

Homeland responsibilities while living abroad

Most Polish citizens are aware of the responsibilities that come alongside their heritage, from celebrating national holidays to commemorating their ancestors, without whom our country may have never returned into existence. However, do they look any different from the perspective of an expatriate?

It's a well-known fact that many Poles currently live abroad. They are referred to as the Polish Diaspora. There are around 20,000,000 people of Polish ancestry living outside Poland. I used to be one of them. Having moved to England when I was just 1 year old and returning at 12, I lived in The United Kingdom for eleven years. I can proudly say that despite living abroad, I always felt to be a part of the Polish community.

One of the most practiced aspects of homeland responsibilities abroad is the importance of teaching children the language and culture. I attended a Polish Saturday School, which happened to be founded by my mother. There are numerous amounts of these schools all across the world. What started as a study group for Polish youth in my living room turned out to become a whole community, now counting around 300 students. At this school I learnt about the history of Poland. Reading and analysing Polish literature was also a major part of lessons at school.

National holidays were always celebrated there, for instance Polish Independence day on the 11th of November. Assemblies were always held, as well as plays prepared by the students and teachers of the school. Other than holidays many cultural events were organised, for example Polish Heritage day. Students were encouraged to join the Polish scouting group, which brought students together and also taught us all about Polish history. The Polish community also took part in celebrating worldwide events like the Olympic games. Our Polish school promoted the concept in the "Polish Social and Cultural Association in London" where we cheered on Polish contestants. "POSK" is a Polish cultural centre in West London. It presents and promotes Polish culture and history to the British public.

Living abroad, it's common that you come across monuments that commemorate the memory of important events or people of your nationality. From personal experience I can surely confirm that expatriates care for them. I recall my parents finding an old abandoned grave in our town's local cemetery. It turned out to be a Polish two-time Olympic medalist's place of burial. They raised money to replace it and bring his life story back to light. This actually led to being written about in the news and being invited to the National Olympics centre in Warsaw for a conference, which I also took part in.

On a more political note, taking part in elections is also important to Polish people. It's obvious that Poles feel a responsibility to actively engage in the losses of their country, especially after the many years of repressions they faced.

During elections in Poland, people abroad have the choice to take part too.

Most Poles abroad feel responsible to be active in the life of their country. These and many other homeland responsibilities have a great impact on their lives. Despite living abroad these mentioned tasks are performed by them daily.

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