

Challenge for the model pupil



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The serial entrepreneur and executive searcher founded Executive Network in 2005. His company searches top executives for a wide array of sectors and offers additional services as board advisory and consulting and executive coaching. Daniel Lewczuk is supervisory board member at Kopex SA and Mostostal Zabrze SA, two large capital groups listed on the Warsaw stock exchange.

Poland has been an extraordinary economic star in Europe, growing all the way through the big recession that dragged down its EU partners. But amidst a consolidation in maturing sectors and the Ukraine crisis, big challenges lie ahead of Polish companies. This has affected their corporate governance: Supervisory boards assume a more active role in controlling and advising the management.

Text: Daniel Lewczuk **Photos:** Daniel Lewczuk, Wikimedia, u.a.

Prior to an important parliamentary election, change is in the air in Poland, politically as well as economically. Although the Polish economy is still growing solidly with a pace of more than 3 % of GDP per annum, the export industry is impacted by recessions in other countries and by the events in the Ukraine and Russia. Meanwhile, sectors like banking and pharma have been consolidating heavily. Polish companies need to be able to succeed in more and more competitive, maturing markets where margins are decreasing.

The boardrooms have adapted to this challenge. Supervisory boards, mandatory in publicly listed companies, used to have a simple representational function. Now, we witness a shift to a more active role. Furthermore, there is a tendency to create advisory boards, which are not demanded by the statutes: They strengthen the management teams, can act as door-openers and bring additional experience and knowledge to the table.

In Poland, supervisory boards usually consist of 3 to 6 members. They supervise the policies of the executive board and the general affairs of the company, considering the relevant interests of the company's stakeholders. The supervisory board advises the executive board and is in charge for corporate social responsibility issues which may be relevant.

When it comes to gender diversity, Poland is behind the game in comparison to many European countries: Well established international companies wish to diversify their boards, but there are only a limited number of less than 200 women who are playing key roles at senior level in large companies.



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Diverse Poland: The biggest of the new EU member countries unites 38,5 million inhabitants on an area of 312 679 square kilometers. Industrial complexes like the port of Gdańsk (top centre) and picturesque Old Towns like in Toruń (top right) contrast with wide landscapes as the Tatra Mountains (bottom right). The historical heart of the country may lie in Kraków (right, second from bottom), the economic driving force stays its capital Warsaw (centre), where the modern skyline is eclipsing the socialist architectural heritage.