

**Remarks by ambassador Ole Egberg Mikkelsen, at the opening of a seminar on young voters 22 March 2019**

A warm welcome to all of you to the Embassy of Denmark for today's seminar "How to get young people to the voting booth".

I am happy to see the turnout this morning from different parts of Polish society. The Sejm, political life, media, civil society, international organizations, academia and think tanks.

First of all: It is an indication that the theme, young peoples' participation in elections, is relevant in a Polish context. But some of you might wonder: Why are we at the Embassy of Denmark this morning? What does the Danish diplomacy have to do with voting in Poland? Are the Danes trying to interfere in the electoral processes in Poland?

So let me explain: We are at the embassy because sharing experience in tackling common challenges is also part of Danish-Polish relations.

By the way: later on this year, in late November, we are going to celebrate 100 years of the resumption of Danish-Polish relations. On that occasion, there will be plenty of high-level contacts. Danish-Polish relations are however not only about high level contacts. It is also about people-to-people contacts and sharing experience and inspiration in very practical fields, like energy, climate, health and the environment. Because as EU-partners and neighbors we very often face the same challenges.

This is the case when it comes to participation of young people in elections. That is a challenge in many parliamentary democracies, including Poland and Denmark. Both countries have tried to address this challenge.

We have had a broad based campaign involving our Parliament, local governments, schools, civil society and youth organizations.

It has actually yielded remarkable results. At our last local elections no less than 75 percent of first time voters took part. Suddenly local politics was very cool among young people. One of the symbols of this is to be found in the mid-size Danish city of Holbæk, where Ms. Christina Krzyrosiak Hansen took office at the age of 24.

We want to share this experience with our Polish friends. This is why we are gathered at the embassy this morning. We want to share with you, how we achieved this. What are the tools? Then it is up to you to consider if it work in Poland

So are we interfering in Polish elections? No, we are simply sharing our experience, and then it is up to Polish society to decide, whether you want to use it.

To share the experience we have invited a number of experts.

The Danish parliament has been spearheading the campaign. I am very happy the head of communication of the Danish parliament, Mr. Søren Wæver could join us this morning in order to share with us how the Parliament has been involved.

Civil society and schools played an important role. Not least the youth organizations. I am happy to welcome Ms. Maria Ladegaard and Mr. Jacob Esmann from the Danish Youth Council. I am happy that you could join us.

Finally, we wanted to base the information sharing on solid empirical evidence.

That is why Professor Kasper Møller Hansen is with us this morning. He is the leading Danish expert on electoral behavior with a strong international track-record. Professor Møller Hansen studied the campaigns targeted at young voters in detail and he knows what works and what does not.

I look forward to your presentations and thank you to all of you for being with us this morning.

I would also like to introduce our moderator, Mr. Kamil Turecki, who will help us through the program today. Mr Turecki is the international affairs correspondent of the leading Polish news portal onet.pl.

Let me conclude by extending my warmest thanks to the Polish parliament. The Sejm has been so kind to distribute the invitation for today's event to its political caucuses. We are very honored to have members of Sejm among us this morning.

I will now hand over to today's moderator, Mr. Kamil Turecki. You will take us through today's proceeding and you will also be moderating the panel debate after the presentations.