

PROMOTION OF UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: AN EXPERIENCE FOR UKRAINE

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Abstract

Public diplomacy of the Republic of Poland since the beginning of XXI century became an important tool of state's foreign policy realization. This article is aimed on the analyses of multifaceted Polish public diplomacy which includes among other priority field of higher education promotion. One of the leading Poland's universities, University of Warsaw, had formed not only a brand of high level of educational services but became a world-wide famous center for science development, using most advanced technologies and instruments in the educational process. There were analyzed the promotional policy of University of Warsaw and main peculiarities of university brand creation. Main projects and initiatives of University of Warsaw in the field of promotion were presented in the current research. Main outcomes are presented in the form of recommendations to Ukrainian higher education institutions as they are only in the initial phase of promotional activities.

Key words: *public diplomacy, promotion, higher education, University of Warsaw, Poland, Ukraine*

INTRODUCTION

Current foreign policy of the Republic of Poland is realized based on the Polish Foreign Policy Strategy 2017-2021. This document covers the vision, mission, main instruments, areas and activities of foreign policy of the state. In 2001, Poland started first steps in promoting its state around the globe. Those actions were connected with the aspirations to join the European Union (EU). Thereby, spread of information about Poland, its culture and traditions reached plenty of countries, especially those, which had already been member-states of EU. At that time the understanding of

public diplomacy was limited to the spread of expedient positive information about Poland among the target audiences in foreign states. Such interpretation, as some of the scholars may argue, is close to propaganda. In some point, the concept of “public diplomacy” and “propaganda” are very similar. Both of the concepts have the main aim to influence foreign audience, but the core value of public diplomacy, comparing it to propaganda, is a long term activity with specificity to analyze how our state is perceived (it is important to listen to such a feedback from foreign audiences). Current understanding as well as a process of public diplomacy implementation in Poland is actually based on the principle – our aim is not only to convince foreign audience in a target state to have positive opinion about the country, but to understand the “psychology” of audience in a foreign state. Such an understanding helps to “win hearts and minds” of people in foreign state [Nye Jr 2008: 94].

Even taking into account that the concept of public diplomacy is not a new one, still the theoretical and methodological background is limited in Poland. Practical aspects of Polish public diplomacy are presented by numerous scholars, but theory and methodology is based on American approach. It should be mentioned that an emergence of public diplomacy as a theoretical and practical concept had appeared in United States of America in the middle of XX century. The beginning of XXI century with intensive globalization processes gave an impetus to “new public diplomacy”. New approaches to solving global problems required local actions based on people-to-people contacts. The concept of new public diplomacy was based on the same idea of influencing foreign audiences, but with more wide range of instruments. Since that time there was observed a spread of science, sport, development, digital, historical diplomacy etc. Poland as well is actively developing practically all areas of new public diplomacy. Among them the leading positions are in cultural and historical diplomacy. Those two fields are the most advanced, especially, as regards promotion of Polish culture, traditions, values, language, presentation of rich Polish history among target foreign audiences. But less attention is dedicated to the study of Polish science diplomacy as a part of state’s public diplomacy course. Science diplomacy lies in the sphere of scientific cooperation between states and non-state actors (universities, individuals, NGOs, civil society groups). The main aim is to influence elites of the foreign state. Through main activities used under science diplomacy are: international students or/and academic staff exchanges and mobility; providing grants for studying and research, etc. In the frameworks of science diplomacy, a special role is given to promotion of its higher education.

During recent years Polish higher education has formed its own brand. This statement is confirmed by a growing number of international students from all over the world, and particularly, from former Soviet Union states. “In the academic year 2017/2018, 37 829 Ukrainians and 6044 Belarusians were studying in Poland” [Study in Poland 2018].

High quality of education is not only the reasons, why youth chose to study in Poland. Quite important here is a complex and multilevel promotion of Polish higher education abroad. Such an activity is realized by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, group of governmental and non-governmental structures and, of course, by universities themselves. University of Warsaw is one of the leading higher education institutions not only in Poland, but in Eastern Europe as well. High level of promotional activities realized by University of Warsaw depends on the complex of measure that are undertaken by university

administration and each of its faculties/institutions as well. Understanding the system of promotion of University of Warsaw may serve as a good example for most of the Eastern European states, as well for Ukraine.

1. PROMOTIONAL POLICY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

The Royal University of Warsaw (currently, the University of Warsaw) was founded “by a decree issued on 19 November 1816 by Tsar Alexander I”. There were launched five faculties: Faculty of Law and Administration, Medicine, Philosophy, Theology and Arts and Humanities [University of Warsaw 2019]. During its long history of challenges, but with constant focus on improving, nowadays it is the largest university in Poland and one of the best research centers in the European Union.

In the beginning of 1990th the process of higher education internationalization started in Poland. First educational programs in English were created in main universities of Poland, considering the University of Warsaw [Pabian 2008]. Those actions contributed to the growth of foreign students and creation of the brand of universities. Meanwhile, EU actively involved in the process of EU higher education internationalization. A lot of scientific and educational programmes were initiated with the aim to form a positive and favorable image of EU to students and teachers all over the world. Among most known programmes was Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies (Tempus Programme). This programme was aimed on the promotion of “institutional cooperation between the EU and Partner Countries and focused on the reform and modernization of higher education systems in the Partner Countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region” [Tempus Programme 2013]. It should be mentioned that the success of Tempus Programme was “mainly thanks to its soft convergence approach, it is perceived as beneficial for both sides, and to a certain extent is able to avoid apparent asymmetrical relationships” [Botonero 2013: 24].

Poland has joint Tempus Programme from its very beginning. Programme resources allowed Polish universities to purchase computer equipment and open a network of Tempus offices in several universities. An experience and international contacts gained under the Tempus Programme had helped Polish universities enter the international market for educational services and offer their own educational opportunities for foreign students.

Another programme that highly influenced the way of teaching at universities and transformed approaches to studying process was a student exchange program – Erasmus. Since 1987 its main aim has been to develop international cooperation between universities. Poland joined this programme in 1998, but an active participation of Polish universities in this initiative started in 2004, since Poland became a member of EU.

The promotion of EU higher education gave an impetus to “a value-based global governance model, and has involved a close interaction of actors in the milieu of high politics and academia” [Botonero 2013: 2]. There was created the brand of European education as one of the most open to foreign students and academic staff exchanges, trainings, studies, etc. EU was using its higher education as an instrument of soft power, spreading its culture, science and education with the help of different programmes around the world. Proving this fact there was an initiative of the European Commission in 2004 to create an Erasmus Mundus Programme. It was

aimed “to strengthen European cooperation and international ties in higher education by supporting high-quality master’s courses and encouraging exchanges between students and academics from all over the world and the European Union... as well as to restore Europe to a leading position on the international university scene” [European Commission 2018].

University of Warsaw was one of the first in Poland that started actively to participate in Tempus, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus programmes and many other initiatives that were directed on sharing experience in the spheres of education and science, promotion of student’s exchange and raising the level of educational services as well as in Poland and in EU. Also an understanding of necessity of University’s brand policy creation helped open important departments within the administration.

One of the main structures in University of Warsaw that is responsible for the promotional activities and university brand is the Office for Promotion. This Office is engaged in organization of different promotional events and ceremonies. Most known of them are Open Day of University of Warsaw or Picnic for employees of this university. What is important to mention that besides promotional activities, this Office is carrying out advertising campaigns as regards university image, recruiting and post-graduate studies. Main instruments that are used to spread information about University of Warsaw are traditional and social media. Thereby, required messages are being disseminated through newspapers, radio, via profiles on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Linked In. The Office for Promotion is also responsible for distribution of promotional materials, including publications, clothing and different gadgets via University online brand shop. This structure assists in holding significant events at different faculties of the university and provides digital support as needed [Biuro promocji 2019].

Another important structure within the University of Warsaw is the International Relations Office. In common with different organizations and foreign universities this Office is responsible for organization or co-organization of events, meetings and visits of special guests to the University [International Relations Office, 2019]. The International Relations Office is involved in the whole process dedicated to the organization of the visits of delegations from foreign universities and creation of favorable conditions for the discussion of future cooperation with university. This may include presentation or getting acquaintance with the best university achievements, study tour in the main campus of university and library, organization of a thematic conference or concert. For example, during 3-7 June 2019 the International Relations Office organized “Cross-cultural communication. Resolving conflicts in an intercultural community”. This event under International Staff Training Week gathered more than 29 participants from 20 countries [International Relations Office 2019]. Sharing experience was one of the main aims of this event. It helps develop a platform for mutual understanding and build people-to-people cooperation that is actually a core value of public diplomacy.

The next peculiarity, not only of University of Warsaw and its International Relations Office, but of most world prestigious universities in the world – is a series of introductory meetings for international students. Such meetings are organized for short term students, for example participants of Erasmus+ programme or different bilateral governmental agreements, as well as for students, who come for long term studies to gain bachelor’s, master’s or doctorate degrees. Introductory meetings are a very good practice and not just a way how to receive important information about

studies at a concrete university, but it's a practice of good manners. This is such an acknowledgment of a high level of university, where values and attitudes towards others are much more important than material goods. A confirmation of this fact is a program "Welcome Point" at the University of Warsaw. A special website was developed to acquaint students/employers with most important:

- *pre-arrival information* (as regards necessary documents, visa, terms of study, admissions, tuition fees, academic calendar, accommodation in Warsaw, health insurance, selection of courses, public transport in Warsaw, general information about Poland);
- *during stay information* (access to maps, guidebooks, movies about university; student card; legalization of stay; access to cultural, sport and touristic activities; huge list of possibilities: protection of students' rights, exemption from fees, psychological and legal assistance, free courses of Polish language and possibilities to study other foreign languages with discount; access to university free WI-FI; international internships and library access);
- *information for PhD students* (basic information about Doctoral Schools: School of Humanities, of Social Sciences, of Exact and Natural Science and Interdisciplinary Doctoral School; accommodation; useful links, for example to Office of Doctoral and Post-Diploma Studies, etc.);
- *information for people, who are interested in working at the University of Warsaw* (grants for visiting guest lecturers; available positions for academic and non-academic staff; social benefits) [Welcome point 2019].

The University of Warsaw is actively promoting the idea of bridging cultures. That is why under the program "Welcome Point" at the University of Warsaw there are organized several important courses for long-term students, as Intensive Polish Language Course, Cultural Orientation Workshop and Communication and Multiculturalism workshop. The last one, for example, helps work with misunderstandings, improve cooperation in multicultural environment, enhance their communication and social skills [UW News 2019].

An interesting way of promotion of the University of Warsaw was created for alumni. It is called "Be our ambassador". Under this initiative, the University has a belief that alumni are ambassadors of the University of Warsaw that can help "to attract and educate the best students. Sharing experience and thoughts with friends and relatives may help the students make a transition to the University of Warsaw for a full-degree or visit the university within Erasmus+ or other exchange programme" [Welcome point 2019]. There are also special alumni groups of the University of Warsaw on Facebook and Instagram that helps them keep in touch and receive the latest information about the university.

During 12-14 May 2016 World Congress of the University of Warsaw Alumni was organized, which gathered outstanding scientists, writers, artists, journalists, politicians, social activists and even famous restaurateurs [Światowy Zjazd 2016]. This event was dedicated to the celebration of 200 anniversary of University of Warsaw. The idea was to show current students how diverse can be the professional life trails of University of Warsaw alumni.

But not only the Office for Promotion and International Relations Office are responsible for the promotion of University of Warsaw, promotional activities are also realized by each faculty. Some of them are very active in this field and have a group

of people/person that is responsible for foreign contacts and relations. They organize international conferences, meetings with foreign professors and other guests, elaborate programs for cooperation with prestigious foreign universities, take part in academic staff exchange programs. Universities, which are now of great interest for the University of Warsaw to cooperate with, are situated in East and South Asia, for example in People's Republic of China. Recently, the "Memorandum of Understanding" was signed between the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of University of Warsaw and Srinakharinwirot University, the largest Thai University based in Bangkok. The Thai delegation also took part in the meeting with main authorities of the University of Warsaw and visited the main campus of the University of Warsaw [Aktualności UW 2019].

Promotion of Polish traditions is an integral part of the University of Warsaw. One of good practices that exist at some faculties of University of Warsaw is a "Christmas gathering". Before Christmas, around 15-20 December, some faculties organize an informal meeting of international students with professors. There they talk and share their ideas about studies, as well as they can try 12 traditional Polish dishes that are cooked for Christmas (Christmas Eve in Polish is "Wigilia"), such as carp, dumplings with cabbage, etc. For most international students it is a way how to get closer to Polish culture and traditions.

Promotion of scientific achievements is possible thanks to the University of Warsaw Repository. The purpose of this structure is to collect, disseminate and promote scientific works of the University of Warsaw scholars. The Repository presents the latest dissertations defended at the University of Warsaw since October 2012 [Repozytorium UW 2019].

2. PROMOTION OF VALUES VS PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Public diplomacy is about spreading our traditions, culture, values, language, history among a target foreign audience with the aim to make a favorable image about the country. Main sources here are not only media, but also people-to-people contacts as they are a core value of public diplomacy. The University of Warsaw has worked out its own approach to the creation of its positive image – "being respectful to others" and "that all of us are equal". A special attention should be paid to the unique programs and initiatives that are launched at the University of Warsaw; especially the program "Równoważni" ("We are all equal") that is against discrimination at University. There was created an official web-site that gives a complex and comprehensive information about what discrimination is and how to find support at university or state institutions. Also this web-site provides information about equality and anti-discrimination projects and research implemented at the University of Warsaw, as well as information on current events on equality and diversity [Rownowazni 2019].

The problem of discrimination is very actual in each big city nowadays, especially among young people, who come to study from different parts of the world. During 2018 at University of Warsaw 42 477 students were enrolled, from which 2812 were international students and 2280 doctoral students, from which 287 were international doctoral students [UW Annual Report 2018]. Understanding the challenges that are connected with the growing number of international students the University of Warsaw is trying to promote studies based on the respect and equal

attitude to each employee or student. To keep this mission, the institution of Ombudsman was established at the University of Warsaw. The Ombudsman “is a fully independent and neutral university officer, to whom students, faculty and administrative staff may turn for assistance in matters concerning the University and its community, in an informal and confidential manner. The role of the Ombudsman is to support the staff and students in problem solving and control that all members of the academic community are treated fairly and honestly. The function of the Ombudsman is independent of the management structure” [Ombudsman 2019].

Another way that is showing a will of the University of Warsaw to protect students' right is an initiative of the Academic Legal Advice Office. Everyone, who is a student of the University of Warsaw, may have a free consultation in this Office as regards studies, different legal matters and all the problems that are in the fields of civil, family, labor or administrative law. Advisors that work in this Academic Legal Advice Office are mainly final-year students, graduates or doctoral students of the Faculty of Law and Administration of the University of Warsaw [Akademicka Poradnia Prawna 2019].

Constant improvement is one of the most important values of the University of Warsaw. In April 2018 there was initiated the University's Integrated Development Programme. The main idea of this programme is to improve quality of teaching, enrich the program of doctoral study and develop interpersonal and professional skills of students and employees as well as to modernize the administrative system [Zintegrowany Program Rozwoju 2018]. The University Integrated Development Programme is planned to be realized until 2022.

Another approach to support and develop entrepreneurial skills in students and teachers is realized under the Incubator of the University of Warsaw. This structure is a section of the University Center for Technology Transfer. The Incubator of the University of Warsaw was established to support entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior in the academic community by enabling verification of practical, scientific, technological or social ideas in cooperation with experienced experts in safe business conditions. This structure supports “in the development of business and social projects in various stages, organizing workshops, trainings, meetings with experts as well as providing modern infrastructure and work space” [Inkubator UW 2019].

Popularization of Polish language is also an integral part of the University of Warsaw. Even if foreign students study in English programme, they have Polish language classes. Those lectures are also very informative, because they consider rich Polish culture and traditions. The Polonicum Centre of Polish Language and Culture for Foreigners is responsible for Polish language and culture courses throughout the academic year for foreign students, as well as other foreigners interested in learning Polish. It is important that these courses are planned in such a way that they meet specific requirements for long term and short term foreign students. The Polonicum Centre also organizes “ethnographic workshops (in cooperation with the Ethnographic Museum) relating to such customs as those associated with St. Andrew's Day, Christmas and Easter” [Polonicum 2019]. A lot of these lectures are presented by outstanding professors of the University of Warsaw.

With the idea of sharing best practices, in 2018, the University of Warsaw, Sorbonne University, Charles University and Heidelberg University signed a common declaration regarding the formation of 4EU, a European University Alliance. This

structure is aimed to cooperate in the spheres of research, education, mobility of researchers and students. There planned several priorities among which are to:

- “create a unique academic environment for students, researchers and staff;
- remove obstacles to free circulation of individuals, ideas and best practices between their universities’
- enable shared platforms and expanded access to the resources of our universities to address large, complex challenges;
- integrate teaching and research to provide a world-leading experience for students from over the world where new ideas will thrive;
- create a common infrastructure that provides added value for the individuals as well as for each particular university” [European University Alliance 2018].

All those attitudes and initiatives of the University of Warsaw are reflected in the ranking that was prepared by the Educational Foundation “Perspektywy”. According to this ranking and public opinion at all, University of Warsaw was marked as the best university in Poland [Ranking Szkół Wyższych 2019].

CONCLUSIONS

The University of Warsaw has built a unique form of promotion represented by a high quality organizational structure of promotional activities through which the Office for Promotion and International Relations Office and individual faculties play an important role in presenting the University worldwide. The brand of University of Warsaw, that was ranked as the best university in Poland, is built on its values, rich traditions and modern system of developed promotional activities.

Numerous programmes and initiatives organized by this University maintain its high ranking among the Central European universities and help gain its international recognition. Support of the students and their rights should become one of the priority tasks, especially in those universities of Eastern Europe, where transformations only have begun. Respect to different cultures and acceptance of different cultures is one of the key message that is spread nowadays at the University of Warsaw under the programme “Równoważni”. Building of a cross-culture dialogue became an integral part of constant improvement of the University of Warsaw.

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