



Embassy
of the Republic of Poland
in London

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**Anglo/Polish Conference on
the Exchange of Information, Legal and Practical Systems and the Placement of Polish
Children Coming to the Attention of
Local Authority Social Care and the Courts in England and Wales**

Welcome by

His Excellency Witold Sobków

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Poland

Thank you for attending our conference today, its theme is an important and highly topical subject in both Poland and the United Kingdom (and indeed other European Union member states as well): care proceedings for, in this case, Polish children and the legal and practical systems that surround them.

The number of cases of public care proceedings being registered by the Polish consular offices is steadily rising, in line with number of Polish families living in the UK. Bearing in mind those facts we are keenly interested in every new development in this field and we would like to contribute to strengthening the cooperation between British institutions and their counterparts in EU countries. I trust that today's discussion will also enhance the mutual trust in public institutions upon which the youngest of our population are so dependent.

I hope that the conference will provide a platform for the representatives of judiciary and family law specialists from both countries to discuss necessary improvements in their communication, identify shortcomings which protract court proceedings and enhance more direct communication between family courts in the UK and Poland.

Biographical Notes

Until his appointment as Ambassador of Poland to the Court of St. James in August 2012, Witold Sobków served as Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations in New York and as Political Director (CFSP). Previously, he was in the Department of Strategy and Planning of Poland's Foreign Policy, with the rank of Titular Ambassador. In 2006 he served as Under-Secretary of State for European Affairs. Witold Sobków was Poland's Ambassador to Ireland from 2002 until 2006, prior to which he had been Senior Adviser to the Minister on European Affairs. In 2001 he was Director for Non-European Countries and the United Nations System, having served as Deputy Head of the West European Department since November 2000 when he came back from the UK having acted as Deputy Head of Mission at the Polish Embassy. Before joining the Ministry, Witold Sobków was for 7 years a lecturer at Warsaw University.

He is a civil servant and holds two MAs *summa cum laude* in the English language and literature, and in the Italian language and literature, both from Warsaw University. He undertook various postgraduate programmes, e.g. Islamic studies at London University, security in South-East Asia at King's College, diplomacy/economics/security/political science at Stanford University as well as national and international security at Harvard. He received scholarships to study in Siena, Venice and Perugia.