

Polish Abroad Press on the Web

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Summary

The World Wide Web has created new chances for the spread of information. The press is also profiting from this opportunity. The online émigré press is in a specific situation. Moreover, it is essential to help cover the costs of this type of press. The World Wide Web really broadens the sphere of publishers of Polish émigré press. This press needs support from the mother country, both in the area of workshop and publishing cycle.

An interesting workshop helping initiative is the Global Board of the Polish Abroad media. The financial support is possible thanks to the Senate's resolution from the year 2002, which contains the procedure of **commissioning national assignments within the domain of protection of the Poles abroad, and grants subsidies for completing the commissioned assignments**. There is 51 315 000 PLN assigned for this purpose in this years' budget. A part of it could be used for the support of Polish press abroad. This is an area for non-government organisations to act. The public Radio Polonia- a Program for Abroad and TV Polonia are significant types of media that broadcast for Poles abroad. It could be interesting to build up a platform of co-operation between the communities abroad and national press. Such a project could be initialised by the public publisher and would be financially supported by non-government organizations.

Key words: press on the World Wide Web, Polish community abroad press, Global Board of Polish Media Abroad, protection of Polish communities and Poles abroad, Senate subsidies, abroad press media map, public broadcaster for abroad, cooperation of Polish and Polish abroad media Internet platform proposal

Year after year the number of new Web versions of press publications increases. The Internet's character requires such publications to be of the outmost topicality. In practise, however, this is the Internet portals' domain rather than particular newspapers'. The possibilities created by the Web enable making updates parallel to the publishing of the newest version of on-line publications. The graphic differentiation, freely carried out by journalists, allows for various possibilities regarding the placement of new content, as well as permanent (addresses, journalist names, etc.) with an active link to advertising columns and

with a note on the date of the update. Certain practices, friendly to internauts, find their followers and thus become common practise. In this group of ‘electronic’ newspapers worth notice, due to their specificity, is Polish press from abroad. The issue of financing these media is also worth paying attention to. This article will discuss the theory that Internet access has become revolutionary in the propagation of this type of press¹.

This type of émigré press² can be divided into different historical periods with 1939 being the first turning point in the emigration of Poles. The published press then had specific political goals while earlier publications contained only employment information. The next turning point was in the 1980s, with the wave of political emigration, and following – 1990 – when the Polish Senate considered itself a protector of Polish people abroad³. However, the most imperative turning point came with the Internet era when these publications really *came out of the shadow*. Smaller and larger publishers now have equal opportunities to be noticed. It should be mentioned, as it is specific of this type of press⁴, that many abroad publications were created out of people’s genuine emotional needs. Often it was an individual or a couple of people getting involved and printing Xerox copies of their creations by themselves. Internet access has significantly lowered publishing costs, which is imperative. Now more can be written and reach much wider audiences. Also direct contact with readers is invaluable. Questions, comments and opinions via e-mail help journalists answer to the people’s needs and find out what they are interested in. The Web is a chance for small and poorer publishers. Nevertheless, it is imperative to support Polish press abroad, workshop wise and with regard to the publishing cycle.

A new and creative initiative began in September 1993 at the culture centre in Tarnow with the creation of a **Global Polish Abroad Press Forum**. Since 1995 more members joined and at the 3rd conference a new name was adopted, the **Global Board of Polish Media Abroad**. Since 1996, the Tarnow Regional Development Agency has been organizing

¹ From Grzegorz Janusz, *Polonia w Republice Federalnej Niemiec*, Lublin 1990, p. 37 i n., Polish Émigrés, also known as *Polonia*, are Polish communities permanently living abroad which have preserved, in the first or the following generation, Polish national consciousness and their Polish background, which cultivate Polish culture, tradition and, in many cases, also language, and which wish to preserve ties with their motherland or ties within the communities.

² **Press** as delineated in a resolution from January 26, 1984, Press law (Dz.U. Nr 5, pos. 24 with further changes).

³ Senate decision from July 26, 1990 (not published), assigning Wspólnota Polska to carry out tasks regarding émigré activity and subsidizing it from the Senate Office budget, from: Włodzimierz Bogusz, Ewa Czerniawska, *Działalność Senatu RP na rzecz opieki nad Polonią i Polakami za Granicą w latach 1992 – 1996*, Dział Analiz i Dokumentacji Polonijnej, Biuro Studiów i Analiz Kancelarii Senatu, OT-63, Luty 1997, p. 4)

⁴ www.king.tarnow.pl/~boniu/odnkomu3.htm

journalists from abroad meetings and in 1999 the Malopolska Cooperation with Polish Emigres Association was established.

The Board is a integration platform for journalists from abroad with domestic journalists as a result of which created were many forms of cooperation between Poland and its people abroad. During the forums presented is Poland's domestic and foreign policy as well as propagation of Poland's membership in the EU. The most imperative element of the forums is the debate on the role of Polish press abroad in upkeeping ties to the motherland and working on promotion of Poland around the world. The forums take place in Tarnow for a period of 2-3 days during which workshops, presentations and conferences are organized. Also information for publication is gathered from the host voivodeship. So far the hosts were the Malopolska, the Podkarpackie, the Lodz and the Swietokrzyskie voivodeships. The forums are supported by the Senate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Culture, local governments and individual sponsors⁵. Also annually there are meetings between the Speaker of the Senate, the Émigrés Committee, Poles Abroad and members of the **Global Polish Abroad Press Forum**.

The most recent, 13th forum (Tarnów – Katowice) took place between September 5-12, 2005⁶ The key issue discussed was the Silesia region in the XXI century: economy, culture and tourism. *During the conference discussions were held on the state of the press, public TV and radio abroad, the promotion of Poland's positive image as well as the promotion of its economic, cultural and tourist offer in Europe and around the world.*

According to the participants of the forum from 23 countries, **émigré media's goals, aside from the promotion of Poland, should be establishing economic, cultural and tourist cooperation between Poland and the world.**

The Senate is the expatriates' official patron and it does enjoy genuine trust of the people. In 1990, created by a group of Senators and clergy members, was the "Wspolnota Polska" (Polish Union) association which resulted in closer ties and more attempts to consolidate Polish expatriates with their motherland. Its first chairman was the then Speaker of Senate, Andrzej Stelmachowski, who holds this position to this day. In its patronage the Senate passed a resolution in 1990. The whole system of help to the expatriates abroad was shaped as a result of the Ministers' Council act nr. 145 from November 5, 1991 regarding cooperation between the expatriates and Polish people abroad which put on government administrative bodies specific tasks to carry out. The system is also aided by the work of various foundations and associations, such as the government foundation "Aid to Poles in the

⁵ www.king.tarnow.pl)

⁶ www.king.tarnow.pl/~boniu/odnkomu3.htm)

East' which helps those who live in that region of the world. Council of Ministers' directives are delineated in the *Government programme of cooperation between expatriates and Poles abroad*

In 2002, the Senate presidium, in act nr.124, outlined the procedure proceedings as far as government tasks directives regarding patronage and subsidies for carrying out such tasks⁷. A division of financial resources from the budget was allocated by the Senate presidium. When making decisions the Senate takes into account the advice of the Émigrés Consultation Council attached to the Speaker of the Senate, the Senate Committee on Émigrés and Poles Abroad as well as the opinion of the Senate Office. Proposals to the Senate Office chairman regarding government task directives as far as Poles abroad as well as subsidies for them which are submitted by individuals or units not part of the public finance sector are reviewed by the Senate committee on Émigrés and Poles Abroad and the opinions are presented to the Senate presidium⁸. There are maximum thresholds regarding such subsidies and they are set at 6.5% for assignments which are investments and 13% for programme assignments.

The Senate presidium, after reviewing the proposals, makes their decisions and passes resolutions accordingly. Every year the Senate Office chairman submits a **report on the realization of national assignments regarding patronage over Émigrés and Poles abroad carried out by units not part of the public finance sector**. Goals and priorities for financing are delineated by the Senate presidium for each year in the form of a resolution. According to the issued **announcement** by the Senate Office⁹, the budget for the above mentioned activities for 2005 was 48 315 000 PLN, including 35 614 000 for programme activities and 12 701 000 for investments. Among the beneficiaries of the subsidies were the "Polish Union" association, "Aid to Poles in the East" foundation and "Semper Polonia" foundation.

The budget for 2006 was set at 51 315 000 PLN, with 34 895 000 for programme activities and 16 420 000 for investments¹⁰. Interesting is that within the first two months of the year 180 proposals have been submitted for both programme assignments and investments for the joint amount of 69 350 769 (56 644 654 and 136 proposals for programme tasks and 12 706 115 and 44 proposals for investments). The first Senate presidium session took place

⁷ Senate Presidium's resolution Nr 124, December 19, 2002. ***On the issue of national tasks directives regarding Polonia nad Poles Abroad.*** (www.Senat.gov.pl/k5/dok/prez/uch/2002/124.htm)

⁸ The procedures were outlined by Senate Office chairman in resolution nr 53, September 20, 2005 ***on the procedures regarding proceedings of reviewing proposals for financing national tasks directives with regard to Polonia and Poles Abroad.***

⁹ Senate Office Émigré Affairs statement, January 12, 2006 summarizing the Senate Presidium's decision regarding the issue of national tasks directives with regard to Polonia and Poles Abroad for 2005 ([ww.senat.gov.pl/k6/polonia/2005/k1.htm](http://www.senat.gov.pl/k6/polonia/2005/k1.htm)).

¹⁰ Senate Office Émigré Affairs statement Nr 1/2006, February 24, 2006. (<http://www.senat.gov.pl/k6/polonia/index.htm>)

on February 16th during which 32 proposals for 9 812 051 zł subsidies were discussed.

Resulting 10 resolutions were passed for the total amount of **9 657 257 zł**.

Looking at the published by the Senate Office *account balance for subsidies based on resolutions of the Senate presidium regarding national assignments directives for aid to the Émigrés and Poles Abroad from 16.02.06*¹¹ it can be concluded that there are only few non-government organization entitled to Senate subsidies which would want to promote the development of émigré press. Up to February 2006 planned was the publishing of a bi-monthly *Forum Polonijne*¹², a programme for free subscriptions for Poles in the East and the purchase of the *Mówią Wieki*¹³ magazine. The hopes are that in the future there will be more interest from non-government organizations in this type of activity. In 2005 some of the more interesting initiatives were:

- publishing of a socio-cultural youth magazine *Pod Wiatr*¹⁴;
- continuous publishing of *Forum Polonijne* as well as a publication of a special issue of *Forum Polonijne*¹⁵;
- free press subscriptions for Polish communities in the East¹⁶;
- support of Polish press in the East¹⁷;
- aid to Polish radio and TV stations¹⁸;
- electronic media for Polish communities and development of a news programme *Polska - Polacy*¹⁹;
- organization of the XIII **Global Polish Abroad Press Forum** Tarnów – Katowice²⁰.

Émigré press not only delivers to émigrés local information in Polish language but all the more often also in the language of the country it is published in. This is done in order to assimilate new generations of expatriates born and raised abroad. Also there is often also a good deal of news from Poland. Each émigré publication has its own specificity based on the **type of émigré community (time of its emigration – post war, income seeking, political,**

¹¹ <http://www.senat.gov.pl/k6/polonia/index.htm>

¹² *Lubelski Klub Polonijny association* in Lublin – 150 000 zł.

¹³ *Foundation Oświata Polski za Granicą* in Warsaw – 164 425 zł

¹⁴ *Agencja Wydawniczo – Reklamowa MT Mirosław Twaróg* in Bydgoszcz –15 000 zł

¹⁵ *Lubelski Klub Polonijny* in Lublin – 200 000 zł

¹⁶ *Foundation Oświata Polski za Granicą* in Warsaw – 169 000 zł

¹⁷ *Foundation Pomoc Polakom na Wschodzie* in Warsaw –1 667 000 zł

¹⁸ *Foundation Pomoc Polakom na Wschodzie* in Warsaw –828 000 zł

¹⁹ *Foundation Pomoc Polakom na Wschodzie* in Warsaw –357 000 zł

²⁰ *Małopolskie Forum Współpracy z Polonią* in Tarnow –50 000 zł

new wave) **it is targeted at**²¹, as well as the **size of the community**. Émigré press is different in Japan, in Africa and in Chicago- the most popular settlement place for Poles. Publications vary in circulation, theme or may just be quite generally targeted to the widest audience. Émigré press, including on-line editions, encompasses many countries such as Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belarus, Brazil, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Georgia, Spain, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Canada, Kirgistan, Kuwait, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Latvia, Moldova, Germany, Norway, New Zealand, Republic of South Africa, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia, the United States, Switzerland, Sweden, Great Britain, Italy²².

It should also be mentioned that in addition to émigré press there is also **press for Poles abroad prepared and published in Poland**. These are titles such as: *Biuletyn Informacyjny Miesięcznik Światowego Związku Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej*, *Kombatant Biuletyn Urzędu do spraw Kombatantów i Osób Represjonowanych* and *Wspólnota Polska*.

Somewhat separate activity for Poles abroad is carried out by public broadcaster- radio and TV Polonia. **Radio Polonia – Programme for Abroad S.A.** is the only public programme of such type on such a large scale. Radio Polonia broadcasts in seven languages: Polish, English, German, Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Esperanto. Its goals are to inform about events in Poland, its policy, economy, culture and role in the EU and to promote the country around the world. Radio Polonia broadcasts 20 hours of programme a day²³.

TV Polonia is part of Telewizja Polska S.A. After changes which took place in 2005, TV Polonia has become practically the only channel which broadcasts 24 hours a day. When Poland joined the EU, 9 of its ground transmitters were turned off in Belarus. A similar situation occurred in cable TV. According to a TV Polonia representative²⁴ *the only reception through cable TV is in Minsk*. Also on January 1, 2006 the broadcast was turned off by the transmitter's owner in Tarnopol. TV Polonia is broadcasted through three transmitters in Kazakhstan. In July 2005 a company cooperating with TVP S.A. arbitrarily treated its agreement with TVP and turned off the signal in South America. According to TV Polonia's spokesperson, XXI century technology allows for the transmission of signal to anywhere in the world, *however, the problem is costs which TVP cannot afford. Thanks to the cooperation*

²¹ The oldest emigration wave is considered to be people who left Poland before World War II and their future generations. New wave is post-1945 emigration, including 1980s political émigrés as well as the newest wave of recent years. A separate group is that of concentration camp prisoners, POWs and forced labourers from WWII most of who have remained in Germany (40-50 000 people). From: Aleksander Zajac, *Sytuacja Polaków w Niemczech*, [ww. polenia.org/polacywniemczech.htm](http://www.polenia.org/polacywniemczech.htm)

²² <http://www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl>

²³ Cf. Bulletin from the Cooperation Committee with Poles Abroad 5th session, February 22, 2006 (<http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/SQL.nsf/Main5?OpenForm&LPG>)

²⁴ as above.

with satellite TV companies the costs are reduced but they are still underestimated. Those Poles who live in the East are not able to afford satellite TV from private, ground transmitters. Then the problem becomes the division of Poles abroad into rich and poor ones. Those who pay in Europe or the US demand great programmes. But those who get reception from analogue antennas are just happy to get the channel. TVP cannot be left alone with the issue of transmitting all over the world. (...) there is a number of factors in the programme realization process and budgeting which are simply outdated. TVP possesses the substantial technological potential which should be better and more widely used by those who are empowered to make decisions on policy, the building of a “Polish ark” and creating a positive image of Poland abroad²⁵.

The discussed here issues of émigré press and preparation of programmes for Poles abroad as well as émigré media show deficiencies in the process of developing a possible **common electronic broadcasting platform** on the Web. Surely it could be a platform thanks to which émigré press could freely communicate with Polish press as far as **exchange of information and news about Poles abroad, the countries they inhabit and, of course, Poland**. It would be a good idea to invite into cooperation representatives of émigré media in the creation of programmes for Poles abroad created in Poland as these people know best their countrymen’s abroad needs and likes. Moreover, such cooperation would result in émigré journalists having better contact with Poland which would influence what they report on from the motherland as well as the quality of their work. Polish journalists and readers could also benefit from this cooperation if, for example, more articles on émigré life were printed in the Polish media. This type of project could be initiated by the public broadcaster with the support of non-government organizations.

²⁵ as above.