

## What Can We Do?

- Get to know Polish people in your area.
- Try some Polish flavours - visit a Polish shop and buy a loaf of bread or some sausage.
- EMBRACE has a free translation service for church notices, including Polish. People respond well to an invitation in their own language.
- Contact the Polish Educational and Cultural Association in NI (PECA) <http://peca-ni.org/home>
- Learn more about migration. EMBRACE has a number of resources. See [www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources](http://www.embraceni.org/category/about-us/embrace-resources). Printed copies are available from the office.
- Undertake migration awareness or myth-busting training with EMBRACE.
- The Polish Honorary Consul is Jerome Mullen and you can find his contact details at [http://ca-ni.org/consular\\_details/poland.html](http://ca-ni.org/consular_details/poland.html)

## Some Polish Phrases:

English	Polish	Pronunciation tips
Good day	<b>Dzień dobry</b>	<i>jen doh-bri</i>
Hello	<b>Cześć</b>	<i>tche-esh-ch</i>
How are you?	<b>Jak się masz?</b>	<i>yah-k sheng mah-sh?</i>
Well	<b>Dobrze</b>	<i>dob-zhe</i>
Have a nice day	<b>Miłego dnia</b>	<i>mee-uego dne-ea</i>
Thank you	<b>Dziękuję</b>	<i>jen-koo-yeh</i>
See you later	<b>Do zobaczenia</b>	<i>dozoba chenya</i>

*From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth...*

Acts 17:26

**EMBRACE NI**  
*Building a Welcoming Community*

Web: [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org)



48 Elmwood Avenue,  
Belfast, BT9 6AZ  
Tel: 028 9066 3145  
Email: [info@embraceni.org](mailto:info@embraceni.org)

EMBRACE Information Sheet 6

## The Polish Community

Spring 2017



*You shall love your neighbour as yourself.* Mark 12:30

### How many Polish people are living locally and why do they come?

There have been estimates as high as 40,000 but a number have come only for a short time to improve their English or raise money for a special purpose (e.g. deposit on a house). Some come to widen their horizons or to earn a bit more than they could at home, others just need a job. Many will have been attracted by job advertisements or by agencies contracted by NI employers. When Polish people began to come here in large numbers from 2004 onwards the unemployment rate was very high in Poland but their economy has expanded since then and with the recession here, some people returned to Poland. A high proportion of Polish people have third level education and they can be found in many different areas of the economy in businesses, educational establishments, factories and the health service.

In the 2011 Census 19,658 people living in Northern Ireland said that they were born in Poland.

### Connections with Poland

The UK has long connections with Poland. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century most grain imports were from there. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century some Protestant refugees from Poland settled in London and political refugees arrived in the UK in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and more settled in England after the First World War.

During the Second World War Polish people made an important contribution to the Allied war effort. When a Communist government was established in Poland many chose to stay in the UK and in the 1951 Census the Polish-born population totalled over 160,000. There was a Polish Government in exile in London until 1991 when free elections took place.

In 2004 the European Community enlarged to include new states including eight in Central and Eastern Europe. Nationals from these countries were allowed to come to the UK and work here without an advance work permit for the first time. One of these countries was Poland and many thousands of Polish people came to the UK to work.

## Did You Know?

- The population of Poland is over 38 million.
- The city of Kraków (Cracow) is a very attractive tourist destination and many local people have been there on holiday.
- There are graves of Polish airmen who died in the 1942–43 period, in Carnmoney and Milltown Cemeteries, Belfast; Movilla Cemetery, Newtownards; and Ballycranbeg, County Down.
- The word 'Polonia' describes the Polish Diaspora: Polish people living abroad. About 20 million people of Polish descent live outside Poland (including 10 million in the USA).
- There is a Poland/Ireland Chamber of Commerce to encourage trade and business connections.
- King Canute's mother was a Polish princess.

## Some Famous Polish People

**Mikołaj Kopernik (Nicolaus Copernicus)**; mathematician and astronomer; **Fryderyk Chopin** composer; **Marie Skłodowska Curie**, scientist; **Karol Wojtyła, Pope John Paul II**; and **Lech Wałęsa**, politician, trade unionist and civil rights activist.

## Some Aspects of Polish Culture

- Social etiquette and formality is important (e.g. a Polish person will find it unusual to address his or her boss by their first name). Most people will begin by calling each other pan (Mr) or pani (Ms or Mrs).
- Some Polish people tend to speak in a very direct, straightforward way that may seem rude or aggressive to others. (This is partly due to lack of fluency in English.)
- In Poland, it is common to remove shoes on entering someone's house.
- Polish people value hospitality. There is a traditional saying: 'Gość w dom, Bóg w dom' which translates as 'Guest in the house, God in the house'.
- While Poland has a complex historical culture of food, costume, dance and music, the young people who have come here to work usually prefer to be seen as modern Europeans.
- Polish Saturday schools across NI enable children to be educated in the Polish language, history, geography and culture.

## Challenges Faced by Polish People Here

Most Polish people who come here live productive, successful lives, but migration brings challenges and a small number of people experience difficulties.

- Some struggle with learning to be fluent in English.
- Local language may not be the English they learned at school (e.g. 'acting the maggot').
- When unemployment rose during the recession there have been more negative stories circulating about migrants, many of them untrue.
- People with professional qualifications often work here in unskilled jobs.
- Some people lost work during the recession.
- Others experience racist attacks (see below).
- There are reports of domestic violence, alcohol abuse, destitution, mental illness and suicide.
- Polish people may move on to 'safer' areas, but if numbers grow in one place, local people complain that the character of 'their' area is changing.

Examples of unease expressed by Polish interviewees in 2009:

*I feel more and more unwanted in this country*

*I'm worried about the harassment of Polish people and the lack of understanding towards my countrymen*

*I'm afraid to speak out loud in Polish...*

*Anxiety. More racist attacks on my countrymen (Poles)*

*Dr Robbie McVeigh and Chris McAfee 'Za Chlebem', 2009*

Read more about their findings:

[www.ark.ac.uk/orb/summaries/McVeighR09.htm](http://www.ark.ac.uk/orb/summaries/McVeighR09.htm)

## Difficulties with Local Culture

- It is hard to be expected to understand a complex troubled history and the sensitivity of symbols, place-names, flags, and national identities.
- There are stereotypes concerning religion and politics because many Polish people are Roman Catholic and people assume wrongly that they will all be Nationalist.