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## **Academic Cooperation Between Poland and Germany – Example of Collegium Polonicum as a Joint Institution of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder)**

**Abstract:** In the EU, advanced international cooperation is a characteristic feature of relations between neighbouring states. The idea behind cross-border cooperation spreads into various fields, including daily life, common programmes, priorities, and strategies. The primary motives behind it include the will to communicate with your neighbours, overcome hostility and prejudice between the two co-existing nations, enhance democracy and develop local administration structures, overcome isolation and remoteness, and quickly merge with the integrated Europe. The article discusses cross-border cooperation between universities in Poland and Germany, with particular attention paid to cooperation taking place between neighbouring cities of Ślubice, Poland, and Frankfurt (Oder), Germany. However, before the cross-border cooperation is addressed, the article elaborates on a broader context.

**Key words:** cross-border cooperation, academic institution, academic cooperation, universities, Collegium Polonicum, Polish-German borderland

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### **Introduction**

Contemporary international relations in Europe are based on integration processes which have led to revolutionary shifts in economy, finance and technology, as well as changes in culture, society, and politics. The constantly developing integration and interdependencies between individual states cause their borders to fade. This phenomenon is particularly visible among states that signed the *Schengen Treaty*, a treaty which put an end to border control on their borders.

Advanced international cooperation is a characteristic feature of relations between neighbouring states. The idea behind cross-border co-

operation spreads into various fields, including daily life, common programmes, priorities, and strategies. The primary motives behind it include the will to communicate with your neighbours, overcome hostility and prejudice between the two co-existing nations, enhance democracy and develop local administration structures, overcome isolation and remoteness, and quickly merge with the integrated Europe. The article discusses cross-border cooperation between universities in Poland and Germany, with particular attention paid to cooperation taking place between neighbouring cities of Słubice, Poland, and Frankfurt (Oder), Germany. However, before the cross-border cooperation is addressed, the article elaborates on a broader context.

In a longer perspective, individual cities and societies are not able to resist those processes, which is clearly visible in towns located on the border between Poland and Germany, e.g. Słubice – on the Polish side, and Frankfurt (Oder) – on the German side. The two cities promote cooperation between local authorities and many other institutions operating in such areas as culture, education and sport. One of important components of the process is cross-border collaboration between their universities, through a joint institution known as Collegium Polonicum.

The article discusses cross-border cooperation between universities in Poland and Germany, with particular attention paid to cooperation taking place between neighbouring cities of Słubice, Poland, and Frankfurt (Oder), Germany. However, before the cross-border cooperation is addressed, the article elaborates on a broader context.

### **Cross-border cooperation**

It is worth mentioning that the process of statutory transformation and multiple shifts of 1990s have allowed Poland to develop the relationship with Germany based on new principles. From the historical point of view, Poland's relations with Germany are very complex. The symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall and revision of mutual prejudice constitute a turning point in relations between Poland and Germany and a chance to overcome stereotypes. Cross-border cooperation, which the countries successfully run since the fall of communism, is a visible effect of the "iron curtain" being eliminated and European integration. The cross-border cooperation with Germany in general, and Brandenburg, Saxony and Berlin in particular, is of a key significance for the region. Brandenburg and Lubuskie Voivodeship enjoy

perfect conditions to promote Polish-German cooperation. The cooperation with Brandenburg is based on a partnership that involves regional and local governments, the central government, economic bodies and institutions, social organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations.

The cross-border cooperation between the Lubuskie Voivodeship and the Land of Brandenburg takes various forms. While discussing cooperation on the western border between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany, it should be noticed that the cooperation can be divided into two stages: before and after Poland's accession to the EU. In those two periods, the cooperation between Poland and Germany depended on various factors and had different forms. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the fields of cooperation are still evolving and expanding. In general, we can divide them into three categories and three levels of mutual undertakings. We can distinguish cross-border activity on the national level (supervised by central governments of the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany). The second level is regional. Consequently, decisions about the form of cooperation are made by neighbouring regions. The third and the lowest level of cooperation is the local government. In this case, international cooperation is triggered off by local authorities, and they actually decide about their mutual undertakings.

As it has been already mentioned, the cross-border cooperation between universities is one of important areas of cooperation involving border regions. Despite relatively positive image of university cooperation at the border between Poland and Germany, there are numerous obstacles that emerge in various projects. According to Krzysztof Wojciechowski, cross-border cooperation between universities often suffers from legal limitations which exist on both sides of the border. Other obstacles include differences in adopted models of academic institutions, inconsistencies within cross-cultural dialogue and partnership, as well as issues that arise in the course of cooperation between unequal partners (Wojciechowski, 2007, p. 10). In its further part, the article addresses selected aspects which characterize cross-border cooperation between universities.

### **Academic cross-border cooperation. The case of Collegium Polonicum in Słubice**

Besides several other high schools in Brandenburg and Lubuskie Voivodeship (Bielawska, 2009, p. 187), Collegium Polonicum is the most

prominent symbol of academic cooperation on the border between Poland and Germany and it is often perceived as an example of a local centre that develops competence in Europe (Duda, 2007, p. 77).

This institution created by Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań and the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) is probably the most visible outcome of academic cooperation on the border between Poland and Germany.

The idea of creating Collegium Polonicum emerged from the “Mutual Statement on Cooperation”, signed on 6 September 1991 in the European University Viadrina by Robert Głębocki, the Polish Minister of Education, and Hinrich Enderlein, the Brandenburg’s Minister of Science, Research and Culture. In December the same year, the Advisory Council adopted a resolution on establishing Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice.

In May 1992, Adam Mickiewicz University adopted a resolution on establishing Collegium Polonicum. In 1994, the then rectors of UAM and EUV signed a mutual statement, which listed obligations of both parties and Collegium Polonicum’s profile of operation.

Legal framework for the Polish-German academic institution included an international agreement (Agreement between Polish Minister...) on Collegium Polonicum, which was concluded on 2 October 2002 between Polish Ministry of National Education and Sport and the Ministry of Science, Research and Culture of the Federal State of Brandenburg (*Das Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur des Landes Brandenburg*) (Musiał-Karg, 2009, p. 250). The agreement defines Collegium as a joint, cross-border academic and research centre. It defines rights and obligations of both parties and requests the governments of Poland and Brandenburg to provide financial contribution. The responsibility for development of the institution is vested in the Permanent Commission of Rectors (Bielawska, 2009, p. 189).

It should be mentioned that one of the obstacles to establish Collegium Polonicum was the existence of two separate legal regimes. Since Germany is a federal state, all decisions had to be made by the authorities of Brandenburg and a ministry in Poland. It took 7 years of discussions to establish the legal basis for Collegium Polonicum. Meanwhile, between the laying the foundation stone for CP in 1992 and the conclusion of the agreement, both parties invested about 40 million euro in this project. It was all possible due to favourable political climate, alignment of interests between Poland and Germany before the enlargement of the European Union, as well as the principle of *fair play* (compromised several times

which posed a threat of the cooperation being ceased) (Wojciechowski, 2007, p. 11). As Krzysztof Wojciechowski (the Collegium Polonicum administrative director) aptly notices, “once you are ready to take some risk, it is possible to work miracles in areas that are not covered by legal regulations” (Wojciechowski, 2007, p. 11). It should also be mentioned that premises for Collegium Polonicum were made available by the local government of Słubice (Musiał-Karg, 2009, p. 250). Therefore, the cooperation between the local government of Słubice, the federal authorities of Brandenburg, and the Polish central government finally resulted in the establishing of this cross-border institution.

In 1994–2000, Adam Mickiewicz University received funds to finance the construction of Collegium Polonicum. The funding came from various sources. About 65% of all funds came from the central budget of the Republic of Poland, 25% from the European Phare Programme, while 10% from the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation. Additionally, a significant contribution came from the European University Viadrina which resorted to funding from the INTERREG programme. From the perspective of Polish-German cooperation, it is crucial that Collegium Polonicum was built thanks to financial support of the Phare CBC Programme and its part of the “human resources” priority. According to a document prepared by the Marshal Office of the Lubuskie Voivodeship entitled *Investment co-financed from the Phare CBC Programme in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 1994–1999*, the total value of projects on human resources implemented in the voivodeship amounted to 20.1 million euro. From among ten tasks, the largest amount (16 million euro in total) was allocated to the construction of Collegium Polonicum, the joint centre of the Polish and German universities. The investment brought to life a valuable institution with a primary goal to provide young people with higher education (Collegium Polonicum).

Hence, Collegium Polonicum constitutes a new form of cross-border cooperation in the field of scientific research and didactics. The institution remains a joint responsibility of the Republic of Poland and the Federal State of Brandenburg (as Germany is a federal state). Collegium Polonicum is a common centre for research and development established by the two partner universities: Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (UAM) and the European University Viadrina (UEV) in Frankfurt (Oder).

The primary objective of Collegium Polonicum is to promote scientific and cultural cooperation between Poland and Germany. With the view of Europe’s enlargement, the founders of Collegium Polonicum thought

of creating a meeting space for students and lecturers from the whole continent. The idea behind Collegium Polonicum is based on regular studies and research programmes in UAM and UEV. This means that Collegium Polonicum offers courses under the auspices of one or both universities. Research and courses are developed in the following fields: comparative research of legal and constitutions systems of Western and Central and Eastern Europe; Polish language and Polish culture; transformation processes in Central European societies; intercultural communication; various dimensions of Polish-German border development in the context of EU's enlargement; historical relations between Poland and Germany; and environmental protection and landscape development in the Oder basin.

Collegium Polonicum is also a conference centre. The institution organizes popular science events, which aim at improving and strengthening relations between Poland and Germany (*Fragments of memorandum*). Furthermore, Collegium Polonicum is the only institution located in the Ślubice County, which provides access to higher education.

Collegium Polonicum offers international studies. Almost 30% of its students are foreigners. In fact, the university is a scientific meeting place for students and lecturers from all over the world. Depending on their field of study, graduates receive a Polish and/or a German diploma or a joint UAM/Viadrina diploma. This opens new career opportunities. Additionally, it helps to meet specific needs of the region in terms of language courses, specialist courses, and skills training. The most popular "cross-border" study offered in Collegium Polonicum is Master Studies on German and Polish Law.

The Faculty of Law and Administration at UAM together with the Faculty of Law at UEV offer five-year and one-cycle master studies in the field of law (official name at the UEV: *Magister des Rechts*). The programme of studies has been developed by the UAM's Law and Administration Faculty Council in cooperation with the EUV's Law Faculty Council. The Polish part of the study programme is provided by professors from Poznań and lectures take place at Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice (*Prawo studia stacjonarne...*).

As studies differ in Poland and Germany, the programme has been developed according to a hybrid structure that includes a selection of Polish principal subjects which are indispensable to learn the Polish law, as well as lectures on international law, European law, commercial law, securities law, and logic provided by scholars from University Viadrina. At the same time, those subjects are supplementary for students of the German

Law. This reflects years of experience in providing law studies at the both universities (Bielawska, 2009, pp. 192–196).

During a five-year education programme, students gain experience in Poland and Germany by attending classes and internships organized by both universities (*Prawo studia stacjonarne...*). This study has been a complete novelty in terms of its programme and the university's policy. There is no other university in the region which provides the possibility to study such two courses at the same time. The bilingual studies on legal systems of both EU member states combine elements of German and Polish law and provide thorough education in the European law. The European University Viadrina is by far the only university which allows students of law to obtain Polish and German diplomas of higher education at the same time, as well as two German and one Polish diploma.

However, it is not possible to study the Polish law at Collegium Polonicum only. This course of study is the most advanced example of Polish-German cross-border cooperation at Collegium Polonicum (Bielawska, 2009, pp. 192–196).

In the 2014/2015 academic year, a new field of study was created, namely international relations (specialization: Regional and Trans-Border Cooperation). The study was part of an international project financed by the National Centre for Research and Development, entitled “AMU – transnational and interdisciplinary solutions of the 21st century” (project co-financed by the European Union from the European Social Fund).

Being a recent outcome of the trans-border cooperation, MA studies have been established in cooperation with the Department of European Culture Studies of European University Viadrina. It is a pilot programme with thirty students from Poland, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Ukraine, Slovakia and Kazakhstan. Its graduates will certainly be prepared to promote the idea of cross-border cooperation and work for organisations and institutions that facilitate such cooperation. Apart from course participants, the course benefits societies and states as it serves the following purposes:

- it shortens the distance by building ‘grass root’ bonds;
- it eliminates stereotypes and prejudices which are there as people do not know their counterparts across the border;
- it establishes economic cooperation whose beneficial outcomes facilitate development of border areas and, more importantly, make it possible to meet citizens' needs at a higher level;

- it creates pressure groups that influence state authorities and European Union institutions, with the purpose to take care of local community interests.

One of major obstacles during the first stages of the project was that young people perceived Słubice and Frankfurt as a periphery. Consequently, limited interest in the course prevented to continue it in the following academic year. Another difficulty was the financing of the studies (Musiał-Karg, Wallas, 2015, p. 14).

Another important undertaking implemented as part of cooperation between the universities of Poznań and Frankfurt (Oder) is the Polish-German Research Institute (PNIB) at Collegium Polonicum in Słubice (in German: Deutsch-Polnisches Forschungsinstitut (DPFI) am Collegium Polonicum in Słubice). The Institute is a joint initiative of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). The Institute was established on 19 October 2012 as a scientific and research unit employing specialists, professors and doctors representing various disciplines: legal sciences, culture studies, linguistics, Slavic studies, Polish philology, German philology, history of art, theology, chemistry and biology. The Polish-German Research Institute was established to combine scientific activity at both universities and efficiently support transfer of knowledge about Polish and German national and international issues.

The scientific and research profile of the Institute can be described as interdisciplinary as it combines research from various fields and scientific disciplines. The primary scientific activity is manifested through scientific projects implemented by scholars and teams of Polish and German researchers. The scope of its activity is determined by its location – primarily by academic relations between Poland and Germany.

For this reason, the Institute supports research into European integration and cooperation at frontiers. The research fields include: comparison of legal issues in Polish and German legal systems, border regions (legal, environmental and urban issues), national and trans-national cultural phenomena with particular attention paid to relations between Poland and Germany, as well as issues outside these relations, as well as social implications of political discussions in Poland and Germany after 1989.

A certain weakness of the Polish-German Research Institute is the disparity within the structure of staff. Most of them come from Poland and there are too few lecturers from European University Viadrina. However,



it should be mentioned that the PNIB personnel also includes scholars from EUV.

Yet another interesting research undertaking in Stubice and Frankfurt is the Pol-Int project implemented by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies about Poland. The project involves European University Viadrina and Collegium Polonicum. Pol-Int is financed by the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation and the Polish-German Foundation for Science. The Pol-Int online platform is supervised by an international team of young scholars representing various disciplines. Project publications are verified by an international and interdisciplinary scientific council.

The Pol-Int project (Polish-Studies. Interdisciplinary Scholarly Information and International Communication) is the first online platform which enables the exchange of knowledge, experience and contacts between specialists from various scientific disciplines. Pol-Int is an international and interdisciplinary online platform available in three languages: Polish, German and English.

The online platform promotes results of Polish interdisciplinary research in the world. The platform founders intended to support the development of contact networks and international partnerships in science. The platform provides information about institutions, projects and scientific conferences, scholarships and grants, as well as calls for papers and reports from various scientific events. Moreover, it is a perfect source of information about world's multilingual publications on studies in Poland.

The platform is designed for researchers, e.g. from such disciplines as history, cultural studies, linguistics, literature, economics, law, political science, sociology, anthropology, architecture and art history, musicology, theatre and film studies, philosophy, gender studies and geography. Its website presents information about scientific editors and reviewers from Poland, Germany, Japan, Great Britain, United States, Italy, Austria, Netherlands and other countries. The quality of content published is guaranteed by the International and Interdisciplinary Scientific Council (Pol-Int).

Currently, an interesting international course of study is Polish Studies is a joint course offered by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). Polish Studies is the first degree course of a general academic profile. The course takes 3 years (6 semesters) and it is designed for all people interested in per-

fecting their Polish language skills and developing knowledge about Polish literature and history. Polish Studies is a course jointly implemented by the Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań (AMU) and European University Viadrina Frankfurt (EUV). After they fulfil requirements of the study programme, graduates receive two diplomas, one from AMU and one from EUV.

There are plans to launch a twin MA course of German Studies to start in the 2023/2024 academic year following an approval by the Ministry of Education. German Studies is an innovative course implemented in cooperation between the Institute of German Philology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, and the Department of Cultural Studies, European University Viadrina (EUV) in Frankfurt (Oder). The language of instruction is German and English and some classes are provided online. The knowledge and language competences acquired allow graduates of the course to take the DSH examination, which enables them to study at universities in Germany. This enable graduates to continue their studies at MA courses offered by German universities.

New courses offered at Collegium Polonicum include the Master of Digital Entrepreneurship (MoDE). It is an innovative study programme that provides students with theoretical and methodical knowledge about digitalization from the point of view of law, economics, and social and computer sciences. MoDE is offered by the European New School of Digital Studies (ENS), a joint venture of European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) and Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań. The ENS goal is to conduct research and offer study programmes that help to meet challenges and utilise opportunities of the digital transformation. It is based on Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice, Poland, a renowned scientific institution on the German-Polish border. The four-semester programme is held in English and consists of six modules. The MoDE includes an introduction to the fundamentals of digitalization and practical skills in project management and business. The MoDE is a project-based study programme that offers knowledge and skills one need to successfully work on individual as well as group projects. With the set of theoretical and practical methods, course participants are able to develop and reflect on their own entrepreneurial solutions developed to overcome challenges of the digital transformation in Europe.

A very important educational project implemented at Collegium Polonicum is the University High School, which started in September 2018. The High School is designed for ambitious students who wish to expand

their knowledge beyond the requirements of the core curriculum while cooperating with passionate teachers. The teaching staff includes the best specialists in their disciplines, people who combine knowledge with a talent for sharing it with others. It includes research and teaching staff from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The intention is to develop students in areas they are particularly talented. Therefore, from Grade II, they have the opportunity to explore two subjects at an extended level. To this end, the High School takes part in various scientific projects for young people offered by UAM.

The High School offers education and care while helping students to grow and develop in line with their needs and abilities, with due respect to their personal dignity and freedom of opinion and religion. The cosy atmosphere promotes direct contact between students and teaching staff. The governing body for the High School is UAM and the school is involved in a close cooperation with its counterparts in Frankfurt (Oder). Students implement joint educational, sport or cultural-artistic projects. The building of Collegium Polonicum in Słubice provides excellent conditions for students as classrooms and laboratories are furnished with modern multimedia equipment.

### **Conclusions**

Collegium Polonicum can be perceived as a laboratory of cross-border cooperation between Poland and Germany on the border between the two countries. Currently, Collegium Polonicum and the border cities of Słubice and Frankfurt play an important role while promoting the idea and initiating cross-border cooperation in the field of science but not only. The cooperation between UAM and EUV in Collegium Polonicum is often seen as a model and, despite numerous difficulties in various stages of their cooperation, the university may be considered a model for Polish-German cooperation. It seems that both universities have created a unique tool that allows to make cross-border cooperation ever more intensive. This has been proven by the growing frequency of contacts and collaboration with Collegium Polonicum (e.g. through common projects and initiatives).

From its very beginning, Collegium Polonicum has aimed to integrate similar study programmes offered by the two universities and develop common Polish-German fields of study (Bielawska, 2009, pp. 212–213).

The experience and projects described above show that although can be difficult and complicated to develop academic cooperation between Poland and Germany, joint activity in favourable political and legal frameworks combined with the will to promote close cooperation may lead to interesting and unique projects, courses, and research.

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**Polsko-niemiecka współpraca akademicka  
– przykład Collegium Polonicum jako wspólnej placówki Uniwersytetu  
im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu i Uniwersytetu Europejskiego  
Viadrina we Frankfurcie nad Odrą**

**Streszczenie**

W Unii Europejskiej, zaawansowana współpraca międzynarodowa jest jedną z charakterystycznych cech sąsiadujących ze sobą państw. Idea współpracy transgranicznej obejmuje różne dziedziny, w tym życie codzienne, wspólne programy, priorytety i strategie. Główne motywy, które za nią stoją, to chęć porozumienia się z sąsiadami, przezwyciężenie wrogości i uprzedzeń między dwoma współistniejącymi narodami, wzmocnienie demokracji i rozwój lokalnych struktur administracyjnych,

przewycięzenie izolacji i oddalenia oraz szybkie połączenie się ze zintegrowaną Europą. Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy akademickiej współpracy transgranicznej między Polską a Niemcami, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem współpracy między sąsiadującymi miastami Słubice w Polsce i Frankfurt nad Odrą w Niemczech. Zanim jednak omówiona zostanie współpraca transgraniczna, artykuł prezentuje szerszy kontekst.

**Słowa kluczowe:** współpraca transgraniczna, instytucja akademicka, współpraca akademicka, uniwersytety, Collegium Polonicum, pogranicze polsko-niemieckie