

Civil Society as a representation of immigrants' interests—the case of Polish ethnic organizations in Germany

According to Polish statistics, the number of Polish citizens residing in Germany amounts to 490,000 (GUS 2008), while German data say that there are about 384,000 people with Polish citizenship residing in Germany (MPI). This makes Poles the third largest group of foreigners in Germany after Turks (about 1.7 million) and Italians (about 500,000). Apart from that, there is a significant group of German citizens who consider themselves to have Polish origins or to be members of the Polish ethnic group. When we add to these two groups some of the resettled people (*Aussiedler*) who have strong links with Poland, the Polish language, and Polish culture, then the resulting size of the Polish and Polish-speaking group in Germany is about 1.5 or 2 million.

This high number is not necessarily reflected in the status of the Polish group in German society. Their representatives often draw attention to the fact that their rights in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) are not respected to a satisfactory degree. They use as examples the fact that Poles do not have minority status, and that Polish-language education is not sufficiently well developed. There are at least a few reasons for this situation. First of all, the Polish group is large but also very heterogenic. The many waves of Polish immigration to Germany have not integrated with each other. On the contrary, much conflict and tension can be observed within the Polish group. Second, it is difficult to select a coherent representation for Poles and the Polish-speaking group, one which would be good partner to the German authorities. The third reason lies in the specific nature of the host society. German integration policies, as well as German attitudes toward *die Fremden* in general and the social image of Poles in particular makes the situation of Polish immigrants complicated. Apart from that, it is worth remembering that the situation of Poles and the Polish-speaking group in Germany is closely related to the not always obvious or simple Polish-German relations, which makes the situation of this group yet more difficult.

This paper aims to describe the role of immigrant organizations in representing the interests of Polish immigrants in Germany. The role of immigrant organizations has been discussed widely (Moya 2005; Babiński 1986; Stoll 2001; Rex, Joly, and Wilpert 1987). The question of the relevance of immigrant organizations is generally analyzed according to two different approaches (Vermeulen 2006:11). The first approach focuses on the role of organizations in the life of immigrant communities. The second approach pays more attention to the integration of immigrants into host societies. This distinction would seem to be slightly misleading, because the integration or incorporation of immigrants into the host society is important not only from the point of view of the host society and its structures, but also from the point of view of the immigrant group.

Looking at the more particular roles or functions played by immigrant organizations, at least three can be clearly delineated. The first role is supporting the ethnic identity and culture. This means making it possible to use one's mother tongue, to meet and cooperate with compatriots, and to express one's nationality and identity. It may also mean providing opportunities—especially for the second and later generations—to acquire the identity, language, etc. This role would mostly be performed by cultural organizations. The second role is advocacy—that is, representing the interests of immigrants who are usually powerless before the authorities of the host society. Organizations which advocate the interests of migrants are usually political and human rights organizations. The third role is to secure the economic existence of the immigrant community. Immigrant and ethnic banks and insurance companies are examples of organizations which fulfill this function.

As this paper is focused on representing immigrants' interests, we will emphasize only the second of these roles. First of all, the question of whether Polish immigrant organizations are capable of representing immigrants' interest must be answered. To do that, an analysis of their condition and standing will be made. The second problem taken up in this study is be the self-

assessment of Polish immigrant organizations. This will help to answer the question of how the leaders of these organizations perceive their role in representing Polish immigrants' interests in Germany.

The paper is organized in the following way. Initially, as necessary background, the history of Polish immigration to Germany will be described. This will also be enriched by the history of the organizing process of the Polish diaspora in Germany. The reason it is worth analyzing this historical background is that it directly influences the current shape of the Polish movement in Germany and its potential. The second part contains an empirical analysis¹ of the condition of Polish organizations in Germany. I assume that their condition is of great importance in analyzing the role of immigrant organizations in representing immigrants' interests. The last part of the paper is devoted to the self-evaluation of the organizations in the context of their role representing the interests of Poles and the Polish-speaking group in Germany.

History of Polish emigration to Germany and the process of organization of Polish groups

Polish migration to Germany has been happening for about two hundred years, occurring in a number of waves. For this reason, Poles in Germany are very heterogeneous group. Individuals vary from each other by legal status (some have Polish citizenship, some German, some both, while some are stateless), material situation, and the strength of their relationship with Poland and with Polish identity.

The history of Polish migration to Germany has been mostly conditioned by the relative situations of these neighboring countries—with the relatively economically and politically strong neighbor as the host country, and the weaker neighbor as the source country—but also by their uneasy historical relations.

The first waves of migration from Poland to Germany began at the beginning of the nineteenth century. After the partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century by Russia, Austria, and Prussia, and after a series of unsuccessful uprisings (in 1794, 1830, 1848, and 1863), many of the insurgents either migrated or were forced to migrate. Among the migration destinations were some of the German states—especially Saxony, which had close relations with Poland (Janusz 2001: 21).

Germany's unification and the creation of the German Empire in 1871 marks the beginning of its great economic growth and industrial development. This of course caused an acceleration in its need for workforce. Poles were the most important immigrant group settling in Germany at the time. It is worth noticing however, that at first there were only internal migrations from the Prussian partition—from the former territories of Poland acquired during the partitions by the Kingdom of Prussia. Later on, Poles from the other two partitions, the Russian and the Austrian, also started to settle in Germany (Plich 1976: 35–49). The most popular settlement places were industrial centers like the Ruhr Area in North Rhine–Westphalia and industrial cities such as Dresden, Hamburg, Hannover, and others. The developing capital of German Empire, Berlin, was also an important destination for Polish immigrants (Cimała 1996).

An interesting feature of Polish economic migration to Germany was that it soon began to develop a network character. Very often migrants coming from the same regions or even locality settled in the same locations in Germany (Stefański 1984). This caused the integration processes to proceed more slowly, because the migrants reconstructed the social networks needed for basic

¹ The data presented in this paper come from the research project “Polish non-governmental organizations in Germany”, funded by the Polish-German Cooperation Foundation. This study is based on three research techniques: analysis of the websites of Polish immigrant organizations, in-depth interviews with leaders of the most important Polish immigrant organizations, and a postal survey of organizations. As the analysis of the data is ongoing, the data presented here come mostly from the postal survey. An analysis of existing databases of Polish organizations in Germany led to a list of 202 organizations. The postal survey was sent to each of these organizations, in some cases accompanied by an email survey. During the course of the research, it turned out that 103 organizations either do not exist or are unreachable. In the remaining 99 cases the address was correct, which leads us to assume that these organizations do exist. During the first two months of the survey, a feedback of 40 surveys was obtained.

existence in a Polish environment. Sometimes whole Polish districts were created, offering not only the opportunity to freely speak Polish, but also to use Polish shops and craft workshops. From another point of view, this network migration had also negative consequences, especially for the process of organization. Organizations that had been created by migrants already closely linked by regional and local ties had a specific character. Relations between members of such organizations normally tended to be more *Gemeinschaft*-like. They tended to be based on similarities such as common local memory and local dialect. They supported and sustained ties more with the particular locality and local identity than with the universal and sometimes abstract Polish identity. In this sense their role in organizing the process of the Polish diaspora was not positive, because it acted as a significant centrifugal force which held back the creation of the Polish immigrant and ethnic movement (Kostrzewa 2005: 16).

It is estimated that in the years 1870–1914 about 3.5 million Poles migrated to Germany. About 1.2 million migrants came from the Prussian partition, 1.2 million from the Russian partition, and less than 1.1 from the Austrian partition (Galos 1981: 31). The size of Polish Diaspora in Germany fueled the development of the Polish immigrant and ethnic movement. Although Poles did not have the right to create political organizations based on ethnic grounds (Kostrzewa 2005: 16), they started to establish cultural organizations whose main role was to preserve and support Polish identity. At first this function was fulfilled by Catholic church organizations which reflected very clearly the religiousness of the Poles. The first Polish organization in Germany was the Dortmund-based *Jedność* Society (*Towarzystwo "Jedność"*), dedicated to Saint Jadwiga, which was founded in 1877. As Janusz (2001: 22) states, "over the next few years in western Germany, about one hundred such organizations were created". Apart from the religious character of these organizations, they also focused on social and cultural activities. Very often they founded choirs and other groups preserving Polish cultural heritage.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the first secular Polish organizations in Germany were founded: the Polish Club (*Klub Polski*) in 1887, the *Kłosa* Polish Society (*Towarzystwo Polskie "Kłosa"*) in 1891, and the Association of Poles in Germany (*Związek Polaków w Niemczech*) in 1894. Their role was to represent the interests of Poles living in Germany, and to secure their material and social rights. Apart from that, some associations of different characters were created, such as the *Sokół* Gymnastic Society (*Towarzystwo Gimnastyczne "Sokół"*), which focused on keeping Poles fit and healthy.

One organization that was very important for the economic wellbeing of Polish workers in Germany was the Polish Professional Union (*Zjednoczenie Zawodowe Polskie*). This was established in 1902 and was the first Polish workers union. The Union integrated the dispersed Polish workers movement, and became a very important and powerful organization, representing almost 80,000 members (Janusz 2001: 23).

The First World war and the assumption of independent statehood by Poland in 1918 changed the situation. First, a great wave of return migrations began. Secondly some of the Polish migrants in Germany decided to migrate to other Western countries—especially France and Belgium (Kozłowski 1992: 24). This, together with the assimilation of some of the migrants caused the number of Poles living in the Weimar Republic to significantly decrease from 1.5 million to about 300,000. During the interwar period, only seasonal migration from Poland to Germany took place, on account of restrictions imposed by the German government and also because of Polish-German agreements. The number of these migrants was close to 500,000 in the years 1927–1939 (Janowska 1984: 367).

At the same time the process of organization of the Polish Diaspora began to become more intense. This activation expressed itself mostly in unification processes. After World War I, three different centers of the Polish movement were established. The first was the Executive Committee of Polish Organizations and Societies in Westphalia and Rhineland (*Komitet Wykonawczy Organizacji i Towarzystw Polskich w Westfalii i Nadrenii*) in Bohun in the Ruhr Area, which united Polish associations in western Germany. The second was the National Committee (*Komitet Narodowy*) in Berlin. The third was the Association of Poles in East Prussia (*Związek Polaków w*

Prusach Wschodnich). Although as Kostrzewa (2005: 17) observes, “activity in organizational structures of Polish migrants was complicated by the existence of different Polish clusters, historical backgrounds, professional sectors, and regional separatisms”, the unification process was very dynamic. On 27 August 1922, the Association of Poles in Germany (*Związek Polaków w Niemczech*) was established, associating German citizens of Polish origin and their organizations. Although not all of the Polish organizations were members, most recognized the Association as their representative. Its 45,000 members and its influence over an estimated 150,000 Poles in Germany (Kostrzewa 2005: 18) gave the Association great power. This power was used mostly for defending the Polish minority against discrimination and forced assimilation. Apart from that, the Association acted in other fields, such as Polish-language education, and ethnic banking and insurance. Janusz (2001: 25) also observes that the Association of Poles in Germany played a vital role in creating a cooperative platform between minorities in Germany.

Yet the activity of the Union was hampered by major internal crises, such as the resistance to centralization displayed by member organizations. Apart from that, political divisions started to play an important role, especially when the political situation in Poland began to become more complicated.

The situation of Polish organizations and of the Polish minority in general changed when the National Socialists took power in 1933. Their policies towards minorities was far more restrictive than the policies of the Weimar Republic. The political rights of ethnic groups living in the Third Reich were limited, which mobilized the Polish ethnic movement and encouraged its radicalization in order to protect the Polish identity. The movement’s character became more nationalistic, and this found its expression in the adoption of the *Rodło* ideology. This provided “Five Rules for Poles”: 1. We are Poles; 2. The faith of our fathers is the faith of our children; 3. All Poles are brothers; 4. We serve our nation every day; 5. Poland is our mother—you shall not speak ill of her. These rules were adopted at the First Congress of Poles in Berlin in 1938.

Those actions did not change the situation. The Association of Poles in Germany was outlawed by the Nazi government in September 1939. Other Polish organizations were also soon liquidated, their possessions confiscated, and their leaders arrested. The Polish movement in Germany was suppressed (Radzik 2001: 19–20).

During World War II, about 1.7 million Poles were displaced in the territories of Germany. They were mostly forced workers, concentration camps prisoners, and prisoners-of-war. After the war, many of them returned to Poland or—chiefly for political reasons—migrated to other Western countries. However some decided to stay in West Germany. In 1951, there were about 50,000 (Janusz 2001: 28) or perhaps 120,000 (Kozłowski 1992: 26) so-called Dips—displaced persons—of Polish nationality within the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The legal situation of these Dips was completely different from that of the older Polish migrants. The Dips became so-called *heimatlose Ausländer* (stateless foreigners), while most of the old migrants were German citizens (Janusz 2001: 28). This difference became one of the reasons why the Polish movement in Germany after World War II began to develop along two distinct tracks. Each groups—ethnic Poles with German citizenship and Dips—created their own organizations, and usually did not cooperate with each other.

Immediately after the war, the ethnic Poles with German citizenship started to reconstruct the prewar organizations. The first reactivated structures were those of the Association of Poles in Germany. The redevelopment of the Association begin in April 1945, and the Association as a whole was registered in the western part of Germany in 1948. Similarly, in the Soviet occupation zone in 1947, another Association of Poles in Germany was established. Its aim was to organize re-emigration to Poland, and it had very close connections with the Polish communist authorities. However, it was dissolved in 1950. Although quite large, the Bohum-based Association of Poles in Germany also had serious problems which resulted from very strong internal conflicts based mostly on political reasons and relations with the authorities in Warsaw. These conflicts caused a split in 1950, when a new organization—the *Zgoda* Association of Poles in Germany—detached itself from the structures of the old Association, which from that time on called itself the *Rodło* Association of

Poles in Germany (Janusz 2001:35). This split marked the end of the unity and integrity of the Polish movement in Germany. The result was a focus on current activities—mostly cultural activities, with relatively little interest in political matters (Kostrzewa 2005: 27).

At the same time, the displaced persons started to establish their own organizational structures. In each of the western occupational zones of Germany immediately after the war, displaced Poles had created different organizations. In 1947, an umbrella organization was established—the Polish Union in Germany (*Zjednoczenie Polskie w Niemczech*), and was recognized by the occupying powers as the representative of the Polish Dips. Due to internal political conflict, in 1951 the Union was converted into the Union of Polish Refugees in Germany (*Zjednoczenie Polskich Uchodźców w Niemczech*) (Ruchniewicz 1994: 209–218). Aside from this, other organizations were created, including the Union of Frontier Soldiers (*Związek Żołnierzy Kresowych*), the Polish Association of War Invalids in Germany (*Polski Związek Inwalidów Wojennych w Niemczech*), and others (Kostrzewa 2005: 25).

In the years 1945–1955, both factions of the Polish movement underwent lively development, but after this period of activity their activity diminished. This was mostly a result of re-emigration to Poland and also the partial integration of some Poles into German society. Conflicts within organizations also brought negative consequences, including an aversion towards organizational life. In the 60s and 70s, the Polish movement in Germany was dominated by the Rodło Association, with about 3,500 members, and the Zgoda Association with 9,500 members. Zgoda conducted more aggressive unification politics, and had absorbed many members of the Dips organizations (Kostrzewa 2005:29).

The situation of the Polish ethnic group in Germany began to become more complicated after 1956, when the campaign to unite families between Poland and Germany started. The so-called *Aussiedler*² (resettlers) came to Germany in three great waves in the 50s, 70s and 80s (these last being the so-called *spät Aussiedler*—late resettlers). In total they amounted to about 1 million migrants. Resettlers claimed German family connections which allowed them to obtain German citizenship and social assistance when living in Germany. Many of them, however, especially those from the later waves, kept dual citizenship and retained close relations with Polish identity and culture (Stefański 1995).

In the late 70s and in the 80s, another type of migration from Poland was observed—the so-called Solidarność or independence immigration. Such migration was politically motivated, as the migrants were political dissidents forced to leave Poland. Apart from them, there was also a large wave of economic migrants due to crises in the Republic of Poland. Both these waves together amounted to about 250,000 people, enough to reanimate the Polish movement in Germany. Once again new migrants began to create organizations—mostly political in nature and aimed at supporting Polish dissent and democratic change in Poland and the Soviet bloc as a whole. Organizations such as the Solidarity Workers' Group (*Grupa Robocza Solidarność*) and the Solidarity Information and Coordination Bureau (*Biuro Informacyjno-Koordynacyjne Solidarność*) and many others appeared. It is worth noticing that in many cases those organizations were financially supported by the German government which, beside the enthusiasm of their founders, was one of the reasons for the growth of these organizations. At the same time, the decline of older wave of Polish movements was observed. First of all the Dips organizations found themselves in deep crisis. Also the Zgoda Association—which was on good terms with the communist government in Poland—began to lose members and significance. Solidarity migrants took power throughout the whole movement.

It seemed that the fall of communism in Poland would stop the flow of Poles to Germany, and the flow indeed lessened somewhat. Yet Germany is still an attractive migration destination. Until Poland's accession to the European Union and the resulting free access for Poles to most of

2 *Aussiedler* also came from other countries like the Soviet Union, and after its collapse, from the new countries of the former Soviet Union—mostly Russia and Kazakhstan, but also from Romania, Czechoslovakia, etc. For more information about this specific type of migration to Germany see, for example Bade 1990, Gugel 1990, and Delfs 1993.

the labor markets of EU member states, Germany was the first destination of Polish migrants. Until 2006, the country with the greatest number of Polish emigrants was Germany (with 430,000 in 2005 and 450,000 in 2006), and since 2006, the United Kingdom has become the primary destination for Polish migrants, with 580,000 Polish citizens (GUS 2008). The German statistics also reflect that at least since the second half of the 90s, the number of Polish migrants entering Germany has been bigger than the number of migrants from any other country. In 2006, the approximately 150,000 Polish migrants composed 27% of all migrants entering German territory (MPI).

The 90s was a period that saw another change in the Polish movement in Germany. The end of communism made the organizations from the Solidarity wave useless. Their basic aim—democratic change in Poland—has been achieved. This lowered the enthusiasm for these organizations, and the level of involvement in them dropped. However in 1991, the signing of the Polish-German Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation changed the situation. Although the German government did not recognize Poles as an ethnic minority,³ in the way that Poland recognized ethnic Germans living in Poland, the Treaty stated that actions should be taken by the German government to protect and support the ethnic identity of German citizens of Polish origin (Graś 2000: 180). This was interpreted by Polish immigrants as a promise to support actions and organizations promoting Polish culture and national identity, which resulted in the growth of cultural organizations relying on financial support from German authorities. Socially, these organizations mostly had their origins in migrants from the waves of the 80s—Solidarity and economic migrants, and to a lesser extent late resettlers that remained closely connected to their Polish identity. As the German support did not turn out to be as generous as expected, many of these organizations were soon liquidated.

Professional organizations were also established, including the Polish Medical Association (*Polski Związek Medyczny*), the Berpol Association of Polish Merchants and Businessmen (*Stowarzyszenie Polskich Handlowców i Przemysłowców w Berlinie "Berpol"*). The aim of such organizations was to protect the interest of occupational groups of Poles working in Germany. This was a result of the qualitative change of Polish migration to Germany, as a result of which more and more professionals began to settle in Germany.

At the same time, accompanied by another crisis of the Polish movement in Germany, the process of reintegration began. This was also a result of the signing of the Polish-German Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation. The centralization of the Polish organizations had been taking place since the beginning of the 90s, and proceeded rather turbulently. In 1992, the first Polish umbrella organization was established: the Congress of German Polonia (*Kongres Polonii Niemieckiej*). In the very same year, a competing structure was founded—the Polish Forum in Germany (*Forum Polskie w Niemczech*). Additionally, both the Rodło and Zgoda Associations of Poles in Germany aspired to represent the whole Polish group. In 1995, the Polish Council in Germany (*Polska Rada w Niemczech*) was established. Although at the beginning of its existence the Council was recognized by the German government as the representation of the Polish ethnic group, it did not complete the centralization processes because it lacked sufficient support from other Polish organizations. However in 1998, the Assembly of Polish Organizations in Germany (*Konwent Organizacji Polskich w Niemczech*) was formed by five umbrella organizations: the Rodło Association of Poles in Germany, the Zgoda Association of Poles in Germany, the Congress of German Polonia, the Polish Council in Germany, and the Catholic Centre of for the Propagation of Culture, Tradition, and the Polish Language (*Katolickie Centrum Krzewienia Kultury, Tradycji i Języka Polskiego*). Although this structure is not registered, and the Rodło Association no longer participates, it is the most representative organization of Poles in Germany. However, its role is still marginal (Kostrzewa 2005).

³ Unlike the Weimar Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany recognizes as ethnic minorities only those ethnic groups that are connected with certain territory. The German state also does not recognize the so-called new minorities—new migrants without German citizenship. Germany recognizes as minority only four ethnic groups: Schleswig Danes, Frisians, Sorbs, and additionally Sinti and Roma (Janusz 2000).

The condition of Polish immigrant organizations in Germany

The first indication of the state of these organizations and of the Polish non-governmental sector in Germany as a whole is their legal status. Although German law recognizes non-registered associations, those that are registered have greater abilities to take actions. Their role in representing immigrants' interests is therefore greater, and a higher proportion of registered associations among the organizations surveyed would be an indicator of the movement's potentially greater power.

Table 1. Legal status of organizations

Category	Count	% of Cases
Registered association	36	90.0
Union of associations	5	12.5
Foundation	1	2.5
Unregistered association	1	2.5

The percentage does not sum to 100 because there were multiple answers.

Most of the organizations researched (36 of 40) were registered associations. The data presented in Table 1 also show another interesting regularity: among the organizations investigated there is only one foundation, which may indicate that the sector as a whole is rather underinvested in.

While the fact that as many as five of the organizations are unions or other umbrella organizations might suggest that the Polish movement in Germany is generally well organized and integrated, a closer look at the data show that this number comes from division rather than from unity. Out of 40 organizations, 24 (almost 60%) stated that they belong to some Polish umbrella organization, and three were members of two such organizations.

Table 2. Membership of umbrella organizations

Name	Count	% of Cases
Congress of German Polonia (<i>Kongres Polonii Niemieckiej</i>)	8	38
Polish Council in Germany (<i>Polska Rada w Niemczech</i>)	6	29
Bureau for the cooperation of associations in Hannover and Lower Saxony (<i>Biuro Współpracy Stowarzyszeń w Hanowerze i Niedersachsen</i>)	3	14
Assembly of Polish Organizations in Germany (<i>Konwent Organizacji Polskich w Niemczech</i>)	3	14
Polish Forum in Germany (<i>Forum Polskie w Niemczech</i>)	1	5

The percentage does not sum to 100 because there were multiple answers.

The dispersion of umbrella organizations not only creates conflict between them, but also lowers the potential of the whole movement. Although as described above there have been some attempts to unify the umbrella and general organizations (such as the Assembly of Polish Organizations in Germany), the negotiating power of such unified bodies is rather limited.

At the same time, Polish organizations are rather cautious when it comes to membership in German umbrella organizations and other supranational or international organizations. In both of these cases, only 9 of the organizations surveyed declared that they belong to such organizations. This may also lower their potential.

Another important indicator of the condition of Polish organizations in Germany is their personnel. Table 3 shows the responses provided by the 40 organizations concerning their

employment practices.

Table 3. Paid personnel of organizations

During the previous year, did the organization employ any paid staff or in any other form pay for work?	Count	%
Yes, we permanently employ paid staff	6	15.0
Yes, we do pay for work, but not on a regular basis	9	22.5
No	25	62.5

Most of the organizations did not employ staff in any form. That means that they were maintained only by members, which usually gives rise to several problems. The first such problem is a lack of efficiency: in most cases, members are professionally active people who can devote only their free time to the organization's activities. No matter how great their devotion may be, their capabilities are limited. The second problem comes from a lack of professionalism: contemporary organizations are often professionalized, which on one hand brings serious threats (such as the threat of ignoring the organization's mission or of losing the spirit of civil society), but on the other hand it enables the further development of the organization. Professional staff is more effective in fundraising, looking after the organization's image, and dealing with external contacts.

Since so many organizations do not employ paid workers, other kinds of workforce are gaining importance. Two significant sources of manpower for organizations are first of all, volunteers, and second, the members of organization themselves.

Volunteering does not seem to be a very popular way of dealing with the lack of personnel among Polish organizations in Germany. Only 16 of 40 organizations (around 40%) declared that volunteers take part in the organization's activities. This shows that they may experience some problems in recruiting voluntary workers. It is worth noticing that the same proportion of organizations which do and do not employ paid staff use volunteers as their workforce. That means that as many as 16 out of 40 organizations do not have any workforce apart from their members. Evidently this may have a negative impact on their power and ability to act.

There are two possibilities regarding members. First, there are organizations whose members are people. Second, there are institutional members—this is typically the case for umbrella organizations and organizations which associate firms and companies. In the first case, the mean number of members in organizations is 103, the median is 41.5 and the mode is 60. The largest of the organizations claims to have 800 members. The smallest, only eight. Nine of 40 organizations have more than 100 members, while 10 have less than 25 members.

In the case of six organizations which associate other organizations or institutions, the mean number of members is 25, the median is 9, and the mode is 3. Three of them have less than 10 members and—with one exception, which had 100 members—all have less than 30 members.

The number of members does not show the extent to which the members are actively engaged in the activities of the organization. The mean proportion of members that actively take part in the organizations' operations amounts to almost 50%, which is relatively high.

Although this shows that the lack of other workforce is made up for by the work of the members, altogether the data on the personnel of Polish organizations in Germany give evidence of one of the weaknesses of the movement: the members of these organizations may be diligent and enthusiastic, but in some cases this may not be enough.

Another important indicator of organizational power is financial resources. Assets and operational capital do not only reflect the condition of the organization, but play a major role in influencing the activities of the organization, its range, its potential power, etc.

Only 33 of 40 organizations answered the question on their annual income. The results are

shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Annual income in 2007.

Annual Income	Count	%
0–100 Euro	2	6.1
101–500 Euro	7	21.2
501–1,000 Euro	6	18.8
1,001–5,000 Euro	6	18.2
5,001–10,000 Euro	5	15.2
10,001–50,000 Euro	1	3.0
50,001–100,000 Euro	3	9.1
100,001–500,000 Euro	2	6.1
More than 500,001 Euro	0	0
Hard to say	1	3.0

Most of the organizations (63.6%) administer an annual budget no bigger than 5,000 Euro. The income of only five organizations exceeds 50,000 Euro, and none surpasses 500,000 Euro. These data shows that the organizations' financial conditions and capabilities are rather poor. This also finds confirmation in the figures concerning the value of organizations' possessions. As many as 24 from 40 organizations stated that they have no material assets. The value of the properties of the other organizations in most cases (61.2%) does not exceed 10,000 Euro.

The most striking example of these material shortcomings is the case of the organizations' offices. Although the question of having an office would seem to be rather down-to-earth, it may be significant when considering the openness of the organization to other representatives of Polish groups in Germany, apart the members of organization themselves. An organization with no office will typically be more difficult to contact, which means that a person looking for help from the organization might not be able to obtain it.

Table 5. Organizations' office facilities

Type of office	Count	%
Organization possesses its own office	6	15.0%
Organization rents an office	14	35.0%
Organization shares an office with other organizations	6	15.0%
Organization shares office with other institutions (e.g. a firm of one of the members)	5	12.5%
Organization's office is in the residence of one of the members	8	20.5%
Organization does not have permanent office	6	15.0%
Other	3	7.5%

The percentage does not sum to 100 because there were multiple answers.

As the data from the Table 5 show, only 6 organizations possess their own office, and 14 more rent an office. As many as 13 organizations uses the company or residence of a member as an

offices, and another 6 do not have any permanent office. On one hand, this shows the material shortcomings that affect these organizations, and on the other hand it indicates a possible source of weakness in the operation of the organization.

Despite these problems, the surveyed organizations perform many activities. When asked if during the last two years the organization has performed any projects or actions, 32 of 40 stated that they had. The remaining 8 organizations answered that their organization had not acted in this way. The mean number of such projects implemented by the organizations during the last two years amounts to 24, and the median is 14. This shows the high activity level of the Polish movement in Germany. These data may be further reinforced by the number of likely recipients of these projects. The researched organizations estimated the number of recipients of their activities at more than 82,000 people, with the mean number of recipients at the level of 1,000 per organization, and with the mode being 300. Although this result seems to be slightly overestimated, one has to notice that taking into consideration the material and human capital problems of the Polish organizations, the movement nonetheless seems to be very active.

To sum up the description of the condition of Polish organizations in Germany, it must be stated that generally their situation is not very good. There are important indicators that show that their potential for representing Polish immigrants is relatively low. First of all, one has to emphasize the membership problem—although the mean number of members in Polish organizations seems to be high in comparison to other immigrant organizations, this does not change the fact that only a very low proportion of Poles take part in the activities of these organizations (3,718 members in the researched organizations). This decreases the representativeness of the organizations, and may reduce their potential power as bodies representing immigrant interests. The second important problem concerns the capabilities of these organizations. Due to the shortage of human and material capital they suffer from, some organizations cannot effectively play a role in the representation of the interests of Polish groups in Germany. The lack of personnel, together with the lack of office space and equipment, may negatively impact their capabilities.

Taking these arguments into consideration, it has to be stated that despite these problems the Polish movement in Poland shows quite a developed level of activity. The number of projects implemented, as well as the number of beneficiaries of the organizations' activities, seems to be at a high level, which shows that the Polish movement does have a certain potential. This potential could be even bigger if the organizations were better supported.

Apart from that, one has to remember that the situation of the researched organizations is unequal. Normally we could assume that the bigger organizations, which possess longer organizational traditions and better infrastructure, would be in better condition. Yet a closer analysis of the data shows that this is not true in all cases. There are examples of large organizations with very complicated internal relationships, a factor which negatively affects their potential. Moreover, the scope of actions and their assumed social reach may make their activities less effective. Yet there are also smaller organizations with smaller ambitions and smaller geographic and social ranges, that are far more efficient. These organizations are more flexible in their actions, more easily adapt to changes and, perhaps most importantly, have better contact with German society and administration. Some of these organizations have managed to establish effective cooperation with local authorities.

The self-perception of Polish organizations' role in representing immigrant interests in Germany

When talking about the role of Polish organizations in representing immigrant interests, it is in the first instance worth inquiring about the most important fields of activity of the Polish movement in Germany. As previously mentioned, most of the organizations seem to deal with culture and identity. This finds confirmation in the data presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Fields of activities of Polish organizations in Germany

Field of activity	Count	%
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Promotion of Poland in German society	33	82.5%
Improvement of Polish-German affairs	33	82.5%
Culture and art	31	77.5%
Supporting tradition and national identity	30	75.0%
International affairs	18	45.0%
Education	17	42.5%
Advocacy—actions in defense of the interests of Poles and the Polish-speaking group	16	40.0%
Counseling and help for new immigrants from Poland	15	37.5%
Youth affairs	14	35.0%
Sport, tourism, recreation, and hobbies	13	32.5%
Self-help	13	32.5%
Trade and professional matters	11	27.5%
Women’s affairs	11	27.5%
Veteran affairs	10	25.0%
Media	9	22.5%
Social help and philanthropy	8	20.0%
Politics and ideology	7	17.5%
Scientific research	5	12.5%
Health	4	10.0%
Religion	2	5.0%
Ecology	2	5.0%
Finance	2	5.0%
Other	9	23.1%

The percentage does not sum to 100 because there were multiple answers.

The two most-often chosen categories—“Promotion of Poland in German society”, and “Improvement of Polish-German affairs”—are closely related to Polish-German relations. As many as 33 out of 40 organizations declared that these are important fields of activity for them. This however only shows the peculiarity of immigrant organizations, and especially of Polish immigrant organizations in Germany, and the significance of Polish-German relations. The two next most common choices were “Culture and art” (31 of 40 organizations) and “Supporting tradition and national identity” (30 of 40 organizations). This means that about 75% of the researched organizations are expressive—their main activity is to articulate and sustain national identity. Culture in this case plays a crucial role as one of the most important carriers of identity. As stated before, this focus on identity and cultural matters results also from the Polish-German Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation.

The most interesting responses from our point of view belong to those organizations that stated they deal with “Advocacy—actions in defense of the interests of Poles and the Polish-speaking group” (16 organizations), “Counseling and help for new immigrants from Poland” (15

organizations) and “Politics and ideology” (7 organizations), because these categories seem to be the most important when immigrants’ interests are being considered. The number of organizations for which these fields are of primary interest is not great, but it is significant. It seems that even though there are more important areas of activities, representing the interests of the Polish group is still seen as a vital activity for organizations.

This hierarchy finds confirmation in the evaluation of the importance of the organization in selected areas of immigrants’ lives. These are to be found in the Table 7.

Table 7. Evaluation of the importance of the organization in selected areas of immigrants’ lives

Area of immigrants’ lives	Of great importance		Of average importance		Of little importance	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Creating a positive image of Poland within German society	33	86.8%	4	10.5%	1	2.6%
Sustaining tradition and culture	33	86.8%	5	13.2%	0	0.0%
Creating and sustaining bonds between people coming from Poland	33	86.8%	5	13.2%	0	0.0%
Creating a positive image of Poles and the Polish-speaking group within German society	31	86.1%	4	11.1%	1	2.8%
Representing the interests of Poles and the Polish-speaking group living in Germany	29	76.3%	5	13.2%	4	10.5%
Maintaining links with the homeland	24	64.9%	7	18.9%	6	16.2%
Integration into German society of Poles and the Polish-speaking group in Germany	24	63.2%	9	23.7%	5	13.2%
Executing the provisions of the Polish-German Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation	21	55.3%	7	18.4%	10	26.3%
Helping (especially socially and legally) people coming from Poland	20	57.1%	5	14.3%	10	28.6%
Teaching the Polish language	17	51.5%	9	27.3%	7	21.2%
Helping new immigrants from Poland to adapt to life in Germany	16	44.4%	12	33.3%	8	22.2%

Economic and financial development of Poles and the Polish-speaking group living in Germany	9	26.5%	10	29.4%	15	44.1%
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As the data suggest, the four first categories are similar to the case of the most important fields of organization activities. The role of organizations in creating a positive image of Poles and Poland within German society, and of sustaining national identity and social bonds between immigrants, was assessed most positively. In each of these cases more than 30 out of 40 organizations evaluated them to be of great importance. The significance in representing the interests of Poles and the Polish-speaking group living in Germany was also highly evaluated by many organizations (29 of 40). However this is a general category: when looking at more specific categories, like executing the provisions of the Polish-German Treaty, or helping new immigrants, the assessment is also relatively high. One area of activity stands out from the others—the organization’s role in the economic and financial development of Poles and the Polish-speaking group in Germany. Only 9 organizations stated that they evaluate these as being of great importance. This comes from the peculiarity of the areas of interests of most organizations. There are not too many organizations which would be interested in these fields which might contribute to the economic development of the Polish group.

Another indicator which may help to describe the self-assessment of organizations’ roles in representing immigrant interest is their evaluation of selected affairs and fields of activity of the organization, shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Evaluation of organizations’ activity

Affairs and fields of activity of the organization	Low		Medium		High	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Evaluation of the level of commitment of people engaged in the organization’s activities	2	5.4%	13	35.1%	22	59.5%
Evaluation of the competences of people engaged in the organization’s activities	0	0.0%	18	48.6%	19	51.4%
Evaluation of the social image of the organization in German society	4	11.1%	14	38.9%	18	50.0%
Evaluation of the social image of the organization among Poles and the Polish-speaking group	4	10.8%	18	48.6%	15	40.5%
Evaluation of the degree of realization of the organization’s plans and intentions	4	10.3%	20	51.3%	15	38.5%

Evaluation of the organization's impact on resolving important problems affecting Poles and the Polish-speaking group	7	18.9%	16	43.2%	14	37.8%
Evaluation of the level of cooperation between the organization and the German public institutions	10	27.0%	15	40.5%	12	32.4%
Evaluation of the level of cooperation between the organization and the Polish public institutions	10	27.0%	16	43.2%	11	29.7%
Evaluation of the level of cooperation between the organization and other Polish or Polish-speaking organizations	8	21.1%	22	57.9%	8	21.1%
Evaluation of the organization's equipment	17	44.7%	15	39.5%	6	15.8%
Evaluation of the organization's financial situation	19	50.0%	14	36.8%	5	13.2%

Most of the presented categories are not relevant for our analysis here, but the most interesting are undoubtedly "Evaluation of the degree of realization of organization's plans and intentions" and "Evaluation of the organization's impact on resolving important problem affecting Poles and the Polish-speaking group". The first category was highly evaluated by 15, and the second by 14 of 40 organizations. These results are visibly worse than in the case of the previously analyzed data. It seems that this evaluation is more realistic, taking into consideration the conditions under which Polish organizations in Germany act.

To recapitulate the self-evaluation of the role of Polish organizations in the lives of Polish immigrants and in representation of their interests, one has to notice that despite the hardships described in the previous part of the paper, this assessment seems to be surprisingly positive. Although organizations describe their situation as rather bad in terms of human and material capital, their level of activity is high. This may be the reason why organizations perceive their role as positive and significant. It may also be an argument for acknowledging those evaluations as reliable.

Discussion

The history of Polish organizations in Germany is an interesting example of the growth, development and the decline of an immigrant organization movement. The subsequent waves of immigrants did not contribute to a growth in the importance of the ethnic group as a whole or its organizations. On the contrary it resulted in conflicts and a tendency to creating new organizations instead of integrating into the old structures. In other words, new flows of immigrants conduced to lowering the potential and cohesion of the Polish group. The contemporary organizations and their potential to represent immigrants' interests results from the overall history of the whole movement.

The results of the research show also that, as a consequence of their condition, the potential of the organizations is not great. Both the human and material resources available for Polish

organizations are limited. The overall lack of unity of the movement is also an argument in favor of a rather negative evaluation of their potential. At the central level, there is no strong partner in contact with the German authorities. Cooperation with other non-Polish organizations is also limited, which may hinder the role of Polish organizations in the immigrant movement in Germany. This also may contribute to the relatively low status of Poles in German society.

Yet a closer analysis of the research data shows that this picture is somewhat misleading. Although the condition of the Polish movement is indeed rather poor, the results of their activities give evidence of their vitality. This paradox may result from two reasons. The first is connected with the significant differentiation of the organizations. There are organizations which seem to be sunk in crisis; lacking both human and material resources, their activities are reduced to minimum, and therefore their power is insignificant. Their potential for effectively representing Polish immigrant interest is very low. Yet there are organizations which are capable of overcoming difficulties and unfavorable conditions, and which have the ability to adapt to varying situations. These organizations are indeed capable of representing the interests of the Polish group in Germany. At the moment it cannot be said what factors give rise to this differentiation; is not in any case a matter of any objective feature of the organization, such as size or age. Nevertheless, these organizations drive the whole Polish movement. The second reason which should be more thoroughly researched is the enthusiasm displayed by some of the organizations' leaders and members, which may be of great importance when trying to explain the differences between the low capabilities and relatively high performance of Polish organizations. Their engagement may help to overcome some of the problems and barriers.

This paradox is also visible in the organizations' self-assessments of their role in representing the broadly defined interests of Polish immigrants. As those evaluations are mostly positive, at first the doubt may arise that they are somehow exaggerated. Yet when one takes into consideration the vitality of the movement, these evaluations begin to seem more justified.

To summarize, it seems that the Polish movement in Germany has a certain potential in representing the interests of Poles and the Polish-speaking group. The organizations, though relatively weak in resource terms, seem to be lively and to some extent efficient. Yet the question remains open as to whether they are fully taking advantage of their potential to represent immigrant interests.

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