



Committee Members



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Marek Konopka (PO)



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(PO) Civic Platform
(PiS) Law and Justice
(N) unaffiliated

The Committee's principal role is to maintain ties with the Polish Diaspora (Polonia) and to monitor the legal situation of Poles and people of Polish descent living abroad. It initiates and coordinates cooperation between Polish communities around the world, and protects Polish cultural and historical heritage worldwide.

Like other Senate committees, the Emigration Affairs and Contacts with Poles Abroad Committee, within its remit, examines the Budget Act and conveys its opinion to the Budget and Public Finance Committee.

The Emigration Affairs and Contacts with Poles Abroad Committee is one of 16 standing committees in the 7th Senate (2007-2011).

Dramatic events that marked the last 200 years of the Polish history: the partitions of Poland, national uprisings, economic difficulties, and two World Wars resulted in the formation of the Polish Diaspora, estimated at nearly 20 million and considered one of the largest in the world. In continuing the tradition of the Senate of the Second Polish Republic (1922-1939), and also as a token of gratitude to the Polish émigré community for its contribution to the recovery of independence by Poland in 1989, the restored Senate of the Third Republic of Poland took on the special responsibility of overseeing Polonia's affairs.

The Committee was established at the first session of the Senate in 1989. In its early days, the Committee focused on establishing relations with representatives of the largest Polish communities abroad. The Committee was particularly active in providing assistance to Poles living in neighbouring countries outside the eastern border of Poland, who often suffer from poor economic conditions. On behalf of the Senate, the Committee together with the Marshal of the Senate, assisted by the Polish Communities Abroad Office, exercise patronage over the Polish Diaspora.

The Committee in the Restored Senate

(1989-2007)

The main thrust of the Committee's activities is to deliver opinions on proposed projects, aimed at supporting the Polish Diaspora. The Committee acts in accordance with the Presidium of the Senate Resolution, which sets out the areas for action for Polonia communities and specifies the list of priority grants.

Since 2007, the Chancellery of the Senate has devoted nearly half of the yearly budget to projects in the field of assistance for Polonia and Polish communities abroad. The funds are channelled through Polish non-governmental organisations, among which the leading role belongs to the "Polish Community" Association, established in 1990 upon the initiative of Andrzej Stelmachowski, the Marshal of the 1st term Senate, as well as the Foundations of "Aid to Poles in the East" and "Semper Polonia". The Senate aid is earmarked to support Polish education abroad and the mission of Polonia organisations, as well as investment projects, such as renovation and construction of Polish schools and centres.

Unlike other Senate committees, the Emigration Affairs and Contacts with Poles Abroad Committee hardly ever performs legislative functions. However, it can boast of several legislative achievements in the domain of the cooperation with the Polish Diaspora, including three legislative proposals: the Repatriation Bill, the Bill on Polish Citizenship and the Polish Ethnicity Card.

The Committee also submitted the Bill on Proclaiming 2 May the Day of Polish Diaspora and Poles Living Abroad, as a recognition of the Polish community achievements in a variety of fields, as a tribute to its contribution to the restoration of Poland's independence and as a symbol of its bond with homeland.

In 2002, due to the Committee's involvement, the Polonia Consultative Council, an advisory and consultative body at the Marshal of the Senate, was set up.

Non-legislative Activities

The Committee monitors the situation of the Polish community around the world and undertakes a variety of projects designed to provide assistance to Poles living abroad.

The nature of the Committee's work requires direct contacts with representatives of the Diaspora, therefore the Committee members often participate in Polonia's meetings, cultural events and anniversary celebrations both at home and abroad.

The Committee's meetings are attended by Government officials and NGO representatives. The topics explored include: supporting Polish community organisations and communities, fostering education and culture, protecting national heritage abroad, forming civic attitudes, promoting Poland, the Polish language and culture, and offering financial assistance to the Polish communities who are most in need.

The Committee has expressed a particular interest in the situation of Poles living in Germany, and Polish minorities in Belarus and Lithuania. Upon the Committee's initiative, the working group on Polish minority in Belarus has been functioning in the Senate since 2006.

The committee initiates numerous debates, conferences and exhibitions. Just one example of these events was the conference "Economic Migration from Poland to other EU Member States - a Challenge for the State", held under the auspices of the Marshal of the Senate, which focused on the phenomenon of the so-called "new emigration".

The Committee, in partnership with the Polish Olympic Committee, has also offered seminars on the role of sport and tourism among Polish communities abroad. Other examples of the committee's activity are the exhibitions, such as the archives of the emigration, "The USA in Polish Historiography and Journalism (1764-1919)", "The Stefan Batory University in Vilnius (1919-1939)", and "The Kosciuszko Foundation - the American Centre of Polish Culture".

In addition, the Committee Members take part in meetings organised by the Polonia Consultative Council at the Marshal of the Senate, as well as in meetings of the Advisory Group on Economic Migration of Polish Citizens to the EU Member States.