

“East-West Mutual Understanding” Social-Cultural Association

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(House of Friendship of Nations, Jerzmanowo district)

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**“For Fraternity and
Reconciliation of Nations”**

About the “East-West Mutual Understanding” Association

The “East-West Mutual Understanding” Social-Cultural Association is a non-profit, apolitical, non-governmental organization established in 2010 in Lower Silesia region, Poland, by young people in Olawa and Wroclaw. The activity of the organization has spread over other regions in Poland and abroad. In 2015 we celebrate the 5th anniversary of our activity.

Mission and goals

The mission of the Association is to build mutual understanding, dialogue and solidarity between nations living in the East and West of Europe and the world – between Latin and Byzantine cultural space.

An understanding between simple people and whole nations, built on mutual trust and respect is our goal. A dialogue based on understanding and respect for distinctiveness and each of us national and cultural identity. We believe that, the reconciliation shall be built on a truth, memory about the past and mutual, sincere forgiveness and not encumbering new generations with their ancestors' faults.

We strive to construct solid reconciliation between Polish people and neighboring nations: Ukrainian, Russian, Belorussian and Lithuanian, as well as all nations from post-Soviet space so divided by the fate of history.

We wish the wounds of the past between our nations be cured by forgiveness. So that religious and political leaders are brave to say: we forgive and ask for forgiveness. First of all, we wish simple citizens of our countries managed to respect, understand, make a friendship and trust each other.

We base our mission on lessons of the Polish-born Pope Saint John Paul II, his successors in Holy See and on the lessons of Orthodox Patriarchs about the necessity of brotherhood and reconciliation, mutual understanding, dialogue and respect between Christians in the East and West, as well as all nations in Europe and in the world.

We ask the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Nikolaos the Wonderworker, the patron of reconciliation between East and West, to care for our Association. In everyday activities we have in mind the holy icons of Our Lady in the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius and Black Madonna in Czestochowa. In these two places both Catholics and Orthodox very strongly praise Mother of God, asking her for God's mercy and protection.

Activities of the “East-West Mutual Understanding” Association (2010-2015)

Realizing our mission and goals, we lead regular activities in the area of culture, education, youth and science. These activities are based on cooperation with Eastern European, Central Asian, Caucasus, post-Soviet and Central European states. We perform our activities on the territory of Poland and abroad, in particular in Lower Silesia region. Our most significant centers are as follows: The House of Friendship of Nations in Wroclaw (ceremonially opened and blessed in 2014), Office in Olawa and the House of Volunteer in Olawa. The Association has its own scientific and research center, assisting in application of our mission and goals – the King Daniel of Galicia Institute (founded 2014). The Association’s network spreads over Wroclaw, Olawa, Przemysl, Warsaw, Krakow, Upper Silesia and other regions. Currently the first Overseas Branch in Georgia is in the process of formation.

We strongly believe that nothing brings people of different national backgrounds closer than face-to-face contact. Following this way, since 2010 we regularly organize in Poland and abroad numerous international events such as: youth exchanges, volunteer workcamps, short-term and long-term voluntary service (the youth from former Soviet Union countries spending time in Poland and vice versa), cultural events, concerts, presentations, study visits, trainings, educational trips, internships, “Central and Eastern Europe Youth Days”, round tables, debates, seminars, lectures, regular meetings of working groups and clubs, intergenerational events etc.

Together with our volunteers from Eastern Europe we approach pupils, students, older people, parishes, nursing homes, the representatives of different local environments, residents of Wroclaw, other smaller towns and villages in Lower Silesia and Opole Province as well. We lead groups of local people interested in having a real face-to-face contact with the youth from Eastern Europe. As a result, the level of knowledge and interpersonal skills tremendously increase.

Through our activities we propagate an idea of voluntarism, civic society development and physical activity of the youth. We strongly support safeguarding of cultural heritage, sustaining of national and local traditions and caring for a memory about the past. As well as we cultivate the memory of young generations about Kresy heritage (“Eastern Borderlands”), especially on our Lower Silesian land.

We cooperate proudly with numerous non-governmental organizations, educational, academic and scientific centers, parishes, schools, cultural institutions and local authorities in Poland, Central and Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia and other regions of the world.

We permanently keep in touch with numerous Polish communities in post-Soviet countries. At the same time, we cooperate with national and ethnical minorities in Poland, doing our best to involve the representatives of these minorities into our activities.

One of important principles of our Association is its apolitical approach, which empowers the agreement and unity in realizing the mission and goals of the Association. Furthermore, no one can feel excluded regardless political views. As the Association, we never engage ourselves in supporting or combating any political groups in Poland, as well as abroad. Thanks to this approach, the people holding different views and beliefs can become members and volunteers of the Association or participants of our projects. What unites them all are commonly shared, over-political values.

Our activities are sustained from private donations, as well as grants from the European Commission, international funds, local self-governments and private foundations. Last, but not least the everyday involvement of our volunteers, members and friends of the Associations is priceless.