine. The examples of such effective cooperation in this field already exist, for instance, Rosomak- a wheeled armoured vehicle, which is manufactured in Poland under the license of an armoured vehicle of Finnish design; Cargotec, which is located near Szczecin, is the world market leader in reloading and transshipment of goods, or FISKARS- a Finnish company operating in Poland since 1990s, which manufactures tools that are exported all over the world.
- **There is big potential and a mutual interest in developing Polish-Nordic relations with the emphasis put on the development of economic relations.** Self-government units, particularly at regional level, should play an important role in promoting its economic offer, an economic portfolio through, among other things, organization of sectoral, fully profiled missions and business meetings. Also, it is of great importance to make use of the mechanisms of a public-private partnership, the support of the

Nordic diplomatic posts, honorary consuls of the Nordic countries in Poland, Polish Trade and Investment Promotion Sections in the Nordic countries or the Nordic and Nordic-Polish organizations supporting the development of cooperation.

- **There are many sources of financing the Polish-Nordic cooperation.** All Polish operational programmes- regional and centralized- contain the components connected with the internationalization of economy. There is a possibility of receiving support from the ministerial funds in Poland (for example, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Economy), Interreg programmes-e.g. for the Baltic Sea, the Norwegian Financial Mechanism or the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism, and also from the Horizon 2020 programme. However, the expectations with regard to the cooperation with foreign partners should be clearly defined in the first place, and more importantly, a long-term, multidirectional project or an internationalization programme should be put in place.