



Social Networking-Poland Day at GTS in Silicon Valley

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Poland Day participants in front of Facebook headquarters, March 26, 2011

On March 26, Poland-specific panels organized by the US-Polish Trade Council filled the Facebook Conference Hall with a mix of academia, business, government and nonprofit. Aiming at sparking innovation entrepreneurship on both sides of the Atlantic, did they accelerate the process?

Three months after the extraordinary Poland-Silicon Valley Technology Symposium in December 2010, the US-Polish Trade Council managed to attract another sizable delegation from Poland, including students from several Polish universities.

This time, attendees came to mingle with broader international audiences attending the 8th Annual Global Technology Symposium (GTS) in Menlo Park, California on March 23-25. The three-day symposium beginning with Russia Day on Day 1 and packed with presentations by Fund Managers, VCs, Angel Investors and celebrity speakers like Pitch Johnson, Bill Draper and Mark Whittaker, concluded with Poland Day on Saturday, March 26.

The choice of venue for Poland Day by conference co-organizer Ms. Monika Barycza was brilliant. The headquarters of social networking giant at the Palo Alto Stanford Research Park was a draw in itself. The park is believed to be the world's first technology center where industry, academia and government began to openly collaborate in research and development, creating what is known today as Silicon Valley. Meeting at Facebook, which didn't even exist seven years ago, was a reminder that great fresh ideas still get rewarded and funded in Silicon Valley.

The goal of organizers was to compare the attributes of the business and investments climates in Poland

and Silicon Valley and stimulate mutual cooperation. Panels addressed four areas:

- (1) government incentives
- (2) technological opportunities/challenges
- (3) academic innovations and
- (4) investment stimulus/venture finance

The opening remarks by Polish Embassy Trade and Investment Section Minister Zbigniew Kubacki, San Francisco Mayor's Office of International Trade Director Mark Chandler, Polish Honorary Consul Tad Taube and US-Polish Trade Council President Jerzy Orkiszewski added confidence in government's commitment.

Presentations on energy, medical technologies, and software communications zeroed in on the enormous potential but also on competencies and policies needed for progress in these areas.

The discussion on academic innovations centered on advances in tech transfer and IP protection in Poland's research clusters in Krakow, Katowice and Gdansk. Stanford Engineering Lecturer Burton H. Lee who studies European Entrepreneurship and Innovation stressed that Poland must quickly reform its university system to remain competitive and relevant. UC Berkley Industry Alliances Office Associate Director Lynne Hollyer offered her department as a successful model of private-public partnership in IP commercialization. University of California made \$125.3 million from licensed discoveries in 2010.

The panel on Investment Funds in Poland was most engaging. National Capital Fund President Piotr Gebala spoke about Institutional Stimulation of VC Market in Poland (VC capital matched by EU and Polish Government) as a creative model to attract capital inflow to small-midsize private enterprise. CEO of Fisher Investments Kenneth Fisher and his Polish-born daughter-in-law Milena Fisher described the lack of investment culture in Poland both as a hindrance and opportunity. Ms. Fisher who assisted the Fisher Investments in assessing the Polish market for entry said, "Poland could attract more capital by streamlining regulations while providing aggressive incentives." She added, "While Poland Day was a step in the right direction in accelerating collaboration, more targeted and interactive platforms for dialogue and information exchange could offer more value to participating stakeholders."

US-Polish Trade Council Chairman Stanford Consulting Professor Piotr Moncarz concluded that the enthusiastic turnout was an indication that the entrepreneur culture is vibrant on both sides. Creating an international network of like-minded investors, business people, researchers, and policy makers brings Poland closer to replicating the successes of Silicon Valley. Participation in GTS gave Polish entrepreneurs access to a global platform.

GTS also increased the awareness of the global race by public-private partnerships to create "silicon valley"-like ecosystems around the world as by the Russian Skolkovo Foundation. While Poland's government cannot create the next Cisco or Facebook, nurturing collaborative networks, real and virtual, enables Polish enterprise to compete more effectively in surging global markets.