



CIVIC CONGRESS

Poland's leading independent
forum for citizens dialogue

Who are we?

Civic Congress is a leading forum for debate and strategic thought of civic society in Poland.

Through Civic Congress conferences, seminars, debates, publications and other activities, we have created a unique, inclusive environment for public dialogue and participatory democracy. Civic Congress is a core platform where Poles convene to discuss issues of common interest, develop recommendations, and communicate to the public at large information about key social, economic, cultural and developmental issues confronting Polish society.



Our goal is to be a **catalyst for change** and to act as a **vital bridge** to foster the exchange of ideas between policy makers, experts, non-governmental organisations, business, media, academia and other active civic groups.

We seek to **break down the silos** between different segments of society and connect groups and people of different views and backgrounds, professions, walks of life, age and gender. We believe it is essential to include citizens and their organisations at the grass roots level to take an active role in policy-shaping and decision-making.

Civic Congress is inspired by and draws on the ethos of **'Solidarność'**, Poland's Solidarity movement of the 1980s. Solidarity originated from peaceful workers' and civil protests against the communist regime of that time to become the first independent trade union in the Soviet bloc. Solidarity subsequently evolved into a mass social movement promoting civic rights, freedoms and democracy, which ultimately led to the end of communist rule in Poland and Eastern Europe.



Jan Szomburg is the **founder and head** of the Program Council of Civic Congress. Dr. Szomburg is also the founder of the renowned Gdansk Institute of Market Economics and has served as a senior policy advisor to several governments of Poland on economic, social and business issues. He is the author of many publications and research projects and is widely regarded as an authority on aspects of social and economic transformation. Dr. Szomburg has focused extensively on promoting civic society, for which he was awarded the 'Order of the Rebirth of Poland' by the President of the Polish Republic.

Policy and Organization

Civic Congress is **independent and non-partisan**, with no political bias. We seek to ensure that all viewpoints are represented in our activities and publications.

At the heart of Civic Congress is its Program Council, composed of 18-20 prominent representatives from business, academia, policy-makers and civic groups. The Program Council brings together the knowledge and experience of this diverse group of leaders and is responsible for developing the content, direction and form of Civic Congress' public debate agenda. The Council members work pro bono.

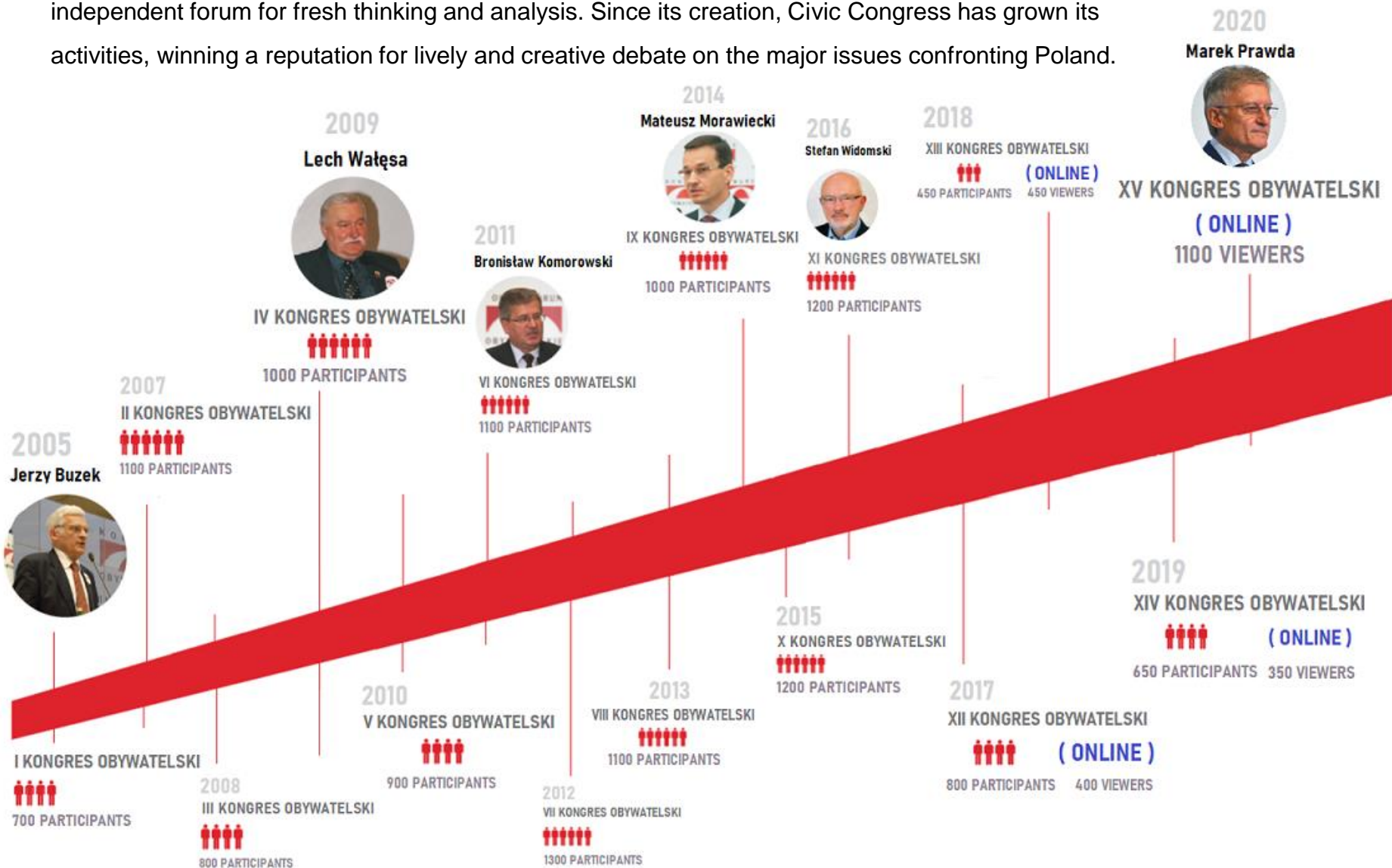


Civic Congress in figures:

- Over **21 000 participants** and **1300 speakers**
- Over **90** events, congresses, seminars, work-shops
- Over **80** publications
- **3,600+** strong Facebook community
- **30,000+** database of contacts including key decision-makers, NGOs, public service institutions (libraries etc.), think tanks, universities, schools, social organizations, business and the media.

History

We have been **active since 2005** when the first Civic Congress was organised in Warsaw. In response to the increasing politicization and partisan nature of public discussion, Civic Congress was created to offer a new, merit based, politically independent forum for fresh thinking and analysis. Since its creation, Civic Congress has grown its activities, winning a reputation for lively and creative debate on the major issues confronting Poland.



Activities

Civic Congress principal event is our annual **flagship conference 'Kongres Obywatelski'** held in Warsaw, with fifteen such congresses held to date.

Every year, the congresses gather **about 1000 participants** from around the country. Usually **representatives of 110-150 towns** come to Warsaw to debate selected topics, share insights, and develop new policy recommendations.



Speakers and attendees come from diverse backgrounds ranging from local and regional community leaders, politicians, NGOs, business, academia, stake-holders and various experts.

The conference is open to the public (participation for free). High level representatives, including former and current Presidents of the Polish Republic and senior government officials are regular attendees. Debates and recommendations are recorded and subsequently published through the media.

Activities

Our **regional conference - 'Pomorski Kongres Obywatelski'** - is a local equivalent of the national event, but with a focus on issues relevant to the northern regions of Poland.

Starting from 2007, this event is held annually in Gdansk and is regularly attended by over 1,000 participants.

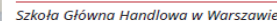
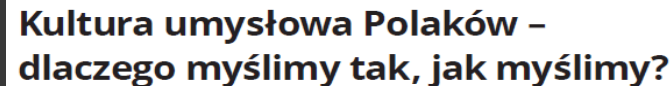


Library debates – „Spreading the wings of local Poland” under the official patronage of the President of Poland. Civiv Congress cooperates with a network of over 50 public libraries in smaller towns and locations. Twice yearly, in cooperation with these libraries, we organize focused debates on topics of local importance such as the challenges facing local development, community building, and grass roots initiatives.

Local leaders, authorities and committed citizens actively participate in debates, which are then disseminated through an online network.

with Civic Congress are frequently published in the national and local media.

We also cooperate with publishers to produce periodical special press supplements on particular topics in which experts and opinion makers debate their views under the auspices of Civic Congress.



Aby zrozumieć dzisiejszą mentalność Polaków, trzeba się cofnąć o co najmniej kilka wieków. Sarmatyzm, krótka reformacja, słaby wpływ nurtów oświeceniowych oraz bardzo silny romantyzm – to wszystko spowodowało, że przez wieki kształtowała się u nas intelektualna kultura umysłowa. Przede wszystkim czyniła nam myślenie. Emocje nad racjonalność. Pojedynczych bohaterów nad społeczeństwo. Spora część tej spuścizmy została w nas po dziś dzień. W efekcie wielu z nas ma trudności w dostosowaniu się do wymagań współczesności. Czy w interesie Polaków leży przeformułowanie niektórych cech naszej umysłowości?

In addition, Civic Congress publishes a weekly **think-letter - 'Ideas for Poland'** - distributed online to a large base of registered readers and frequently re-published in the national press.

Our **online platform** encourages interactive citizen-led debates and has built up a strong community of active social media followers.

Debate


Our repertoire of events, discussions and insightful reports enables Civic Congress to **contribute ideas and lead the debate** on a wide range of issues, including:

- Local, regional, national and international sustainable development
- Citizens' solidarity, social responsibility, community building
- Health and wellbeing, quality of life
- The environment and climate change, circular economy
- Urban revitalization and development of rural areas



- Educational reform for a modern, innovative society
- Migration and social integration
- 'Soft power' skills and competencies - cooperation, teamwork, dispute resolution
- Economic, business and labour issues, toward a more competitive Poland
- Inter-generational synergies for mutual benefit
- Cultural change and identity, balancing between tradition and progress
- Ethics, social trust, social norms
- Corporate Social Responsibility



K O N G R E S

OBYWATELSKI



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