

Asia-Integration – Follow-up Report on Polish Policy Challenges Towards Asian Countries

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Asia-Integration
Follow-up Report on Polish Policy Challenges Towards Asian Countries

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Key findings:

- **Polish policy towards Asian countries should consider the experience of Poles living and working on the continent to a greater extent. This includes both the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects.**
- **The narrative about Poland presented in Asia, emphasis on contemporary problems, future challenges, and modernisation should be more significant, rather than on a historical policy.**
- **Promotional strategies should depend on Poland's existing images, as an EU country and consider host countries' needs in a wider scope.**

- **Organising sustainable networking platforms and communication networks for Polish expats is essential. This would help them to reach more important information while increasing success probability.**
- **The creation of new Polish institutions in Asian countries, including business councils, chambers of commerce, schools, and cultural centres is advisable. This will simplify integration and competence sharing.**
- **There is a demand for further thematic meetings to deepen the analysis of business opportunities and support entrepreneurs. Moreover, there is a need to build the Polish brand's reputation, improve the quality of public debates, and discuss migration policy. Competence should be built with the help of Polish expatriates and the Polish diaspora to outline the main features of the upcoming Asian programme.**

Targets of the Round Table for Polish Women and Men Living in Asia

Poland aligns with the countries of the biggest continent through old ties, which are more important in a changing world and a developing Poland. For that reason, analysts from The Boym Institute searched for answers to Poland's challenges in Asia with the Polish diaspora and expatriate community representatives in Asia. The debate was attended by people from the media, academia, business and non-governmental organisations, and people associated with i.a. diplomacy, the banking sector, science, tourism, and entertainment industries, who live or work in Asia.

The debate was the consequence of positive reactions to the open letter that the Boym Institute published in the summer of 2020. Many of its readers pointed out the necessity of broad consultations regarding the principles of the new multidimensional policy in order to reflect the diversity of perspectives, interests and conditions. The round table that involved Polish women and men in Asia was another one in a series of consultation meetings that the Boym Institute conducted with Polish communities involved in cooperation with Asian countries.

We were searching for the answers to the following questions:

- What should the aims and means of Polish policy towards Asia from the perspective of Poles living there be?
- How can Poland support the integration of the Polish community in Asia and support their interests?
- How to successfully help entrepreneurs to develop the Asian part of their businesses?

The huge dynamics of global change, which is determined mainly by Asia, is the context of the meeting. This continent is home to 60% of the world's people. Asia is home to three great religions, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. Asia accounts for about one-third of the world GDP. Asia accounts for 53% of global greenhouse emissions. Asia means China because it is one of the major political powers, and according to purchasing power parity, the first economy in the world. Asia means India as well, which is undergoing a historical change and the development of which is being prioritised by the world's largest digital companies. In 2019, India became the fifth largest economy, outstripping France and the United Kingdom, and is third in purchasing power parity. Japan ranks in the third and fourth position. According to the

World Bank, Indonesia doubled its nominal GDP between 2008 and 2018 and exceeded USD 1 trillion. At the same time, the Vietnamese economy has grown over 2.5 times.

The dynamic development of many Asian countries and the increase of Chinese assertiveness are causing disproportions that are increasing in the continental and global order. Tension on the border between India and China or around the Korean Peninsula has been rising in the South China Sea. The Global Fire Power 2020 ranking, which shows the military strength of countries, China, India, Japan and South Korea ranked from third to sixth place, respectively. Among the countries and regions in which business is ready to take (Doing Business 2020), Singapore is in second place, and Hong Kong is in third place. This makes them key financial centres.

The expansion of these economies and Poland's' development, as its activity within international blocs, including the European Union and the Three Seas Initiative, may open up for future cooperation. The persistent Covid-19 pandemic has left its mark on the entire global economy but may also bring about opportunities in fields such as investment and trade, labour migration and closer scientific and educational cooperation.

The whole of the above context means that Poland is facing an unprecedented opportunity to create new forms of cooperation and expand its influence on the largest continent. However, It needs a coherent and transparent policy in Asia and the political will to implement it.

CHAPTER I

Priorities of Polish policy towards Asian countries

The perspective of the Polish diaspora and Polish women and men abroad

The logic and course of the meeting were maintained in the conclusions of the discussion that took place on 23 October 2020.

1. Building a Polish brand

Challenge A: Mismatch, lack of a sufficient correlation between promotional strategies and the host countries' reality. Strategies are frequently created solely on the basis of the experience of decision-makers from the headquarters in Poland. The focus is mainly on the problems and content relevant to Warsaw. The needs of the host societies are not being taken into a more extensive account.

Proposed Solution: Poland as well as its national brand's promotion strategies should be based on identifying what the country needs. It is essential to undertake a fundamental evaluation of previous projects led by Polish agencies, which did not succeed, including, e.g. an analysis into the promotion of Polish apples in China. It is also worth paying more attention to the Philippines. Due to its Catholic cultural heritage, the Philippines' society may be more interested than others in Polish culture's religious aspects.

Challenge B: Promotional strategies and cultural policy are excessively built on history and cultural history but insufficiently on current achievements that are attractive in the host country. The experience of experts who work in Asia shows that overloading promotional strategies with a historical narrative is ineffective. Local societies lacking detailed knowledge of European history are not interested in the outdated geopolitical realities of the 20th century.

Proposed Solution: While choosing the cultural undertakings in Asia, commemoration of Polish people, their culture, and Polish traces in Asia must have a major part, in accordance with Article 6 of the Polish Constitution. The experience of diplomats and people promoting Polish culture proves that these are the only historical elements that arouse keen interest in the host countries. However, at the narrative and technical level, these aspects should be better connected with the host countries ideas and solid, innovative sides of Polish industry and culture (e.g. the usage of the gaming sector to create promotional products such as video games or use of popular games in a particular country). Changing the proportions between the historical policy realisation and the new view, favouring the latter, is recommended.

Challenge C: Making promotional activities operational, with no sufficient involvement in long-term frameworks. For example, the President of the PRC tried Polish apples during a recent high-level visit to China. However, the Polish side could not respond quickly to the demand for this product, which emerged after the meeting.

Proposed Solution: Promotional efforts should be part of a long-term strategy. that the recommendation is that foreign visits should complete this process, and the Polish side in agreement with the business, should be prepared for increased demand for goods that are an element of promotion. Promotional strategies should be evaluated on an ongoing basis, also by means of surveys among Polish people living abroad.

2. Working on unblocking communication and transport

Challenge A: Communication is severely hampered in the course of the pandemic, which causes personal perturbations and has a damaging impact on business.

Proposed Solution: Polish people living in Asia and those operating their businesses there should strengthen diplomatic pressure, improve technical and organisational competencies in Poland in order to restore safe and efficient air transport.

Challenge B: Few direct transport and logistic links.

Proposed Solution: The emphasis on shipping and trade should be increased through the use of maritime transport. In the light of the fact that shipping handles up to 90% of all trade, restoring permanent and safe sea connections directly from Poland would make it possible for Polish entrepreneurs to become independent of Dutch or German ports. The importance of Polish ports will be improved by the consistent implementation of a long-term development programme for inland waterway transport in Central and Eastern Europe.

3. Streamline the institutions

Challenge A: Polish institutions in Asian countries are not sufficiently integrated with each other. At present they sometimes they duplicate their activities or operate without coordination and agreement. They mainly have a poorly defined legal status, which makes functioning difficult, and staff shortages result in difficulties in running their offices and activities simultaneously.

Proposed Solution: All Polish institutions in a particular country should be integrated and subjected to a single authority located in that country. It should also be responsible for the overall effects of the work. In particular, this involves coordination between PHA institutions, embassies, consulates and institutes of Polish culture.

Challenge B: Existing facilities and staff are insufficiently and inadequately allocated. An example of that is the consulates which have not enough staff and too many tasks, which make them focus mainly on granting visas to foreigners and providing day-to-day service to citizens in their everyday lives. The consulates do not have enough time for active integration activities among Poles living abroad and actions of strategic importance.

Proposed Solution: Following the example of Western European countries, staff and resources should be redeployed from the Member States of the European Union to the most important Asian countries in the global context, whereas proactively having regard to long-term prospects of countries in the region and appropriately placing a greater emphasis on strengthening outposts in emerging countries (e.g. Next 11), e.g. Vietnam, Indonesia. Visa issues can be effectively automated by taking other countries as role models. Alternatively, significantly increasing the number of consular staff managing visa procedures in countries with a high demand for work and student visas, such as India (where Polis services also serve as many as six neighbouring countries), the Philippines and Indonesia is recommended. Temporarily increasing the number of officials is also suggested, the instrument of a temporary delegation of MFA employees from Warsaw can be used.

To some extent, the integration of specific tasks by V4/3SI/EU Member States based upon common interests in the host country, along the lines of the common diplomatic missions of the Scandinavian countries (the project of common embassies/consulates of V4 countries) could be the response to understaffing and financial shortages.

Challenge C: The e-Consulate global IT system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is ineffective and remarkably vulnerable to hacking attacks, significantly hinders or impedes Asian and international entrepreneurs from getting their employees and management to Poland. There have been cases where Poland has missed out on significant investments as a result.

Proposed Solution: The urgent need is to replace or upgrade the e-Consulate system.

Challenge D: Insufficient level of academic cooperation

Proposed Solution: Using the experience of Poles working at Asian universities is advisable to strive for compiling and consolidating academic cooperation. This cooperation should be carried out through student and staff exchange, as well as through collaborative research projects. A particular opportunity is in the EU's funds, which in the new budget perspective will allocate funds in order to increase cooperation in innovative fields, particularly those related to combating climate change and low-emission energy technologies, between the Member States and Asian countries. The cooperation type must be practical. For Polish institutions, it is advisable to take the initiative of organising lectures and conferences in English. Broader cooperation between Polish film schools and their Asian partners seems promising due to their reputation and recognisability.

4. **Poland Town, Polish Network, e. institutions are supporting the transfer of information to the diaspora and between its members.**

Challenge A: Polish women and men abroad do not have easy access to national networks.

Proposed Solution: The priority is to create communication channels that speed up the transfer of information. According to the particular country, an easy and secure communication platform should be chosen, e.g. email newsletter, social media (e.g. Facebook) or instant messaging (WhatsApp, WeChat). In the first instance, it is worth supporting channels that already exist, expand networks, improve the information transfer, and promote, rather than create new ones alongside existing ones.

Polish institutions' websites should provide clear instructions on how to join such groups and who is responsible for them. The regulations for communication within them should be set out to serve the purpose of integrating Polish people abroad without bringing in domestic disputes that are of marginal relevance in the Asian context. The kinds of communication that might cause difficulties in the host countries should be clarified (e.g. Thai sensitivities and legal regulations on offences against the royal court).

The consular services, together with selected participants of Polish communities, should be responsible for administering such groups.

Assistance from diplomatic representations is of great importance in order to create Polish business councils, chambers of industry and commerce, which can be affiliated to European chambers of commerce in a given country. The Polish Chamber of Entrepreneurs in Shanghai may be used as an example of successful practice.

Challenge B: Providing information for the business. Despite the existence of market information on PAiH websites, Poles living in Asia are not aware of it or are ambivalent about its quality, timeliness and usefulness.

Proposed Solution: Thematic separation of communication platforms for specific groups, e.g. business. The creation of information platforms on legal conditions in different Asian countries or quality and the recognisability for improvement of the available information.

CHAPTER II

Poles Integration in Asia. How to Improve and Benefit From it?

In the presentation of the discussion conclusions, the logic and sequences of the meeting on 23 October 2020 have been preserved.

1. **Elaborating a new integration model.**

Challenge A: Lack of ideas around which Poles could integrate. A low awareness of the country's origin strengths as well as attributes of Polish companies, brands and institutions.

Proposed Solution: Focusing around the axis of pragmatic goals, such as business and developing Polish national brands, including promoting contemporary achievements, e.g. in the scientific, cultural and economic fields is recommended. In this context, it is essential to define Poland's strengths and

communicate them first among the diaspora and expatriate groups and then externally. However, the integration objectives may vary depending on the Polish community's specificity in particular host countries.

Challenge B: Inadequate institutional support from the state for integration activities and Poland's promotion in receiving countries. The lack of sufficient staff and resources in diplomatic missions results in overwhelming embassies and consulates, which cannot integrate activities on a large scale. These are among the reasons for the insufficient number and diversity of Polonia community meetings. An essential aspect of Polonia meetings should have an inclusive and open nature, as well as the transparent distribution of information about them. For example, the limited number of guests for a conference organised by the consulate on Independence Day in one of the Asia cities caused controversy. It provoked unnecessary speculation about who had been invited and why. The strength of the Polish community abroad should be its unity, and the state institutions rules are to bring it together.

Proposed Solution: The key is to manage financial resources and human resources by shifting them from EU countries to enterprises in Asia.

Establishing the Polish community abroad also requires an even more proactive attitude of the Polish diplomatic and consular services in fuelling institutions such as the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, Polish Institutes and all institutions that may be formed in the future.

Challenge C: Insufficient variety of interaction channels and integration types.

Proposed Solution: While maintaining and ensuring the continuity of the already existing formats, the new models and channels of integration, which would be attractive for members of the Polish diaspora according to their demands and differing ages. Such channels would include talks, lectures, round tables, workshops, conferences and festivals. Apart from functioning as a meeting forum, these would help Poles to exchange specialised knowledge and competencies.

Communication between the communities living in particular countries and institutions may be facilitated by appointing one representative person representing the Polonia community and representing expats.

Integration can be facilitated by the effective use of social media (e.g. WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter) and newsletters.

2. Creating Institutions

Challenge A: Insufficient number of meeting spaces for Poles, such as Polish Institutes, common rooms and happenings and Embassies. There is a significant demand for a more effective stimulation of exchange and debate within the community.

Proposed Solution: Creating Polish business, cultural and educational institutions in further countries. These could be community schools, for example the Polish school in Shanghai. Establishing more Polish Institutes in Asia, which currently exist only in India, China and Japan, is advisable. Founding such institutes should be considered first in Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea and the Philippines.

In parallel, members of the diaspora should be encouraged and supported to create private initiatives for the benefit of communities, as for business ventures, such as Polish restaurants. These places can promote

cuisine, culture and provide meeting spaces. It is also worthwhile to involve businesses that have Polish origins in this initiative.

Examples of good integration, although requiring further improvement, have lasted for many years: meetings for Poles in Delhi, monthly meetings for Polish diaspora members in Shanghai, Polish Chamber of Entrepreneurs in Shanghai, and Polonia Association in Singapore.

An opportunity for the meetings could be training courses for Polonia leaders interested in non-governmental activities, networking, competence development and cultural sensitivity.

Parallel to the integration of the Polish diaspora, its organised activity in formats operating under the EU's auspices should be strived towards. A particularly relevant aspect is Polish – or more broadly, Central European – business circles in EU chambers of commerce in Asian countries.

Challenge B: Excessive centralisation of promotional and integrational activities hinders Poles' effective participation in their residential country's life. These activities often follow strict guidelines from Warsaw, and as a result, they are not sufficiently adapted to these countries' specificities.

Proposed Solution: It is crucial to decentralise and give more powers to the institutions working abroad. These institutions are well aware of the local conditions, the Polish community's demands, and the broader public's needs.

3. Keeping the competencies

Challenge A: There is a lack of a platform which would facilitate professionals, including researchers, entrepreneurs and investors, to share knowledge and competences in their fields.

Proposed Solution: The strengths of the Polish diaspora and expats communities in Asia are a diversity of experience, practical knowledge of Asian countries and regions. The aim should be put on utilising this wealth by organising targeted meetings, both formal and informal. The first step could be using existing integration fields, such as national holiday celebrations, to launch new business initiatives. The following step could be organising the separate events for specialised groups.

Challenge B: Insufficient international cooperation at the academic level and low usage of academia's experience and skills.

Proposed Solution: Increasing the emphasis on education and practical Polish research, and scientific cooperation with Asian Institutions is recommended. Concluding agreements between universities in the context of research, technology and innovation in order to undertake collaborative research projects is also worthwhile. Founding such institutions, including raising funds for its permanent presence in the Asian country is also recommended. Perhaps there should be a unit representing KRASP, which would be of a practical nature, focused on launching research and implementation projects. Polish-Asian scientific corporations need to be included as much as possible in the frameworks of scientific cooperation between the EU and Asian countries.

4. Building base of practical knowledge

Challenge A: Lack of reliable and credible information channels for groups such as entrepreneurs, new expats, analysts and tourists. The dispersion of information complicates launching the work and attendance in Asian markets and functioning in Asian societies.

Proposed Solution: The demand for creating accessible documents that consolidate knowledge about particular Asian countries exists. Such examples of the documents could appear in handbooks to jointly prepare diplomatic services, business and academic organisations and Polish associations. Those handbooks should include an introduction to the local business environment, practical information on the political and legal situation in a given country; they should be useful in everyday life, as well as in market analyses and the cultural context. It would be beneficial for these documents to be available on a single, unified platform. What is more, they should also include links to relevant knowledge resources of the European institutions and institutions of other EU Member State countries.

Furthermore, such a unified platform could include a database of popular and scientific publications concerning various aspects of the host countries, including reports, studies and analyses created in the Polish language by universities, research institutions, think tanks and administrations. The knowledge base could be found in a list of reliable press articles, documentary films, scientific and reportage books.

Polish diplomacy should endeavour, at the community level, to integrate or unify the knowledge resources made available by the EU institutions and the institutions of Member States, particularly those dealing with supporting business.

Chapter III

Suggestions for future discussion topics

Cooperation with the expatriate and diaspora community, especially with expats, should be one of the cornerstones of Asia's policy-making. Willing to use Poles' practical knowledge and competences in the largest continent, we intend to organise further discussions in the upcoming months.

Proposed topics:

1. Where are business opportunities for Poland in Asia? Identification of new opportunities in particular countries and their resulting strategic assumptions for Asian policy (target group: entrepreneurs, current and former employees of the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, economy and trade departments of diplomatic missions);
2. Establishment of the Polish image in Asia (target groups: Polish Investment and Trade Agency, Polish Tourism Organisation, Polish National Foundation, entrepreneurs, diplomats)
3. How to gain effectiveness in supporting business in Asia? (target groups: Polish Investment and Trade Agency, entrepreneurs and their organisations);
4. Polish soft power: tools and target groups: Polish National Foundation, Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Polish Institutes, promotion specialists in embassies, aid organisations, e.g. Polish Humanitarian Action)
5. Public debate and establishing reliable information channels (target groups: media people, analysts, academics, entrepreneurs, diplomats, tourism sector);
6. Immigrant workers from Asia in the context of migration policy (target groups: diplomats and consuls, labour market analysts, specialists on the integration of foreigners);

7. Benefiting from diaspora integration: how to build competences? (target groups: representatives of different diaspora groups, diplomats and academia).
8. How the Polish community in Asia, especially the business community and public institutions supporting it, may use institutions, society and multilateral instruments (V4, 17+1, 3SI etc.)
9. How to change Polish policy towards Asian countries? Assumptions, goals and means (target groups: ambassadors, Ministry of Polish Eastern policy, experts from academia and administration with enterprise in security, security and energy policy, labour market specialists, transport specialists, etc.)