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PECULIARITIES OF POLISH-UKRAINIAN PARTNER CITIES' COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF POLAND'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

ABSTRACT

Polish public diplomacy is a multilateral instrument of foreign policy, which represents Poland's soft power. Numerous and developed Poland's public diplomacy activities are in post-Soviet states, especially in Ukraine. This country plays a specific and important role in Poland's foreign policy. The main fields of Poland's public diplomacy in Ukraine are those connected with cultural, scientific and educational, as well as development aid issues. Apart from them, there is another field that is less addressed and studied by scholars – cooperation between partner cities. Such a field could be presented and examined separately in the frameworks of 'city diplomacy' and as a part of public diplomacy as well. This article presents an analysis of Polish-Ukrainian partner cities cooperation, using public diplomacy as a tool for establishing mutual understanding between people.

Keywords: public diplomacy, Poland, Ukraine, partner cities

INTRODUCTION

Public diplomacy is a foreign policy instrument aimed to create a favourable image of the state by influencing foreign audience with the promotion of its culture, values, history, development aid, educational and scientific programmes, etc. All those actions also belong to the 'soft power' of the state. Nevertheless, 'soft power' and 'public diplomacy' are not synonymous. The former reflects all 'soft' elements of the country that could be promoted and by which we can influence foreign audience and change/transform or/and create a positive image of our state. Those 'soft' elements include culture in its widest understanding; our most significant achievements in science, sport, etc; presenting touristic attractions, historic heritage, etc. In turn, 'public diplomacy' does not possess a power, it is just an instrument which represents such a power of a country. Public diplomacy is a tool *for creating, maximising and rendering soft power into diplomatic influence*.¹ It is also a *process by which direct relations are pursued with a country's people to advance the interests and extend the values of those being represented*, [and which] *appears to be an idea whose time has come*.² An idealistic form of public diplomacy covers people-to-people contacts (p2p). Nevertheless, the most common form is government-to-people (g2p), which includes an influence by the government of one state on another state's public opinion (mostly it is a determined target audience, e.g., youth, scholars, cultural elites, etc). The most important aspect of conducting public diplomacy is a constant communication process, which is aimed on the rapprochement of people from different countries. A desire to overcome stereotypes, misunderstandings or false perceptions that may exist between two countries, and to create a favourable image, is also part of public diplomacy.

For Poland, the process of conducting public diplomacy started almost 20 years ago. The first steps in this direction were taken at the beginning of the 2000s and were connected with the accession to the EU. The strategic goal of Poland's foreign policy to join the EU was accompanied by comprehensive promotional activities. Those actions included the highlighting of Poland's 'civilizational' belonging to Europe through the promotion of the country's cultural heritage, history, and the strengthening of people-to-people contacts. Those activities were called 'cultural policy' and later shaped into cultural diplomacy. A more profound understanding of 'public diplomacy' as a foreign policy tool, which contains among others cultural diplomacy, has been observed since 2007, when Radosław Sikorski was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Poland has shown a great interest in building platforms for people-to-people dialogue, for sharing experience and knowledge by co-initiating, with Sweden, the Eastern Partnership Programme (EaP). It is one of the most significant projects that Poland has initiated and strongly engaged in it.

¹ C. Bjola, M. Kornprobst, *Understanding International Diplomacy: Theory, Practice and Ethics*, London–New York 2013, p. 156.

² P. Sharp, "Revolutionary States, Outlaw Regimes and the Techniques of Public Diplomacy", in J. Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, Basingstoke–London 2005, p. 106.

A special importance under the programme has been assigned to the exchange of European Union's (EU) best practices with Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia on governmental, regional and local levels. As regards the last one, intensification of local communities' cooperation has been observed, especially between those in Ukraine and Poland. Sharing best practices, knowledge and Poland's experience in transformation on its way to the EU with Ukraine has played a significant role in the communication process between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities.

The term 'partner cities' mainly refers to two urban settlements which enter into agreements on friendship and cooperation, aimed at the exchange of experience in various fields, strengthening p2p contacts and cultural links. Several other notions are equal to the term 'partner cities' or have a close meaning. First of all, the most widespread term is 'twin-cities', which covers specific form of friendship and cooperation between cities, based on their geographical, historical, cultural and other links or even on their symbolic meaning for the state. The terms 'partner cities' and 'twin-cities' are mostly used in Europe, but in Australia, the United States and Asia, mainly the term 'sister cities' is used. It is worth mentioning as well such a term as 'city-to-city cooperation', used mainly in Japan.³ The term 'town-twinning' is often used as *an effective tool in the process of peace and reconciliation, bringing together countries which had previously been locked in combat*.⁴

GENESIS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS OF POLISH-UKRAINIAN PARTNER CITIES' COOPERATION

The beginnings of cooperation between partner cities go back to ancient times. Nevertheless, its intensive development is connected with the period after the Second World War. This time the United States started to promote an idea of restoring mutual understanding and peace between countries, using one of the most widespread tools – 'sister-cities' cooperation. Intergovernmental contacts could not influence citizen's attitudes to foreign nations or build platforms for people-to-people contacts. That is why a need to create a space for discussions and rapprochement between people arose. From 1956, the concept of sister-cities cooperation in the United States was a part of comprehensive policy of President Dwight Eisenhower, called *people-to-people diplomacy*.⁵ That period saw the establishment of numerous international organizations aimed to maintain people-to-people contacts and cultural exchanges between residents of various cities.

³ N. Ishinabe, *Analysis of International City-to-City Cooperation and Intercity Networks for Japanese National and Local Governments*, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, March 2010, at https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication_documents/pub/discussionpaper/en/1837/iges_discussion_paper_local_initiatives_march_2010.pdf, 15 June 2021.

⁴ M. Furmankiewicz, "Town-Twinning as a Factor Generating International Flows of Goods and People – the Example of Poland", *Belgeo*, vol. 1-2 (2005), p. 1, at <https://journals.openedition.org/belgeo/pdf/12466>, 17 July 2021.

⁵ Ibid.

Among the main ones was Sister Cities International,⁶ founded in 1956. An important role was played by the following organizations and associations: the Chattanooga Sister City Association, the Sister Cities of Raleigh, the Aspen Sister City organization, the Bloomington Sister City Organization, and especially, the Omaha Sister Cities Association (development of partnership and cooperation with the cities of Europe, Asia and Latin America). All of those structures were aimed to promote mutual understanding through the exchange of people, information, ideas, experiences and best practices between local self-governments.

The concept of 'people-to-people diplomacy' in the US foreign policy was later dominated by the term 'public diplomacy' (for the first time the term 'public diplomacy' was used in 1965 by E. Gullion at Tufts University, USA).⁷

European cities also started to be involved in the process of deepening cooperation through 'partnerships' between cities and engaged in the activities of international organizations. In 1951, the Council of European Municipalities was established in Geneva. Later it was expanded to include regions, as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). The Council played a significant role in shaping the cooperation between European cities, and fostering partnerships between cities as a way to unite European municipalities.⁸ Since 1951, CEMR *promotes the construction of a united, peaceful and democratic Europe founded on local self-government, respect for the principle of subsidiarity and the participation of citizens.*⁹

Even though the cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities has extensively developed since the EaP programme was initiated in 2008, its beginnings date back to the 1950s. The process of establishing partnerships between cities took place during two fundamentally different periods:

- 1) 1950s – late 1980s – during the communist period;
- 2) 1991 – nowadays – cooperation between the cities of independent Ukraine and the Republic of Poland.

During the first period, there were no autonomous local governments, all municipal units were centrally controlled.¹⁰ Since the mid-1950s, Poland's main cities were allowed to *initiate contacts with towns in communist countries: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR or the USSR.*¹¹ Mainly an establishment of trans-border cooperation occurred

⁶ *Sister Cities International*, at <https://www.sistercities.org/about-us/our-mission/our-history/>, 19 July 2021.

⁷ *About U.S. Public Diplomacy*, at http://pdaa.publicdiplomacy.org/?page_id=6, 17 July 2021.

⁸ A. Vion, "Europe from the Bottom Up: Town Twinning in France during the Cold War", *Contemporary European History*, vol. 11, no. 4 (2002), p. 636.

⁹ Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). European section of United Cities and Local Governments, at https://www.ccre.org/en/article/introducing_cemr, 19 July 2021.

¹⁰ M. Grochowski, J. Regulska, "New Partnership and Collaboration: Local Government and Its Supporting Institutions – the Case of Poland", in E. Amna, S. Montin (eds.), *Towards a New Concept of Local Self-Government? Recent Local Government Legislation in Comparative Perspective*, Bergen 2000, pp. 73-100.

¹¹ M. Furmankiewicz, "Town-Twinning as a Factor...", p. 4.

in the framework of the USSR's desire to strengthen economic, political and military cooperation with other communist countries. In order to support the process of deepening trans-border contacts and cooperation between cities, in 1956 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet government agreed with parties and governments of the European socialist countries to establish friendly trans-border relations between the regions of the USSR and voivodships, districts, regions of the Polish People's Republic, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic and the Socialist Republic of Romania.¹²

Nevertheless, all those partnerships between cities and bordering areas had ideological objectives. The initiative did not come from citizens or even city authorities, but from the central governments. During the communist period, even though the partnerships between cities were established, they still suffered from the *totalitarian regime, the one-party rule; intolerance of dissent, denial of pluralism; constant ideological pressure on all spheres of cultural life, especially on the creative intelligentsia*.¹³

The partnerships between the cities of the Polish People's Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic were also under the control of the central government and covered:

- mainly border cities;
- relations between the representatives of the local communist parties from both states);
- contacts of the labour group representatives of the partner cities;
- cooperation was conducted mainly in the sphere of culture.

In August 1956, the first trans-border contacts between the cities and regions of the Polish People's Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic were established. They covered the Lviv and Volyn regional committees of the Communist Party of Ukraine, and the Lublin Voivodeship committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. The cities of these regions and voivodeship entered the transborder cooperation in 1959.¹⁴

First partner cities of the Polish People's Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic were Poltava and Koszalin, which concluded a partnership agreement in 1956.¹⁵ Culture and exchange of experience between labour collectives were the priority areas of cooperation. An expansion and deepening of cooperation between cities from Poland and Ukraine at that period connected/brought closer people, especially, from the labour collectives of various enterprises, as well agricultural workers from both countries. Nevertheless, cultural contacts between the cities dominated other forms of cooperation. Those cultural links contained gatherings of representatives of professional and artistic groups, drama groups, local culture centres, music schools, art centres, etc.

¹² В.П. Колесник, *Интернациональные связи трудящихся приграничных областей СССР и европейских социалистических стран*, Львов 1984, р. 17.

¹³ Т. Марусик, *Західноукраїнська гуманітарна інтелігенція: реалії життя та діяльності (40-50-ті рр. XX ст.)*, Чернівці 2002, р. 65.

¹⁴ В.П. Колесник, *Интернациональные связи...*, р. 18.

¹⁵ А.В. Кудрицького (ред.), *Полтавщина: енциклопедичний довідник*, Київ 1992, р. 556.

In the following years, contacts between the cities were limited, and only after the collapse of the Soviet Union and gaining independence by Ukraine, connections between cities reached another stage with improved qualitative and quantitative levels of cooperation. The first of the partnership agreements were signed between Lviv and Rzeszow in 1992, Kyiv and Kraków in 1993, Kyiv and Warsaw in 1994.¹⁶ At the time, the main factors that determine the establishment of partnerships between Polish and Ukrainian cities were geographical and cultural proximity. In general, the following aspects were considered:

- *favourable geographical location, with a special attention paid to links;*
- *linguistic affinity;*
- *similar socio-economic situation of the cities;*
- *historical ties;*
- *similar and / or identical names of cities;*
- *the presence of national minorities;*
- *other public relations*¹⁷;
- common ‘specialization’ on producing goods or services;
- common geographical ‘specificity’, (e.g., Odessa and Gdansk, both port cities).

Since the beginning of the 2000s, partnership agreements between Ukrainian and Polish cities have been concluded upon:

- an initiative of a city, proposing such a cooperation to a foreign partner;
- a join initiative of two cities;
- an initiative of a public organization;
- private contacts of the residents of two cities;
- previous business, cultural, etc. contacts between the cities;
- an assistance from the foreign city;
- the partner city’s need to implement a joint international project;¹⁸
- prestige-related reasons;
- new possibilities for the city’s promotion, especially its touristic potential among foreigners.

R. Formuszewicz generalized all mentioned above factors and determined several key factor groups, Polish cities considered, while conducting partnership agreements:¹⁹

- private contacts, especially between local leaders;
- external institutions, an assistance of international non-governmental organizations to develop partnership relations;
- local institutions, including educational institutions: schools and universities;
- local associations, public institutions, cultural centres, etc.;
- business contacts, mainly in the border areas.

¹⁶ L. Osińska, “Polskie a ukraińskie pojmowanie partnerstwa strategicznego pomiędzy Warszawą a Kijowem”, *Dialogi polityczne. Polityka*, nr 8 (2007), pp. 25-43.

¹⁷ R. Formuszewicz, *Współpraca zagraniczna samorządu lokalnego w Wielkopolsce*, Poznań 2004, p. 50.

¹⁸ A. Skorupska (ed.), *Współpraca międzynarodowa samorządu gminnego*, Warszawa 2005, p. 30.

¹⁹ M. Furmankiewicz, “Town-Twinning as a Factor...”, p. 8.

An implementation of partner cities' cooperation demands clarification of its legal framework. It is determined at the following three levels: international, interstate and domestic. Cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities is regulated at:

- a) the international level by:
 - the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (1980);
 - the European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985);
 - the World-wide Declaration on Local Self-Government (1985);
 - the European Urban Charter (1992, 2008);
 - The European Declaration of Urban Rights (1992);
- b) the interstate level by:
 - the Treaty between the Republic of Poland and Ukraine on Good Neighbourliness, Friendly Relations and Cooperation (1992);
 - the Agreement between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Poland on interregional cooperation (1993);
 - the Agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and the Government of the Republic of Poland on the rules of local border traffic (2008);
- c) the domestic level by:
 - the Constitution of Ukraine (1996) and Poland (1997);
 - the Act of the Republic of Poland on Local Government (1990) and an Act of Ukraine on Local Self-Government (1997);
 - the Act of the Republic of Poland on Voivodeship Self-Government (1998);
 - the Act of the Republic of Poland on the principles of accession of local government units to international associations of local and regional communities (2000);
 - municipal charters;
 - local government acts.

SPECIFICS OF POLISH-UKRAINIAN PARTNER CITIES' COOPERATION

At the beginning of the 2000s, Polish cities had the most numerous partnerships with German cities (644 partnership agreements). Ukrainian cities had the most numerous partnerships with Polish cities – 81 partnership agreements, until 2014 this number increased to 199.²⁰ In 2020, the number of partnership agreements between Polish and Ukrainian cities was 216. An active development and strengthening of Polish-Ukrainian cooperation of partner cities occurred, among others, due to Poland's profound involvement in the EaP programme activities (2009-2013) and the effective implementation of public diplomacy projects, especially in the sphere of culture in 2012-2013.

²⁰ Full list of Polish and Ukrainian partner cities, in O.I. Богородецька, *Снівробітництво між містами-побратимами України й Польщі в контексті європейської інтеграції*, Луцьк 2016, p. 184.

In each voivodship of Poland there are cities that have concluded agreements of partnership cooperation with Ukrainian cities. The cities of the following voivodships have the largest number of partner cities in Ukraine: Subcarpathian, Lublin and Świętokrzyskie. On the Ukrainian side, the following regions have the largest number of Polish partner cities: Vinnytsia, Lviv, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk. Lublin, Kielce, Przemyśl, Rzeszów, Kraków and Łódź have the largest number of Ukrainian partner cities. The most numerous partnership agreements of Polish cities are with the following Ukrainian cities: Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Lutsk, Kovel, Truskavets, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Drohobych, Ternopil. The highest concentration of Polish-Ukrainian partner cities is in the border areas. Those partnerships derive mainly from common historical and cultural heritage. Nevertheless, the development of Polish-Ukrainian partner cities' cooperation was influenced by the implementation of transborder programmes. It is especially true in the case of the Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014-2020 which was aimed at economic and social development of the border regions and facilitation of cooperation between their cities.

Another significant stimulus of the development of Polish-Ukrainian partner-cities cooperation comes from Poland's public diplomacy initiatives. The main role in it has been played by cultural projects and initiatives. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has financed the publication and printing of Polish-language magazines or/and newspapers in Ukraine (among them: *Głos Polonii*, magazine, since 2012; *Kurier Galicyjski*, daily paper, since 2005; *Słowo Polskie*, magazine, since 2012; *Głos Nauczyciela*, magazine, since 2001). Those papers are directed not only to the Polish diaspora in Ukrainian cities, but also have another mission – to spread information about Poland, its cities, educational programmes for youth, festivals, etc. They are printed mainly in both languages – Polish and Ukrainian. For example, the bilingual newspaper published in Lutsk, *Monitor Wołyński*, is funded by the General Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Lutsk. The main tasks set by the initiators of this publication are to promote the idea of European integration; bringing Poland and its cities closer to Ukrainians (dissemination of information about the country, its history, culture, traditions, higher education institutions, exchange programs); presenting Volyn and Lutsk to Poles (informing them about the life of the region, its history and culture); promoting dialogue between people and breaking stereotypes. The Chernivtsi *Gazeta Polska Bukowiny* is founded by the Chernivtsi Region's Adam Mickiewicz Society of Polish Culture. The publication of the newspaper is possible due to the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

A special role in 'building bridges' between Ukrainian and Polish cities has been played by Polish minority organizations in Ukraine. Very often, they created platforms for communication between the citizens of Polish and Ukrainian cities. The following are only some of the Polish societies operating in the Volyn Region alone: Ewa Felińska Society of Polish Culture in Volyn, Tadeusz Kościuszko Society of Polish Culture, Juliusz Słowacki Society of Polish Culture of Gorohivshchyna, Volyn Society of Doctors of the Polish Origin, Volyn Branch of the Polish Teachers' Association, 'Barwy Kresowe' Society of Artists of the Polish origin, Michał Ogiński Society of Polish

Culture in Novovolynsk and Gabriela Zapolska Society of the Polish Language Teachers.²¹ All of these associations actively participate in projects initiated by Poland to promote Polish culture and language as well. Each of the associations mentioned above, as well as other similar around Ukraine, provide Polish language courses, giving possibility visit to Polish cities (mainly partner cities; those visits are financed by Polish government through different educational and study tour visits to Poland).

The rapprochement of Polish and Ukrainian partner cities was possible also due to one of the Poland's public diplomacy tasks: to present Polish culture on the main cultural festivals abroad. In the case of Ukraine, this refers to the presentation and promotion of Polish:

- a) films at:
 - Molodist Kyiv International Film Festival;
 - Kyiv International Documentary Film Festival;
 - Lviv International Short Film Festival Wiz-Art;
 - Odessa International Film Festival;
- b) music at:
 - Stare Misto Lviv Rock Fest;
 - Alfa Jazz Fest;
 - Jazz in Kyiv;
 - JAZZ BEZ International Festival;
 - O-FEST International Music Festival;
 - UNITY International Jazz Festival;
 - KRAINA MRIY Festival;
- c) performing arts at:
 - DRAMA.UA New Drama Festival;
 - ZELYONKA FEST International Festival of Contemporary Dance Theatre;
- d) visual arts at:
 - Kyiv International Biennial of Contemporary Art.²²

Apart from the cultural component as a key one in cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities, an important part of interactions is dedicated to exchange of information, ideas, and experiences between cities (authorities, business, structures, educational and scientific institutions, etc.). A special role in it is played by exchange of experience as regards an improvement of local self-government and the work of city services (e.g., cooperation between partner cities Ivano-Frankivsk and Rzeszów). Another part of experience exchange initiatives involves professionals from Polish and Ukrainian partner cities. Quite often, exchanges of professionals are organized: doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, and groups of students, etc., (e.g., exchanges between partner cities Rivne and Piotrków Trybunalski; Lutsk and Lublin).

²¹ H. Stronsky, H. Panyshko, "Polish Societies Role in the 'Third Sector' Development in Volyn", *Modern Higher Education Review*, no. 3 (2018), p. 20.

²² Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, *Promocja kultury polskiej za granicą 2016 – Promesa. Zalecenia dodatkowe do programu*, at http://www.mkidn.gov.pl/media/po2016/dokumenty/20141210Zalecenia_dodatkowe-Kraje_Partnerstwa_Wschodniego.docx, 19 August 2021.

One of the most active Polish cities, highly engaged in different projects as regards exchange of experience with Ukrainian partner cities, is Lublin. The initiatives of the Lublin city authorities include projects designed to share best practices, knowledge, and experience with Ukrainian partner cities as regards: building modern self-government; urban development strategies; use of ISO 9000 quality standards, development of marketing strategies; development of the tourism sector of the city. Among Ukrainian partner cities, the initiatives have been joined by Lviv, Rivne, Lutsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, Dnipro and Sumy.

It is worth mentioning the Eastern Europe Initiatives Congress, organized in 2015-2019 by the Centre of Eastern Europe from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.²³ During the congress, the most important issues in Eastern Europe were discussed, such as security, new geopolitical coordinates due to Russian aggression in Ukraine. Most importantly, representatives (city authorities, political, journalists, academics, etc.) from partner cities in Eastern Europe were invited to this congress. Numerous delegations came from Ukrainian partner cities, such as Lutsk, Sumy or Lviv.

The 'Lublin Triangle' was established in Lublin, as the name suggests, in 2020. This joint Polish-Ukrainian-Lithuanian initiative focuses on deepening political, military, economic and cultural cooperation between the states.²⁴ This initiative underlined the specific and significant role of Lublin in the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue of nations. Moreover, the importance attached by Polish government to EaP, especially to Ukraine on its way to Euro-Atlantic structures, is evident. All those initiatives are reflected in Poland's public diplomacy objectives, as regards strengthening cooperation with its eastern neighbours through dialogue and constant communication at interstate, trans-border and partner cities' levels.

It is worth adding that the cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities has slowed down slightly over the past six years (2015-2021). Those changes are connected with the fact that Poland's eastern policy became less active. The EaP and the initiatives connected with this programme are currently not among the main priorities for Poland. Poland's foreign policy became *unanimously pro-American*, and Poland is *'less interested in cooperation with the post-Soviet countries'*.²⁵ It has been even noticed that since 2015 Poland has not actively pursued any eastern policy.²⁶ It is a rather con-

²³ Centrum Europy Wschodniej Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, at <https://www.umcs.pl/pl/o-centrum,11514.htm>, 17 July 2021.

²⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, *Joint Declaration of Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Lithuania and Ukraine on Establishing Lublin Triangle*, at <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/joint-declaration-foreign-ministers-republic-poland-republic-lithuania-and-ukraine-establishing-lublin-triangle>, 19 July 2021.

²⁵ A. Szeptycki, "Polish Take on Realism: Poland's Policy Towards the Former Soviet Countries, 1991-2021", *Journal of International Analytics*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2021), p. 140.

²⁶ J. Nizinkiewicz, „Kowal dla »Rzeczypospolitej«: Polska polityka wschodnia nie istnieje”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 2015, at <https://www.rp.pl/artykul/1175138-Kowal-dla--Rzeczypospolitej---Polska-polityka-wschodnia-nie-istnieje.html>, 17 July 2021.

troversial issue, and the slowing down of the EaP has highly influenced the dynamic of cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities. The main activities are in the sphere of culture, neglecting tourism, education, public administration, etc.

Even taking into account a certain slowing down over the last six years, still, there has been an evident influence of cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities on:

- the improvement in the system of local self-government in Ukraine through an exchange of experience and best management practices;
- the improvement in good neighbourly relations on the basis of international dialogue of urban communities (one of the key roles in it is played by the Agreement on the Local Border Traffic, 2008);
- the growth in Poland's investments in Ukraine (in Khmelnytsky, Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi and Zhytomyr regions, several significant companies with Polish capital from partner cities operate, in particular, such as: 'Cersanit-Invest' (Zhytomyr region, Chizhivka) producing ceramic sanitary ware; 'Barlinek-Invest' (Vinnytsia) specializing in manufacturing wood flooring, 'Agro Team Khmelnytsky' (Khmelnytsky region, Nyzhchi Vovkivtsi) manufacturing equipment and facilities for greenhouses, 'Yanik Group' (Vinnytsia) in the field of distribution of medical equipment, 'Polimex-Mostostal Ukraine' (Zhytomyr), specializing in the construction of industrial and commercial facilities, 'Inco-Food Ukraine' (Berdychiv) producing meat products and semi-finished products;
- promotion and development of tourism sector of Ukraine;
- the development of cultural events, where Ukrainian partner cities are represented in Poland and Polish partner cities – in Ukraine.

The main directions of cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities nowadays include:

- cooperation in the field of culture;
- interactions of the authorities in the scope of local self-government;
- exchange/sharing experience, knowledge, and good practices between professionals;
- participation in cultural events, aimed on the development communication between the citizens of partner cities that would influence the strengthening of tolerance, respect for cultural differences, etc.;
- strong support of Polish minority organisations that often act as a bridge for connecting two cities.

All those directions of cooperation are reflected in the execution of Poland's public diplomacy, whose aim is to build a strong and long-term people-to-people dialogue. This dialogue is observed at the level of Polish and Ukrainian partner cities. Those cities, from an ideological central government decisions for partnerships in the 1950s, built an open-mind space for sharing opinions, ideas and experience in the 21st century. A paramount role in the development of the connections between Polish and Ukrainian partner cities has been played by the Polish government, which highly supports different initiatives on bridging Polish and Ukrainian cities and their people. The

highest level of partnership agreements is concluded between Polish and Ukrainian border cities. There are several reasons for that: historical and cultural heritage, numerous programmes and initiatives, mostly of cultural nature, but also those reflecting interstate political initiatives (Poland-Belarus-Ukraine Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2014-2020, 'Lublin Triangle') that are launched or/and carried out in the border areas of both countries.

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