



Chapter IV

# GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT POLAND

Marzena Ples



## Get to know about Poland – Training Materials for Trainers and Teachers

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**Composition/graphics:** DoLasu | art studio, [www.dolasu-pracownia.pl](http://www.dolasu-pracownia.pl)

ISBN: 978-83-938388-2-0

**Published by:**

© Institute for Eastern Initiatives (Instytut Wschodnich Inicjatyw)

ul. Salvatorska 5/10, 30-109 Kraków

[www.iwi.org.pl](http://www.iwi.org.pl) | [www.aboutpoland.iwi.org.pl](http://www.aboutpoland.iwi.org.pl)

Kraków 2015

The workshop scenario is part of the publication *Get to know about Poland – Training Materials for Trainers and Teachers* which was created during the project coordinated by the Institute for Eastern Initiatives.

The project is co-financed by the Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the framework of the “Cooperation in the Field of Public Diplomacy 2015” competition.

The publication expresses the views of the authors only and cannot be identified with the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

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## 1. WORKSHOP SCENARIO



### AIMS

- The participants are provided with or reminded of basic information on Poland.
- Existing stereotypes about Poland are discussed and the terms *stereotype*, *prejudice*, *discrimination* are defined.
- The participants are acquainted with Polish culture and traditions.
- Skills of creative thinking are developed.



**DURATION:** 180 minutes.



**PARTICIPANTS:** 20 people.



### TEACHING METHODS

- Demonstration methods – film.
- Expository methods – talk.
- Problem-focused methods – didactic discussion.



### TEACHING MATERIALS, AIDS AND WORK

- Computer and projector to display video and text.
- Board or flipchart to write down associations.
- Slips of paper with inscriptions to divide into groups (20 slips, 5 from each of the following categories: mermaid, dragon, eagle and bison).
- Flipchart with a drawn scoreboard divided into 4 groups: dragons, mermaids, eagles, and bison.
- Secret phrases to play charades, preferably in the form of a Power Point presentation with additional pictures or photos.

## I. WORKSHOP SCENARIO

### Plan of the workshop



#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The workshop begins with a brainstorm on what the participants know about Poland. Each person is asked to share his/her associations with Poland in the following fields: geography, economy, politics, society, culture, traditions, and history. It should be emphasised that according to the rules each person has the right to speak and at this time it is forbidden to make any comments or interrupt. Associations which have been previously grouped should be written on the flipcharts and discussed together with the participants, based on their knowledge. Gathering information from the groups, according to the knowledge of particular persons, is the starting point to talk about Poland. The purpose of this introduction is to form a general diagnosis of the participants' state of knowledge. On this basis, it will be easier to modify the subsequent workshops. The task also aims at complementing and organising the participants' information and associations about Poland and the Poles.

An educational film *Get to know about Poland: General Information* and documentary *Poland? Yes! (Auxiliary material no. 1)* should be presented and then discussed together, both the information contained therein and the visual material. The participants are asked to decide which facts from the two films should be written on the flipchart alongside their previous associations. The sheets with this information on Poland are hung in a prominent place in the room.



#### 2. EXPLAINING AND CONDUCTING THE FIRST EXERCISE

The slips of paper with the inscriptions: mermaid, dragon, eagle, and bison are distributed to the participants (*Auxiliary material no. 2*). They are asked to read the content of their own slip only after all the slips have been distributed and the game rules explained. The participants are informed that their task will be to find people representing the same category, yet it is forbidden to speak or make any sounds – only gestures are allowed. In this way four teams: mermaids, dragons, eagles, and bison are formed by the participants. Make sure that the participants know the meanings of these words and their importance in Polish culture. They are told that the task to find members of the same team was only a warm-up before the real game of charades.

The game rules should be discussed in detail – they can even be written on the board or on the flipchart (*Auxiliary material no. 3*). It should be explained that charades is a word guessing game. In each round, the one member from each team stands with his/ her back to the projector and must guess the word displayed on the screen. (*Auxiliary material no. 4*). In the meantime the other team members, facing the projector, have 2 minutes to act out the secret phrase using only gestures. The team whose representative was the first to guess the secret phrase, gets one point. The winner is the team with the most points written on the board or flipchart. It is important that the contestants be changed after two (or possibly) three secret phrases – in such a way each team member will have the chance to be the actor and the guesser.

After each round, a given issue is discussed with the participants – it should be remembered that the most important element of the task is not the guessing of the secret phrase per se but rather the cultural insight gained from each word. The phrases may be freely modified depending on the knowledge and age of the group. Additionally, photos related to a given topic may be displayed. In this chapter, examples of words along with commentary are presented (*Educational material no. 1*).

## 1. WORKSHOP SCENARIO

**3. EXPLAINING AND CONDUCTING THE SECOND EXERCISE**

The participants are asked if they know any stereotypes about the Poles – they should be written on the flipchart or on the board. Next the possible origins of these stereotypes are discussed.

A video on Polish stereotypes is now presented (*Auxiliary material no. 5*). After that, the participants are asked about what they think of the film and the stereotypes contained therein are discussed. A closer look should be taken at which stereotypes written previously on the flipchart were repeated in the film and why. The participants are asked if the information contained in the film surprised them or whether they believed it. There will follow a discussion on whether these stereotypes are positive or negative and how true they are. The participants should refer to their own experiences. They are asked if it is easy to change stereotypes.

The purpose of the exercise is to develop a common definition of a stereotype and its characteristics. The participants work in groups of four and then discuss together a definition which they have developed. It is important that the definition contain the following elements: 1) stereotype as preconceived notions, simplification, categorisation; 2) assigning people to particular groups with certain ascribed features; 3) not prone to changes, socially shared; 4) may be positive or negative. The participants are asked to think together about the possible consequences of basing our opinions and judgements on stereotypes and if someone can possibly have any influence on them. In the summary it should be emphasised that people cannot live without stereotypes. It is important, however, to be aware of their existence.

The participants are asked what prejudices are and how they differ from stereotypes. It is discussed how stereotypes affect prejudices. It is important to ensure that the participants understand that prejudices contain an emotional component, and that these are attitudes towards social category. Some examples should be given here. Afterwards, the term *discrimination* is introduced, with regard to behaviour resulting from the possession of certain prejudices. It should be checked whether the participants understand the difference between stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination.

A poster of the “Polish plumber” of 2005 should be introduced (*Auxiliary material no. 5*). The participants are asked what they see and how this poster may fit with the topic of stereotypes. A discussion is held on the background of this campaign just after Poland’s accession to the European Union when a “Polish plumber” appeared as a bogeyman against the cheap labour force from Poland in Western countries, especially in France. The participants are asked if they notice here any stereotypes, prejudices or discrimination. They are informed that the poster was the idea of the Polish Tourist Organisation (POT) to encourage tourists to come to Poland, based on the stereotype of the Polish plumber, and that the campaign was one of the most successful in the POT’s history. Afterwards, the participants are asked if they like the idea.

**4. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

The participants are asked what they learnt during the workshop on Poland and the Poles, what information surprised them most and what issues they would like to touch upon during the next workshops (this information can be used while preparing the subsequent classes). The participants are asked how they liked their work in groups during the two exercises, what helped and what hindered them in performing the tasks.

## I. WORKSHOP SCENARIO



### 5. THE TIME FRAME OF THE WORKSHOP

Introduction to the topic and the presentation of the films: 40 minutes.

Conducting the first exercise: 60 minutes, including:

- Explaining the task and dividing into groups: 10 minutes.
- Showing and discussing secret phrases: 50 minutes (around 2 minutes to present and guess each phrase, around 3 minutes to comment on the phrase).

Conducting the second exercise: 65 minutes, including:

- Writing stereotypes about Poland: 15 minutes.
- Presenting the film and discussing it: 20 minutes.
- Defining what are stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination: 20 minutes.
- Discussing the poster: 10 minutes.

Discussion and summary of the workshop: 15 minutes.

## 2. AUXILIARY MATERIALS

### Auxiliary material no.1



#### Educational films

The films are available on You Tube at:

- *Get to know about Poland: General Information* (EN):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTtGkwc3fml> (RU): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZIGelZKumA>
- *Polska? Tak!* (EN):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM-p8PGn3CI&list=PLbacxjg4nkHfff2pnRtVvPmP6L3b1QMzi&index=11>

### Auxiliary material no. 2

#### The slips of paper with the inscriptions



- 4 slips with graphic: mermaid, dragon, eagle, bison.  
(Attachment no.1, to print on A4)



### Auxiliary material no. 3



#### The Rules of Charades

1. Each group selects a person who will guess a secret phrase in a given round standing with his or her back to the projector (in order not to see the words which are displayed). After two rounds the team members swap places and there will be a new person guessing the phrase.
2. The other team members face the screen, standing opposite the guesser.
3. The person hosting the game reveals a secret phrase on the screen and at the same time participants of all teams start to act out the phrase using gestures.
4. The team whose representative will be the first to guess the phrase, receives a point. The winner is the team which obtains the most points.
5. The maximum time to show the phrase is 2 minutes. After each round, a specific issue is discussed.
6. All the secret phrases are related to Poland and contain a maximum of 4 words.
7. The actors neither can speak nor make any sounds; they can show neither numbers nor letters. They can only indicate on their fingers the number of words in a phrase and which word in the order they are now showing.

## 2. AUXILIARY MATERIALS

### Auxiliary material no. 4



### Examples of secret phrases that can be used in the game

Population – 38 million
7 Neighbours
Sea Eye
Vistula River
Top Apple Exporter
Crowned White Eagle
Chicago – Second Polish city
International Chopin Piano Competition
Catholicism – Dominant Religion
Solidarity Movement
Ski Jumping, Volleyball and Football
Never Won Eurovision
Hosted Euro2012 with Ukraine
Hot Summers, Cold Winters
Shoemaker Dragonkiller
Mermaid with Shield and Sword
Dumplings with Mushrooms
Schindler’s List
All Saints’ Day
Earth Goes Round the Sun
Name Day
Home for Bison
Salt Mine
Greatest Science-fiction Writer
First Woman with Noble Prize
Young Marriages
Pizza with Ketchup
Home Alone – Christmas Tradition
Smoked Cheese
Gentlemen Kiss Ladies’ Hands
Potatoes with Everything
World’s Tallest Statue of Jesus



## 2. AUXILIARY MATERIALS

### Auxiliary material no. 5



### Stereotypes on Poland

- The film *12 Misleading stereotypes about Polish People* (ENG):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rah8WxTRac>
- A poster of the Polish plumber [http://serwer1441659.home.pl/kampaniespoleczne.pl/images/zdjecia/th\\_470/8e/zdjecie\\_20080522170448\\_620.jpg](http://serwer1441659.home.pl/kampaniespoleczne.pl/images/zdjecia/th_470/8e/zdjecie_20080522170448_620.jpg)

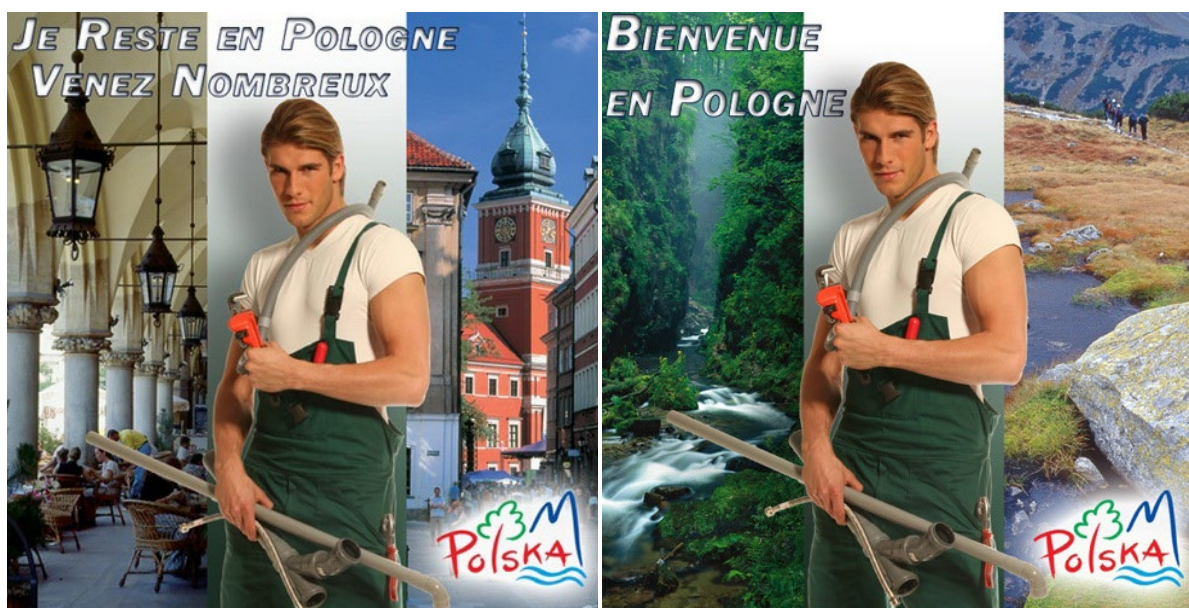


Photo: Posters of the Polish plumber / Source: [http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/kampanie,200,postrach\\_francji\\_znakomita\\_wizytowka\\_polski](http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/kampanie,200,postrach_francji_znakomita_wizytowka_polski)

## 3. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

### Educational material no.1



### Examples of secret phrases with a short commentary

#### *Population – 38 million*

According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS) there were 38 496 000 people living in Poland in 2013, yet over the past years this number has gradually been in decline. The data may be overstated as people registered in Poland yet living abroad are included in the statistics.

#### *7 Neighbours*

The neighbouring countries of Poland are: the Russian Federation, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine to the east, Czech and Slovakia to the south, and Germany to the west. Poland is situated between the Baltic Sea in the north and the Carpathian Mountains and Sudetes in the south.

#### *Sea Eye*

Sea Eye (Morskie Oko) is the largest and the most picturesque lake in the Polish Tatras. It is frequently visited by tourists due to its green water and the hostel located near here which is a great starting point for high mountain trips.

#### *Vistula River*

The Vistula is the longest river in Poland. It is over a thousand kilometres long (precisely 1047 km). It flows through many important cities and towns in Poland, for example through Krakow, Sandomierz, Kazimierz Dolny, Puławy, Warsaw, and Gdańsk.

#### *Top Apple Exporter*

In 2012/2013 Poland was ahead of China and became the largest exporter of apples, selling 1.2 billion tons. However, due to an embargo imposed by Russia in 2014, the export of this product has slightly decreased. Poland is still in the world's top and the plans to sell apples to new countries (e.g. Vietnam) and the increase in sales to other countries (e. g. Belarus) make forecasts very optimistic.

#### *Crowned White Eagle*

The White Eagle is the National Emblem of the Republic of Poland. This symbol is linked with many legends and stories – the oldest date back to the times of Polans and the legendary founder of their settlement – Lech.

#### *Chicago – Second Polish city*

Chicago is inhabited by more than one million Americans of Polish origin, a quarter of whom speak Polish every day. It is estimated that around 10 million people of Polish origin live in the entire United States. The first Poles started arriving in America in the 17th century, although the biggest wave of migration occurred at the beginning of the 20th century.

### 3. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

#### ***International Chopin Piano Competition***

The International Chopin Piano Competition is one of the most prestigious competitions in the world. It is held every 5 years. 2015 marked its 17th birthday. The contestants perform only the works of the great Polish composer Fryderyk Chopin.

#### ***Catholicism – Dominant Religion***

According to the Central Statistical Office of 2012, 87% of people living in Poland are Roman Catholics. These people are mainly baptised during a Latin rite. However, over the last 30 years the number of people attending Sunday Mass has gradually declined.

#### ***Solidarity Movement***

This trade union which was formed in 1980 to defend the rights of workers significantly contributed to the subsequent transformation of the Polish political system. The co-founder and the first leader of “Solidarity” – Lech Wałęsa in 1983 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and in the years 1990-1995 served as President of Poland.

#### ***Ski Jumping, Volleyball and Football***

Poles like watching sports competitions. The following three disciplines in recent years have gained in popularity due to the successes of Polish sportsmen. Adam Małysz and Kamil Stoch became world icons of ski jumping and an inspiration for many Poles. In 2014, Poland won the title of World Champions in volleyball. Poles also follow the brilliant career of Polish footballer Robert Lewandowski who currently plays for Bayern Munich.



Photo: Corpus Christi in Łowicz / Mariusz Cieszewski / Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland - Flickr.com

### 3. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

#### ***Never Won Eurovision***

Edyta Górniak was very close to winning the Eurovision Song Contest in 1994 as she came second. The song was performed in Polish and was the nation's debut appearance in this contest. Maybe there is a chance to win in 2016 in Sweden?

#### ***Hosted Euro2012 with Ukraine***

In 2012 Poland, together with Ukraine, organised the UEFA European Championship. In Poland, the matches were held in Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań and Gdańsk. Euro 2012 was a great Polish organisational success. Regrettably, this success did not translate into sport results and our team did not qualify from their group.

#### ***Hot Summers, Cold Winters***

Poland is known for hot summer and severe winters. In the summer the average air temperature ranges between 16.5°C and 20°C and in the winter between -6°C and 0°C. However, in the summer, especially in central Poland it often exceeds +30°C and in the winter is less than -10°C. In Poland there are all four seasons.

#### ***Shoemaker Dragonkiller***

Shoemaker Dragonkiller (Szewczyk Dratewka) is a hero who, as a Krakow legend has it, defeated an evil dragon by proffering him a sulphur-filled sheep. When the dragon devoured it, he was so thirsty that he had to drink water from the Vistula till he... burst.

#### ***Mermaid with Shield and Sword***

The mermaid – half-woman, half-fish – since 1596 has been the symbol of Warsaw, the capital of Poland. The legend has it that she was a sister of the mermaid of Copenhagen. She was imprisoned by a greedy fisherman and freed by the son of the captor whom she promised to defend. This explains the sword and a shield held by the mermaid.

#### ***Dumplings with Mushrooms***

Dumplings (Pierogi) is one of the favourite dishes of Poles. There are many types of pierogi. Often pierogi with mushrooms are served with cabbage. The most popular ones are the so-called Ruthenian pierogi stuffed with mashed potato, cottage cheese and onion.

#### ***Schindler's List***

This film directed by Steven Spielberg, awarded seven Oscars, was made in Krakow. It tells the fact-based story of a German entrepreneur Oskar Schindler who during the World War II saved the lives of 1,000 Jews. Presently, one of the most frequently visited museums is Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory, which was rented by the hero of the film.

#### ***All Saints' Day***

All Saints' Day is celebrated in Poland on the 1st November. On this day, Poles light candles to warm the souls of the dead and bring flowers to the graves of their loved ones. It is a public holiday. The 2nd November is All Souls' Day when those who passed away are remembered and prayed for. Often on this day concerts, exhibitions and performances are organised.

### 3. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

#### ***Earth Goes Round the Sun***

Nicolas Copernicus, a Polish astronomer and author of the work *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* proved that the Earth revolves around the Sun. Due to this discovery the so-called Copernican Revolution took place. The scholar was born in Toruń, a city famous for its delicious gingerbread produced by the company named in his honour.

#### ***Name Day***

In Poland, name days are often lavishly celebrated, especially among the older generation who celebrate this day more enthusiastically than a birthday. Each day has a name assigned to it (often the names of Saints or the Blessed) and people with this name celebrate his or her day.

#### ***Home for Bison***

In 2013 Poland was home to 1377 bison. Nearly a half of them could be seen in the Białowieża Forest in the north-eastern part of Poland. The image of this animal is found on the label of one of the worlds' most recognisable Polish export products – Żubrówka vodka.



Photo: Winter in Poland, Pilsko Mountain / Mariusz Cieszewski / Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland - Flickr.com

### 3. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

#### ***Salt Mine***

The 700-year-old Wieliczka Salt Mine is the longest-standing Polish company. The Mine is visited by over a million tourists annually. This is one of the most valuable Polish world-class monuments. It was inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage as one of the first of twelve places.

#### ***Greatest Science-fiction Writer***

Stanisław Lem is the most famous Polish science-fiction writer. He was a doctor, futurologist and philosopher. His works such as *Solaris*, *Tales of Pirx the Pilot* or *The Man from Mars* became an inspiration for many artists of the contemporary world.

#### ***First Woman with Noble Prize***

Maria Skłodowska-Curie, a Polish physicist and chemist was the first woman in history to win the Nobel Prize. What is interesting, she won the Prize twice. She discovered two elements: polonium and radium. Polonium was named in honour of Poland which at that time (the year 1898) was under occupation.

#### ***Young Marriages***

According to statistical data, Poles are the youngest newlyweds in the European Union. On average, they marry for the first time at the age of 29. To compare, the Swedes marry at an average age of 36.

#### ***Pizza with Ketchup***

Poles like eating pizza with ketchup and it is often served in restaurants in such a form, which is always criticised by the Italians. In Poland it is believed that the more components on a pizza the better. The Italians, however, say that the maximum permitted number of components on a pizza is 5.

#### ***Home Alone – Christmas Tradition***

Christmas without Kevin is no Christmas – as the old Polish maxim goes. Over Christmas, the Poles love to watch Christmas films together with their family and *Home Alone* is their favourite. Polish productions (e. g. *Letters to Santa*) try to catch up with Kevin in terms of holiday viewership rankings – as yet without success.

#### ***Smoked Cheese***

Smoked Cheese (Oscypek) is a traditional Polish sheep's milk cheese from the mountain regions, especially Podhale. Oscypek is a Polish regional product, protected by EU law. In Slovakia a similar cheese Oštiepok is produced, which despite its many similarities and a history shared with Oscypek, is considered to be a separate regional product.

#### ***Gentlemen Kiss Ladies' Hands***

Traditionally in Poland a man greets a woman by kissing her hand. This custom is popular especially among the older generation. Young people prefer kissing on the cheek or hugging. Men greet each other by shaking their hands.

### 3. EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

#### ***Potatoes with Everything***

The Poles love potatoes of every kind (fried, boiled, baked, in the form of potato dumplings) and eat them quite often. However, not everyone knows that they only became popular in Poland in the 17th century. Potato pancakes are one of Poland's traditional dishes.

#### ***World's Tallest Statue of Jesus***

The tallest Statue of Jesus Christ in the world is not in Brazil but actually in Świebodzin in Western Poland. The Figure of Christ the King was completed in 2010. The total height of the Monument is 36 meters.

*Development of texts: Marzena Ples*



Photo: Shepherd's Trail – Oscypek, smoked cheese, Pieniny Mountains, southern Poland / Mariusz Cieszewski / Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland - Flickr.com

## 4. THE PROPOSED LITERATURE AND FILMS

### Websites:

- #Polska – Official Promotional Website (PL, EN): <http://www.polska.pl/en/>
- Polish National Tourist Office (PL, EN, RU): <http://www.poland.travel/en/>

### Books:

- *Facts about Poland: Everything you wanted to know about Poland but were afraid to ask*, Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, Warsaw 2014: [http://www.paiz.gov.pl/files/?id\\_plik=24519](http://www.paiz.gov.pl/files/?id_plik=24519)
- *This is Poland*, Central Statistical Office of Poland, Warsaw 2011: [http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/as\\_this\\_is\\_poland\(1\).pdf](http://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/as_this_is_poland(1).pdf)
- *About Polska – an insider guide for outsiders*, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Warsaw 2012: <http://www.brukselaue.msz.gov.pl/resource/e672b972-4339-49ed-959c-c9e2a0fa3437>

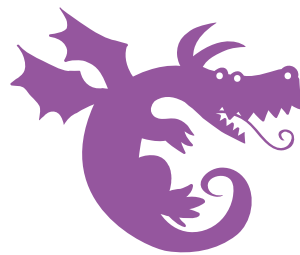
### Films:

- *Get to know about Poland: General Information*  
(EN): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTtGkwc3fml>  
(RU): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZIGelZKumA>
- *Poland – come and find your story* (EN): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1egt\\_zl73g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1egt_zl73g)
- *Polska? Tak!* (EN): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM-p8PGn3CI&list=PLbacxjg4nkHfff2pnRtVvPmP6L3b1QMzi&index=11>
- *Polska – where the unbelievable happens* (EN): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2APgLhXK3UA&feature=youtu.be>
- *Poland is beautiful*: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qbu\\_FRg8vuU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qbu_FRg8vuU)
- *Польша – приезжай и найди свою историю* (RU): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeovB8LSCaU&index=6&list=PLD1FF00C63925A36E>
- *Colors of Poland* (EN): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fEhBSXDnmc>





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