

## Learning about Willy Brandt



Forty years back Willy Brandt, then German federal chancellor, made history. With his new Ostpolitik under the motto „Change through rapprochement” he initiated a turnaround in German foreign policy and helped bring about the detente in the East-West conflict. A seminal event for German-Polish reconciliation was the signing of the Warsaw Treaty with the ensuing recognition of the Oder-Neiße line as Poland’s western border.

40 years thereafter the Friedrich Ebert Foundation brings back to memory that milestone in Polish-German relations. A first in a series of events came with the opening of a travelling exhibition called „Willy Brandt and Poland” on 15 June in the New City Hall of Gdańsk. Together with the local European Solidarity Centre and the German Consulate General the Friedrich Ebert Foundation introduced the exhibition to more than 60 visitors from academic, cultural, business and policy circles.

The German Consul General in Gdańsk, Joachim Bleicker, said in his opening address that Gdańsk had a very special role in German-Polish relations. Just like Willy Brandt’s native city Lübeck, Gdańsk was one of the cities in the Hanseatic League, and is further the birth place of Brandt’s close friend, writer Günther Grass. Gdańsk is thus perfectly the venue to recall Brandt’s political activities, Bleicker said.

Paweł Bogdan Adamowicz, the city mayor of Gdańsk, also acknowledged the very prominent role Willy Brandt played on the road to German-Polish reconciliation.



Damit sei Brandt is thus to be seen as one who paved the way towards a united Europe. Angelica Schwall-Düren, Bundestag deputy and vice-chair of the SPD caucus in the German parliament, then said that Brandt successfully joined his work for a deepened integration of Germany with the West with rapprochement with neighbours in the East.

„That particular policy of rapprochement through establishing links proved a recipe for success at the time”, said Angelica Schwall Düren, „today that policy can be viewed as a guiding principle in developing EU policies towards countries along Europe’s borders in the East as well as towards Central Asian countries.” Another particularly remarkable idea was Willy Brandt’s commitment to the cause of freedom, which was strongly influenced by his personal experience. That made him a precursor of Europe. That is why his work is even today a benchmark of successful, peaceful and conciliatory foreign policy.

„Willy Brandt is the epitome of social democratic policy of freedom”, said Knut Dethlefsen, head of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Warsaw, in conclusion. „He paved the way to a united Europe and had the courage to bring in motion necessary political changes in various areas.”

The exhibition „Willy Brandt and Poland” is open for visitors till 24 September on working days from 08:00 to 16:00 in the New City Hall of Gdańsk. The show designed by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation history centre especially for high school and college students, and any interested person as well, presents a comprehensive show of the life and work of



Willy Brandt. The exhibition goes next to Wrocław where it opens on the occasion of a scheduled Willy Brandt event there on 7 Oktober. Thereafter the 21 boards of the exhibition will be moved to the Polish capital to be shown on the anniversary of the Warsaw Treaty on 7 December.

For more information on opening hours and show venues please email: [kkonarek@feswar.org.pl](mailto:kkonarek@feswar.org.pl)