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Twenty Years
of Democratic
Elections in Poland

Global Elections Day 2011

Toruń, Poland · 2-3 February 2011

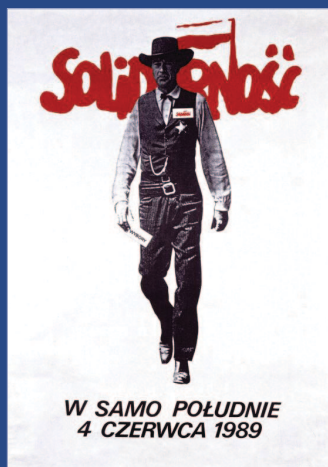
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Twenty Years of Democratic Elections in Poland

In 1991 several important changes took place in Poland which significantly modified the character of Polish political system and scene.

After the first democratic elections to local councils in 1990, which were the consequence of the reactivation of territorial self-government in the Republic of Poland after a few dozens of years, and after the first direct and universal elections of the President of the Republic of Poland in 1990, it was time to hold the first free and fully democratic parliamentary elections. In June 1989 – soon after the Polish Round Table Agreement was signed – the Sejm and the Senate were indeed elected, however, the acceleration of the process of democratization also resulted in changes in this area. That particularly relates to the “contract Sejm” which was not chosen in fully democratic elections and, consequently, did not fit into the new system of authorities of the already democratic state.

The electoral regulations to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland were enacted on 28th June 1991. The new law provided that elections must be universal, direct, equal, conducted by secret ballot, and, what is momentous, free. The allocation of seats in the Sejm was carried out according to the principle of proportionality. The Sejm’s electoral regulations of 1991 determined a new structure of National Electoral Commission (Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza). The requirement that only a judge could be a member of the Commission, introduced in the Law on Presidential Elections of 1990, was retained, however, the Commission became a permanent body responsible for preparation, organization and conduct of elections. Subsequently, another permanent body – National Electoral Office (Krajowe Biuro Wyborcze) – was set up as an office operating in permanence and providing technical and administrative assistance in



“Contract” elections. Election poster of “Solidarność”

National Electoral Commission. The announcement of results of elections to self-governments, 2006. photo by Maciej Kobałko





Members of NEC, representatives of NEO and CEC no. 4 and 5 together with the first President of the Supreme Court. The announcement of results of elections to the European Parliament, 2009.

photo by Maciej Kobiątko

the performance of National Electoral Commission's tasks. Voivodeship level electoral offices were formed to support other electoral bodies, then the offices became the Branches of National Electoral Office (Delegatura Krajowego Biura Wyborczego).

The basic principles of elections, specified in regulations 1991, were later assumed in the parliamentary electoral regulations 1993 and 2001. These regulations maintained, in only a slightly modified model, the core of permanent professional electoral administration which still functions properly.

On 27th October 1991 voting in the first fully free and democratic parliamentary elections – to the Sejm and the Senate – was held. The Sejm formed in those elections – called later “fragmented” – consisted of representatives of as many as 29 committees did not stand the full term of office. Nevertheless, the “contract” Sejm went down in history and all main authorities in Poland gained democratic legitimacy.



🕒 First day – Wednesday, 2nd February 2011

Session I Chairperson – Chairman of the National Electoral Commission

Stefan Jaworski

- 11.00 Opening ceremony
- 11.15 Occasional speeches

13.00 Coffee break

Session II

Chairperson – Prof. Paweł Sarnecki

- 13.20 Introduction
- 13.25 *Legal position and significance of permanent electoral bodies in the Republic of Poland* – Prof. Andrzej Szmyt, Prof. Andrzej Sokala
- 13.45 *Electoral Code as a chance for electoral law stabilization* – Prof. Krzysztof Skotnicki, Dr Anna Rakowska
- 14.05 Closing session

14.10 Lunch

Session III

Chairperson – Prof. Krzysztof Skotnicki

- 15.40 Introduction
- 15.45 *Dilemmas of creators of the Electoral regulations of 1991* – Prof. Stanisław Gebethner
- 16.05 *Problems of local elections in the jurisdiction of administrative courts* – Dr Katarzyna Właźlak, Dr Renata Lewicka, Dr Marek Lewicki
- 16.25 *Selected problems of electoral law to territorial self- government units* – Doc. Dr Janusz Mordwiłko
- 16.45 Discussion
- 17.25 Closing session

19.30 Conference Dinner

🕒 Second day – Thursday, 3rd February 2011

“Young people are voting”*

Chairperson — dr Bartłomiej Michalak

Workshops

- 9.00 Alternative voting methods
- 9.25 Electoral coercion
- 9.50 Voting in the Republic of Poland

Meeting with experts

- 10.30 Introduction
- 10.45 Presentation of survey results *Young people are voting*
- 11.00 Experts' comments
- 11.30 Discussion

Jubilee of the “Electoral Studies”

Chairperson — Secretary of the National Electoral Commission
Kazimierz W. Czaplicki

- 14.00 Speech of Prof. Krzysztof Skotnicki
- 14.15 *Review of Electoral Studies* — Prof. Ryszard Chruściak

15.00 Lunch

Lecture in honor of Prof. Dr. Waław Komarnicki

Chairperson — Prof. Andrzej Sokala

- 17.00 Opening ceremony
- 17.20 *Women's electoral participation – challenges and dilemmas* — Prof. Arkadiusz Żukowski
- 18.15 Discussion

20.00 Dinner

*For guests who do not participate in the meeting with the youth a special tourist program is planned for Thursday morning.

“Young people are voting”

“Young people are voting” is one of the events accompanying Global Election Day, which has been hosted by Centre of Electoral Studies of Nicolaus Copernicus University since 2009.

The aim of this action is to popularize knowledge about the nature, functions and objectives of elections and mechanisms for their realization. This action is directed at young people who just begin their adventure with elections.

The long-term objective of this action is to develop civil attitudes, the attachment to democratic institutions and consequently stimulation of social activity in the public sphere. Young people, who just begin their adult life, make an important social group and very often they already have clear ideas into reality.

An active participation in such initiatives not only allows them to obtain new information and necessary knowledge for subsequent formulation of thought-out political decisions based on rational grounds, but also to meet with experts and see the backstage of elections. The organizers' wish is to debate in an open forum crucial issues from the perspective of representative democracy, to facilitate the understanding and application of its procedures and to encourage public involvement.



The meeting with experts in electoral law with secondary school students from Toruń under the title “Your first voting” in February 2010. photo by Ireneusz Chelminiak



Lectures in honor of Prof. Dr. Waław Komarnicki

One of the leading projects of Centre of Electoral Studies of Nicolaus Copernicus University is the organization of the series of lectures in honor of Prof. Dr. Waław Komarnicki.

The patron of the lectures was a prominent specialist in constitutional law, lecturer at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius and Oxford University and a political activist of the first half of the twentieth century (including Member of Parliament, later Minister of Justice in the Polish Government in Exile).

The lectures are held at least once a year, usually on Global Election Day on the first Thursday of February.

Audiences of the lectures are not only the academics and students of Nicolaus Copernicus University, but first of all electoral law practitioners including electoral commissioners and staff of National Electoral Office.

The speakers are outstanding representatives of electoral law doctrine and the issues that are taken concern of are essential problems of this discipline of law.

There have been three lectures so far:

- “Advantages and disadvantages of proportional electoral system” given by Prof. Bogusław Banaszak (University of Wrocław),
- “About the need for stability of election law. Selected issues” given by Kazimierz W. Czaplicki (the Head of National Electoral Office) and
- “Functions of elections and size of electoral districts” given by Prof. Krzysztof Skotnicki (University of Łódź).

On 3rd February 2011 the next lecture in honor of Prof. Dr. Waław Komarnicki entitled “Women’s electoral participation – challenges and dilemmas” will be given by Prof. Arkadiusz Żukowski (University of Warmia and Mazury).



*Waław Komarnicki –
Minister of Justice (1942-1944)
in his London office.
photo by Czesław Datka (zbiory NAC)*

*Prof. Arkadiusz Żukowski
photo from private archive*



Contact details

Conference secretariat

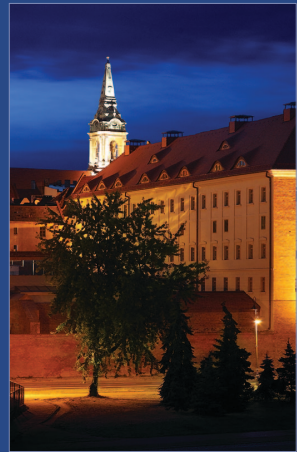
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Accommodation and conference venue

Bulwar Hotel
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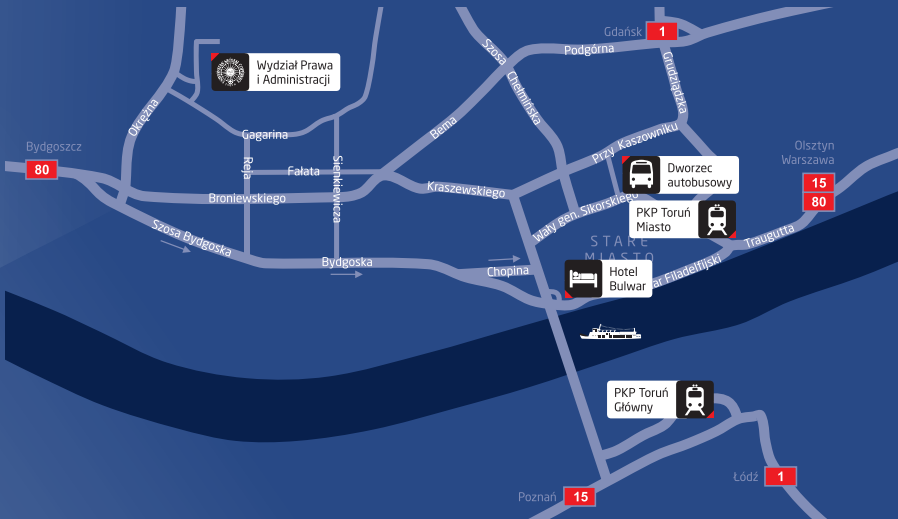
“Young People are Voting” Event

Wydział Prawa i Administracji UMK
ul. Gagarina 15, 87-100 Toruń



*The Bulwar Hotel,
view from the bridge*

Sketch map



Organizers

