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Overview of the Poland-Brazil Relations

Kinga Brudzińska

For centuries, Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) was perceived in Poland as a distant land visited only sporadically by individual diplomats and travellers. Except for rare cases of direct people-to-people contacts, it can be safely observed that the history of direct relations between Brazil and Poland failed to attract considerable attention of both countries. Nevertheless the bilateral diplomatic relations were set up in 1920, the first Polish President to visit Brazil was Lech Wałęsa in 1995, and the Brazilian President, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, paid a visit to Poland no earlier than in 2002. Geographical distance, the lack of traditionally close ties and fundamental domestic policy goals were among the main causes of the relatively low intensity of dialogue. The systemic transformation in both countries (Brazil has started its transition in 1985, and Poland in 1989), which included development of the democratic systems and solid macroeconomic footings; and modernization of their socioeconomic system did not help them to develop a global foreign policy. As a result the intensity of bilateral relations has been low. If we however compare Poland's relations with Brazil to its interactions with other LAC countries, we notice that Brazil has always been one of its top partners in the region (next to Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Peru and Colombia). Despite an obvious difference in scale and international positions (Brazil is five times larger in terms of population and economy)¹, Poland pays special attention to its relations with the South American giant. For example, Brazil is mentioned as "priority partner" in the region in two key Polish foreign policy documents: "Strategy of the Republic of Poland towards Non-European Developing Countries" from 2004 and "2012-2016 Polish Foreign Policy Priorities".

Political and diplomatic relations

¹ K. Brudzińska, B. Znojek, Poland and Brazil: Narrowing the Distance, Exploring Mutual Potential, Policy Paper no. 46, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw 2012.



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Polish-Brazilian diplomatic relations were established on 27 May 1920 at the level of Legations². The Consulate General of Poland in Curitiba and the Vice-Consulates in Porto Alegre and São Paulo were subordinated to the Legation of Poland in Rio de Janeiro. In Poland, apart from the Legation of Brazil in the capital, two Brazilian Consulates General operated (in Warsaw and Gdynia). During World War II, Brazil did not break relations with Poland, and recognized its government in exile in London (Polish interests in Brazil were represented by the French Embassy in Rio de Janeiro). After the war, both countries agreed to nominate their respective diplomatic representatives at the level of Deputies. So it was that the Polish Legation in Brazil, and the Brazil Legation in Poland resumed their activities (in 1946 and 1947 respectively). Finally, on 13 January 1961 the diplomatic representations were elevated to the level of embassy.

At that time, Polish diplomatic representations in Brazil included: the Embassy in Brasilia, three Consulates General (Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo), and three Honorary Consulates (Belo Horizonte, Erexim and Vitoria). The number of Polish diplomatic representations subsequently decreased when two Polish Consulates in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo were closed (in 2008 and 2013 respectively). At the same time, the number of Honorary Consulates went up. Today Poland has six Honorary Consulates (in Belo Horizonte, Fortaleza, Manaus, Porto Alegre, Vitoria, and Salvador)³. In addition a Trade and Investment Promotion Sections, under the Polish Ministry of the Economy, was created in São Paulo to help Polish companies in Brazil, and to assist foreign businesses looking to buy goods and services or locate their activity in Poland⁴. Brazil is represented in Poland by its Embassy and the Consulate General in Warsaw. Despite attempts to open a Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex-Brasil) in Warsaw in 2009, the agency is not present in Poland (it operates from Brussels and Moscow)⁵. In both countries, there are however Chambers of Commerce (in São Paulo and Warsaw) that support local companies in entering new markets⁶.

² K. Szczepanik, A. Herman-Łukasik, B. Janicka (ed.), Guide to the Diplomatic Relations of Poland: North and South America 1918-2007, vol. II, MFA of Poland, Warsaw 2008, pp. 28.
³ Polish diplomatic representations abroad, Brazil, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/informacje_konsularne/polskie_placowki/
⁴ First Brazilian-Polish Chamber of Commerce was created in 1962 in São Paulo. See more: Trade and Investment Promotion Section in Sao Paulo, Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Brasilia, https://saopaulo.trade.gov.pl/en/o nas/article/detail,43,Our mission.html

⁵ G. Lima, Brazil opts for Poland, Invest in Poland, PAIZ, 7 September 2009,

⁶ Câmara Nacional de Comércio e Indústria Brasil-Polônia, http://www.exporta.sp.gov.br/2004/pages/popCamInt.asp?C=142 and Câmara de Comércio Polônia-Brasil http://www.izbapol-braz.com/str2%200%20izbie.html

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, Poland and Brazil have signed fifteen bilateral agreements, of which nine have so far entered into force⁷. These include agreements on economic cooperation (1960), on maritime transport (1976), on cultural cooperation (1991), on education and technology (1996), and a visa waiver agreement (1999)⁸. Moreover, the European Commission-Brazil Framework Cooperation Agreement (1992), the EU-Mercosur Framework Cooperation Agreement (1995) and the Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (2004) shape Polish-Brazilian cooperation⁹.

Today there are no contentious matters in Poland's relations with Brazil¹⁰. Similarly to most Latin American countries, the mechanism of political–economic consultations at the deputy ministerial level or at the level of political directors prevails in Poland's relations with Brazil (last held in 2012 in Brasilia at the level of Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs). Direct talks are also hold in the framework of multilateral meetings, in particular in the EU-LAC format (for example the EU-CELAC summits). Thanks to Poland's EU accession, Latin American and Caribbean countries have become more accessible, and relations with them more complex, mostly because of the wide range of areas in which the EU collaborates with Brazil. Even though Poland is still a "rule-taker" rather than a "rule-maker" in regards to EU policy towards the LAC region (within the CFSP or EEAS Warsaw still focuses more on the Eastern Partnership countries), it tries to engage in shaping EU strategy. For example, Poland is in favour of further negotiations on the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement¹².

Within the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Poland, Brazil is dealt with together with other Latin America and Caribbean countries in the Department of the Americas that coordinates the cooperation between the Poland and North, Central and South America as well as regional

⁷ Database of the Polish bilateral agreements, MFA of Poland, http://www.traktaty.msz.gov.pl/SearchTreaties.aspx?t=DW

⁸ The agreements waiting for becoming operational are for example agreements on Cooperation in the field of Veterinary (2002), on Fight Against Organized Crime (2006), on Defense Cooperation (2010), and on Transferring Convicts (2012). See more: Database of the Polish bilateral agreements, op.cit.

⁹ EU-Brazil Fact Sheet, Brussels, 20 February 2014 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-14-122 en.htm

EU-Brazil Fact Sneet, Diusseis, 20 replain, 122 en.htm
10 In the past, there was however one issue that could have negatively affected the bilateral relations. In 1970 and 1980 communist Poland owed to Brazil debt that amounted to \$4 billion (consequently Poland became the largest debtor of Brazil). Quickly, Polish debt securities were pejoratively called "polonetas" by Brazilian press and name became a symbol of "bad" debt, which is practically unrecoverable. Fortunately, the debts were restructured at the beginning of Poland's democratic transition in the 1990s under the Paris Club and repaid only in 2001 (\$3,3 billion), [in:] Poland pays its debts to the Paris Club, Ministry of Finance of Poland, 31 March 2009, http://www.archbip.mf.gov.pl/bip/20943.html

¹¹ Poland-Latin America and Caribbean relations, MFA of Poland,

http://msz.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/other_continents/latin_america_and_caribbean/poland_latin_america_and_caribbean 1?searchCategory=Text&search=true

²² And Caribbean Trsearch Laceyory Technology Poland-Latin America and Caribbean relations, op.cit.

organisations, and supervises the diplomatic representations of Poland in the region, including ten embassies (in Ottawa, Washington, Mexico, Havana, Caracas, Bogota, Brasilia, Lima, Santiago and Buenos Aires)¹³. In the Brazilian MFA, Poland is dealt with together with the Visegrad countries (known also as V4, which apart from Poland includes the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia) the Balkans, the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and the South Caucasus in the Division of Central and Eastern Europe (Divisão da Europa II, DE II). Thus DE II supervises sixteen diplomatic representations of Brazil in the region, including Bratislava, Bucharest, Budapest, Yerevan, Kiev, Ljubljana, Minsk, Moscow, Prague, Sarajevo, Sofia, Tallinn, Tirana, Tbilisi, Warsaw, Zagreb¹⁴. Surprisingly, even after 10 years in the European Union the V4 and the Baltic states are not yet part of the DE I, which covers Western Europe, Scandinavian countries and Turkey¹⁵. Still Brazil has lesserdeveloped relations with Poland (and V4 countries) than other EU Members. Due to Brazil's particular interests (for example: Germany in trade and environmental cooperation, and France in military sphere) or cultural ties and a common language (Portugal), the "old EU member states" are more attractive partners. Therefore, the internal bureaucratic organisation within Brazilian MFA has not changed yet. For the same reasons, in Poland (as in other Central European countries), Brazil together with other LAC countries is integrated into the Americas department. Given the fact that this department is responsible for relations with the United States, Canada, and 33 other countries, in general - the Latin American and Caribbean region looses the focus on a daily basis.

Areas of cooperation

Besides political dialogue, areas of cooperation between Poland and Brazil include trade and investment, including in the defence sector, and the development of people-to-people contacts, given the large Polish diaspora in Brazil¹⁶.

Trade and Investment

¹³ Department of the Americas, MFA of Poland,

http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/ministry/organisation/organisational units /department of the americas

14 Brazil representations abroad, Itamaraty, http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/o-ministerio/o-brasil-no-exterior

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¹⁶ The numbers differ. The Polish Commonwealth Association, which cooperates with Polish diasporas abroad, says there are about 1.8 million people (as of 2007), [in:] The Polish Commonwealth Association, Polish community abroad in numbers, http://archiwum.wspolnotapolska.org.pl/index.php?id=pwko00

Brazil is Poland's most important trade partner in Latin America and the Caribbean¹⁷. The volume of trade between the two countries rose to a record level of \$1.48 billion in 2013 (a 8.4% increase from the previous year)¹⁸. This is a substantial increase compared to 2000, when trade made up just \$544 million, and 2004, when it was hardly any larger, at \$554.2 million¹⁹. The 2007-2008 global financial crisis had a delayed effect on Polish-Brazilian trade. Although imports from Brazil were relatively constant, Polish exports to the region suffered a slight dent in 2009. However, they soon recovered and between 2010 and 2011 trade with Brazil saw an unprecedented increase of 20% (from \$1.16 billion in 2010 to \$1.4 billion in 2011)²⁰. Thus, paradoxically, it was the latest global financial crisis that provided the conditions for Poland to look at Brazil more interested. Increasing awareness of the difficulty of fully overcoming the negative effects of the crisis in at least the medium term in Europe has led to a growing conviction that the emerging economies such as Brazil will be important poles of economic growth. On this wave, in 2012 the Ministry of the Economy of Poland added Brazil, as the first LAC country, to a list of priority markets for Polish export and investment. As part of the programme, titled "Priority Directions for Poland's Economy", Polish companies receive support in their activities on foreign markets, including initiatives such as support at trade fairs, participation in official state visits, and the promotion of Poland in the local press.

Even though Poland has a current account deficit with Brazil, its exports to Brazil have been growing faster than imports (there has been a 21% increase in export, and 1.6% rise in imports in the last year)²¹. A current account surplus of \$330,6 million on the Brazilian side is down to the Polish purchases of Embraer airplanes, coffee, and sugar cane. In general Brazil's exports to Poland fall into 5 categories: electro-machinery products (planes, automotive parts); commodities (soy products, coffee, sugar, tobacco, tropical fruits); minerals (iron ore, aluminium); plastics; and chemical products. In the last few years, Polish exports to Brazil have consisted in three groups of products: electro-machinery (machinery and electronic parts);

https://saopaulo.trade.gov.pl/pl/brasil/article/detail,2149,Wspolpraca gospodarcza Polska -Brazylia w 2013 roku.html

¹⁷ Nevertheless, both positions in trade flows are modest (as of 2013 Brazil's share of Polish trade amounts to 0.36%, while Poland accounts for just a bit over 0.2% of Brazil's trade), [in:] Economic cooperation between Brazil and Poland in 2013, WPHI São Paulo,

¹⁸ Economic cooperation between Brazil and Poland in 2013, op.cit.

Economic cooperation between Brazil and Follow and 2004.

Economic cooperation between Brazil and Pollow in 2013, op. cit. ²¹ Economic cooperation between Brazil and Poland in 2013, op.cit.

mineral products (coal); and chemical products (mainly fertilisers).

According to Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, potential co-operation areas between Poland and Brazil include machinery, railroad transportation, agri-food and defence. As for the latter, in 2010, Poland concluded military-technological cooperation agreements with Brazil, and a military attaché office was set up within the Polish Embassy in Brasilia. The increased interest in developing cooperation with LAC countries is not only given to Poland's intentions to exchange experience and information with other democratic countries in the area of defence but is also linked to its aim to explore new export opportunities. For example, Poland's defence company Polski Holding Obronny (PHO) is very interested in Brazil's long-term reform of the armed forces and defence industry that is due to include the purchase of air defence, night vision devices, mortars or missiles²². As a result, PHO is reportedly considering opening an office in one of the Brazilian cities.

Even though Poland is the second destination of Brazilian direct investments among the V4 countries (after the Czech Republic), the Polish Agency for Investment Promotion (PAIiIZ) in 2011 registered only one (finished) Brazilian project in Poland, carried out by IT company Stefanini. Indeed, there are more cases of Polish engagement in Brazil than vice versa. According to Eurostat, since 2005 Polish direct investment in Brazil has been constantly growing (from \$1.3 million in 2005 to \$21.5 million in 2010, and \$52.3 in 2012)²³. Again the biggest increase was seen between 2009 and 2010, when the Polish FDI increased more than fivefold (from \$4 million in 2009 to \$21 million in 2010)²⁴. The Polish firms present in Brazil belong to various sectors and include Selena (construction chemicals producer), LUG (electrical equipment manufacturer), Medcom (manufactuer of equipment for power supply systems), eSKY (ICT), FM Group (cosmetics), Komandor (furniture), Chemical Group Boryszew (under the name Maflow do Brasil Ltda; car parts). One interesting example of Polish engagement is the Gremi Group's investment in northeast Brazil, which is based on the principles of sustainable development and engagement with local communities. The project consists of establishing three interlinked components: an ecological tourist

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²² The PHO is the biggest producer and supplier of arms in Poland and one of the biggest in Central and Eastern Europe. The majority shareholder in Polish Defence Holding is the Polish State Treasure,, in: Polish Defense Holding, About Us, http://www.pho.pl/about-us/

²³ EU direct investments in Brazil, Direct investments stocks,

²⁴ Ibidem.

resort, a housing complex and a technological park²⁵. Due to the increased interest of Polish companies in Brazil, an increase in investment in coming years seems probable. Polish companies are especially interested in the Brazilian chemical industry. This is reflected by the fact that the Polish producer of Indian rubber - Synthos, plans to build a factory in Brazil²⁶. Other attractive sectors are the rubber industry, pharmaceutical, and metal sector.

People-to-people contacts

The Polish diaspora (the so-called "Polonia") in the region has always been an important element of the Polish-Brazilian relationship. Out of all LAC countries Brazil once again stands out. Of the 2.5 million people of Polish origin living in the region, the biggest community lives in Brazil (ca. 1.8 million)²⁷. Even though for Brazil (now inhabited by 202 million people) the numbers of people with Polish origin is small, for Poland which has around 20 million people abroad the community in Brazil accounts for almost 10%. Brazil, after the United States, and Germany is the third biggest cluster of Poles abroad²⁸.

The first wave of Polish immigrants began arriving in Brazil in the 1870s and 1880s in search of opportunities and a better life²⁹. Around 8-9 thousand Poles arrived in states such as Espírito Santo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do $\mathrm{Sul}^{30}.$ In the coming years, the favourable policy of the Brazilian government towards immigrants from Europe (for example granting property for free or on favourable conditions) on the one hand, and the complicated internal situation in Poland on the other hand, encouraged the Poles further to come to Brazil. This period, known also as "Brazilian Rush" (the apogee of which was 1890-1891) attracted ca. 40-80 thousands Poles to Brazil³¹. Between 1894-1896 came ca. 20 thousands more. First Poles who came to Brazil were mostly peasants, many of whom settled in São Paulo and worked on coffee plantations. The first and second world wars forced more Poles to look for a safe haven. After World War I broke out, 115 thousands Poles left to Brazil. By 1939 there were as many as 300 thousand Poles in Brazil³². After

²⁵ K. Brudzinska, B. Znojek, op.cit.

²⁶ D. Malinowski, J. Wiśniewski: a country of samba and football attracts the attention of Polish chemical industry, 3 April 2014, http://chemia.wnp.pl/j-wisniewski-kraj-samby-i-pilki-noznej-rozpala-wyobraznie-polskiej-branzychemicznej,222470 1 0 1.html

Association Polish Community, Polonia the World, http://wspolnotapolska.org.pl/polonia w liczbach.html

28 J. Łapaj, Poles in Brazil – the historical aspects and the present days, [in:] M. Kucharski, J. Łapaj, T. Okraska, Brazil, Humanistic Scripts, Vol. X, Katowice 2013, pp. 27.

29 M. Kula, Brazilia Polonia, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1981, pp. 18.

M. Kula, Brazilian i Giolius, 223 30 J. Łapaj, op.cit. pp. 12. 31 M. Kula, Brazilian Polonia, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1981, pp. 19.

the World War II, 10-20 thousand more Poles settled in Brazil. After 1947, a new type of emigration – the movement of displaced persons fleeing communism - had started to arrive to Brazil (in total ca. 9 thousand). As opposed to the Polish immigrants in the 19th century, they mostly inhabited the cities, and became the driving force of the existing Polish grassroots organisations³³. This last wave represented the end of Polish mass migration to Brazil.

Today people of Polish origin centre around three southern states: Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. Even though Polish heritage is present in Brazil, the majority of people of Polish origin consider themselves Brazilians. They do not speak Polish, and few of their offspring have visited Poland³⁴. Nevertheless, they are still somehow attracted to Poland. The biggest association of Poles - the Central Representations of the Brazilian-Polish Community (BRASPOL), created in 1990, operates in 334 communities, and 16 states. In Curitiba, known also as "the capital of the Polonia in Latin America", there are several initiatives every year that stimulate contacts among the community. For example, in 1996 the Centre of the Polish Culture was created, and since 1993 the Congress of Latin American' Polonia is organised annually³⁵. The Association of Tadeusz Kościuszko, and the House of Polish-Brazilian Culture currently organise Polish cuisine workshops.

Poland's diplomatic representations in Brazil support the Polish community in Brazil, and promote Polish culture there. Maintaining the relations with the Polish diaspora around the world is of special interest to the MFA especially since 2012, when it started to shape, conduct and coordinate its policy toward Polonia (formerly it was in the purview of the Polish Senate)³⁶. In Brazil, Poland is working on launching a Portuguese-language radio station, it supports the Polish language course at the University of *Brasília* (Universidade de *Brasília*, *UnB*), and joined the Brazilian scholarship programme "Science without Borders" that offers 200 spots for Brazilians in Polish universities in the academic year 2014/2015. Additionally, the MFA has recently supported a platform called "Smart Start" that is intended to enable young people of Polish descent or Poles who study abroad to acquire first

http://www.kurytyba.msz.gov.pl/pl/polonia w brazylii/polonia w brazyli/

³³ Polonia in Brazil, The Consulate General of Poland in Curitiba,

M. Malinowski, Polonia Movement in Argentina and Brazil between 1989-2000, Warsaw 2005, pp. 262.
 J. Łapaj, op.cit. pp. 25.
 Department of Cooperation with Polich Discours and Delay Alexandre.

³⁶ Department of Cooperation with Polish Diaspora and Poles Abroad, the MFA of Poland, http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/ministry/organisation/organisational units /department of cooperation wit h the polish diaspora

professional experiences (fellowships or jobs) at foreign branches of Polish enterprises (the Polish companies present in Brazil include Selena, LUG, Medcom, eSKY, Gremi Group)³⁷.

In terms of cultural promotion, LAC countries have marginal place in the Polish cultural policy. Not one of the 23 Polish Institutes that function abroad is in the LAC region³⁸. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute (IAM), which has conducted promotional projects in 26 countries between 2001-2013, does not include LAC in its mission statement³⁹. Nevertheless, IAM's first project in the region will be soon be implemented in Brazil. "Brazil 2016" aims at fostering joint projects between artists from the two countries. As a result of this limited activity by Poland's public cultural institutions, the Polish diplomatic representations are supported by the MFA's Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy that are the most active in terms of enhancing bilateral cultural links. They conduct activities such as the promotion of Polish education and science, art, music, theatre, and sometimes film. In 2013, the Polish Embassy organised, among others, the 5th Festival of Polish Movies in Brazil in six cities, a jazz concert by PINK FREUD in the framework of the festival "Cena Contemporânea Brasilia", supported the project "All-Seeing Eye" by Joanna Rajkowska in the National Museum of Brazil, and sponsored the presentation of "King Roger" in a concert version during the XVII Festival Opera House in Manaus.

Final remarks

Although Poland and Brazil have a history of 95 years of diplomatic relations, both countries have not had time to get to know each other in a mature way. Given a period marked by a series of sea changes in international affairs and a rather on-and-off nature of bilateral relations, the relations between both countries can be assessed as friendly but distant. Both sides contributed to this state of play. For Poland, after 1989, the LAC region continued to take a back seat to other priorities. Its foreign policy goals were naturally focused on NATO membership (achieved in 1999) and European Union accession (achieved in 2004). For Brazil, the EU has always been an important partner. However, among the EU member states, five countries are especially important for Brazil: in terms of trade and environmental cooperation - Germany (30% of the EU trade with Brazil), in military sphere -

³⁷ Smart Start, <u>www.inteligentnystart.org</u>
38 "Polish Institutes", MFA of Poland,
http://www.mfa.gov.pl/en/foreign_policy/public_diplomacy/polish_institutes/
39 Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Projects, http://iam.pl/pl/o-pas#misia-cele-dzia Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Projects, http://iam.pl/pl/o-nas#misja-cele-dzialalnosc

France⁴⁰, and in investments - the Netherlands (first EU investor in Brazil). Special attention is also given to Portugal (due to cultural ties) and Spain (the first EU recipient of Brazilian direct investments). In this aspect, Brazil has not paid much attention to its relations with the EU member states that joined the union in 2004 such as Poland.

Although Poland is at a disadvantage within the EU in terms of its relations with Brazil, it has a competitive advantage in at least two areas, which could be held up as potentially fruitful. First, the relatively substantial Polish diaspora creates potential for tourism, as well as the development of scientific or economic exchange. Second, the growing muscle of Polish companies means they are searching for new markets and for new sources of growth, including Brazil⁴¹. In today's globalised, crisis-hit world, it is factors like these that prompt the decision-makers to start exploring relations with non-traditional allies. Even though we should not expect the bilateral relations between two regions to be lifted to the strategic dimension any time soon, their cooperation could be expected to grow and become more mutually beneficial.

⁴⁰ M. Kosiel, UE-Brazil relations: from: "enchantment" to "strategic" formal partnership, [in:] M.F. Gawrycki, Brazil as a rising power, Museum of Polish Peasant Movement, Warsaw 2013, pp. 144.
⁴¹ One example is a Polish US\$3 billion investment in Chile, made by the extractive company in copper sector KGHM in 2012.

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Smart Start, www.inteligentnystart.org

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