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FMA VISIT TO POLAND



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The Polish Presidency

7 GOALS



„Security,
Europe!”

The Polish Presidency priorities*

During the first half of 2025, Poland will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Poland takes over the presidency of the Council of the European Union at a time of uncertainty and concern. Europe is grappling with the consequences of Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine and the need to strengthen its own defence capacity. We are witnessing increasing geopolitical tensions, the erosion of the rules-based international order and hybrid attacks targeting European democracy and security.

For Europe, this is the time of trial and decision. The European Union must protect itself and its citizens and take care of its immediate neighbourhood. It must give Europeans a sense of security and prospects for development.

Responsibility for future generations requires EU unity and a willingness to work with partners who share our values, in particular aspiring members. Furthermore, it obliges us to defend the values on which the Community is based, such as democracy, freedom and the rule of law.

Therefore, the Polish Presidency will support activities strengthening European security in all its dimensions: **external, internal, information, economic, energy, food, and health.**

source: <https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/programme/priorities/>

Priorities in More Detail

DEFENSE AND SECURITY

We need concerted and ambitious action on European defence, complementing the efforts of NATO.

There is a need to boost defence readiness based on increased military spending, a stronger defence industry and addressing defence capability gaps. The Polish Presidency will support these activities and push for an in-depth debate on defence financing in the EU.

We need strong support for the defence capabilities and defence industry, which will benefit entities of all sizes from all Member States. Support for key defence and dual-use infrastructure, such as East Shield and the Baltic Defence Line, is also important. A priority of the Polish presidency will also be to strengthen cooperation with NATO and like-minded non-EU countries, mainly the USA, as well as the UK, South Korea and others.

PROTECTION OF PEOPLE AND BORDERS

Europe must continue its efforts to ensure an optimal level of internal security for its citizens.

Together we will seek new solutions to comprehensively address the challenges of migration and security at the EU's external borders, work to reduce irregular migration and strengthen the effectiveness of return policy.

We will work towards an adequate EU response to hybrid threats, in particular the instrumentalisation of migration. We will face the challenges of ensuring that the Schengen Area functions properly.

We will work to enhance EU and member state capacities for civil protection, disaster resilience, rescue and humanitarian assistance. We will address the issues of: combating international organized crime networks, terrorism and radicalization, including in the context of the internal security threats posed by the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

RESISTANCE AGAINST FOREIGN INTERFERENCE AND DISINFORMATION

The European Union and its member states must strengthen the resilience of democracy to curb polarization and radicalization. This requires the ability to recognise and eliminate disinformation and foreign manipulation, but also long-term efforts in the areas of civic education and strengthening civil society.

The Polish presidency will strive to strengthen coordination in the fight against disinformation, information manipulation and to improve the EU's ability to prevent and mitigate the effects of hostile actions in cyberspace. It is particularly important to deal with crisis situations involving interference by third countries with EU information systems.

Attention will be paid to the development of modern, secure digital services. We will also combat climate disinformation to make us more secure in the face of climate change.

ENSURING SECURITY AND FREEDOM FOR BUSINESS

The Polish presidency intends to take measures that will contribute to solving challenges related to rapid technological change, energy and climate transition as well as geopolitical tensions. It is necessary to deepen the Single Market, remove barriers to cross-border activity, especially in the services sector. Enacting initiatives that improve access to private capital for businesses that want to grow and invest will also be of importance.

The Polish presidency will promote the reduction of bureaucratic burdens. In this context, it will be important that major European policies make their approach more flexible, move away from penalties and obligations and focus on rewards and incentives. The Polish Presidency will also concentrate on improving support mechanisms for industry in areas important for security and building economic advantages, while maintaining a level playing field within the EU.

It will also be our priority to restore a fair competition for EU industry in the global arena. We intend to improve trade policy instruments, enforcement when goods enter the EU market and make better use of the strengths of the EU's broad public procurement stream.

The Polish presidency will undertake a discussion on the future shape of cohesion policy, as improvements in the Single Market should be accompanied by policies that promote security and economic competitiveness.

ENERGY TRANSITION

Poland stresses that the reliability and certainty of the supply of energy resources is crucial for the EU's energy security. However, it was only Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine that led to a reduction in Russian gas and oil imports by about two-thirds and a complete shift away from Russian coal imports.

Nevertheless, there is still much to be done. Today, EU energy security is also about ensuring that citizens and businesses have access to energy in sufficient quantities and at an affordable price.

The Polish presidency will therefore promote actions aimed at a full withdrawal from imports of Russian energy sources. It will undertake steps with a view to reduce energy prices in the EU and revise the EU's energy security framework to enhance the physical security and cybersecurity of energy infrastructure in the EU and its neighbourhood and ensure a level playing field for the development of each clean energy source in the EU.

We will strive to reduce our dependence on imported technologies, the components to make those technologies and the critical raw materials needed to manufacture them.

COMPETITIVE AND RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

Europe must ensure that farmers' position in value chains is strengthened and their income is stable. We need a competitive and resilient European agriculture that provides food security for Europeans. All EU actions should take into account vulnerable agricultural sectors and ensure that non-EU producers comply with EU food quality, safety and sustainability standards.

The Polish presidency will strive to shape a strong Common Agricultural Policy that supports farmers and the development of rural areas. The policy should encourage, rather than force, farmers to take action to protect the environment and show the benefits of combating and preventing the effects of climate change, such as floods and droughts.

We will work on the challenges that future EU enlargement will bring to the sector.

HEALTH SECURITY

The Polish presidency will focus on the digital transformation of healthcare and the need to improve EU medicines security, with a particular focus on the patients' perspective. Both the diversification of medicines supply chains and support for their production in the EU play a key role.

Health security is also about the wellbeing of EU citizens, so we will focus on ways to improve the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital age and health promotion activities and disease prevention.

for more information : <https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/programme/priorities/>

The Trio Programme¹

Source: <https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/media/fmqjgglv/trio-programme.pdf>

Priority dossiers under the Polish EU Council Presidency (EPRS 2025).

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/767187/EPRS_BRI\(2025_767187_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/767187/EPRS_BRI(2025_767187_EN.pdf)
Source:)767187_EN.pdf

Polish Presidency debriefs EP committees on priorities

Source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20250122IPR26419/polish-presidency-debriefs-ep-committees-on-priorities>

Poland's History

History of Poland

Poland, officially Republic of Poland, Country, central Europe. Area: 120,423 sq mi (311,895 sq km). Population: (2024 est.) 37,587,000. Capital: Warsaw. Most of the people are Polish; there are minorities of Ukrainians, Germans, and Belarusians. Language: Polish (official). Religion: Christianity (predominantly Roman Catholic; also Eastern Orthodox). Currency: zloty. Poland consists almost entirely of lowlands in the northern and central regions; the southern border is largely formed by the Sudeten and the Carpathian Mountains.

The Vistula and Oder, the principal river systems, both drain into the Baltic Sea. Industries include mining, manufacturing, and public utilities. Poland is a unitary multiparty republic with two legislative houses; its head of state is the president, and its head of government is the prime minister. Established as a kingdom in 922 under Mieszko I, Poland was united with Lithuania in 1386 under the Jagiellon dynasty (1386–1572) to become the dominant power in east-central Europe, enjoying a prosperous golden age. In 1466 it wrested western and eastern Prussia from the Teutonic Order, and its lands eventually stretched to the Black Sea.

Wars with Sweden (see First Northern War; Second Northern War) and Russia beginning in the late 17th century led to the loss of considerable territory. In 1697 the electors of Saxony became kings of Poland, virtually ending Polish independence. In the late 18th century Poland was divided between Prussia, Russia, and Austria (see partitions of Poland) and ceased to exist. After 1815 the former Polish lands came under Russian domination, and from 1863 Poland was a Russian province, subjected to intensive Russification. After World War I an independent Poland was established by the Allies.

The invasion of Poland in 1939 by the U.S.S.R. and Germany precipitated World War II, during which the Nazis sought to purge Poland's culture and its large Jewish population in the Holocaust. Reoccupied by Soviet forces in 1945, Poland was controlled by a Soviet-dominated government from 1947. In the 1980s the Solidarity labour movement led by Lech Wałęsa achieved major political reforms, and free elections were held in 1989. An economic austerity program instituted in 1990 sped the transition to a market economy. Poland became a member of NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/summary/Poland>

Key dates of Poland's History

A chronology of key events

966 - Duke Mieszko I, the historically recognised founder of the Polish state, adopts Catholic Christianity.

1025 - Boleslaw I proclaims the Kingdom of Poland.

1569 - Poland signs Union of Lublin with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to establish the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a major power in Europe unusual for its powerful parliament of noblemen and its elected kings.

1772 - The Commonwealth is subjected to the first of three major partitions by its neighbours Prussia, Russia and Austria following an anti-Russian revolt.

1791-1793 - A programme of political and social reform culminates in the 3 May Constitution in 1791, which promises civil rights to the urban and peasant population of the Commonwealth. Russia invades to prevent liberal change. Prussia also sends in troops, and the two powers carry out a second partition in 1793.

Independence lost

1794-1795 - Reformers lead an armed uprising against the partitioning powers. Following its failure the Commonwealth is finally partitioned among Prussia, Russia and Austria. Independent Poland disappears from the map of Europe.

1807 - Napoleon creates the Duchy of Warsaw as a client state to rally Polish support for his cause.

1815 - The Congress of Vienna creates a rump Kingdom of Poland, ruled by Russia.

1830-1831 - Military revolt in protest at Russian erosion of the Kingdom's political autonomy and civil liberties.

1863-1864 - Another revolt against Russian rule is defeated and the Kingdom annexed to Russia.

1864-1914 - The Polish national movement in Russia, Prussia and Austria focuses on strengthening the grassroots through education, culture and political parties.

Independence restored

1918 - After more than a century of foreign rule, an independent Polish state is restored after the end of World War One, with Marshal Jozef Pilsudski as head of state.

1920 - Soviet Red Army offensive repulsed.

1926 - Pilsudski stages a military coup, which leads to nine years of autocratic rule.

1932 - Poland concludes non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.

1934 - Poland signs similar 10-year pact with Nazi Germany.

1935 - Pilsudski dies. The military regime continues.

Invasion and subjugation

1939 - Nazi Germany invades Poland. Beginning of World War Two as the United Kingdom and France declare war on Germany in response. USSR invades from the east. Germany and the Soviet Union divide Poland between them and treat Polish citizens with extreme brutality. Germany begins systematic persecution of the large Jewish population.

1940 - Soviet secret police carry out systematic massacre of about 22,000 Polish army officers, professionals and civil servants mainly in a forest near Katyn in Russia's Smolensk region. The Soviet Union attributed the crime to the Nazis until acknowledging responsibility in the late 1980s.

1941 - Germans start to build concentration camps in Poland. Their names - Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek - become synonymous with the Holocaust.

1943 - Warsaw ghetto uprising against German attempts to transport the remaining Jewish inhabitants to concentration camps. Resistance lasts nearly four weeks before the ghetto is burned down. The Germans announce the capture of more than 50,000 Jews.

1944 - Polish resistance forces take control of Warsaw in August. The Germans recapture the city in October and burn it to the ground.

1945 - Soviet forces capture Warsaw in January. All German forces are driven from Poland by March. Poland's borders are set by the post-war Potsdam conference; Poland loses territory to the Soviet Union but gains some from Germany.

Communist rule

1947 - Poland becomes a Communist People's Republic after Soviet-run elections, under the Stalinist leadership of Boleslaw Bierut.

1955 - Poland joins the Soviet-run Warsaw Pact military alliance.

1956 - More than 50 people killed in rioting in Poznan over demands for greater freedom. Liberal Communist leader Wladislaw Gomulka takes over.

1970 - Food price riots in Gdansk. The protests are suppressed, hundreds are killed. Edward Gierek becomes party leader.

1970s - Poland enjoys relative economic prosperity based on foreign loans. Successive US presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter visit Poland.

1978 - Karol Wojtyla, Cardinal of Krakow, elected Pope.

1980 - Disturbances at the shipyard in Gdansk lead to the emergence of the Solidarity trade union under Lech Walesa.

1981 - Martial law imposed. Many of Solidarity's leaders, including Walesa, are imprisoned.

1983 - Martial law lifted.

Success for Solidarity

1989 - Round-table talks between Solidarity, the Communists and the Catholic Church pave the way for fall of communism in Poland. Partially free elections see landslide win for Solidarity, which helps form coalition government. Tadeusz Mazowiecki becomes Poland's first non-Communist prime minister since 1946.

1990 - Walesa elected president of Poland. Market reforms, including large-scale privatisation, are launched.

1991 - First parliamentary elections since fall of communism. Soviet troops start to leave Poland.

1993 - Reformed Communists enter coalition government. They pledge to continue market reforms.

1994 - Poland joins Nato's Partnership for Peace programme.

1995 - Aleksander Kwasniewski, a former Communist, narrowly beats Lech Walesa to become president.

1997 - Polish parliament adopts a new constitution. General election is won by the Solidarity grouping AWS. Jerzy Buzek forms a coalition government.

Towards EU membership

1998 - The EU opens talks on Polish membership.

1999 - Poland joins Nato.

2000 - Aleksander Kwasniewski re-elected as president.

2001 - Poland permits citizens to apply to see the files kept on them by the secret police during the communist era.

2001 October - New coalition between the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Peasants' Party forms government with SLD leader Leszek Miller as prime minister.

2002 December - EU summit in Copenhagen formally invites Poland to join in 2004.

2003 March - Polish Peasant's Party ejected from ruling coalition over failure to vote with government on tax. Leszek Miller carries on as PM in minority government.

2003 June - Poles vote in referendum in favour of joining EU.

EU era dawns

2004 May - Poland is one of 10 new states to join the EU.

Prime Minister Miller resigns. Former finance minister Marek Belka succeeds him.

2005 September - Conservative Law and Justice party comes first in general elections.

2005 October - Law and Justice candidate Lech Kaczynski wins presidential election.

Minority government led by Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz of Law and Justice sworn in.

2006 May - Law and Justice Party reaches majority coalition agreement with Self-Defence Party and League of Polish Families.

2006 July - Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz resigns as prime minister. President Lech Kaczynski's twin brother, Jaroslaw, becomes premier.

2007 January - Recently-appointed Archbishop of Warsaw Stanislaw Wielgus resigns over revelations about his co-operation with the secret police under communist rule.

2007 April - Prosecutors bring charges against former communist leader General Jaruzelski over his role in introducing martial law in 1981.

2007 October - Liberal, pro-EU Civic Platform party wins early general election after coalition government collapses.

Defence agreement with US

2008 February - The government forges an agreement with the US in principle to host a controversial American missile defence system.

2008 September - Poland's last Communist leader, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, goes on trial in connection with the imposition of martial law in 1981.

2009 May - The IMF approves a one-year credit line for Poland of \$20.6bn to help it weather the global economic crisis.

2010 April - President Lech Kaczynski and many other senior officials are killed in an aircraft crash travelling to a ceremony in Russia marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre during World War Two.

2010 July - Parliament Speaker and Acting President Bronislaw Komorowski of the centre-right Civic Platform defeats former prime minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski in the second round of presidential elections. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton oversees amended agreement to station US missile defence shield base in Poland.

2010 December - Nigerian-born John Abraham Godson becomes first black member of Polish parliament.

2011 January - Russia's aviation authority blames Polish pilot error for the Smolensk air crash in which President Lech Kaczynski and many other officials were killed in April 2010.

2011 July - Poland takes over EU rotating presidency for first time since it joined the bloc in 2004.

2011 October - Prime Minister Donald Tusk's centre-right Civic Platform party wins parliamentary elections.

2012 January - A court gives communist-era interior minister Czeslaw Kiszczak a two-year suspended prison sentence in absentia for his role in the martial law crackdown in 1981. The Communist Party leader of the time, Stanislaw Kania, is acquitted.

2013 September - Tens of thousands of protesters march through Warsaw in one of the largest demonstrations in years, organised by trade unions, to demand more jobs and higher pay.

2014 March - Prime Minister Donald Tusk says that Russia's annexation of Crimea cannot be accepted by the international community.

2014 April - Poland asks Nato to station 10,000 troops on its territory, as a visible mark of the Alliance's resolve to defend all its members after Russia's seizure of Crimea.

2014 June - Mr Tusk's ruling coalition narrowly survives a confidence vote triggered by a scandal prompted by leaked tapes of senior government officials appearing to disparage Poland's allies.

2014 September - Prime Minister Donald Tusk resigns to take up the post of president of the European Council. Ewa Kopacz takes over as head of government.

2014 November - Poland adopts a new National Security Strategy that states the country is threatened by war and names Russia as an aggressor in Ukraine.

2014 December - Poland complains of "unprecedented" Russian military activity in the Baltic Sea region, saying Nato is being tested but is not at risk of attack.

2015 April - Poland announces purchase of US Patriot surface-to-air missiles amid rising tension with Russia.

Turn to the right

2015 May - Conservative Law and Justice candidate Andrzej Duda beats centrist incumbent Bronislaw Komorowski in presidential election.

2015 October - Law and Justice conservative, Eurosceptic party becomes first to win overall majority in Polish democratic elections.

2015 December - President Duda approves controversial reform making it harder for the constitutional court to make majority rulings, despite large protests and EU concerns at the implications for oversight of government decisions.

2016 January - European Commission investigates new media law that allows government to appoint heads of state TV and radio as potential "threat to European Union values".

2016 October - Parliament rejects private-member's bill to institute a near-total ban on abortion following mass protests. The governing Law and Justice party decides not to back the bill.

2017 April - Poland welcomes Nato troops deployed in the northeast, as part of efforts to enhance security following Russia's annexation of Crimea.

2017 May - Tens of thousands of people take part in a march in the capital, Warsaw, to protest against what they see as curbs on democracy imposed by the governing Law and Justice Party.

2017 July - President Duda vetoes controversial laws that would have given the government extensive power over the judiciary.

2017 December - Finance Minister Mateusz Morawiecki takes over as prime minister of the Law and Justice party government.

2018 March - A new law makes it an offence to ascribe Nazi atrocities in occupied Poland to the Polish state.

2019 October - Law and Justice party maintains its position in the lower house of parliament at general elections, but loses control of the Senate to centre and centre-left parties.

2017 May - European Parliament threatens to suspend Hungary from the EU in practical terms over its attempts to close down the liberal Central European University in Budapest.

2017 June - Hungary passes law that requires non-governmental organisations to register as foreign organisations if they receive a certain amount of funding from abroad, in a move seen by opposition supporters as targeting groups critical of the government.

2017 November - Hungarian-born financier George Soros complains about a government campaign involving billboards and leaflets alleging he plans to force EU countries to accept millions of migrants.

Political situation

Government and society

Constitutional framework

The constitution of Poland's postwar socialist state, the Polish People's Republic, took effect in 1952 but was amended numerous times, most significantly in early 1989, when constitutional reforms worked out between the government and Solidarity were passed by the Sejm (legislature). Among the changes were the replacement of the Council of State by the office of president (a position that had been eliminated in 1952) and the reinstatement of the Senate, which had been abolished in 1946 in an allegedly rigged national referendum. The existing Sejm, with 460 members, became the lower house of the new legislature, and the Senate, or the upper house, was assigned 100 members. Additional reforms passed later in 1989 by the legislature included the guarantee of free formation of political parties and the return of the state's official name to the Republic of Poland.

The new constitution of 1997, which replaced a 1992 interim constitution, was adopted in April by the National Assembly (Zgromadzenie Narodowe; as the Sejm and the Senate are referred to when they meet in a joint session to debate constitutional issues), approved in a national referendum in May, and promulgated in October. The constitution confirmed the mixed presidential-parliamentary form of government that had been established during the period 1989–92. Under its provisions the president is directly elected to not more than two five-year terms. The president serves as commander in chief of the armed forces, has the power (albeit restricted) to declare martial law or a state of emergency, and can veto an act of the Sejm (which in turn can override that veto with a three-fifths majority vote).

The president nominates the prime minister and, on the prime minister's recommendation, the cabinet, subject to the Sejm's approval, but the president cannot dismiss the government. Deputies in the Sejm and senators are popularly elected to four-year terms. Laws must be adopted by both houses. The Senate has the right to amend or reject a law passed by the Sejm. The Sejm may override the Senate's decision with a majority vote. The Sejm appoints the members of the Constitutional Tribunal, the commissioner for civil rights protection (the ombudsman), the chairman of the Supreme Chamber of Control (the state audit commission), and the president of the Bank of Poland. The main executive power is vested in the prime minister and the Council of Ministers, who are responsible to the Sejm. The government can be terminated by the Sejm only by a constructive vote of no confidence. The prime minister has a role comparable to that of a chancellor in the German political system.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland/Government-and-society>

Local government

Local government in Poland is organized on three levels. The largest units, at the regional level, are the województwa (provinces), which were consolidated and reduced in number from 49 to 16 in 1999. At the next level are some 300 powiaty (counties or districts), followed by about 2,500 gminy (towns and rural communes). The last are the fundamental territorial units within Poland. The status of the capital city of Warsaw is regulated by a special legislation. Both powiaty and gminy are governed by councils, elected to four-year terms. These councils in turn elect the heads of local administration. The representatives to the sejmiki wojewódzkie (provincial legislature) also are elected to four-year terms. The head of provincial administration, the wojewoda, is nominated by the prime minister.

Justice

The constitution guarantees the independence of the judiciary. The supreme representative of the judiciary is the National Council of the Judiciary. Poland has a Supreme Court and other special judicial bodies (including the High Administrative Court, military courts, and industrial tribunals) as well as general courts, comprising appellate, provincial, and district courts. General courts deal with criminal, civil, and family matters; commercial courts deal with civil law disputes between businesses. The Constitutional Tribunal provides judicial review of legislation. The Tribunal of State reviews violations of the constitution and other laws by the top state officials.

Political process

Beginning in 1948, Poland was governed by the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP; Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza), the country's communist party, which was modeled on the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The postwar government was run as a dual system in which state organs were controlled by parallel organs of the PUWP. The executive branch of government, therefore, was in effect the PUWP, with the party's first secretary acting as the de facto head of state and the most powerful authority. The party's Political Bureau, or Politburo, operated as the central administration, and the party ensured its control over all offices and appointments by use of the nomenklatura, a list of politically reliable people.

Two other parties, the United Peasant Party (Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe; ZSL) and the Democratic Party (Stronnictwo Demokratyczne; SD), were permitted to exist but only as entirely subservient allies of the PUWP. However, in 1989 economic and political problems obliged the government to recognize the independent trade union Solidarity (which had been banned not long after it came into being in 1980) and allow it to contest at least some seats in a general election. The PUWP and its allies were guaranteed 65 percent of the seats in the Sejm, but Solidarity won all the rest and all but one of those in the Senate, going on to form Poland's first postcommunist government with the support of the SD and the ZSL, which broke their alliance with the PUWP. In 1990 the PUWP voted to disband and reform as the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej; SdRP). In the same year, Lech Wałęsa, the leader of Solidarity, was elected president.

Thereafter, however, as Poles experienced the costs of economic reform, support for Solidarity waned, and the party split into several smaller groups. In the first completely free elections, in 1991, no party obtained more than one-eighth of the vote, which led to a succession of short-lived coalition governments. In the 1993 legislative election the Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, or PSL, as the ZSL was renamed) and the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej; SLD), a coalition comprising the SdRP and All Poland Trade Unions Alliance (Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych; OPZZ), won a majority of seats and formed a coalition government. In the presidential election of 1995, Wałęsa was defeated by a former communist, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who was reelected in 2000. Nevertheless, there was no fundamental change in economic and political policy: all postcommunist governments gave high priority to the integration of Poland into the EU and NATO.

Before the 1997 parliamentary election, the fragmented political right united under the banner of the Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność; AWS), which was later reorganized as the Solidarity Electoral Action of the Right (AWSP). In the decade following, other leading political parties were the SLD, the PSL, the leftist Union of Labour (Unia Pracy; UP), the liberal-democratic Freedom Union (Unia Wolności; UW), and the centre-right Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość; PiS) and Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska; PO) parties. Poland grants universal suffrage at age 18.

Security

Military

Poland's armed forces consist of three services—the army, the air force, and the navy. They are divided into the four military districts of Warsaw, Pomerania, Kraków, and Silesia. Under the communist government the armed forces were highly politicized. The military command was controlled by the party's Main Political Administration, which also oversaw the political indoctrination and supervision of all units. Most officers were party members. Senior officers normally graduated from Soviet academies. One of the founding members of the Warsaw Pact, a mutual-defense organization dominated by the Soviet Union, Poland supplied the second largest contingent to its forces. After the organization dissolved in 1991, Poland's forces were depoliticized in preparation for joining NATO. Poland, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary, joined NATO on March 12, 1999. That year compulsory military service was reduced from 18 months to 12 months; beginning in 1988, conscientious objectors were allowed to perform a civilian alternative to conscription.

Police

The regular defense of Poland's frontiers is provided by the border guard. The Office of the Protection of the State (UOP), established in 1990, was charged with the country's intelligence services. In 2002 it was replaced by the Internal Security Agency (ABW). Normal civilian police services are under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Under the communist government, police services were undertaken by the Citizens' Militia—of which the Motorized Detachments of the Citizens' Militia (ZOMO) acted as a mobile paramilitary riot squad—and the Security Service (SB), a secret political police force. In the early 1980s ZOMO played a key role in enforcing martial law and controlling demonstrations. The paramilitary nature of the Policja ("Police"), as they became known after 1990, has diminished.

Health and welfare

Health care in Poland has been handled largely by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, which oversees the health departments of the regional governments. Facilities include clinics; hospitals; sanatoriums, rest homes, and spas; and ambulance services. Private medical and dental practices proliferated after the fall of communism, and the pharmaceutical industry also was privatized. In general, the health care system was in a state of transition during the 1990s, and medical services were seriously strained during periods of general economic crisis. In 1999 the government launched a major reform of the universal health care system.

Under communism, social insurance for health services provided for free treatment for all workers and the members of their families, as well as for pensioners, invalids, students, and others. In addition, there was a social service whose purpose was to ensure a suitable means of support for the elderly and invalids. Services for the unemployed were established as a part of the 1989–90 economic reforms. During the mid-1990s, however, a number of laws were enacted that reduced the formerly comprehensive coverage of the unemployment program. In 1990–2000 the incidence of many diseases, including measles, mumps, venereal disease, and salmonella infections, fell precipitously, but other diseases, such as influenza and mental and behavioral disorders, rose during this period.

Housing

As a result of the program of urbanization that began in the 1940s, Polish cities became overwhelmed by migrant workers from the countryside, and the demand for housing vastly exceeded supply. In urban areas, various cooperative housing schemes were put into operation by the local government authorities, but the standard apartment was inadequate for many families. As a result of the low priority placed on the creation of housing during communist rule, housing shortages were extreme in the 1980s and '90s. In postcommunist Poland private ownership of housing increased significantly. In 2001 some 106,000 dwellings were completed, slightly more than were built in the five-year period from 1991 to 1995 (101,000).

Education

Schools of all types and on all levels are free; the system of schooling is standard; and attendance from age 7 to 18 is compulsory. The system, reformed in 1999, contains nursery, primary (six grades), and secondary schools. There are two levels of secondary schools, the gimnazjum (grades 7 through 9) and the liceum (two to four additional years). Several types of the upper-level secondary schools offer vocational training, technical training, and general college-preparatory education. In general, all schools are subject to the Ministry of National Education, but medical schools and colleges are subject to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, army colleges to the Ministry of National Defense, and higher schools of art to the Ministry of Culture and Arts. A substantial number of private schools of all levels (including colleges) emerged in the 1980s and '90s.

Prominent universities include the University of Warsaw (founded 1818), the Jagiellonian University (1364) in Kraków, Adam Mickiewicz University (1919) in Poznań, and the Catholic University of Lublin (1918; from 1945 to 1989 the only private university in the Soviet bloc). The highest academic institution is the Polish Academy of Sciences, which has numerous research institutes and represents Polish learning abroad.

Cultural life

Cultural milieu

Jasna Góra monastery, Częstochowa, Poland
Visitors at the Jasna Góra monastery, a popular pilgrimage site, in Częstochowa, Poland.(more)

The culture of Poland has been nurtured by a great variety of folk traditions, with influences and borrowings from France, Scandinavia, Russia, and, more recently, the United States. Poland's strong connections to the Roman Catholic Church, dating to the 10th century, brought it into close orbit with western Europe. This gave Poland access to cultural developments that had a lesser impact on some of its neighbours. Unlike Russia, Poland was deeply immersed in all the great movements of Western culture—such as humanism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism—and its cultural identity was already strong before the series of partitions of Polish territory began in 1772. Because of its loss of political independence, Poland in the 19th and 20th centuries was characterized by an unrelenting struggle to preserve its national culture and values from foreign impositions and government policy.

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland has played a social and cultural role far beyond the religious sphere. After World War II and the arrival of state socialism, catechism lessons—conducted with great zeal in the parishes—exposed children to a nonofficial view of the world. Church-sponsored societies, such as the Catholic Intellectual Clubs, provided adults with a unique forum for free public discussion. Parish halls provided shelter for a wide variety of uncensored exhibitions, plays, films, and meetings. And the work and example of St. Pope John Paul II lent support to the popular movement that resulted in Poland's transition from a communist satellite to an independent democratic nation in the last years of the 20th century.

Daily life and social customs

Because of rapid industrialization and urbanization, as well as a certain distrust of rural conservatism during the years of communist rule, Poland's traditional folk culture has been seriously undermined since World War II. Regional dress, regional dialects and forms of speech, peasant arts and crafts, and religious and folk festivals have all been swamped by mass culture from the cities and the media. In an effort to compensate, the Roman Catholic Church has tried to preserve the religious elements of folk culture, notably in the large annual pilgrimages to shrines such as Częstochowa, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (a UNESCO World Heritage site), Lanckorona, and Piekary Śląskie. Similarly, the communist authorities supported folk music and folk dancing. The colourful and stylized repertoire of the State Folk Ensemble, Mazowsze, for example, won international acclaim. Several regional communities, including the Górale ("Highlanders") of Podhale, the Kurpie in the northeast, and the inhabitants of Łowicz, near Warsaw, have created an authentic blend of the old and the new culture.

Classical music festivals also are quite popular, particularly those commemorating Romantic pianist and composer Frédéric Chopin (Fryderyk Franciszek Szopen), though the music of Beethoven is celebrated in Kraków in spring and that of Mozart in Warsaw in summer. Traditional Polish cuisine includes hearty dishes such as duck soup (czarnina), red beet soup (barszcz), dumplings (pierogi), smoked salmon and eel, kielbasa sausage and sauerkraut, and pork and poultry dishes, the latter often served with a sweet sauce. The products of both gardens and forests, such as horseradish, currants, cabbages, gooseberries, and mushrooms, figure in many Polish dishes, such as bigos, which makes use of cabbage and freshly harvested mushrooms, and the traditional soup called grzybowa. Pączki are fruit-filled deep-fried pastries served on the Christian feast days prior to the Lenten season of fasting.

The national flag of Poland, which was adopted in 1919, comprises a white horizontal band above a red horizontal band. The Polish coat of arms features a white eagle on a red background. The national anthem is "Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła" ("Poland Has Not Yet Perished"). Major holidays either are Christian in nature (Easter, Christmas, Feast of the Assumption, Corpus Christi, and All Saints' Day) or commemorate nation building, such as Constitution Day on May 3 and Independence Day on November 11. Traditional holidays include Topienie Marzanny (March 23), when children throw dolls symbolizing winter into newly flowing rivers.

For more information: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Poland/Government-and-society>

Biography of Donald Tusk



Donald Tusk (born April 22, 1957, Gdańsk, Poland) is a member of the centrist Civic Platform party who returned to office as the prime minister of Poland in 2023 after the country experienced some eight years of increasingly authoritarian rule by the Law and Justice party (PiS).

Tusk had been the first prime minister of Poland to serve two consecutive terms (2007–14) since the fall of communism in 1989. He also served as president of the European Council (2014–19).

Early life and start of political career

The son of a carpenter and a nurse, both of whom were enslaved labourers during the Nazi German occupation of Poland, Tusk grew up as part of the Kashubian ethnic minority in the port city of Gdańsk, the birthplace of the Solidarity movement. After showing promise as a football (soccer) player, he studied history at the University of Gdańsk, where he became an anticommunist student leader in the 1970s. Tusk's political awareness had been dramatically awakened at age 13 when he witnessed police shooting at striking workers.

He joined Solidarity in 1980, becoming one of the movement's prominent young intellectuals. After the imposition of martial law in 1981, Tusk worked as a chimney painter and cofounded a cooperative, one of the few avenues of private enterprise open to Poles at the time. In the process he became a devotee of free-market capitalism and would eventually embrace the economic theories of F.A. Hayek and classical liberalism, as well as look to Western conservatives Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan as role models.

In 1989, as Solidarity began to fragment (the product of political and personality clashes within the movement following its assumption of power and the demise of the communist state), Tusk cofounded the free-market-oriented Liberal and Democratic Congress (KLD) party. He entered the Sejm (lower house of Poland's legislature) in 1991. After the KLD failed to meet the threshold for representation in the 1993 parliamentary election, it merged with the Democratic Union Party (UD) in 1994 to become the Freedom Union (UW). In 1997 Tusk was elected to the Senate.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Tusk>

Then in 2001 he formed another centre-right market-oriented party, Civic Platform (PO), was again elected to the Sejm, and became its deputy speaker. In 2005, as the parties on the left in Poland waned in influence, the PO finished second in Sejm elections to the Law and Justice party (PiS), whose candidate, Lech Kaczyński, defeated Tusk in that year's presidential election.

First term as prime minister

The tables were turned in 2007, when scandals forced the PiS to call an early legislative election and the PO, having secured a pluralist victory (with some 40 percent of the vote), joined the Polish Peasant's Party (PSL) in coalition rule, with Tusk as the prime minister. Despite the difficulties of cohabitation with President Kaczyński, Tusk's popularity swelled as he "reset" Poland's relations with both Russia and Germany. He also implemented strongly pro-business and pro-European Union (EU) policies that benefited the Polish economy, which, robustly bolstered by EU funds, survived the global economic downturn of 2008-09 and the resulting euro-zone debt crisis to continue to grow while the economies of other EU member countries were badly shaken. Tusk also demonstrated a steady hand during Poland's first-ever tenure in the presidency of the EU in 2011.

The stability Tusk seemingly brought to Poland was never more visible or necessary than when the country was plunged into despair following the airliner crash in April 2010 near Smolensk, Russia, in which President Kaczyński perished along with a number of other major government and military figures. After initially declaring his interest in the presidency, Tusk removed his name from consideration in the special election in an attempt to maintain continuity for the country and also to see that his party's policy objectives continued to be realized. Bronisław Komorowski, an associate of Tusk's, won the special election for the presidency, solidifying the PO's grip on power, which was further reinforced when Tusk led his party to victory in the 2011 legislative election, becoming the first government returned to office in Poland since 1989.

Second term as prime minister

Much of the political debate in Poland in early 2012 centred on Tusk's plans to reform the pension system, which called for an increase over time of the retirement age from 65 for men and 60 for women to 67 for both. That reform was deeply unpopular with voters and led to a serious conflict between the PO and its partner in the ruling coalition, the PSL, which was unhappy about both the substance of the proposal and the PO's lack of consultation with it prior to the plan's introduction. After weeks of wrangling, the PSL agreed to a retirement age of 67 for both men and women in return for the PO's agreeing to the possibility of early retirement on a partial pension under certain conditions. The reform was then passed by the Sejm (parliament) and signed into law by the president.

Among the numerous scandals during 2012 that contributed to an overall decline in popular support for the PO was one involving Tusk's son, Michael, who worked for the Polish discount airline OLT Express, which went bankrupt, followed by its parent company, Amber Gold, a parabank (unlicensed financial institution offering banking services) that was responsible for a widespread Ponzi scheme.

In an attempt to reverse the PO's waning popularity, Tusk reshuffled his cabinet more than once in 2013. In March the government survived PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński's attempt to bring it down with the aid of an iPad message. During debate on what became a failed no-confidence vote, the PiS leader employed the device to play a prerecorded speech by potential prime minister Piotr Gliński, who could not address the Sejm in person because he was not a member.

There was also trouble for Tusk within his own party. In April he sacked Minister of Justice Jarosław Gowin, officially because of Gowin's controversial accusation that German research centres were importing foreign embryos for experimentation; Gowin had begun to use his position as the head of a new faction within the PO to challenge Tusk's leadership of the party. Tusk faced the challenge head-on by calling early elections for the leadership, which he won in August, capturing almost 80 percent of the vote, while Gowin was supported by some 20 percent of PO members. Ultimately, Gowin and two other members of the conservative group departed the PO, leaving it with a razor-thin parliamentary majority.

European Council presidency and beyond

In August 2014 the leaders of the European Union voted unanimously to select Tusk to succeed Herman Van Rompuy as president of the European Council. Tusk resigned as prime minister in the second week of September and assumed the new post in December. Among the notable challenges during his tenure were Russian aggression in Europe—the country had annexed Crimea in March 2014—and Britain's 2016 decision to exit from the EU. Tusk, who was reelected to a second term in 2017, stepped down as president of the European Council in November 2019. Later that month he was elected head of the European People's Party, a transnational political group representing the interests of allied conservative parties in Europe.

In July 2021 Tusk returned to the centre of Polish political life when he again assumed leadership of Civic Platform, announcing his intention to take on the PiS by saying, "Today, evil rules in Poland and we are ready to fight against this evil." Two terms of PiS rule had resulted in a judiciary and media controlled by the party, accusations of erosion of the rule of law, and the withholding of funding by an EU that feared for the future of Polish democracy. Moreover, stoking nationalism and presenting itself as the protector of traditional Roman Catholic values, PiS had pursued an anti-immigrant agenda, discriminated against the LGBTQ+ community, and all but eliminated abortion in Poland.

Determined to stanch Poland's march toward the sort of "illiberal democracy" practiced by Viktor Orbán's Hungary, Tusk led the opposition into the October 2023 parliamentary elections and came out a winner. Although PiS finished first, garnering some 35 percent of the vote, it came up short of a ruling majority in the Sejm, even with the addition of the seats of its potential coalition partner, Confederation. Civic Platform finished second with about 31 percent of the total vote, but, along with its fellow opposition parties, Third Way and the New Left (which took about 14 percent and about 9 percent of the vote, respectively), it claimed 248 seats, enough to form a majority coalition government with Tusk at its head.

Tusk's ascent to power was delayed by Pres. Andrzej Duda, who gave incumbent prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki of PiS the first opportunity to form a new government. That action by Duda, who is also a member of PiS, was widely seen as a stalling tactic. As expected, Morawiecki proved unable to win the backing from other parties necessary to remain in power, and on December 11 his caretaker government lost a vote of confidence. The Sejm then elected Tusk prime minister by a vote of 248–201.

For more information: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Donald-Tusk>

The Polish Parliament and EU affairs (EPRS, Jan 2025)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/766274/EPRS_BRI\(2025\)766274_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2025/766274/EPRS_BRI(2025)766274_EN.pdf)
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ODIHR Limited Election
Observation Mission Final Report

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 15
OCTOBER 2023

REPUBLIC OF POLAND

Economic situation

OECD economic survey Poland (2023)

Source: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-poland-2023_6fc99a4b-en.html

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Poland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (EPRS, Oct 2024)

Source: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)733665](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2022)733665)

**Commission staff working
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Poland**

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The Polish Presidency

Programme of the Polish Presidency of the European Council

<https://polish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/programme/programme-of-the-presidency/>

The political situation

Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish foreign policy tasks in 2024

<https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/information-of-minister-of-foreign-affairs-on-polish-foreign-policy-tasks-in-2024>

Environmental, social and regional Issues

Poland's climate action strategy (EPRS, Dec 2024)

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/767168/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)_767168_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/767168/EPRS_BRI(2024)_767168_EN.pdf)

European Commission against racism and intolerance (ECRI) report on Poland

<https://rm.coe.int/sixth-ecri-report-on-poland/1680ac8c62>

Poland : Regions and cities at a glance (OECD 2024)

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-regions-and-cities-at-a-glance-2024_23b366ee-en/poland_9206a904-en.html

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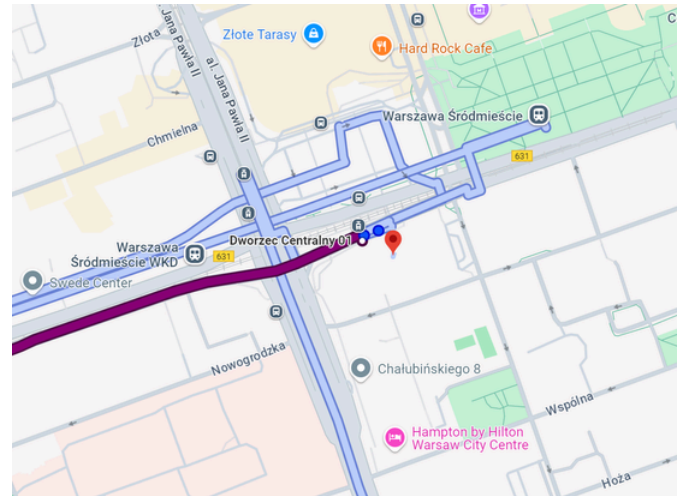
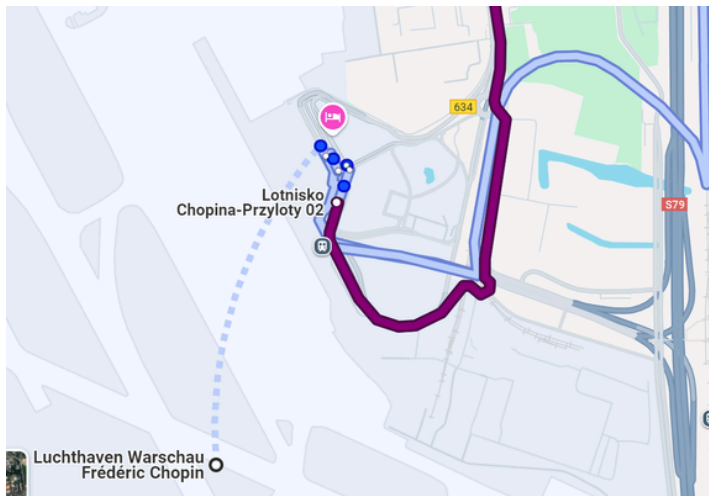
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Presidential Hotel

 10min  €8-11  8.3 km

Public transport



From Airport to Hotel

duration: 31 min (to go from the Hotel to Airport, use the same trajectory in the opposite direction)

Ticket prices - zone 1: 75 minute ticket - 4,40 PLN (1.06 euros), people above 70 years, free. one-day ticket (valid 24h): standard - 15,00 PLN (3.60 euros), people above 70 years, free.

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Dworzec Centralny 01

Warsaw Presidential Hotel
Al. Jerozolimskie 65/79, 00-698 Warszawa,
Polen



175 Pl. Piłsudskiego

✓ 28 min. (17 haltes) · Code stopplaats: 02 · 



Weather and currency

Weather

Wed 26th



15°
6°

Thu 27th



13°
5°

Fri 28th



13°
4°

Currency

1 Polish złoty equals

0,24 Euro

19 Mar, 14:53 UTC · Disclaimer



+ Follow

1 Polish złoty

0,24 Euro

1D 5D 1M 1Y 5Y Max



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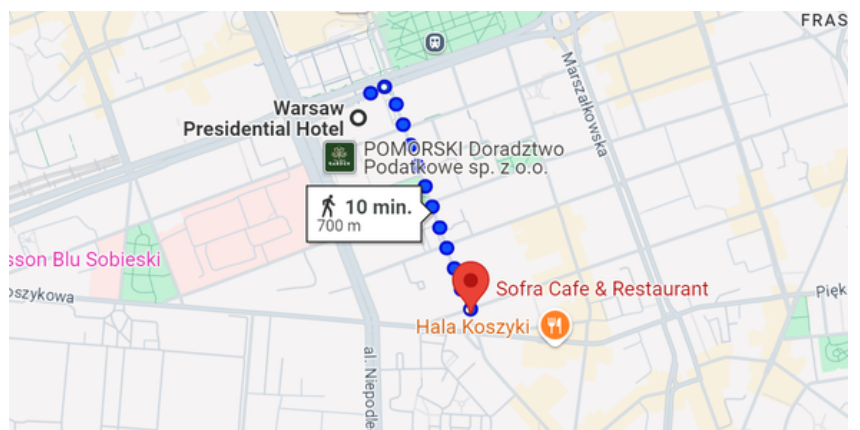
1 minutes
walk from
Hotel to
restaurant



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walk from
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