

The European Policies of Poland



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705: European Policies
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Introduction

“The EU enlargement is very important to us. Yet we realize that it will be very difficult.. Ukraine has found itself in a very difficult situation, and we support Ukraine” “transforming the country” – Adam Szlapka, minister of EU Affairs, in June 2024 during discussions regarding Ukraine’s accession process

= Clear Polish assistance towards **Ukraine** on it’s path to the EU while stressing the fact that Poland will actively support and provide help/ guidance in order to acquire the EU criteria

“We are talking about the path to the complete restoration of rule of law in Poland and changes in all areas” - Szlapka, in December 2023, shortly after Poland’s new government, led by prime minister Donald Tusk, took office

= Indicates Poland’s intention to meet EU criteria and emphasizes the country’s commitment to **restoring the rule of law** and unlocking previously frozen EU funds

Themes

- I. Factors shaping the European policies of Poland
- II. The Eu policies of Poland
- III. Major Recent Challenges

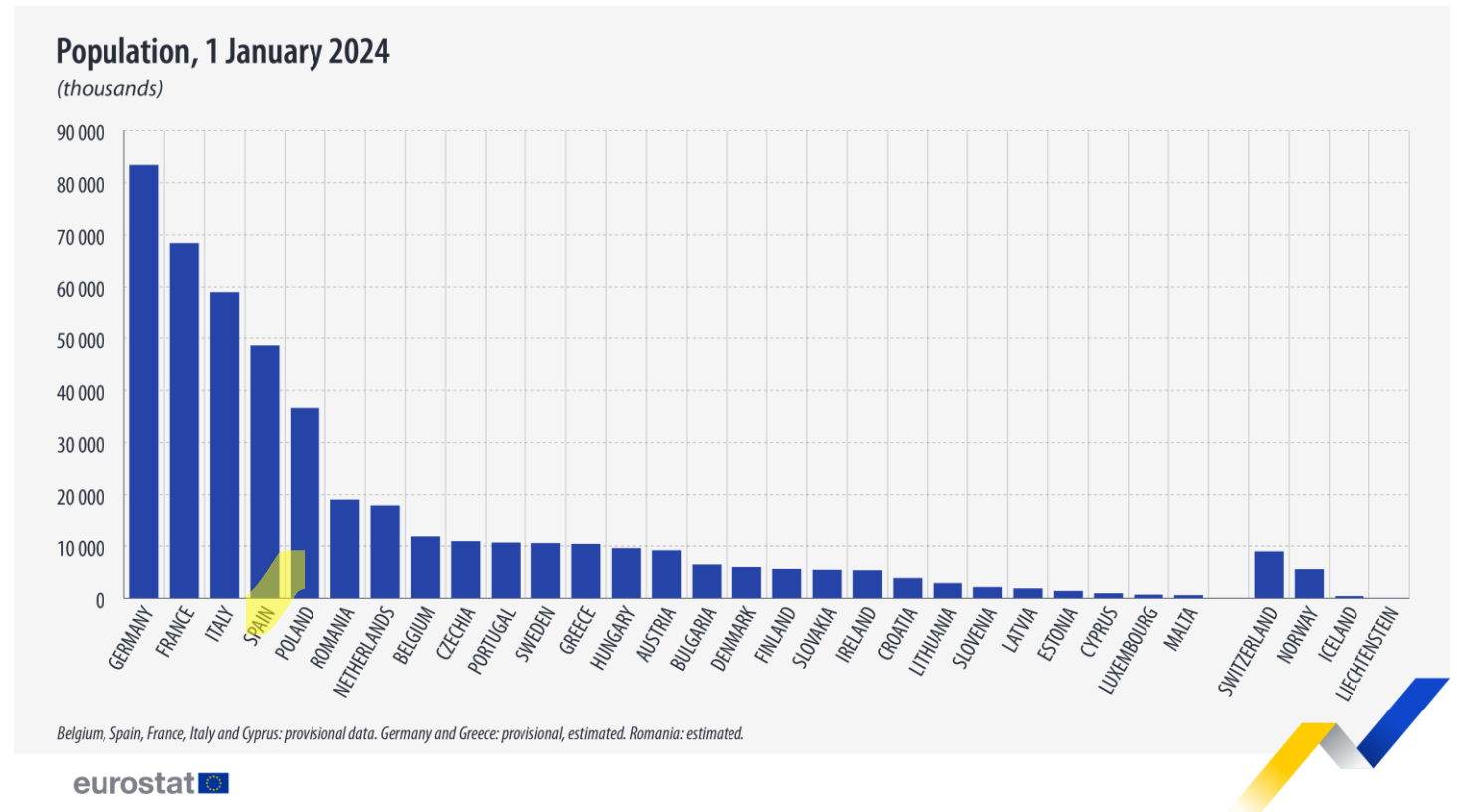
Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The place on the map

- **Sea access** (Baltic Sea) and member of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (**CBSS**)= a multilateral cooperation between the countries encompassing the Baltic Sea -> strong position in trade
- Important port: **Gdansk**
- **7 land borders**: Russia (Kaliningrad Oblast), Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Germany
- Strategic Location: in Central Europe, connecting Western and Eastern sides
- In the way of **migration routes** from the east



Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The size of the country

- Population: 38,7 million = 8.1 % of the total EU population and the 5th demographic power + stable since 1980s, hasn't faced any major disturbance
- 53 seats on the European Parliament and increasing influence in regional policy-making
- Rapidly developing economy and a significant contributor to agriculture and industrial sectors



Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The Polish population

DISPARITIES BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

URBAN CENTERS (Warsaw, Krakow) → modernization, high living standards, economic growth

RURAL AREAS → limited infrastructure and technology access, reliance on traditional agriculture, poor health care system

The 16 Voivodeships of Poland (different divisions), based on the country's historic region, highlight intense differences

Masovian Voivodeship



Population density: 151/km²
(2019)

GDP per capita: €27,300
(2022)

Total Area: 35,579 km²

Podlaskie Voivodeship



Population density: 58/km²
(2019)

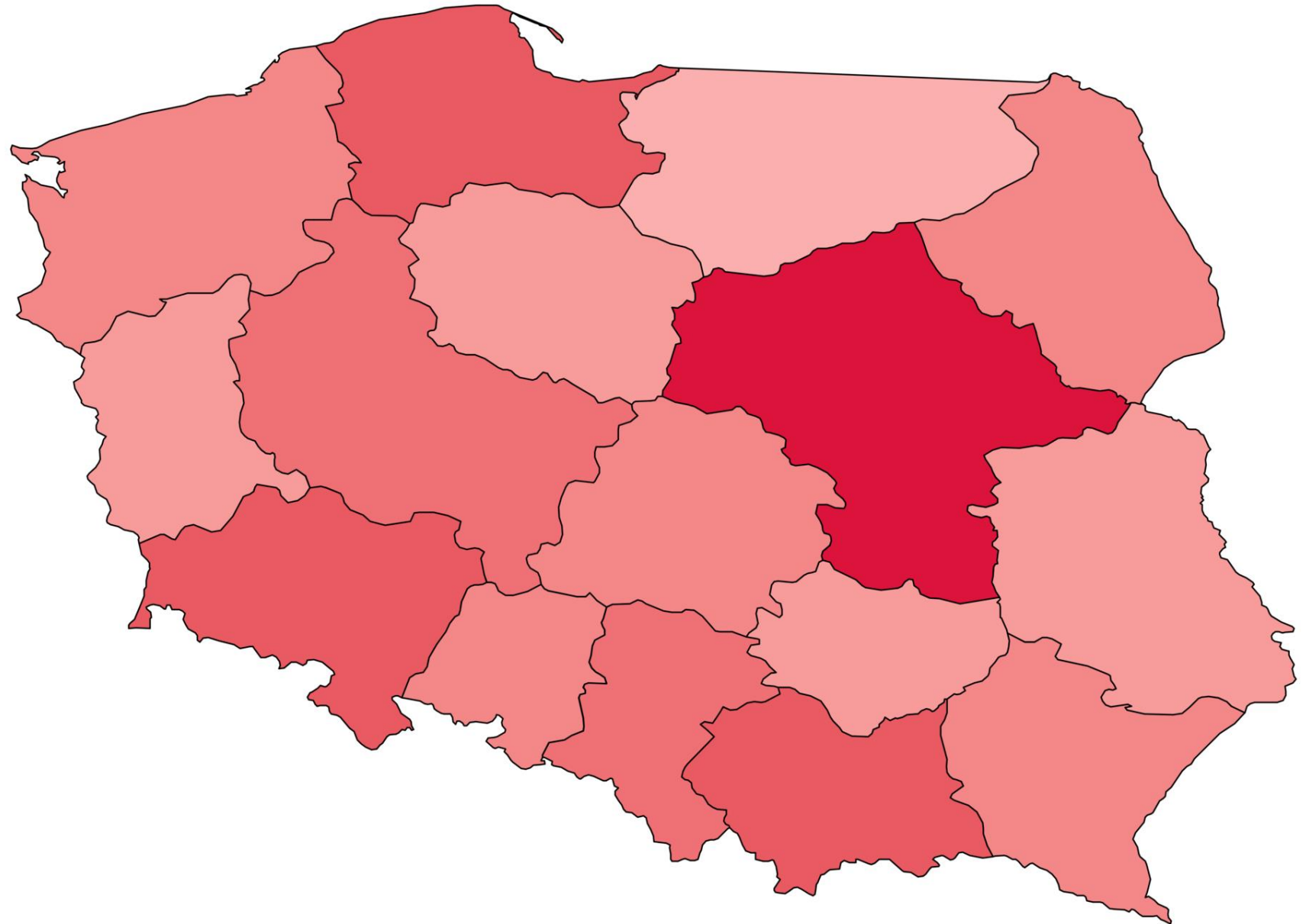
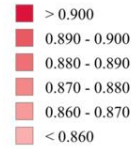
GDP per capita: €11,000
(2022)

Total Area: 20,180 km²

HDI is an indicator which shows the **level of human development** based on 3 components: life expectancy, education and income per capita

Key Observation:
major inequalities between Voivodeships

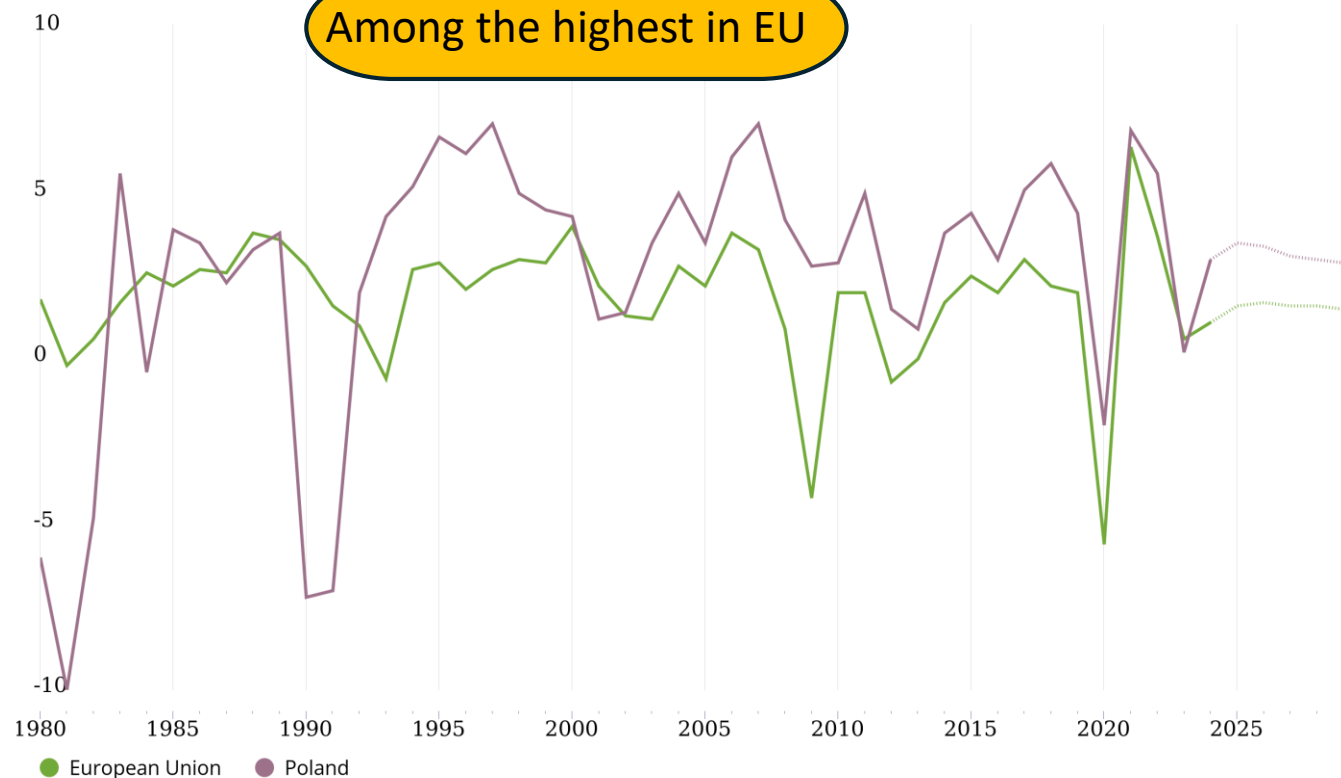
Human Development Index (2021)



Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The Polish economy

IMF DataMapper

Real GDP growth (Annual percent change)



STRONG ECONOMIC IDENTITY:

- Represents 5,4% of the EU's total GDP
- 6th largest economy in the EU
- Major exporter: 75,5% share in total exports (2022) and 63.9% in total imports – higher than the EU27 average, which is 62.1% and 58.8% respectively

KEY DATA:

Public Debt: 49.6% of GDP (2023) – low compared to EU
National Budget Balance: 5.4 deficit (% GDP) (2023)

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The Polish economy

Dependency on EU funds for development:

2004-2023: EU funding to Poland: 245.5 billion € (current prices) with an annual average of 12 billion (2-3,5% Poland's annual GDP)

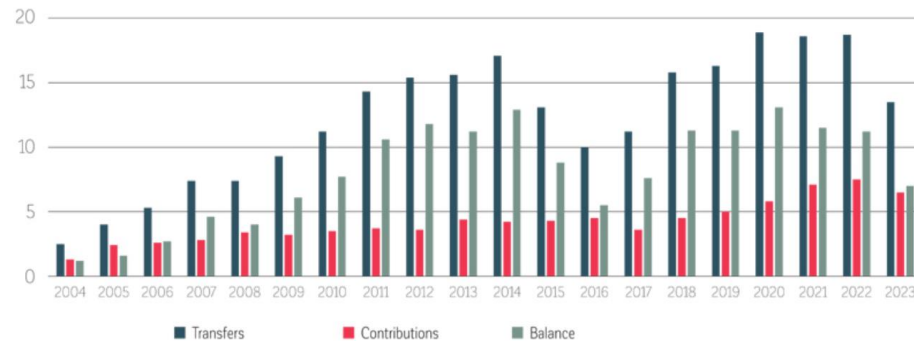
What Funding;

- EU Cohesion Policy: 2/3: 161 billion → aims to reduce development disparities between regions/ countries [ERDF, Cohesion fund like ESF and JTF]
- CAP: 1/3: 76 billion → aims to support Polish farmers and rural areas
- Others (migration funds, pre-accession and transitional funds after their accession to EU)

ERDF (European Regional Development Fund): supports the poorest Polish regions
2004-2023 = 51,5% of total EU cohesion policy funding
2021-2027 = 62% of total (around 64,4billion)

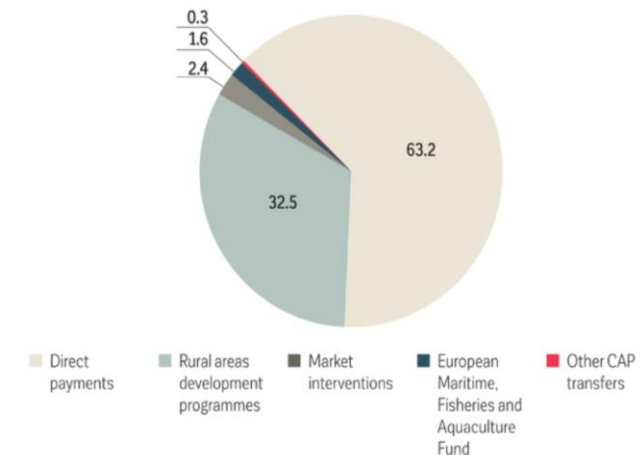
Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The Polish economy

CHART 1: POLAND'S SETTLEMENTS WITH THE EU IN 2004-2023, (EUR BILLION)



Source: Own elaboration based on the Ministry of Finance data, <https://www.gov.pl/web/finanse/transfery-polska-ue-unia-europejska>

CHART 3: CAP FUNDS FOR POLAND IN 2004-2023, (%)



Source: Own elaboration based on the Ministry of Finance data, <https://www.gov.pl/web/finanse/transfery-polska-ue-unia-europejska>

Key Observations:

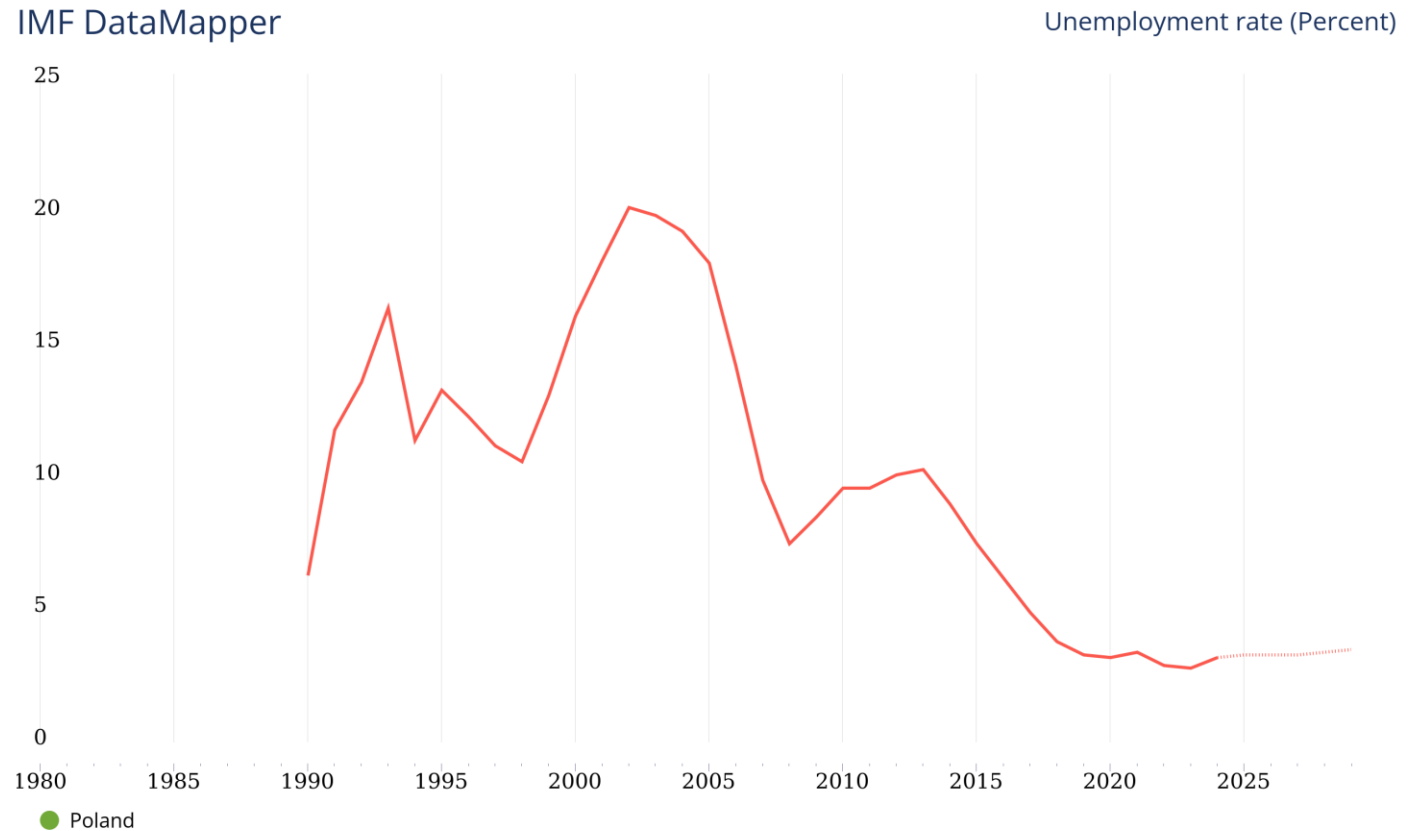
- Since Poland joined the EU in 2004, the Transfers have consistently exceeded contributions
- The balance (difference between what P receives and and what P contributes) is always positive = net beneficiary of EU funds
- Peak point: 2015-2020: significant EU funding for development projects

- Majority of CAP funds have been allocated to direct payments to farmers, and so reflecting the EU's strong focus on supporting/ stabilizing agriculture income
- Also, the significant 32.5%, aiming to support rural areas, shows EU concern to improve and modernize rural areas, limiting social divergence

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The Polish economy

Key Observations:

Sharp increase during 90s:
transformation period for Poland's
Economy - from centrally planned
economy to liberal market economy
Significant Decline after 2004:
Poland's accession to the EU
(structural and development funds) =
boosted the economy and attracted
foreign investment
TODAY: unemployment rate is lower
than 5%



Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – Domestic politics

System of Governance: parliamentary democracy

Prime minister = head of government

President= head of state

The government structure is centred on the council of ministers

Combination of electoral law:

Sejm (Lower House): proportional representation

Senate (Upper House): majority 231+/460

Multi-party system +
Coalition Governments



Domestic Culture of
Compromise: negotiations
and consensus reaching



Formation of stable
governing coalitions

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – Domestic politics

CURRENT GOVERNMENT:

Coalition (KO+ Third Way + New Left) run by Pr. Minister *Donald Tusk*, formed after Oct '23 elections when they collectively assembled the majority of the 460-seat Sejm (248)
PiS party did secure the largest amount of seats (194) but NOT majority = SHIFT IN POLAND'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE after 8 years of PiS

HOW ROBUST IS THE COALITION?

- Internal diversity (in need of continuous compromise + external pressure = hard to maintain unity)
- Presidential Opposition: Andrzej Duda (PiS party) = critical of the government
- Public Support = recently loosing

IMPORTANT DOMESTIC POLICY ISSUES

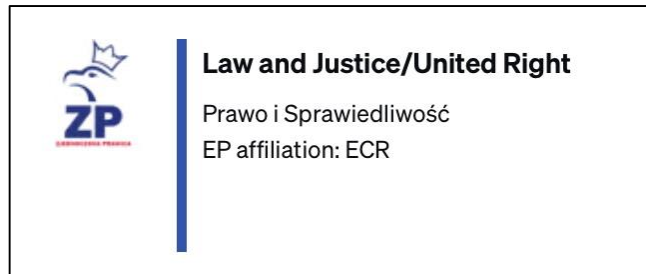
1. National Identity and Sovereignty (post-Soviet independence- historical context)
2. Judicial Reform and Rule of Law
3. Eu funding
4. Security (Russia, NATO) and Migration

2027: Next scheduled elections
HOWEVER

2025: Presidential elections will set a different view

CHANGES IN POWER DYNAMICS :
Euro sceptic party to pro-EU one

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – Domestic politics



Eurosceptic and prioritizes national sovereignty over deeper EU integration,
judicial reforms must be a strictly sovereign matter and rejection of EU's criticism, which points out the undermining of judicial independence and of democratic norms,
conservative – meaning advocator of traditional family values supported by the Catholic Church ,
skeptical of EU leadership and of deepening the ties with Germany and France,
While accepting EU's climate policy, Poland supports energy sovereignty and the reliance on coal,
strong border control,
supports NATO and defense policy

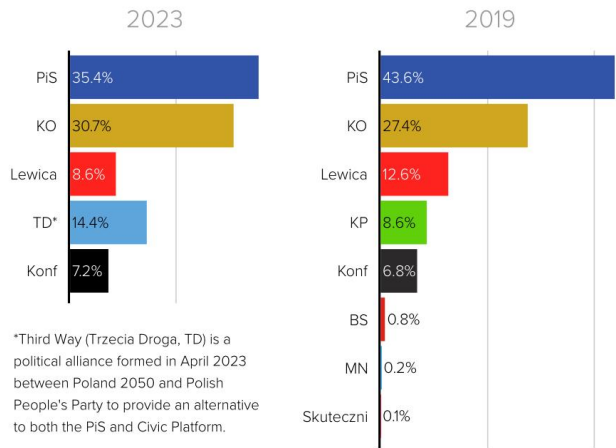


Strong pro- EU orientation,
more open to future discussions about euro,
opposition to the judicial reforms (by PiS)
while supporting the restoration of judicial independence,
alignment with EU on equality, diversity and human rights (liberal social policy), also with EU's Green Deal,
supports humanitarian solutions as for migration,
strongly advocates NATO and EU as for it's foreign policy

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – Domestic politics

Poland — 2023 general election

POLAND HEADS TO THE POLLS

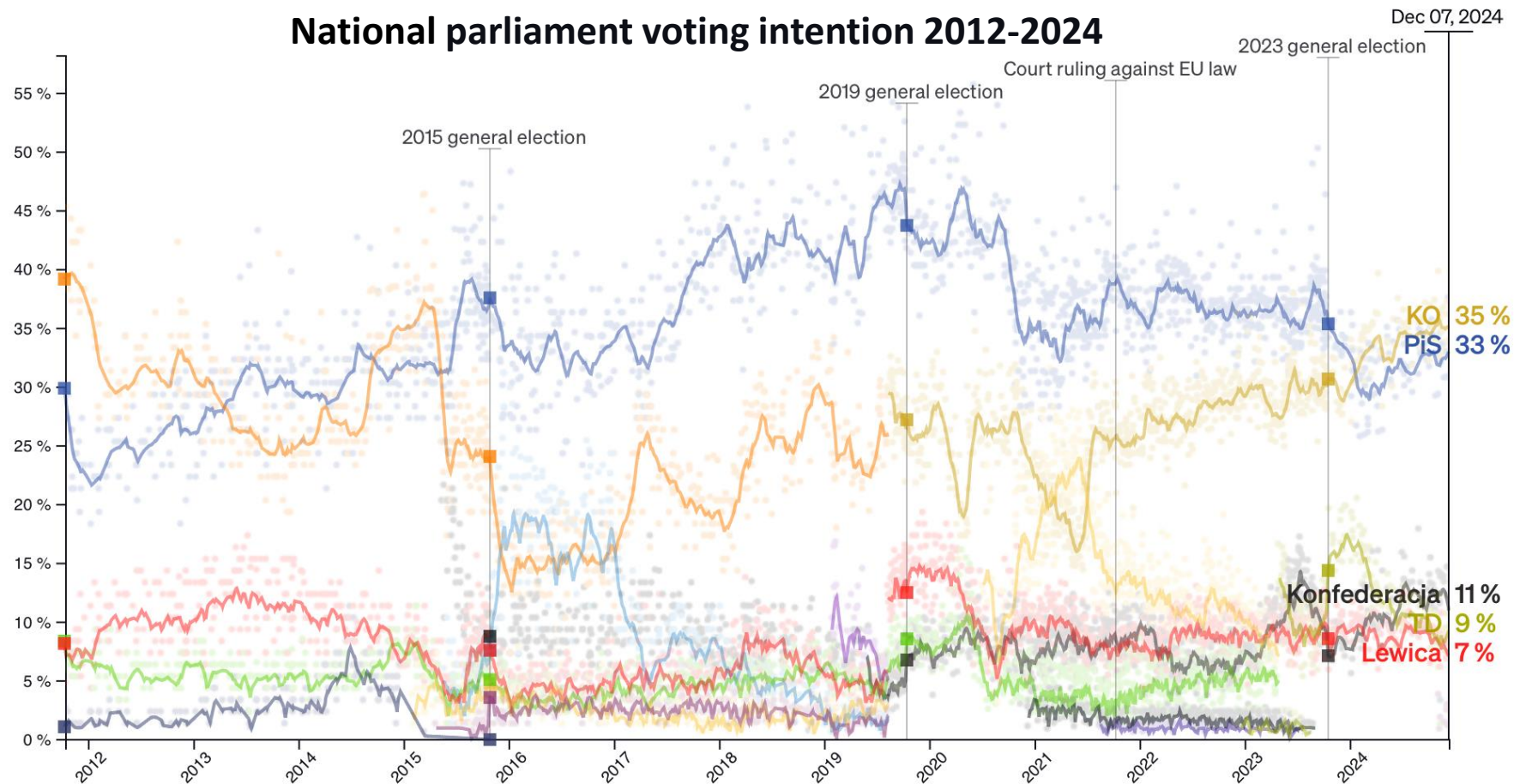


*Third Way (Trzecia Droga, TD) is a political alliance formed in April 2023 between Poland 2050 and Polish People's Party to provide an alternative to both the PiS and Civic Platform.

SOURCE: National Electoral Commission

POLITICO

National parliament voting intention 2012-2024



European Elections

Seats by political group - 2024-2029

Poland - Constitutive session



Total 53 seats

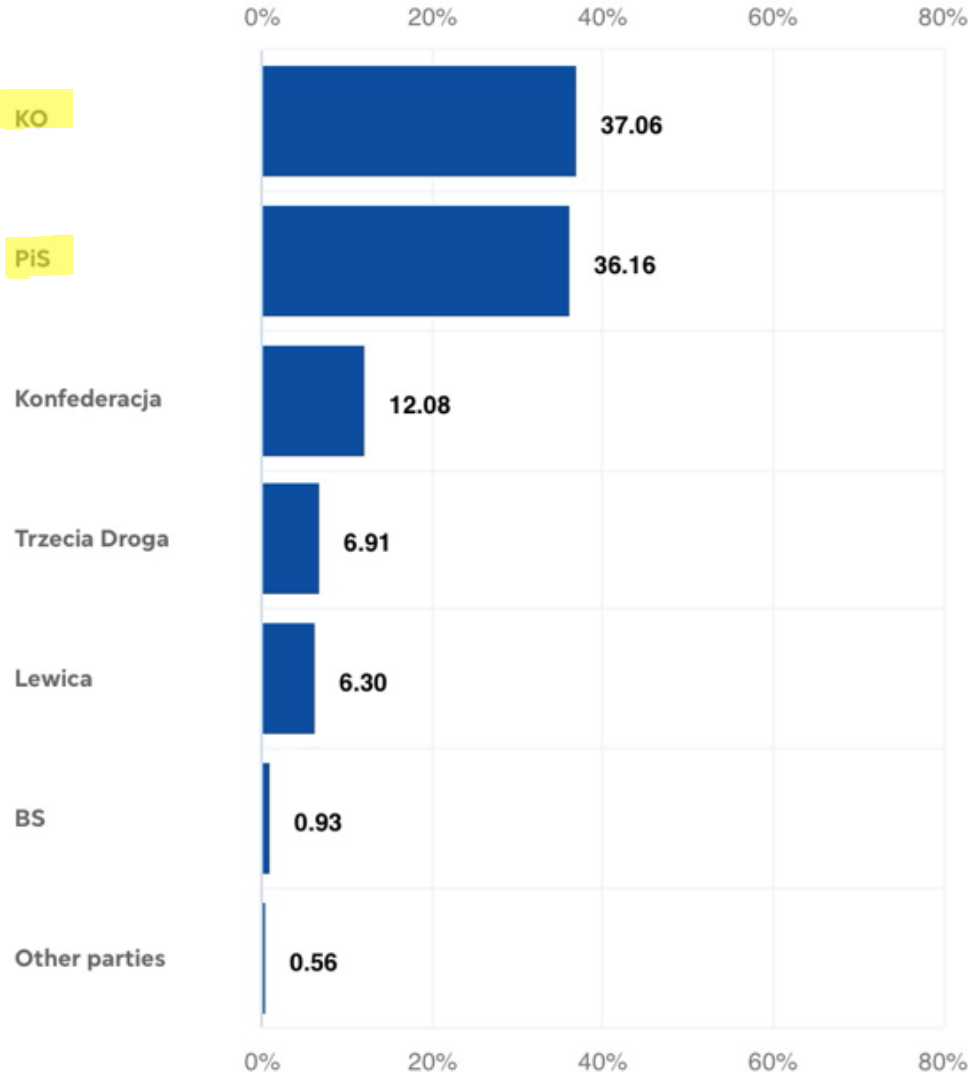
Political groups in the European Parliament

- **EPP** - Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
- **S&D** - Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
- **PfE** - Patriots for Europe
- **ECR** - European Conservatives and Reformists Group
- **Renew Europe** - Renew Europe Group
- **Greens/EFA** - Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance
- **The Left** - The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL
- **ESN** - Europe of Sovereign Nations
- **NI** - Non-attached Members

According to Parliament's rules of procedure, a political group shall consist of at least 23 Members elected in at least seven Member States.

Poland 2024

Official results



European Elections

EUROPEAN PEOPLE’S PARTY (EPP):
Christian Democrats / centre-right,
Pro-European

In alignment with :
KO – Civic Coalition

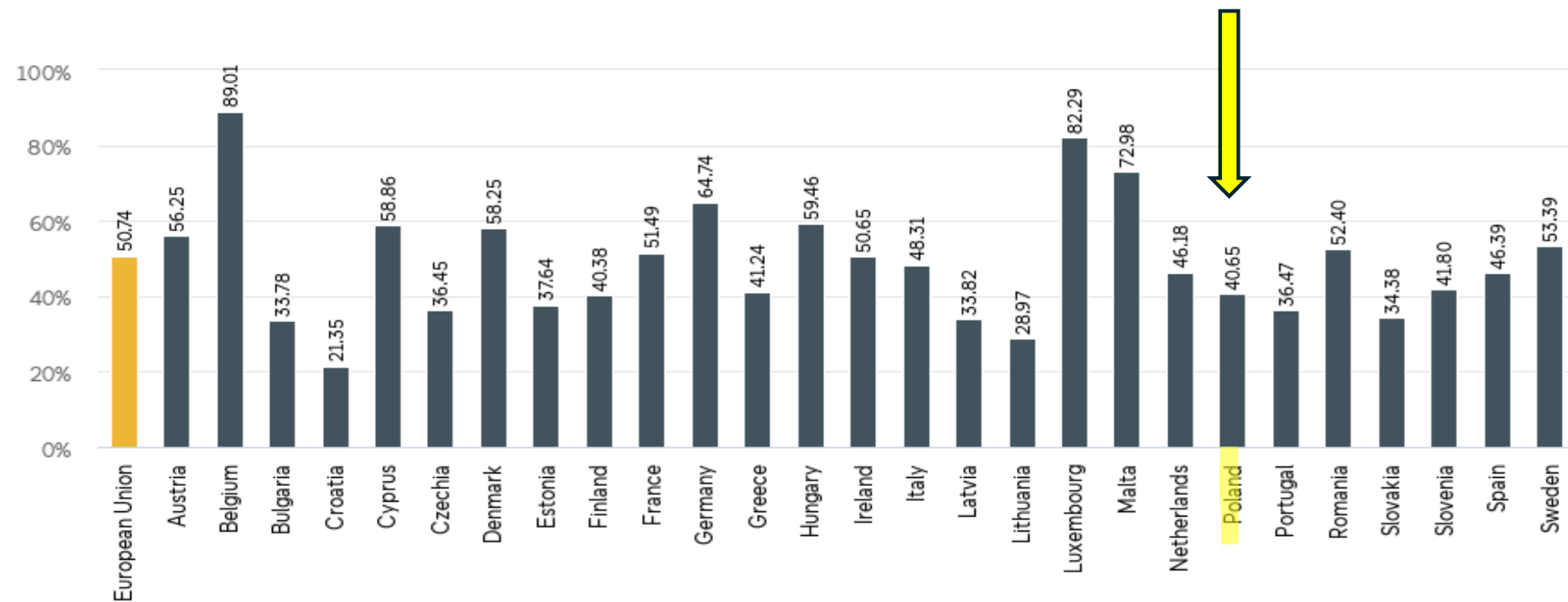
**EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES
AND REFORMISTS (ECR):**
Conservative Right and
Euro-sceptic

In alignment with :
PiS – Law and Justice

European Elections

Turnout by country (%)

Final results



Source: Provided by Verian for the European Parliament

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The history of the country

End of 18th century: instilled **deep distrust** of foreign domination and a strong sense of national identity and partly explains today's strong focus on national identity and its protection

1795: Poland's disappearance after the Third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as a result of the pressure by Russia, Austria and Prussia which was an ongoing situation since 1772

Over a century later (1918) Poland's sovereignty was recognized by the Versailles Treaty (after WW1) = no independent Polish state for 123 years

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The history of the country


20th century: shaped the need for **strong security** and **territorial integrity**, which echoes today, mainly by the CO party which remains wary of both German and Russian influence

1920 (right after its reemergence) : Soviet invasion

WW2: repeated invasions from USSR and Nazi (Germany) caused immense losses, while the end of the war left Poland with territorial changes pushing the country westwards

1947: under soviet control, Poland becomes a communist state

1980: Solidarity movement (Lech Walesa) combined with the Pope's, John Paul the second, contribution led to communism's collapse by the 1989



The fall of communism indicated a decisive moment for the country, taking the side in favor of democracy and aligning with NATO and the EU

Factors shaping the European policies of Poland – The history of the country

21st century: characterized – so far – by the **EU integration** project, in which Poland acts as a key player that predominantly suggests policies that guarantee security and sovereignty

1999: NATO member (a decision that made a statement as for the desired security against Russian aggression)

2004: EU member, (which symbolizes the long history behind advocating solidarity)

The EU Policies of Poland - WHY?

Poland's historical experiences and traumas directly influence current policies

POLITICAL FACTORS

- Communism intoxication and democratization, stronger institutional stability, categorization as an official European Nation which would reconnect Poland with Western society after the lengthy and intense Soviet influence

GEOPOLITICAL

- 1.official break from the Soviet bloc, chance to intensify the relationship with central/ eastern Europe (cross-border) neighbors and enhance their cooperation, security for a country in a strategic location with critical value (between Germany and Russia, connecting the two blocs)

ECONOMIC

- access to the Single market (vital for trade, investment and economic growth), FDI (foreign direct investment) attraction as a result of political stability, EU structural and cohesion funds (economic modernization: industrial, agricultural etc), labor mobility, access to Global Supply Chains (manufacturing and services)

The EU policies of Poland – WHAT?

- Advocates **initiatives**: CAP, Customs Union and the Single European Act + member of Schengen zone
- Actively propels **EU enlargement** (specifically Ukraine's integration, Georgia's, Moldova's and Western Balkan's)
- Strong proponent of an “easier”- with less EU pre-enlargement reforms- accession of new members
- Against the **Single Currency**
- Opposed to deepening EU integration at the expense of **sovereignty** –historically against authorization



The war in Ukraine and Poland's position

Poland is the second largest military supporter of Ukraine after the US. Humanitarian efforts: has received over 6 million Ukraine refugees. Diplomatic initiatives for peace talks. Supports Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO.

Due to Poland- Ukraine bilateral relations (economic), tensions in other areas can toughen up the balances. However, Poland looks after its national interest while ensuring regional security.

PiS is also on the same page. Confederation is skeptical over the involvement in the conflict.

Public Opinion

- Single Currency: FOR: 36 AGAINST: 51 proves the opposing position to the monetary union and the euro



- Eu Direction: RIGHT: 55 WRONG: 31
- 'Poland could better face the future outside the EU' AGREE: 47%
DISAGREE: 45%

= paradox that shows a complex view of the EU

While the overall outcome of EU influence is positive, there are concerns about Poland's autonomy, as a result of EU regulations and governance.

The EU policies of Poland

The upcoming Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU (1
jan 2025) plans to:

- A) step-up the EU-NATO cooperation
 - B) Strengthen EU security and resilience
 - C) Deepen transatlantic relations
 - D) Propel the EU enlargement to the East / South
 - E) support Ukraine
- (To name a few)

Major Recent Challenges – Migration and Refugee Crisis

National Security Concerns and Humanitarian Responsibilities

A. BELARUS- POLAND Border

JUL 2021: migrants and asylum seekers (from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria)

Crisis Starting Point: Belarus promotes tours (+VISA) to the EU in the Middle East and encourages entering EU by crossing Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian borders

2 SEPT: POLAND: emergency state (at least 5000 people stuck on borders)

B. UKRAINE- POLAND

Ukraine War: massive refugee influx into Poland

March 2022: 1,8 million refugees, of which 1 million residing in the country

Oct 2022: Donald Tusk: aim to suspend the asylum for illegal immigrants in order to enhance the national security

Belarus-Poland border crossings



"We are not going to respect or apply any European idea that... violates our security and I'm thinking here of the 'migration pact' [adopted by the EU in May]."
Donald Dusk, 12 Oct 22, at a party convention



Major Recent Challenges – Democratic Backsliding

PiS government steps over the independence of the judiciary with the aim of enhancing its political influence and its moves lead to Democratic Backsliding

2015: Polish Constitutional Court Crisis after PiS tries to appoint judges to the Constitutional Tribunal

2017: Supreme Court Crisis

2019: Polish Judicial disciplinary panel law

European Union expresses concerns and stresses the importance of judicial independence and the separation of the powers. Also initiated Article 7 procedure and referred Poland to ECJ

Major Recent Challenges – Democratic Backsliding

Numerous protests, due to the constitutional crisis, reached a peak on June 4, 2023

Donald Tusk-led coalition government (after 2023) has made initiatives in order to reverse PiS rule-of-law reforms

HURDLE: **Andrzej Duda** who is President of Poland and PiS-aligned => 2025 presidential election : critical point



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