
Indian Diaspora's Influence on the Economic Development of Poland in the Last Decade in the Context of the War in Ukraine and the Middle East

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“Indian Diaspora should be looked at, not just in terms of its numbers, but also in terms of its strength. The term ‘brain drain’ has been in vogue. But if we look at the Diaspora as our strength, we can convert this into ‘brain gain’ “
PM Narendra Modi (Inauguration of Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra Indian Diaspora Centre on the 2nd of October, 2016)

Abstract:

Purpose: The article discussed Polish-Indian bilateral relations and the Indian diaspora's influence on the economic development of Poland over the last decade. The Polish-Indian trade relations have been 71 years now and there were around 41000 people from India working in Poland in 2022. The number of SME companies with Indian capital has been growing since 2009.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research methodology is based on empirical research of existing literature and accessible data for the Indian diaspora and Polish-Indian bilateral relations based on government documents and agreements. For the literature review, the engine search of Mendeley was used. The main question which is assessed in this article is the evaluation of the influence of the Indian diaspora on Indo-Polish relations and also how the progress of these relations impacts the development of the Indian diaspora in Poland.

Findings: There is a strong correlation between these two regarding a positive impact on further development. The current global situation on the world market is unstable due to the global economic consequences of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine and The Middle East. Poland and India require a lot of cooperation and understanding of their position regarding future trade and the direction of global economic development. Indian diaspora in Poland can facilitate this process.

Practical Implications: In practice, the Indian diaspora can be useful for their remittances, investment, lobbying for India, promoting Indian culture and building an image in Poland through their intelligence and industry.

Originality/Value: The Indian professionals can trigger the new investment start-ups in Poland in the area of technology, nuclear energy power use and military protection. This can be done by the access of India to EU investment programmes coordinated by Poland from the EU side.

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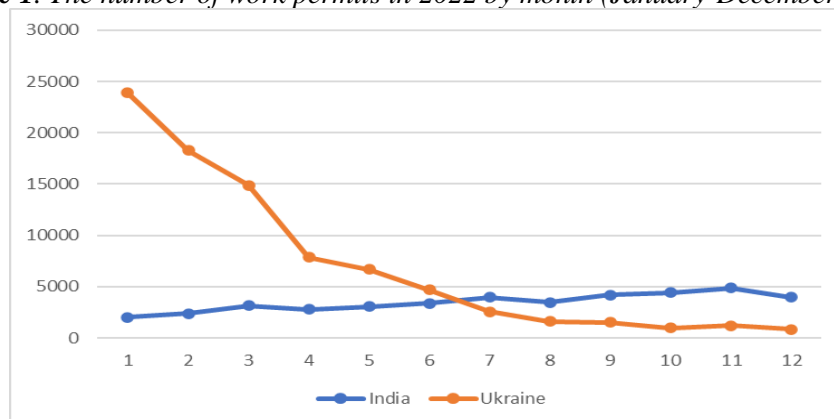
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1. Introduction

Indian diaspora is the second largest in the world estimated at 35 million people dispersed around the world. The Polish diaspora is also a big one having 20 million Poles around the world but only a fraction of that living in India. According to different sources, 10000-15000 Indian people lived in Poland before 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021; Pędziwiart and Kugell, 2014; Bąbiak *et al.*, 2015; GoH, 2020).

Due to the COVID-19 period and global economic slowdown, the number of Indian people in Poland has decreased but since the war in Ukraine from 2016 to 2022 the number of work permits issued to Indian immigrants who could legally work in Poland increased to 86307 and 94% of the work permits were issued to males (MRiPS, 2023). The war in Ukraine forced many Ukrainian workers to leave Poland and come back to Ukraine, so since July 2022 the work permits issued to Indian workers in Poland have surpassed the work permits issued to Ukrainians (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The number of work permits in 2022 by month (January-December)



Source: Based on data MRiPS, 2023.

The average work permit for 24 months and above was 61% of all work permits in 2022. Based on that it can be estimated that in Poland since 2016 live and work 40 000 people from India which constitutes Indian Diaspora in Poland. Despite the cultural differences Indo-Polish bilateral relations have a long tradition of 71 years. The first trade agreement between India and Poland was signed in 1951 to increase the volume and range of the trade (Dygas, 2021).

The analysis of bilateral cooperation between India and Poland should be preceded by indicating the area of cooperation on a comparison of the main indicators defining the economic potential of the two countries, which is provided in Table 1. India's economic growth rate is much faster estimated at 8.2% per annum in 2022, compared with 3.9% in Poland. That makes a big difference.

Table 1. *India and Poland – selected economic indicators, 2022.*

	India	Poland
Population in millions and trend	1406 (increasing since 1960)	37 (increasing since 2022 - 4,7 million Ukrainian refugees)
GDP growth in %	8.2	3.9
GDP per capita in USD	7 943	34200
CPI inflation in %	6%	14% (increased since 2020)
Public debt per capita in USD	2126 (increasing)	9000 (increasing)
The unemployment rate in % (U)	8.2*	5.4
Government budget to GDP ratio in % (G)	2.9	43
Current account to GDP ratio in % (CA)	-2.6	2
Average monthly wage in USD	422	1408
Nuclear energy share of total energy production	1,8%	0%
IMD Competitiveness Ranking – position in the ranking	37/63	50/63
Digital Transformation Index (DTI) – share of ICT industry leaders	11%	5%
MDI World Digital Competitiveness Ranking (WCDR) – position in ranking (2021) and competitiveness trend	46 (increasing)	41 (decreasing)

Note: * The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant increase in unemployment by 25–27% from March 2019 (OECD, 2020).

Source: Compilation by the author based on data from: ceicdata.com, (IMF, 2022 and WEF, 2021).

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it can be concluded that, despite India having a lower GDP per capita and monthly earnings than Poland, India is a thriving economy with huge human capital potential and the production of energy and nuclear power. In addition, there was a downward trend in Poland's digital competitiveness, as opposed to India, which saw growth in this case – despite Poland's higher position in the World Digital Competitiveness ranking (IMD, 2021).

Given the above, India could be an important and attractive economic partner for Poland, which is the fastest-growing economy among the Visegrad Group countries and has the economic potential to increase its GDP growth. For Poland to maintain its leading position in Eastern Europe, developing industrial production, trade, and services is necessary. In addition, the country needs an increase in capital investment and an increase in the level of innovation, which is currently below the EU average.

However, this requires stronger relations between business and scientific centres. In this case, closer scientific cooperation between India and Poland can contribute to reducing this gap and to the development of bilateral trade. Another important aspect is that Poland suffers high inflation due to the ongoing war with Ukraine. India could be the food hub not only for Poland when the situation with wheat transports will worsen. It can be stated that opportunities for trade cooperation between India and Poland had not been fully exploited.

During a visit by Szymon Giżyński, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Agriculture, to India in 2019, Amit Lohani, President of the Forum of Indian Food Importers (FIFI) stressed the need to import other agri-food products from Poland. The most important outcome of this meeting was a declaration of support from the Government of India regarding the procedures for the authorization of Polish companies to sell agri-food products on the Indian market (Dygas, 2021). The agriculture sector is not the only possible area for cooperation.

Another sector of investment and interest could be the mining sector, especially coal which is controversial in the EU regulatory framework of “Fit for 55” and gets more attention from the Polish economy in the context of the war in Ukraine. Poland’s cooperation with India in the mining sector has continued for many years. Both economies rely on coal, but Poland must also meet the challenges of implementing the European Green Deal strategy set by the European Commission for the energy transition of the EU member states.

The Government of India aimed to increase coal production from 708 million tons in 2016 to 1 billion tons per year in 2020, so Polish companies should take advantage of this opportunity to cooperate. The leader in this area is currently Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa, the largest producer of coking coal in the EU, which signed a cooperation agreement with Essar Steel in 2017, ensuring the continuous sale of coke produced in its plants. Relevant mining cooperation agreements were also signed between the Silesian Voivodeship and West Bengal in 2017.

The energy transition of EU countries requires exploring alternative energy sources, including renewables, an area in which India also has extensive experience. It creates additional opportunities for the investment of Indian capital in Poland. Another possible area of cooperation is the construction sector. Due to the war in Ukraine, there was an obligation by law for Ukrainian men to join the army. In that sense, most of the eligible possible workers left Poland.

It caused a significant gap in the construction sector where developers had to stop the construction business and because of the high inflation and soaring prices of building materials, many of the Polish construction companies went bankrupt. From this perspective, the construction workers from India can be a solution to this problem.

Another area of cooperation could be the film sector and entertainment. Indian cinematography is one of the world's leaders in the number of productions. Every year, 2,000 films are made in different languages in India, compared to just 40 in Poland. Regarding revenue from the distribution of film distribution in cinemas, India ranks 7th in the world due to the severe restrictions of COVID-19 impact (MPPA, 2019).

Poland signed an audiovisual co-production agreement with India in 2012. It also covers television production. Under the agreement, the Polish company Artevision signed a contract with the Indian film producer Auracine Entertainment. In March 2019, the Polish Institute of Film Arts also entered into a cooperation agreement with the Indian Producers Guild. The globalization of the Indian movie industry has played a key role in promoting Indian soft power in international relations and Prime Minister Narendra Modi often stresses in his foreign policy doctrine the four D's: democracy, demography, demand and diaspora.

The above-mentioned areas of cooperation between India and Poland need to be considered by both governments and also influenced by the proper activities of the Indian Diaspora in Poland. The recent visit of The Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Zbigniew Rau to India in April 2022 was a good sign of strengthening bilateral relations.

Minister Rau participated in the Raisina Dialogue international conference and admitted that India is one of Poland's key economic partners in Asia and Poland would like to cooperate with India in environmental technologies. Minister Rau also addressed the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service on Polish-Indian relations as well as the challenges and opportunities of Polish Foreign Policy (MSZ, 2022).

2. Literature Review

The literature regarding the influence of the Indian Diaspora on the development of Indo-Polish relations is rather very limited because the Indian Diaspora in Poland is quite small in numbers. More information can be found about Indian Diaspora in general (Bhattacharjee, 2020; Parija 2021; Gowricharn, 2021) as it is the second largest diaspora in the world after China. It influences the world to be the soft power which is composed of culture, ideology and foreign policy (Srinivas, 2019).

Diaspora is defined in literature as the minor community living in exile and the word 'Diaspora' has a Grk root (Shai, 2019). The word 'diaspora' comes from the ancient

Greek diaspeiro and means ‘to saw over’ or ‘dispersion’. The term was used to designate the dispersion of the Jewish people, whose first real exile outside Palestine dates from 70 CE (Britannica, 2023).

Now there is the age of digitalisation which made travelling easier and the distance shorter the term ‘Diaspora’ has lost its original connotation. More publications concern the diaspora’s engagement policy and how it is formed. The interesting approach of the Indian diaspora engagement framework in Germany, Italy and Ireland was described by The International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

There were several steps indicated based on the best practices in EU countries such as: (1) getting to know the diaspora, (2) supporting states in diaspora engagement, (3) empowering the diaspora especially by promoting network and ng, (4) creating space for interaction and dialogue. One of the important findings of this study was that diaspora organisations are primarily organised along regional lines and aim to promote culture, language and arts in Germany, Italy, Ireland and Poland (Noack, 2019).

As it is indicated in the literature there are some important policies namely building a transnational national society, providing protection and tourism services, and facilitating investment opportunities (Gamlen, 2006). One of the important characteristics of diaspora members is a continuity to relate, personally and vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnic-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship (Nandan, 1996).

One of the reports related to the Indian Diaspora in Poland was published in 2014 by The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM). This report was based also on the 20 different interviews conducted with Indians living, doing business and working in different sectors in Poland. Even though that report is old and the global economic situation has changed due to the pandemic COVOD-19 and the war in Ukraine some of the recommendations from this report can be recalled here:

(1) Polish labour market. Poland should rethink its immigration policy and visa regime concerning Indian nationals to encourage certain groups (for example, doctors, IT specialists and nurses) to move to Poland.

(2) Education. Another recommendation was that more students from India should come to study in Poland.

(3) Indo-Polish relations. The third recommendation was that Polish diplomacy should recognise the Indian community as a useful asset in strengthening relations with India (Kugieł and Pędziwiatr, 2014). Indo-Polish relations in the aspect of

culture were also examined from the perspective of transforming such relations into cultural diplomacy.

The main finding was that the absence of a strategic partnership put the impetus on cultural diplomacy as it became an important foundational block on which a future relationship between Poland and India can be built (Solanki, 2020).

The government of Haryana issued the report regarding Indo-Polish bilateral relations and India's diaspora in Poland. According to this report, the main achievement of the Indian diaspora in Poland was to create three India-centric business chambers [Indo-Polish Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IPCCI), Western Pomeranian Indian Chamber of Commerce & Poland-India Business Council (PIBC)] (GoH, 2020)

3. The Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on empirical research of existing literature and accessible data for the Indian diaspora and Polish-Indian bilateral relations based on government documents and agreements. For the literature review, the engine search of *Mendeley* was used. There are not enough data and literature positions regarding the influence of the Indian diaspora the Polish-Indian bilateral relations. That is the knowledge gap that should be partially filled by this article.

The author used also his publications regarding Polish-Indian relations, professional experience and contacts with Indian people who have worked and lived in Poland for a long time to formulate some thoughts. The impact of COVID-19 and the war on Ukraine were included in this article which is quite important for the conclusions and interpretations of presented data. The research is conducted using secondary data sources on migration, economics, Indian diaspora.

The existing literature, reports by IMF, OECD, WEF, and statistics from Polish government authorities and the Government of India are mainly used. Other publications and reports of government and private entities available in the public domain have provided valuable input.

4. India's Diaspora in Poland and its Impact on the Development of Bilateral Indo-Polish Relations

According to official Polish government statistics in 2021, there were around 7000 positive decisions for temporary (up to 3 years) residence in Poland issued for Indian nationals (migracja.gov.pl). Indian Community of Poland had 10000 registered members in 2020 (Indiancommunityofpoland.org). It means that the Indian Diaspora in Poland is not big but it is still the beginning of changes and opportunities for India and Poland to strengthen bilateral relations. Indian diaspora in Poland can be characterised as voluntary migration for the sake of business or academic purposes,

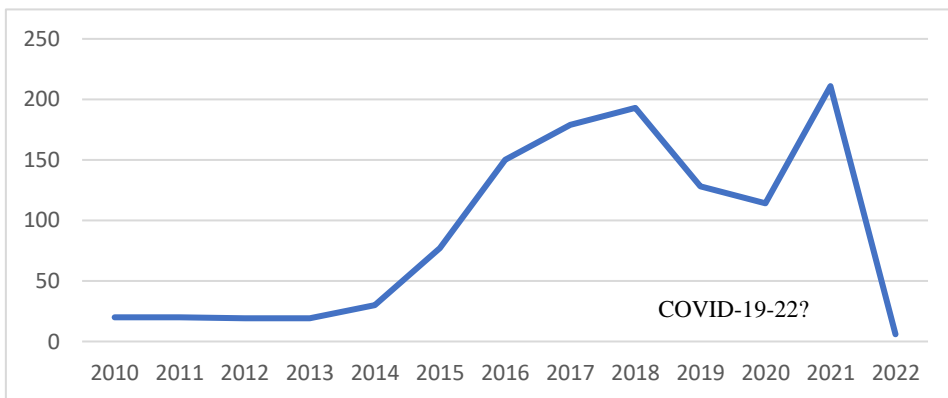
but it is still not an important destination for Indian immigrants who prefer other destinations such as France, The Netherlands, Germany and the UK in Europe and the US, KSA, Malaysia, Mauritius in other parts of the globe.

There are a couple of important historical events which allowed Indian people to visit Poland. The first was the collapse of communism in 1990, then the second was the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004 and the direct flight of LOT Airlines from Warsaw to New Delhi on the 11th of September 2019 (There was an indirect flight in 1985 but with the stop in Uzbekistan, Tashkent).

Those events helped to establish and do business with Indian professionals in Poland. The characteristics of the Indian Diaspora in Poland mainly relate to business and education. Some of the members are CEOs or Board Members in such companies like Wipro, HCL, and ArcelorMittal and others run Indian restaurants, and yoga schools in the main cities of Poland such as Warsaw, Raszyn, Pabianice, Łódź.

The most of Indian companies located in Poland are in the IT sector (Dygas, 2020). Besides the big multinational companies (MNEs) there are also small and medium Indian firms operating in Poland (SMEs). The number of registrations of Indian SME companies in Poland by the year of registry is presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. The number of registrations of Indian SME companies in Poland 2010-2022



Source: Based on the *coig.pl*, data.

From Figure 2 it can be seen that the number of registrations of Indian SME companies (also with Indian capital) was increasing since 2013 till COVID-19 started in 2019. There is a still risk of COVID-19 in Europe which will hurt business in Europe. According to the accessible data from the Central Economic Information Center (*coig.pl*), there were 1294 companies with Indian capital where the shareholder was an Indian company or a private owner from India.

The most common business profiles of such companies were restaurants, food and catering services and textile trading (440 companies). These companies were located mainly in big cities of Poland (Warsaw, Cracow, Łódź, Poznań).

The explanation for the increasing number of Indian companies registered in Poland besides Polish economic growth in the CEE region can be also the Indian government's official visitation to Poland and Polish government ministries' visits to India. Such visits took place during 2009-2022. There is a positive correlation between bilateral Indo-Polish relations development, Poland's stable economic growth (2003-2018) and Indian diaspora growth in Poland.

The bigger the Indian diaspora in Poland, the more attention the Indian government attracts. The better the bilateral trade and cultural relations between India and Poland the better conditions for the Indian diaspora in Poland to grow. One of the barriers is cultural differences. Poland is a rather homogeneous society while India is a country of many languages, religions and social flavours.

The business culture differences are still big obstacles for Indian people to live and do business in Poland for no longer than 3-5 years. Another important group in the Indian Diaspora is Poland students. They were the third largest group of foreign students studying in Poland mainly on master's and PhD courses in 2019 before COVID-19 started (Siwinska, 2020). The students from India also chose to study in Ukraine as the visa procedures were less complicated than in the EU.

Nowadays as the war in Ukraine expanded to western parts of Ukraine most of the Indian students escaped to Poland or returned to India. The Indian diaspora besides obvious business influence in Poland can also act as the mediator between India and Poland in the context of the war in Ukraine giving support to Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

There are different approaches of India and Poland in foreign policies towards Russia. Poland stands for Ukraine and chose to isolate itself from Russia's gas, oil and fertilizers while India had a different strategy which can be explained by Asian business culture. In the European mentality, it is quite difficult to understand how it could be possible to continue business with a country which violates the independence and peace of Ukraine which is a neighbour country of Poland.

It was also similar to the US President who evaluated India's neutrality as disappointing because it signalled a sharp divergence between Washington and New Delhi on a fundamental issue of global order, namely, the legitimacy of using force to change borders and occupy another nation's territory through a blatant war of conquest (Tellis, 2022). That is why the EU imposed several restrictions and financial sanctions on Russia which was treated by Russia as the declaration of the III World War. In Asian culture is not the case – a business can be done even though the war was started by Russia in Ukraine in 2014.

There are also cases of business cooperation between Japan and China on electricity even though the geopolitical differences have to be considered. Another example is Indonesia which wants to officially cooperate with Russia. From an Asian standpoint, India and Indonesia accept and support the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

It needs to be clarified but understanding such different policy approaches by Poland and other EU countries is tough. Here comes the role of the Indian diaspora which can act as the intermediary and facilitator of Polish-Indian bilateral ties and further cooperation to protect the Polish-Indian long tradition of trade and cultural exchange despite the war in Ukraine and differences in this matter between India and Poland.

5. The Impact of the Wars in Ukraine and the Middle East on Indian Diaspora

There were 18 000 Indians in Ukraine mostly students of engineering and medicine while in Israel were 85 000 Jews of Indian origin mainly from Maharashtra (Bene Israelis), but the number of Indians living and working in Israel was 18 000 as of 2022. There is also the Indian Diaspora in Russia of 21,000 non-resident Indians (Embassy of India, 2023). Most of the Indians who stayed in Ukraine were evacuated to India under the “Ganga Operation” while quite a few Indians immigrated to Poland to join the diaspora there.

The situation in India regarding the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East is not easy and helpful for the Indian Diaspora to grow. Indian government supports Israel in a war conflict which makes it difficult for Indian Diaspora members living in other Islamic countries. According to the official statistics of the Government of India and the Ministry of External Affairs the Islamic countries of the Gulf Region had 8.8 million Indians as of March 2023 and the value of the remittance sent to India was around 44 bn USD (Singh, 2022).

As the anti-Jewish tensions will increase in those countries Indian Diaspora will need to consider evacuation to India or other countries. It will create additional problems for the Government of India to take care of millions of returned home especially students who can not continue their studies in Ukraine and Israel. That creates also the opportunity for Poland where more Indian students choose Poland as the place to study. Poland received 2,700 students from India which was the second-highest number after Zimbabwe in the academic year 2022/23 (Wesoła, 2023).

Also, the position of India regarding the war in Ukraine is rather business-related and the government of India needs to balance between political alignment and business opportunity which both wars bring to India.

Indian Diaspora is a tool for India’s development strategy so when the diaspora is diminishing due to the wars and conflicts the soft power of India is weakening and the Indian government costs increase. The war in Israel destabilises the India-Middle

East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) the infrastructure projects connecting India with the Middle East and Europe. That can also affect Poland in a negative way as the European Union is involved in this project and Poland is at a political turning point after the national parliament elections on the 15th of October 2023 so it makes the situation less clear and complicated.

6. Conclusion

Based on the facts presented in this article the most important conclusions can be as follows:

- (1) Due to the COVID-19 period and global economic slowdown, the number of Indian people in Poland was decreasing. Still, since the war in Ukraine (2014) from 2016 to 2022 the number of work permits issued to Indian immigrants who could legally work in Poland increased to 86307 and 94% of the work permits were issued to males. It can be estimated that Indian Diaspora in Poland reached 41000 people in 2022.
- (2) The war in Ukraine and Israel impacted the Indian diaspora communities living and working in those countries and the majority of them had to return to India which required the government of India additional programs to secure the work and for the students a possibility to continue their studies. Poland can have the opportunity to place Indian students in Polish universities due to the war in Ukraine and Israel.
- (3) The war in Israel destabilises the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) the infrastructure projects connecting India with The Middle East and Europe.
- (4) The Indian diaspora can be useful for their remittances, investment, lobbying for India, promoting Indian culture and building an image in Poland through their intelligence and industry.
- (5) The Indian professionals can trigger the new investment start-ups in Poland in the area of technology, nuclear energy power use and military protection. This can be done by the access of India to EU investment programmes coordinated by Poland from the EU side.
- (6) The Polish government should:
 - a. refocus on Indo-Polish business relations despite the geopolitical differences and also make the visa process for investors and students from India simpler and easier,
 - b. improve the labour market situation in Poland, especially in the construction and service sectors where Indian employees can fill the gap of the Ukrainian workers who left Poland due to the war in Ukraine,
 - c. start Polish- Indian initiatives for cooperation in agriculture, maritime and nuclear energy sectors. This can also be done with the help and facilitation of the Indo-Polish chambers of commerce such as IPPCI, Western Pomeranian Indian Chamber of Commerce & Poland-India Business Council (PIBC),

d. create more opportunities for Indian students to choose Poland as the place for international study.

(7) The absence of a strategic partnership put the impetus on cultural diplomacy as it became an important foundational block on which a future relationship between Poland and India can be built (Solanki, 2020).

(8) Further Polish-Indian bilateral relations depend on India's and Poland's foreign policy towards Russia. The Indian diaspora in Poland can play a specific role in this process by supporting Ukrainian refugees.

(9) The better the bilateral trade and cultural relations between India and Poland the better conditions for the Indian diaspora in Poland to grow.

(10) Diaspora organisations are primarily organised along regional lines and aim to promote culture, language and arts in Germany, Italy, Ireland and Poland (Noack, 2019).

Those points above are not complete but they at least show the magnitude of the potential opportunity regarding the influence of India's diaspora on economic development through soft power. More than 20 million Polish people are living abroad but they do not have the characteristic of networking as the Indian diaspora has.

There should be a lesson learnt from the Indian diaspora on how to organize and work together to support the home country's position in international business. Indian diaspora besides the strong networking is transformed into an organization where cultural, economic and ideological aspects interact together (Gowricharn, 2021).

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