

## **THE ROLE OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN POLAND'S CROSS-BORDER AREAS**

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### **Abstract:**

Main idea of the article is to present the role of public diplomacy as carried out by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a chance for tourism development in cross-border regions.

The cross-border cooperation aimed at tourism development in cross-border areas can and should be carried out at various local government and non-governmental levels.

The expert opinions confirm the need for the formal and legal enhancement and focusing, by way of public diplomacy, of the actions taken by local governments.

Inspired by the works of G. Szondi, we prepared a proposal that may serve as a starting point for the discussion. We suggest the need to shift from traditional public diplomacy to 21st century public diplomacy where support for local initiatives associated with cross-border tourism development would be one of the main objectives (Szondi, 2008).

Contemporary public diplomacy – both at the central and local administration levels – should employ more sophisticated communication techniques based on political and economic marketing theory. Contrary to the traditional model of diplomacy, public diplomacy should be aimed at multilateral, open and overt cooperation and promotion. To conclude, we would like to quote the opinion of one of the experts who participated in our study.

Cross-border tourism cooperation helps indisputably – first of all, to overcome the barriers and prejudices towards people of other nationalities, and secondly, to improve the living conditions of the population that lives in the border area and is involved in such cooperation.

Relevant literature presents various types of classification schemes and typologies of the factors of tourism development. These are neither comprehensive nor disjoint; the primary aim is to clarify and organize these factors according to the particular strategic or operational development objectives of the tourism services market in a certain area. Interestingly, virtually all classifications distinguish a category of political factors.

The political factors in tourism development are determined by government policy and are mainly associated with regulating the economic aspects of life through: the creation of social policy that supports or limits the tourism activities of both citizens and foreigners; financial and fiscal policy, e.g. tax liabilities, tariffs, price regulation; economic policy which affects the economic growth rate and the resulting increase in the real income of citizens; and foreign policy, including international agreements and membership in organizations that regulate and in some cases facilitate tourist traffic, but above all activities that directly influence the perception of Poland in the international arena in terms of tourism and investment attractiveness (Gaworecki, 2003; Alejski, 1999).

The authors believe that the political factor is defined too narrowly and its identification remains constrained to activities and behaviours that are typical for traditional diplomacy, the roots of which may be traced back to the customs of the last centuries or even communication practices currently referred to as **government to government (G2G)**. The current reassessment is a chance for tourism development in cross-border regions.

This reassessment is associated primarily with the acknowledgement of the role of public diplomacy as carried out by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This type of diplomacy is based on the development and implementation of strategic, conceptual, analytical, coordination and executive activities, which influence the pursuit of Poland's essential interests in the world by shaping social attitudes and public opinion abroad using tools and methods that go beyond traditional diplomacy as a field of interstate relations.<sup>1;2</sup>

This reassessment is associated primarily with the effects of the democratization processes in the countries where we perform our business dealings as well as the revolution in global communication tools and channels. In Poland, the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland is responsible for the performance of the tasks of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy as carried out by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a set of activities of strategic, conceptual, analytical, coordinative and executive nature which influence the pursuit of Poland's essential interests around the globe by shaping social attitudes and public opinion abroad using tools and methods that go beyond traditional diplomacy as a field of interstate relations. The ultimate goal of public diplomacy is to ensure foreign understanding and support for Poland's national interest and the policies of Polish state authorities. As a complement to traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy is aimed at foreign institutions, organizations and societies.

By definition, public diplomacy extends the scope of diplomats' efforts beyond bilateral intergovernmental cooperation and addresses broadly defined foreign public opinion. In principle, the extension of the scope of efforts is correct and appropriate. The problem with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' definition of public diplomacy is that, by law, it is conducted by the Ministry. Ironically, from the point of view of the objectives and interests of cross-border tourism development, the extension of this type of tourism activity actually leads to its reduction and in some cases hampers development.

As stated above, "The ultimate goal of public diplomacy is to ensure foreign understanding and support for Poland's national interest and the policies of Polish state authorities." Although right in principle, this essence of public diplomacy is relatively far from directly creating the conditions for cross-border tourism development.

Admittedly, this is a risky claim, if only because it addresses the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – an institution with a catalogue of indisputable achievements in the international arena during the last 25 years. These include the successful integration with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and many other entities that play an important role in shaping integration processes in Europe. Our ambitions are far more modest:

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<sup>1</sup> cf. "Komunikacja Społeczna" online journal 2012, No 1, [www.komunikacjaspoleczna.edu.pl](http://www.komunikacjaspoleczna.edu.pl); University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów, ul. Sucharskiego 2, 35-225 Rzeszów

<sup>2</sup> The phrase was first used in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, dean of the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy at Tufts University. According to the publications of that period, "public diplomacy... deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications".

in accordance with our education and professional activity, we are referring to the role and the methods and techniques that should be used to add value to integration processes in Europe using the actual and potential possibilities of tourism development in cross-border regions.

Confident that this was the only way to convert our risky hypothesis from an author's assumption into a scientifically proven claim, we conducted a proper study to verify the conclusions from our experiences and reflections which formed our initial hypotheses.

Our research model consists of four basic stages.

In the first stage, we organized a brainstorming session (Martyniak, 2013). We invited our friends who deal with the topic as well as our University students from Ukraine and Belarus, who were expected to take on the role of catalysts in the discussion.

In the second stage, we carried out a diagnostic survey (SMART questionnaire) and F2F interviews in a group of ten MBA – Management of a University students from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the Poznań University of Economics and Business. The research sample was chosen to represent various academic environments. Respondents included administrative employees and academics from Poland's top universities who specialized in different fields. We assumed (and the results of our study proved us right) that apart from being administrative and research staff, all respondents were also tourists who understood the challenges and opportunities of cross-border tourism development. Study population characteristics confirmed that the study included experts.

The third stage was a synthesis of the study results which we are presenting in this paper and which we presented at a national scientific conference entitled "Tourism in cross-border areas", organized by the University of Rzeszów, Faculty of Physical Education, Department of Natural Sciences and Department of Tourism and Recreation for participants' critical appraisal.

In the fourth stage we are planning to organize a seminar with representatives from the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. The primary goal of this seminar will be to work out a common position on the topic of interest and identify a catalogue of the necessary and possible steps to be taken with the aim of directing public diplomacy in such a way that cross-border tourism becomes one of the activities that promote cross-border cooperation.

The understanding of the concept of cross-border cooperation was crucial in the preparation of materials for the four stages specified above. Typically, cross-border cooperation is defined as a form of international cooperation whose primary goal is to lift the restrictions that result from the existence of national borders. The so-called Madrid Convention defines transfrontier cooperation as "... any concerted action designed to reinforce and foster neighbourly relations between territorial communities or authorities within the jurisdiction of two or more contracting parties and the conclusion of any agreement and arrangement necessary for this purpose". Apart from the Madrid Convention, cross-border cooperation in Europe is sanctioned by the European Charter of Border and Cross-border Regions, adopted by the Council of Europe on 19 November 1981 and the European Charter of Local Self-Government, adopted by the Council of Europe on 15 October 1985 in Strasbourg ([www.rm.coe.int](http://www.rm.coe.int); [www.aebr.eu](http://www.aebr.eu), [www.coe.int/pl](http://www.coe.int/pl)).

All of the legal definitions quoted and discussed in the abovementioned documents refer to the term of border or borders. This is mainly due to the fact that borders are the fundamental element of statehood. A state border is an ambiguous term that may be found in diverse contexts, in both informal usage and in theories in various fields of study ([www.nowastrategia.org.pl](http://www.nowastrategia.org.pl)). In the most general and common sense, a border is also the vertical area that intersects the borderline on the earth's surface separating the territory of one country from other countries or from areas outside of national sovereignty, such as high seas

([www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl](http://www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl)). In this sense, a border is a category of space that is, by its nature, open and accessible from different sides.

Throughout the history of mankind, borders have been the subject of disputes which have typically led to conflicts and wars. The fact that Poland has enjoyed stable borders for more than 70 years should not cause us to lower our guard and prevent us from seeking the methods and ways of reinforcing the status quo. One of the most effective approaches in this regard is cross-border tourism development via an extended public diplomacy mandate. This claim is legitimized by the changes in Polish borders that occurred (or were brought about) in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, causing changes in the tourism space of the border area.

Tourism space, as defined by the authors of this article, is a distinguishable part of geographical space that is grounded in the social environment and the cultural identity associated with the space, especially with the natural and anthropogenic values that were created over the years by local communities and that have been used by tourists to pursue their personal cognitive and recreational goals.

The changes that have occurred in the tourism structure of the Polish border area during the last two decades are associated primarily with the division of these values, their transfer to the territorial area of other countries or takeover from other countries' areas. There are a number of examples, such as one of the most beautiful natural values in central Europe, the Białowieża National Park, divided between Poland and Belarus. Anthropological values are affected in a similar fashion. Soviet Russia took over the anthropological values of e.g. Lviv. The natural and anthropological values of East Prussia were merged with the pre-war Pomeranian, Warsaw and Białystok voivodeships as a result of decisions made by the Allies. Likewise, the tourism values of the land of Silesia in the former Weimar Republic were incorporated into the Poznań voivodeship. Many other examples may be given – and detailed, but this is a task for historians. Here, we are interested in the challenges and consequences of these processes for cross-border tourism development. The fact is that virtually all aspects of cross-border tourism development are associated with specific conditions.

The authors of this paper have personal experience with the identification of these conditions. Within the framework of Action 3, the European Commission (EACEA) awarded the Józef Piłsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw a grant to complete a project as part of the European Week of Sport.<sup>3</sup> We invited universities from Latvia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Denmark, as well as the Faculty of Physical Education of the University of Rzeszów and the Faculty of Tourism and Recreation of the Eugeniusz Piasecki University School of Physical Education in Poznań for cooperation. The primary goal of this project was to identify, describe and present the folk games of the countries participating in the project to Warsaw citizens. These games have always been cognitively interesting for tourists and identify and define the tourism space in which these tourists find themselves. It became clear in the initial phase of the project that the identification of folk games within Poland's and its neighbours' current borders is a difficult if not impossible task. The popular game of palant, which is now being rediscovered, may serve as an example. Is the game Polish, German, or perhaps Scandinavian? As we sought the answer to this and similar questions, we concluded that folk games are of cross-border nature. The same is true for other tourism values that were created by local communities divided by changing borders. Aware of this, we gave up the plan to assign the folk games to particular countries within their current

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<sup>3</sup> Mini Recreation Olympic "RecreaOlympic". The project is financed by the European Union from the Erasmus+ Sport Fund in Action No. 3: "Not - for - profit European sport events related to the European Week of Sport 2016", decision no. 2016-1009/001-001. The main objective of the cooperation between the project participants is to plan and organize the Mini Recreation Olympic (RecreaOlympic), which will promote traditional games and recreational plays related to the cultural heritage of the participating countries. There is only one project in Poland and thirteen in Europe in this action.

borders and shifted the identification process to historic regions. For the purpose of the project we assumed that a region is a notionally extracted, relatively homogenous area whose features – anthropogenic, natural or acquired throughout history (e.g. own language, religion, culture or a community that lived during a historical period) – differ from those of adjacent areas. Our assumption fits into a current trend of European integration based on the principles of equity and cooperation; here, we dedicated the values that result from cross-border tourism development to this cooperation.

In view of the fact that cross-border cooperation aimed at tourism development in cross-border areas can and should be carried out at various local government and non-governmental levels, the Polish legal system that regulates the role of local governments in international cooperation is insufficiently developed compared to international regulations. Multilateral international agreements or bilateral agreements between countries remain the dominant basis of the international activity of local governments at the poviát, gmina and rural levels.

The expert opinions confirm the need for the formal and legal enhancement and focusing, by way of public diplomacy, of the actions taken by local governments. We asked the selected group of experts to assess the following list of detailed questions with reference to the main question using the Likert scale (scale of 1 to 10).

Cross-border tourism development can contribute to:

1. The stabilization of the political situation in turbulent regions.
2. The mutual understanding and acceptance of cultural differences.
3. The development of interregional economic cooperation in tourism.
4. The promotion of anthropogenic and natural values in border areas.
5. Increased threats associated with organized crime.
6. Increased threats associated with acts of hooliganism and minor offences.

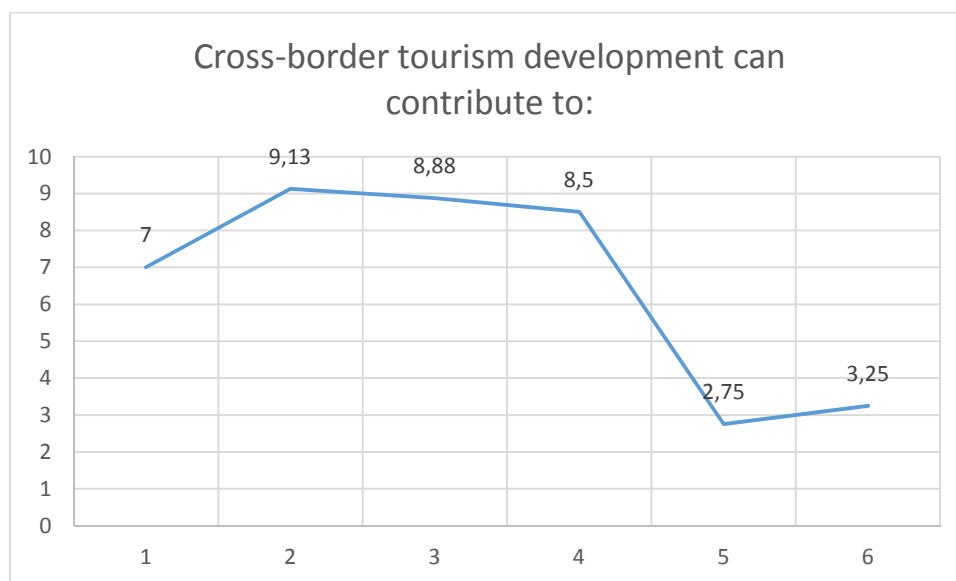


Figure 1. Cross – border tourism development contribution.

Source: own analysis

Experts clearly stated that cross-border tourism development was important for the mutual understanding and acceptance of cultural differences, the development of interregional economic cooperation in tourism and the promotion of anthropogenic and natural values in border areas. We asked the experts to freely express their opinion on the importance of cross-border tourism and its values. Here is a quote from one of the opinions:

“Słubfurt (Słubice + Frankfurt (Oder)) is an example of consistent cross-border cooperation that encompasses multiple and frequent activities aimed at solidifying and

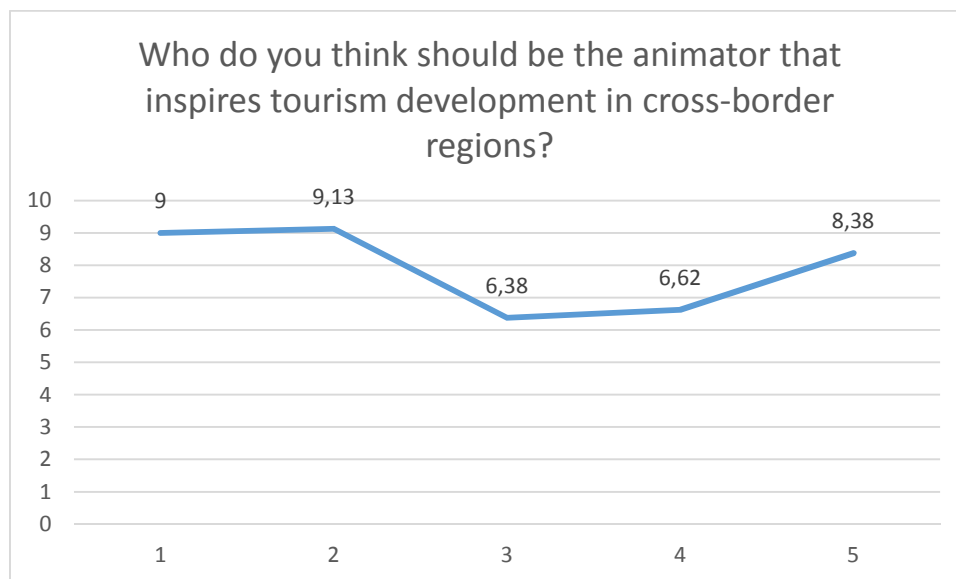
furthering neighbourhood relationships, not only between the authorities of the twin city, but above all between the area's residents. Information on a wide range of initiatives that enable economic development and help establish contacts and overcome prejudices and barriers (be they linguistic, cultural or historic), thus deepening integration in the Euroregion ("Pro Europa Viadrina" Euroregion), is available at [www.frankfurt-slubice.eu](http://www.frankfurt-slubice.eu), the webpage of the local Polish-German Cooperation Centre. The example of the twin city of Słubfurt shows that cross-border cooperation is not only necessary, but actually indispensable if European integration is to be deepened – in practice, among EU citizens, and not just at the government level, on paper, in theory. The example of Słubice and Frankfurt is a repository of knowledge that can be used to analyse the issue of cross-border cooperation." (*Administration, Deputy Director of the Collegium Polonicum, Słubice; Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, female*)

The experts' answers to question 2 were particularly inspiring for further research in the topic discussed in this paper:

Who do you think should be the animator that inspires tourism development in cross-border regions?

Respondents were asked to respond by commenting on the following entities:

1. local foundations and associations;
2. local government authorities;
3. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
4. local businesses;
5. schools and universities in the border area.



**Figure 2.** The animator that inspires tourism development in cross-border regions  
Source: own analysis

The experts' opinion on the role of schools and universities in cross-border tourism development may seem surprising. This opinion was confirmed by one expert's free comment:

"I believe that this type of cooperation should be developed first and foremost at the local level, include primarily children and young people, and involve the cooperation of schools, kindergartens, cultural and educational institutions, etc.; however, this cooperation should be initiated by the local authorities and supported, especially financially, by the central administration and appropriate national authorities." (*Dean of the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań, female*)

Although justified, these opinions are somewhat aspirational because at the local level, Polish law concerning cross-border tourism cooperation is imprecise, particularly when it comes to setting the boundaries to decision-making on local initiatives that are deemed rational. In any situation of this kind, the voivode or mayor is obliged to examine the treaties and agreements ratified by the Polish government and to ask the voivode or central administration authorities for permission. These initiatives are often short-term, such as the organization of a tourist/recreation picnic, and are often not taken up at all precisely because of the local authorities' awareness of the inconveniences of obtaining administrative acceptance. This applies to around a thousand local government units that operate in the border area.

In contrast to the local level, Polish law clearly defines and regulates the international cooperation of voivodeships. Chapter 6 of the Act on Voivodship Government explicitly states that cooperation with foreign countries is not only a right, but an obligation as well. The duties of voivodeship governments include organizing cooperation with the regional government structures of other countries and with international regional associations (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 486).

Although in principle the mandate of voivodeship governments with regard to cross-border tourism is conducive to its development, the mandate has no direct support in terms of the public diplomacy tasks carried out by the relevant department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In summary, we are dealing with a formal and legal situation where the central administration and its directly subordinate voivodeship administration are the primary regulators of cross-border tourism activities at the local level. Therefore, it seems crucial to discuss the extension of the mandate of the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy of Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which we are planning to do in the fourth stage of our studies.

Inspired by the works of G. Szondi, we prepared a proposal that may serve as a starting point for the discussion. We suggest the need to shift from traditional public diplomacy to 21<sup>st</sup> century public diplomacy where support for local initiatives associated with cross-border tourism development would be one of the main objectives (Szondi, 2008).

**Table 1.** Modification traditional public diplomacy for cross – border tourism development.

	<b>Traditional public diplomacy</b>	<b>Public diplomacy for cross-border tourism development</b>
<b>Objectives</b>	The achievement of political change in target countries through changes in behaviour	The promotion of cultural identity in cross-border tourism subregions with the aim of shaping an environment that supports common initiatives promoting tourism attractiveness and activity.
<b>Strategies</b>	Persuasion and management of public relations	The establishment and maintenance of partner relations with institutions that deal with the promotion of cross-border tourism values.
<b>Direction of communication</b>	One-way communication	Multidirectional communication including both government and non-governmental entities.
<b>Studies</b>	Sporadic/none	Extension of studies initiated by universities/faculties from the cross-border region which deal with tourism.

<b>Context of the message</b>	Ideologies/interests	Mostly cognitive values that assimilate common achievements and traditions.
<b>Target groups</b>	All users in the target country	Segmentation: active persons and enterprises that contribute to the development of cross-border tourism.
<b>Channels</b>	Traditional mass media	Modern mass media
<b>Budget</b>	Sponsored by the government	At the stage of implementation and announcement of the initiative to join the “Cross-border tourism” project programme.

Source: own analysis

The goals of public diplomacy that is institutionally tied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should include the following:

- the identification of cross-border cultural identity with communities divided by borders;
- the assessment of the negative aspects and effects of the division;
- the establishment of an anti-negation strategy;
- the establishment of operational programmes that cover the methods and ways of mobilising the local structures in Poland and abroad to achieve the predetermined operational goals;
- the allocation of funds to support the agreed activities within the framework of the performed programmes.

The performance of these tasks requires close cooperation with local government authorities, tourism operators and non-governmental institutions.

The scope of cooperation requires that a Cross-Border Cooperation Division responsible for creating, inspiring and monitoring cross-border tourism be set up within the Department of Public Diplomacy. Knowledge of the problems and challenges that can and ought to be defined in terms of cross-border tourism development in the regions should be the main criterion for the recruitment of analysts to the postulated Division. In other words, the recruitment process should target regional patriots and hobbyists who are in love with the tourism values of a region and not central administration officials.

Contemporary public diplomacy – both at the central and local administration levels – should employ more sophisticated communication techniques based on political and economic marketing theory. Contrary to the traditional model of diplomacy, public diplomacy should be aimed at multilateral, open and overt cooperation and promotion rather than secret pacts and protocols, struggles for influence and the unilateral imposition of one’s position.

To conclude, we would like to quote the opinion of one of the experts who participated in our study:

“Cross-border tourism cooperation helps indisputably – first of all, to overcome the barriers and prejudices towards people of other nationalities, and secondly, to improve the living conditions of the population that lives in the border area and is involved in such cooperation.” (*Chemistry professor, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, male*)



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