Poland

COUNTRY OVERVIEW
CAPITAL: Warsaw
POPULATION: 38,482,919
ETHNIC GROUPS: Polish (96.7%), German (0.4%), Belarusian (0.1%), Ukranian (0.1%), other/unspecified (2.7%)
LOCATION: Central Europe, east of Germany
CLIMATE: Temperate with cold, cloudy, moderately severe winters with frequent participation; mild summers with frequent showers and thundershowers
RELIGIONS: Roman Catholic (89.8%), Eastern Orthodox (1.3%), Protestant (0.3%), other (0.3%), unspecified (8.3%)
LANGUAGES: Polish (97.8%), other or unspecified (2.2%)

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
TEACHING STYLES – Classes are teacher-fronted and teacher oriented. Meanwhile, students are expected to not ask any questions or engage in arguments with instructors. There is no evaluation system for teachers by students at any level of education.

LEARNING STYLES – Students work alone, in pairs or in groups, depending on the subject, the project, or the teacher. Group work has become more popular in recent years. Students are respectful and will sometimes stand when called on to answer a question or when the teacher enters the classroom.

INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING – Many schools are on shift systems, meaning that half of the students study only in the morning and the second half arrives for class in the afternoon. The pressure of exams is high, due to entrance exams, which students must take in order to pass from elementary school to middle school to high school.

DISCIPLINE AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – Written rules and consequences for breaking them are posted. Students get points for good behavior, and lose points for bad behavior. If students misbehave, they may get a detention or will be expelled from school because suspension is not practiced.

EDUCATOR-Student RELATIONSHIP – Teachers are students’ role models, but are not expected to interact with students outside of school.

STUDENT-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS – While students are in school, they develop strong relationships. However, competing with one another for entry into better schools can make them jealous or malicious. Due to a shortage of educational supplies, students learn early to share with others.

POLITE/IMPOLITE TOPICS/BEHAVIORS – The art of argument is widely practiced and admired in Poland. It is necessary for professionals to make appointments with each other, and people are generally very punctual. Cultural history, country, and family, are welcome topics of conversation. However, sexual overtones, criticism of the Catholic Church, and jokes about Polish people, are considered rude.

**All information from the “CIA World Factbook” and “Understanding Your International Students: An Educational, Cultural, and Linguistic Guide” (October, 2010)