



20 YEARS together



POLAND

Twenty years ago, Poland became part of the European Union. Since then, Poland has benefitted from EU cooperation and solidarity in direct and indirect ways. The Polish economy has boomed thanks to investment and integration - now, it forms a strong part of the Single Market. Today, citizens living in Poland enjoy better lives and opportunities thanks to borderless travel, better transport, modernised public services and cutting-edge technology. At the same time, Poland has contributed to the EU's strategic interests in supporting Ukraine and increasing Europe's security. It is also helping to push forward the clean and digital transitions. **Poland has made the EU stronger. And the EU has made Poland stronger.**

Creating opportunities and growth since 2004

-  Poland has enjoyed sustained economic growth since joining the European Union, with its **Gross National Income** increasing by 7% per year on average.
-  With easier access to the EU's agri-food market, **Poland's agricultural sector has grown significantly over 20 years.** Today, the value of Polish food exports stands at €51.8 billion, eleven times greater than the pre-accession period. Poland also benefits from a positive trade balance today, exceeding €18.6 billion.
-  **Poland's economy has been converging to the average of the EU-27**, with its Gross Domestic Product per capita going from 52% of the EU-27 in 2004 to 79% in 2022.
-  Since 2004, **Poland's employment rate has increased**, going from 57% to 77% in 2022. The **unemployment rate has fallen** from 20% to 3%, **the biggest improvement amongst the 10 Member States** that joined the EU 20 years ago.
-  As part of the Single Market, **Poland has benefitted from the free movement of goods across the European Union.** Today, the EU is the first destination of Poland's exports of goods, taking over 74%. The value of these has increased from €45 billion in 2004 to over €263 billion in 2023.
-  With the support of EU funds, **the percentage of households in Poland with internet access has increased**, going from 26% in 2004 to 93% in 2023.

Supporting Poland's economy and society

Over the past 20 years, the EU's Cohesion Policy has strengthened the economic, social and territorial cohesion of EU Member States. Since 2004, **over €160 billion in Cohesion Policy funding has been invested in Poland**, benefitting citizens living in the country.

Driven by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Poland has experienced significant progress in agriculture and rural development. Since 2004, **an investment of €74.6 billion in CAP funding has been directed towards the country**, nurturing sustainable growth and prosperity in rural regions.

With the support of **€25.3 billion in grants**, as well as **€34.5 billion in loans from the EU's NextGenerationEU**, Poland is helping Europe transform its economy and society, by investing in:



**Climate
47%**



**Digital
21%**



**Social
22%**

Investing in Polish transport

With EU funds, Poland has been able to invest in substantial transport projects over the past 20 years. In 2004, there were less than 800 km of motorways and expressways in Poland. After 20 years, there are now around 5 000 km – most of which have been built with the support of EU Cohesion Policy funding and the Connecting Europe Facility. Better transport infrastructure has made the lives of commuters easier, cutting journey times within Poland by one-third. The number of airline passengers across Poland has also increased from 9 million in 2004 to 41 million in 2022.



Increasing Europe's renewable electricity

Thanks to EU investment over the past 20 years, Poland has been able to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, thus strengthening EU energy sovereignty. With the support of NextGenerationEU, Poland is now developing its first offshore wind farms, making a crucial contribution to the decarbonisation of Europe.

Advancing Polish and European research

The EU has been able to support thousands of Polish researchers over the past 20 years, funding almost 6 000 projects in less than two decades. With EU funding under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship, Polish researchers are currently looking to find better treatments for patients suffering from breast cancer. NANOCARGO, for example, is pushing for a breakthrough in cancer treatments, which could help thousands of women in Europe. The project recently won the Innovation Radar 2020 Grand Prix for its important work.



Defending our Union

As a member of the European Union, Poland is helping to reinforce and strengthen Europe's defence capabilities. For instance, with the support of more than €2 million in EU funding, Dezamet Metal Works – a Polish armaments company – is set to boost production capacities for shells in Europe.



Standing in solidarity

As a member of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism since 2004, Poland has provided emergency assistance and logistical support following crises and disasters in Europe. Since Russia launched its brutal invasion of Ukraine, Poland has hosted Ukrainians fleeing the aggression, as well as the EU's medical evacuation hub, offering a safe space for civilians with medical needs arriving from Ukraine. At the hub, patients are screened for medical treatments, vaccinations and mental health support. It is also designed to facilitate the work of medical personnel as they tend to vulnerable patients arriving from Ukraine.



Benefitting from smooth and secure travel in Europe

Since December 2007, Poland has been a member of the Schengen area, the world's largest free travel area. As part of Schengen, millions of EU citizens, including individuals living in Poland, are able to move freely without being subject to border checks. They also benefit from common EU approaches to shared security challenges.



Creating study opportunities

Over the past 20 years, young Polish citizens have gained more opportunities to study across the European Union. Since 2004, almost 262 000 higher education students from Poland have participated in the Erasmus+ programme. Through Erasmus+, nearly 210 000 EU citizens have also enjoyed the opportunity to attend universities in Poland.

Enjoying quality food and produce

Over the past 20 years, EU citizens have been able to enjoy more high-quality foods, drinks and agricultural produce of Polish origin. Today, 36 products from Poland, including apples from the region of Grojec, are featured on the EU's list of products with protected designations of origin.



© European Union, 2024

Reuse of this document is allowed, provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license). For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders. All images © European Union, unless otherwise stated.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

PDF ISBN 978-92-68-14762-7 doi: 10.2775/531777 NA-05-24-290-EN-N

