



Colm McGivern

Director British Council, Poland



Foreword by Colm McGivern Director British Council, Poland.

I am delighted to introduce Next Generation: Poland.

This is the first in-depth examination of Poland's 'Covid Generation'. The research was conducted against the backdrop of an intensifying pandemic, divisive elections and the largest street protests in the country since the fall of communism. It brings us the views and voices of those who will be responsible for rebuilding Poland from the rubble of Covid and finding a path through current political and social dislocation.

The youth population in Poland is fascinatingly complex, and in places seemingly contradictory. They are simultaneously internationally-minded and globally aware, but happiest within their home. They are proud of their country, though sceptical about its leadership. They are curious about – but sometimes wary of – other cultures.

Most of all this report shows a drive in Poland's young people that puts 'ambition, skill and hard work' at the centre of a successful life. Young people know that they are experiencing a better quality of life than their parents, and the report communicates their anxiety about

making the most of this and not wasting their chances.

This is fascinating in its own right, and we hope it will be useful to individuals and organisations that work with and for young people across Poland, the UK and beyond. But is also vital information for the British Council to inform and guide our work for the years ahead. Our role is to build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and Poland through arts and culture, education and the English language. A central objective for us it to design and run programmes that meet the needs and aspirations of young people, and support their personal, social and economic development, and promote open and inclusive societies. The British Council's work in Poland always starts with partnerships and results in mutually beneficial outcomes. This report helps us respond precisely to what we hear from those we want to connect with the most.

A fascinating and accessible read, Next Generation: Poland joins a suite of reports conducted across the world, and offers interesting comparisons particularly with other recent European studies. Young Poles, like their UK, Irish,

German and Italian counterparts are



digitally native, find their news almost exclusively online, but also are wise enough to interrogate it. There's a shared absence of faith in their political leaders, and a dissatisfaction with the education offered to them – particularly a strong feeling that it is not equipping them with the right skills for the jobs of the future. Yet social engagement is rising – this is not an apathetic generation.

Like their European counterparts, young Poles are concerned about employment opportunities, but also have high expectations of the kind of work they want to do. Against the trend in Europe, social and family ties seem to be strengthening in Poland and religious belief is high even if church-going is in decline. There is a troubling theme emerging about the challenges young people face around mental health and drug abuse. This is surely a call to action.

This report has tracked views across the most extraordinary year most of us will ever live through. I would like to thank the teams at Stocznia, Centrala, Sound Connections, the Academic Task Force and Young Advisors as well as our British Council team who worked hard together and separately to bring this report to

you. The support of the British Embassy in Warsaw has been invaluable, and we thank them I hope you enjoy this report as much as I have, and that you return to it in your 'need to know' moments.

All that it teaches us will echo in our work in the months and years to come.